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**“Why is the United States in Afghanistan?
A Deeper Look into America’s Discourse of the American
Occupation in the Middle East”**

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Abstract

The terror attacks of September 11th, 2011 were the beginning of a war between the USA and Afghanistan. Ten years later, America is still in the Middle East and this empirical research asks the question: Why is the U.S. still there according to Americans and how is the American public influenced from the media it consumes? This thesis is composed of six chapters where relative topics of an anthropological nature are discussed, such as the global influence of American mass media as well as current media anthropology discussions with examples from renowned social scientists.

Fourteen interviews have been conducted with Americans from the state of Indiana. There are two groups of informants, as half of them have first-hand experience in Afghanistan, and the other half of interviewees have received their information primarily via media outlets. I hypothesize that the juxtaposition between the two groups will show how personal experience gives one a nuanced perception of the situation of Afghanistan and also, underline how the mass media influences the American public's opinion on the war.

The methodology is based on media theory from George Marcus (1998) and his notion of multi-sited research. The theory discussed is centered upon Edward Said's *Orientalism*, where such concepts as "Othering" and hegemony are often mentioned to describe the behavior of the United States. The empirical research is dissected and analyzed utilizing Philipp Mayring's method of qualitative content analysis (2000).

The interpretation shows that the American society is not only strongly influenced from the mass media (what has already been proven in the past), but also that Americans have begun to reflect upon the media they consume. Nevertheless, they are unconscious of the fact that the media outlets still largely steer the opinion of the individual. In addition, media outlets do not provide a clear concise reason for being in Afghanistan due to the severe complexity of the situation.

This leads to contradiction and confusion among the public. Lastly, I propose a new concept of how the United States reacts to a crisis and offer people a way to gain a better understanding of the conflict outside of the realm of American media outlets.

Zusammenfassung

"Warum sind die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika in Afghanistan? Ein tiefer Einblick in den Diskurs über die amerikanische Besatzung in Nahost".

Ein Terroranschlag am 11. September 2001, markiert den Beginn eines Krieges zwischen den USA und Afghanistan. Über ein Jahrzehnt später sind Amerikaner noch immer in Nahost stationiert, und es stellt sich einige Fragen: Warum sind sie noch immer dort? Wie nimmt die amerikanische Öffentlichkeit die amerikanischen Aktivitäten in Afghanistan wahr?

Diese Arbeit setzt sich in sechs Kapiteln unter anderem mit dem globalen Einfluss amerikanischer Massenmedien auseinander und analysiert diesen anhand aktueller Theorien der Medienanthropologie.

Vierzehn Gespräche wurden mit Amerikanern aus dem Bundesstaat Indiana geführt, von welchen jeder zweite bereits persönliche Erfahrungen in Afghanistan gemacht hatte. Die Antworten jener, die die Situation in Afghanistan nur aus den Medien kennen, wurden denen mit persönlicher Erfahrung gegenübergestellt, um nicht nur die unterschiedlichen Perspektiven, sondern auch die Konzepte dahinter zu verstehen und zu eruieren.

Methodologisch lehnt sich diese Arbeit an die Medientheorien George Marcus (1998) und seine Auffassung von "multi-sited" empirischer Forschung an. Die Theorie basiert auf Edward Saids Konzept Orientalismus (1978), in welchem Begriffe wie "Othering" und Hegemonie verwendet, um das Verhalten Amerikas in Nahost zu erklären. Das Material wurde nach Philipp Mayrings Qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse (2000) analysiert und aufbereitet.

Anhand der Interpretation erkennt man, dass die amerikanische Gesellschaft nicht nur stark von den Massenmedien beeinflusst ist, was seit Jahrzehnten bekannt ist, sondern dass auch die Amerikaner sich sehr wohl kritischer mit Medien auseinandersetzen. Trotzdem sind sie nicht bewusst, dass ihre persönliche Meinung von den großen Medienkonzernen gesteuert wird. Diese Medienkonzerne beziehen jedoch keine konkrete Position zum amerikanischen Engagement in Afghanistan, da die Situation zu kompliziert ist. Dies führt jedoch zu Widersprüchen und Verwirrung in der Öffentlichkeit.

Zuletzt präsentiere ich ein neues Konzept, wie die Vereinigten Staaten auf eine Krise reagieren. Des weiteren bitte ich eine Möglichkeit an, Informationen unabhängig von den Medienkonzernen zu beziehen.

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I dedicate my work to my parents, who always wished their best for me, raised me well and taught me through their own actions that with perseverance and a positive attitude, I can achieve my goals.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROCESS

1.1 Interest in topic

On the morning of September 11, 2001, an act of war against civilians in a place at peace scrambled the categories of culture, cognition, and communication. This act killed 3,000 people and injured scores more, eliminated two landmark buildings in a landmark city, and startled, stunned, scared, and confused the U.S. population and the communication system on which it depends for professional reassurance about how to think, (Rothenbuhler, 2005:176).

September 11th was just the beginning of a long, drawn out military endeavor. It has been over a decade since not only this act of war took place, but also since the United States military has occupied the Middle Eastern region of Afghanistan. As an American that is interested in foreign politics and human behavior, my interest in this topic has grown as I began to contemplate on why the country still remains in Afghanistan after all this time. After pondering on this issue for quite a while, I was still not able to come up with a suitable answer that justified the means. As thousands of Afghan and American, civilian and military lives continue to be lost I needed to gain a better understanding as to why all of this tragedy continues to occur.

Everyone has heard heaps of stories via various media outlets (television, newspapers, the Internet, radio, etc) and also from friends or family that have been there. Howbeit, there does not seem to be a clear clean cut understanding as to why the United States is still there. I am interested in discovering what American citizens think and understand about the war and the occupation, as well as how their perception is influenced by both the media and their personal experiences.

1.2 Definition of Terms

To ensure that the reader is able to follow the text along, I provide a few definitions of terms that are useful to understand before delving into the numerous research topics.

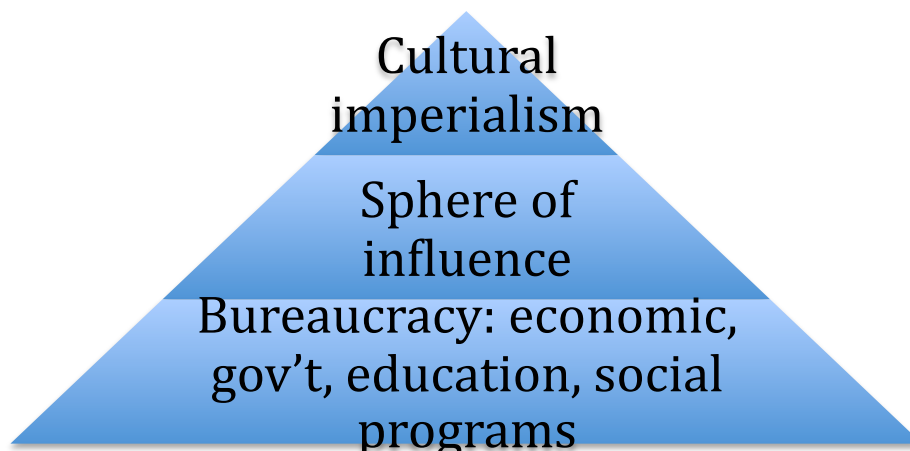
Hermeneutics- “the study of the methodological principles of interpretation,” (www merriam-webster 2012), like the media. Hermeneutics is the understanding of an event, like the Afghan war, by analyzing its meanings to the human participants (soldiers, American citizens) and the American culture. It is only possible to grasp the meaning of an action (statement about the war, justification) within the context of the discourse from which it originates. Interviews are read, analyzed and interpreted.

Orientalist- the most widely accepted definition of the term refers to “anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient, and what he or she does is Orientalism,” (Said, 1978:2), although the most fitting description for the term Orientalism in the sense that it carries in this work is best described as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” (Said, 1978:3).

Hegemony- “influence or control over another country, a group of people, etc,” (www merriam-webster 2012).

The following figure gives an example of how hegemony normally functions.

Hegemony Pyramid, Table 1.2.1



1.3 What role does the U.S. play in world politics?

In order to introduce the topic of the research project and to place the situation in a larger frame of context, I begin by utilizing Herbert I. Schiller's writings about American cultural imperialism in his 1971 publication *Mass Communications and American Empire*. Schiller does a spectacular job at pinpointing American cultural imperialism via mass communication from its roots. Intercultural communication literature is also used throughout the discussion as well, such as Heather J. Bowe and Kylie Martin's 2007 *Communication Across Cultures: Mutual Understanding in a Global World* and Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon's 1995 *Intercultural Communication* to name just a few.

It is widely known that the United States is a major hub of mass communication in which data is not only produced, but also reproduced, and sent out to many different corners all over the planet. The U.S. has created an empire, and mass communication has become one of the major tools, (if not the largest), which is used in order for this particular nation-state to create a dialogue with people across the entire globe.

The dialogue that occurs consists of American media outlets (the transmitter) and the global village of consumers (the receivers). Globalization has opened its doors to mass media, and it meets millions of citizens in the global village right at their doorstep, often in the space and comfort of their own homes, in their own language, daily and unceasingly up-to-date, creating a relationship where the receiver has the ability to identify his or herself, but within the scope of not only an informative but rather a political or consumer-based motive, which influences the receiver's feedback to fit the transmitter's wants and needs. It comes in many forms, such as radio, television, and the Internet to name the most widely used. Let us take a look back at what American scholars and politicians have said regarding this phenomenon as it was becoming more and more popular as well as widely received. In a *Life Magazine* editorial in the early 70's, Henry Luce urged Americans to:

accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit. It now becomes our time to be the powerhouse from which the ideals spread throughout the world... (H. Luce in Schiller, 1971:1).

The Americans, namely those who are producing communication that can and will be exported, are aware of the power that the nation has over the rest of the world (to a greater degree the Western world at that time). With that said, a picture of the American consumer based culture is created, and the American culture itself is often what is being reproduced. Culture, according to Hofstede (in Bove 2007;80) is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. Let us keep that in mind as this explanation continues. Going back to Luce and his statement, Schiller reflects on it and says:

In short, the emerging imperial network of American economics and finance utilizes the communications media for its defense and entrenchment wherever it exists already and for its expansion to locales where it hopes to become active, (Schiller, 1971;3).

Here Schiller makes a good point as he discovers how exactly the U.S. utilizes its power and influence, and just as importantly, why. Economics and finance are the building blocks that drive the force of mass communication. As an anthropologist, it is essential to be aware of the economic and financial aspect because it is a large factor in the flamboyant American culture that is being reproduced. Although economics and finance were not intended to be a highlight in this discussion, it is too significant not to mention in an effort to understand the historical background and motivation for the issues at hand. The anthropological significance of economics will also be an important factor in the analysis of the research. To continue with the role of the U.S. in world politics, the 33rd President of the United States Harry S. Truman gave a speech in Texas stating:

There is one thing that Americans value even more than peace. It is freedom: freedom of worship-freedom of speech-and freedom of enterprise, (in Schiller, 1971:6).

This message is crucial in the understanding as to what context 'freedom of speech' was being referred to. Truman's statement is quite interesting when studying the realization of the American mass media culture. As he was mainly referring to enterprise, the free market, the meaning of another aspect of his speech later came to support the U.S. mass media machine and its influential power. Schiller states:

Freedom of speech...interpreted to signify the unrestrained opportunity for the dissemination of messages by the American mass media in the world arena, has developed in the years since Truman spoke as an equally significant support in the American imperial arch, (Schiller, 1971:6).

The United States functions as the transmitter nation and the weaker and/or developing countries function as the receiver. In this discourse, the receiver does not have a voice in which face-to-face communication is permitted, but feedback is created in the mind and behavior of the receivers, often in the form of the consumption of American products. There is a stereotype created here in this example of Americans and how Hollywood and the American mass media portray its citizens. In order to comprehend the importance and problematic issues that these stereotypes produce, it is also necessary to briefly discuss power relations and stereotyping. This review will come back to this topic, but keep in mind that it has first been introduced here.

From an anthropological perspective it is crucial to pose the question what is the U.S. trying to imply? What is its message? Schiller made a fairly bold attempt to discover some answers to those questions. In his findings he includes how Truman stated:

We are seeking a pattern of international communications that would be most conducive to freedom of enterprise, (in Schiller, 1971;7).

Here it is clear that the U.S. and its political aim were to create international communications, not to inform others objectively but rather to influence them and promote capitalism and consumerism. How did this happen?

If free trade is the mechanism by which a powerful economy penetrates and dominates a weaker one, the 'free flow of information'... is the channel through

which lifestyles and value systems can be imposed on poor and vulnerable societies, (Schiller, 1971:9).

The United Nation's goals after WWII was surely to promote peace and attempt to bring people of the globe together, providing a platform where nations can meet and discuss the issues that affect the citizens of the world. While UN's intentions are good, the system can also be manipulated because there are counter affects to new services they permitted to be provided as a result. It is also important to look back at the early seventies when television was just becoming a household product, and the Internet did not even exist yet.

Nevertheless, with America's technological advances and economical capabilities, the current circumstances provided the nation with new tools and the chance to influence not only modern civilization but almost the entire globe as well. "To a significant degree what America does will shape the emerging international communications system," (Ibid in Schiller, 1971: 9)¹. Congress was also fully aware of this, and at that time when international mass communication was a current phenomenon, a member in the House of Representatives stated:

Through the use of modern instruments and techniques of communications it is possible today to reach large or influential segments of national populations-to inform them, to influence their attitudes, and at times perhaps even to motivate them to a particular course of action, (in Schiller, 1971:10)²

This is proof that American politicians were not only aware of their influence, but they consciously allowed the mass media to promote subjective, incentive-based ideas to other nations, according to the interests of the American enterprises.

As a side note, I want to mention what a senior political columnist for *The Washington Examiner* wrote about General Electric (GE). According to Timothy P. Carney (2011), the GE company spends more on U.S. lobbying than any other

¹ Ibid, p.53 in the Modern Communications and Foreign Policy Report No.5 Subcommittee of International Organizations and Movements of the Committee on Foreign Affairs 90th Congress, 1st session, House of Representatives 1967. Washington, D.C.

² Ibid. Committee on Foreign Affairs, Report No. 2 on "Winning the Col War. The U.S. Ideological Offensive, 88th Congress, House of Representatives No. 1352, April 27, 1964. Washington, D.C. pp.6-77

company. This introduces a political aspect within the motives of GE. Anyone familiar with American politics and lobbyists is aware of the fact that it is legal for companies to have relationships with politicians, and in return, many politicians receive large amounts of cash. We will not delve into this topic, but nonetheless it is still an important notion to be aware of.

All in all, it is fair to observe that an enterprise and the states they support (or the states that support them), play a role in the empowerment of mass communications through a well thought out and created identity in order to ultimately serve the major players involved, whether it be an enterprise or a politician.

Let us quickly return to the discussion of power relations and stereotypes, as this is a pluralistic issue, which deserves attention from differentiating side points. The American media creates a representation of its people, according to how the enterprises or media outlets desire how the American people, the American culture and people outside of American's borders (more specifically 'Others'), ought to be perceived. They do this by creating stereotypes of their own. Scollon and Scollon provide a definition, stating:

Stereotyping is the process by which all members of a group are asserted to have the characteristics attributed to the whole group, (in Bowe, 2007:87).

People belong to a multitude of different sub-groups and cannot possibly be defined by their membership to any one particular group. Cultural differences in the concept of self and 'Others', and related perceptions of power are also important in understanding the social expectations and conventions. Any categorization of a group results in some level of stereotyping, (El Dash & Busnardo in Bowe, 2007:5).

Stereotypes, whether positive or negative, limit our understanding of human behavior and can lead to miscommunication in intercultural discourse because, as Scollon & Scollon conclude:

They limit our view of human activity to just one or two salient dimensions and consider those to be the whole picture, (Scollon & Scollon, 1995:167).

People need to consider the differences and similarities that exist between people and cultures. Scollon and Scollon theorize (1995:157) that no individual member of a group encompasses or displays all of the characteristics of their group. Individuals belong to a variety of different groups and thus their identity and characteristics can be asserted differently, depending upon the situation. This is especially so for those who relate to more than one ethnic or cultural group, as so many people in the United States are.

In addition, there are political consequences of mass media networks as a result of being the subject in a one-sided discussion of the world's affairs where the interlocutor is not involved in the discussion. Wilson and Wilson's discussion on intercultural communication and power relations in *Will and Power: Towards Radical Intercultural Communication Research and Pedagogy* (2001) can also be applied to this discussion. Let us take a look at their theory:

it [communication] is a socially and jointly constructed interaction of which power is an indissoluble part, (Wilson, 2001:77a).

So they begin by implying that the notions of power and communication exist within one another. When communication is present, then power plays a role within the social interaction among the transmitter and the receiver(s) involved in the dialogue. They go on to say that, "intercultural communication on a global level is steeped in relations of power and domination" (Wilson, 2001: 77b).

This theory supports that argument, when applied to our example, that first, power plays a role in mass communication, where the American media outlets hold the power, and two, it is already a well-known fact that power and/or domination are also involved in intercultural communications in the global realm. Wilson and Wilson go on to argue that:

intercultural communication is a form of social interaction, not in the sense of sentence-speech-acts, but in terms of people *responding to* each other, thereby *acting upon* their worlds. This implies that intercultural communication has an

irreducible *social* dimension and that therefore intercultural communication is a joint activity, (Wilson, 2001:81).

Even though the receiver, or the international consumer if you may, does not have a voice in this dialogue, they are in fact active participants in this cross-cultural information flow, as they form their views and opinions based on information that they receive via American media outlets. It is therefore extremely difficult for one to independently form his or her own ideas objectively due to the fact that it is nearly impossible to escape the empowering American media empire giant with its global presence.

If we as individuals are sometimes betrayed or revealed by what we consciously and unconsciously say, this may be equally true of the deliberate and accidental pronouncements of our society in its forms of mass communication (Bowe, 2001:9).

Americans are often stereotyped and misunderstood as a result of their imperialistic form of mass communications. The society as a whole does not have much control of what is produced, as it is in the hands of a minority of the people. Individuals themselves have even less control of their image and how it is represented globally. This situation is problematic because the American mass media has helped to create, whether consciously or unconsciously, a stereotype of the people that live within its borders, along with the 'Others' outside of its borders.

Not only is the identity of the American people not always accurately represented, but the representation of 'Others' is often misrepresented at the same time, which in turn plays a role in intercultural communication that Americans have with 'Others'. The United States and its enterprises have an apparent influence on the world's mass communications, and this is supported by the theories of Wilson and Wilson.

1.4 Literature Review

In this next section, we will take a look at two media anthropology publications, the first focuses on both a media ethnography debate and later, on symbolism during and after 9/11. The second text focuses on an American culture television

news experiment. It is my intention to give the reader examples of how anthropologists have used media in their research, to provide an ethnographic example of how 9/11 has been confronted in the recent past and to highlight how media can play a role in American culture from a differing perspective in relation to my research project.

Media Anthropology is edited by Eric W. Rothenbuhler and Mihai Coman. Coman is the former Dean of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication Studies at the University of Bucharest, and Rothenbuhler is a Professor of Communication at Texas A&M University. Rothenbuhler and Coman's primary argument justifies and discusses media anthropology research methods.

Eric W. Rothenbuhler is also the author of *Chapter 8: Ground Zero, The Firemen, and the Symbolics of Touch on 9-11 and After* (2005) and has already been mentioned, since I utilized an appropriate quote from his excerpt for the opening of the thesis. Rothenbuhler does a good job of describing the scenes at Ground Zero during that chaotic time and paints an accurate picture for his readers with the purpose of establishing the setting, which he then dissects, analyzes and interprets.

1.4.1 Media ethnography debate

An important current debate that one discusses in media anthropology circles today focuses on whether traditional ethnography is necessary to everything called anthropological, or is the adaptation of the spirit of ethnography in media and cultural studies legitimately anthropological? Applying ethnographic methods to modern societies had already produced a dispute regarding methodological purity within anthropology, even before ethnographic ideas were widely adopted in neighboring fields. The questions anthropologists must then ask are: 1) where is the dividing line between doing an ethnography in the classic sense and doing research that is ethnographic in some aspects? And 2) how important is that line? (Rothenbuhler, 2005:2a).

Anthropology is a social science that has a history of changing and adapting to fit the needs of the society in which the anthropologist either comes from or is researching in. With technological advances in today's modern society, it is essential that anthropology continue to adapt to its environment because it is constantly changing, too.

However, scholars have criticized Rothenbuhler's work due to the fact that his research is mostly based on interviewing people within the walls of their own homes, and that the label "ethnography" is misleading, because detailed participant observation is minimal and actual immersion in the daily practices and social worlds of the people studied is almost nonexistent, (Spitulnik, 1993:298 in Rothenbuhler, 2005:2b).

On the other hand, although one may be hesitant at first to label research that is only ethnographic in some aspects (not all aspects) ethnography in order to make fair assumptions about social order and correct generalizations about current phenomena, it *is* necessary for anthropologists to think out of the box of traditional ethnography. Moreover, accepting new and innovative research methods can lead to fundamental breakthroughs, which opens the doors of possibility for future research in the field. Anthropologist Moores (1993:4) disputes such claims like Spitulnik's as he states:

despite these clear differences, reception studies can still properly be called ethnographic. It is true that they are not based on extensive fieldwork in distant lands, but they do share some of the same general intentions as anthropological research...if the means of investigation are not always identical, then the aims of inquiry can be, (in Rothenbuhler, 2005:2c).

And the aims of inquiry are essential identical. In the end, the research aims to understand some sphere or realm of human behavior. As I have chosen to conduct open-ended interviews to collect data, then according to Moore's conclusion, since the research has an anthropological motive and structure, the ultimate goal is essentially the same as well. Therefore, media anthropology is in fact a valid form of ethnography. That brings us to our next point.

Since we have established that media anthropology is a valid form of ethnography with the help of Rothenbuhler and Coman, let us take a deeper look into some of examples of how phenomena, such as ritual and myth, can be detected and interpreted in a media anthropology discourse.

1.4.2 Ritual

Ritual has become a popular and interesting topic in media anthropology. It is found in various forms from production to consumption. As Rothenbuhler states:

At one end, we find a reductive interpretation of the concept: the ritual is a sum of formalized, repetitive, stereotypical acts. In this line, Tuchman (1978) launched the phrase 'strategic rituals' to name the standardized working procedures of journalists, (Rothenbuhler, 2005:4a).

Here you have the author providing a clear example of how the production of media follows a strict ritual. Tuchman even finds this ritual necessary to name, 'strategic rituals'. This is an accurate way of describing the media outlets' intentions. We will come back to this point in the analysis of the research. Moving on, another interesting and similar point that Rothenbuhler makes is that:

scholars have considered the regular consumption of television programs or the periodic reading of newspapers...as ritual behaviors (Goethals, 1981; Lull, 1988; Morley, 1992 in Rothenbuhler, 2005:4b).

Here you have another example of how the ritual factor is found in human behavior but in a slightly different form due to the fact that the consumer passively performs a ritual as the media producers actively perform a ritual. There are also varying levels of empowerment found in these instances, as well, but we will not highlight those instances, although they are still important enough to mention and to be consciously aware of, as well.

At the other end of the debate regarding rituals in media anthropology, Carey (1988) offers a rather abstract interpretation of the concept from a ritual perspective of communication:

ritual appears as a form of realization and expression of social communication, as a 'model for' communication processes centered not on the transfer of information, but on the sharing of a common culture, (in Rothenbuhler 2005:4).

A supporting argument is also given by Dov Shinar in Rothenbuhler's collection of essays. With sociocultural change as his focus, he was able to describe a complex system about the functions of communication. He argues:

ritual is the instrument through which society manages change; the anthropological theories and concepts offer a scientific lexicon to name and interpret the actors' behavior, the institutional destructuring and restructuring processes, and the dialectic of values and symbols that support these transformations, (Rothenbuhler, Chpt. 25).

As you can see, it is clear that there are many ways in which an anthropological perspective, in this case rituals within the media realm, can be used to describe human behavior. There has been sufficient research done by an array of well-known scholars to support this new form in which anthropology is being studied.

1.4.3 Myth

Rothenbuhler also underscores how myth exists in relation to news stories, which helps to frame my research just the same. In the case of news, he states that there are media texts that are required to be verifiable reports of events in real time and space. These media products are thus endowed with instrumental status and referential content; news stories, under that paradigm, then, would not be expected to involve mythological representations because it is in fact, intended to be objective (or one is at least lead to believe this). In spite of all this, many recent studies show that some news media texts build a new level of meaning, deeply anchored in the codes and symbolic vocabulary of the targeted community, starting from and going beyond the referential dimension. The discourse of news media challenges the anthropology of mass media to illustrate how and why they appear in the field of information and denotation, symbolic constructs and use of origins, functions, or means of representations that have a mythic significance. In characterizing television and other media as mythic they are identified as instances of the central symbol system of the society at hand and therefore worthy of the careful treatment anthropologists accord to myth (Rothenbuhler, 1988: 90 in Rothenbuhler, 2005:7a).

While not all media that is created can be considered myth, the truth still remains that media producers play a role in creating myth as they at times produce information, which is biased, opinionated, or motivated by other means other than the transfer of information.

Scholars have concluded that, “after showing how narrative conventions can determine the organization of information, [one] comes to the conclusion that news stories can be conceived of as ‘part of a process of producing collective meaning rather than transmitting information,” (Schudson in Rothenbuhler, 2005:7b). This is also essential to keep in mind as you read the analysis of my research and observe how the interviewees respond according to which media outlets they use. This observation can then reveal how a particular media source influences and shapes the opinions of its consumers.

1.4.4 Ground Zero, The Firemen, and the Symbolics of Touch on 9-11 and After

Rothenbuhler observed Ground Zero, particularly the firemen and how they were used as a symbol in New York City the days following 9/11 in 2001. As he begins to recount the story, he writes:

These enemies reached past the warriors, into the hearts of domestic space, and touched America’s citizens right on the forehead, before they could react” (Rothenbuhler, 2005:177).

This passage sets the scene and aims to stir the reader’s emotions. He also attempts to connect with Americans and their allies using the term ‘enemies’, and consciously not taking an objective standpoint as he describes the situation. He makes the reader (assuming it is an American or sympathizer) feel as if they are both on the ‘same side’. As an anthropologist, I disagree with his intentions here, as he is so blatantly subjective. If he considered this particular research so emotional, it would have been wiser to discuss an anthropological matter from another point-of-view, as he loses credibility through his apparent subjective behavior. He goes on to say:

Disorder and sacredness came powerfully and dangerously together in the death and destruction of the World Trade Center Towers, (Rothenbuhler, 2005:178).

As this may have been an accurate description of the scene, I find it once again inappropriate for a piece of ethnography, as it is very poignant. On the other hand, the acknowledgement of sacredness was a fair judgment, and it paves the way to comprehend how an object at that time, the firemen, was a symbol, because of the significant sacredness of the event. He described the symbolism so:

In the public's response to this act of war against civilians in a place a peace, The Firemen symbol and the individual firefighters were border crossers and death touchers. They represented the public, the citizenry in intimate contact with the most vital questions of life: Who keeps it? When does death come? They performed and represented cultural repair work as the categories of citizen and soldier; peace and war; workplace, tourist attraction, and battlefield; air travel and weapon of mass destruction; duty, loyalty, rationality, and sentiment as all this and more was resorted after 9-11, (Rothenbuhler, 2005:186).

Although he was subjective in his introduction of the topic, he does succeed in providing ways in which The Firemen were symbols at that time, and his synopsis produces a just conclusion.

1.4.5 *News of the World: World Cultures Look at Television News*

In *News of the World: World Cultures Look at Television News*, edited by Klaus Bruhn Jensen, we take a look into chapter 8, entitled *The United States*, written by David L. Swanson, Ann N Grigler, Michael Gurevitch and W. Russell Neuman. The book itself focuses on media studies and chapter 8 obviously deals with the country at hand here and its political culture. Although it is difficult to define, it is fair to say that:

traditional American political values emphasizing self-reliance, individualism, active participation in civic life, and equal opportunity continue to figure prominently in much elite and popular political discourse, (Almond and Verba, 1963:144 in Bruhn Jensen, 1998:145a).

The above-mentioned authors all took part in a project called *News of the World*, thus the title of the book. The project attempted to “understand the role of television news as a political resource for information and awareness, a potential vehicle to support citizens’ participation in political culture and the public sphere,

focused specifically on the process by which viewers understand and interpret television news stories,” (Bruhn Jensen, 1998:145b).

In addition, it is interesting to discover that the Swanson, Grigler, Gurevtich and Neuman reported that the most popular themes in U.S. political communication research were media dependence, agenda-setting, powerful communication effects and hegemony, (Bruhn Jensen 1998: 145c).

“The News of the World project focuses on the tensions between the reportorial discourse of the TV journalist and the rich, diverse and personally-grounded interpretations of the news audience. We are drawn to a constructionist perspective which emphasizes an active, interpretive, dynamic interchange between public opinion and the world of TV news,” (Bruhn Jensen, 1998: 145).

In other words, the focus is the way in which viewers actively construct meaning in their interpretation of the political world around them, which is somewhat similar but not identical to how I perceive my specific endeavor. The concentration is “how super-themes are employed in the interpretative process, how they relate to manifest content and themes in news stories, and how they arise from the world of everyday experience,” (Bruhn Jensen, 1998: 145).

The similarities of this research and mine will become clear, as super-themes, or categories, will be used in my analysis, but based on a different theory. The researchers focus on national television news in the United States and conclude:

Americans continue to read newspapers and news magazines regularly, but increasingly large pluralities, especially among younger Americans, say they rely primarily on television as their main source of news, (Bruhn Jensen, 1998:146).

There has been an increase in the number of viewers in television news ever since television has become popular. There has thus been an increase on studies of broadcast/viewer political actors. Keep in mind that this experiment was conducted in 1998, and today there is an every increasing reliance on Internet-based news today. Besides that fact, Swanson, Grigler, Gurevtich and Neuman claim that:

Generally, this line of work has led to pessimistic assessments of citizens' political knowledge, often linked at least in part to attributes of television news, (e.g. Bennett 1988, 1992; De Werth-Pallmeyer 1997; Neuman 1986; Patterson and McClure 1976; Robinson and Levy 1986; in Bruhn Jensen, 1998: 147a).

Reception analysis has become a method of research focus due to the discovery of how much Americans, especially the youth, rely on television news because:

Reception analysis, then, focuses on the relationship between discourses in particular media texts and discourses audience members produce describing their interpretations and experience of those texts. (Bruhn Jensen, 1998: 147b).

For methodological purposes, the following attributes among the interviewees were recorded: age, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity and geographic location. They then made an analysis of the news content in which they broke down the stories that they gathered. The researchers discovered that between 1989-1993, there was a 55-25% decrease in TV news credibility among viewers. "This declining confidence in television news reflects the increase of 'tabloid journalism' on television and growing suspicion that US journalists generally are 'often influenced by powerful people and organizations,'" (Briller, 1990: 108 in Bruhn Jensen, 1998:154).

As one may assume, it has also thus been proven in many research surveys and experiments that the media is successful in its subtle power to frame and cue our thinking and influence our 'agenda' of political significance, (Bruhn Jensen, 1998:155).

Lastly, as a worthy of note of interest, "News anticipates events, near and far, which may affect the audience's basic sense of 'ontological security' (Giddens 1984): 'Am I safe, is my family safe, is the nation or culture to which I belong safe?' (in Bruhn Jensen, 1998:165).

Conflict and unrest is an important issue to recognize and reflect upon as a motive as to why one informs him/herself about the war in Afghanistan. The ontological security factor may also be useful in the comprehension and interpretation of my data analysis.

1.5 Research Question

In an effort to successfully determine how Americans perceive the occupation of the United States in Afghanistan and how that perception is influenced by mass communication and experience, I pose the following questions in descending order:

A. What categories of perceptions can be found among Americans' responses and how are they related to the media they consume?

B. What are the similarities and/or differences between media consumers among those that have first-hand experience and those that have not been to Afghanistan?

The posing of two different and distinct questions offers an effective approach to decipher the data collected in order to comprehensively comprehend the current state of affairs. The slight variation of queries will help both me and the reader to successfully gain enhanced knowledge about the opinions of Americans regarding the conflict in Afghanistan.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

To commence conducting the research, I hypothesize that those Americans with first-hand experience in Afghanistan have a more realistic and nuanced perception of Afghanistan than those who are only able to rely on media reporting and second-hand stories. Additionally, since previous media research has already proved America's dependency on news media, I go a step further to propose that similarities in opinions and perceptions regarding the topic will directly correlate among interview partners who share the same media outlets.

1.7 Methodological Approaches

The method used to categorize the data is based on George Marcus's World System Theory (1998), which determines micro categories that fit into universal macro categories, such as economics and politics. Herein also lies a juxtaposition between the interviewees that have been to Afghanistan, first-hand experience, and the interviewees that have not been to Afghanistan, second-hand experience.

When determining a category, I had to go through each individual response from the interview partners thoroughly and distinguish how and why a particular subject was mentioned in an effort to correctly structure and place an utterance in the proper correlating category in which it belongs. This process will become more lucid when I later describe and present the findings.

Media research methods also suggested by Larkin, Ginsburg and Abu-Lughod in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* are briefly included in order to enhance the analytic process, incorporate other accepted media research methods and most importantly provide a wider perspective and understanding on how the American public receives information that is specifically produced and created for the topic of Afghanistan.

1.8 Theoretical Approaches

The theoretical portion of this text will be based on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), focusing on the issues of namely Orientalism, 'othering' and stereotyping. The three notions are closely intertwined and exist in relation to one another. Said's main point is to stress the fact that Western culture has been dominating the Orient, as western politicians and intellectuals have seen themselves as superior to the 'other', (the inferior mid-eastern subject), as well as demonizing and dehumanizing the 'other' for centuries. In conjunction with the Orientalist-framed mentality and correlating prototype of imperialism, the United States has continued this pattern of hegemony and domination into the 21st century, as the U.S. culture has integrated a constant threat from the 'other' into its society.

1.9 Structure of Thesis

The remainder of the thesis will consist of five main parts: media methodological approaches, theory, the presentation of research results with a detailed analysis, the interpretation of the research results and a final conclusion.

First, the methodological approach portion goes into detail and provides arguments from the methodological aspects of media anthropology from both

George Marcus's (1998) *Ethnography Through Thick & Thin* and Larkin, Ginsburg and Abu-Lughod's (1996) *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. The next section of the text, theory, is based upon Edward Said's notion of Orientalism. This part is followed by the presentation of the research results, which contains a full analysis based on Philipp Mayring's model qualitative content analysis (2000). An interpretation is then made based on the material that has been dissected in the previous section, which then also refers back to media anthropology and Orientalism theories of the text in an effort to blend the portions of the thesis together. Lastly, a conclusion on the work in its entirety is provided, including a reflective piece, as well.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

2.1 Media Theories and Methods: *Ethnography Through Thick & Thin*

To begin this portion of the text, I introduce George Marcus's book entitled *Ethnography Through Thick & Thin*, where Marcus discusses recent transformations of anthropology and how classical ethnography is no longer the sole way in which anthropological research is being and should be performed this day and age. While the most common mode of ethnographic research is extremely focused single placed observation and participation, times have changed along with the world and cultures within it, thus inspiring and forcing ethnographers to develop other means and methods.

George Marcus has done this in a way that he considers existing within a world system context, which includes digging in archives or having a macrotheorist perspective. As the area of study continues to develop, new ways conducting research are forming, which rely on relationships and networks among varying spaces; thus, leading to a multi-sited field of research. He refers to this method as:

Thinking in terms of multi-sited research provokes an entirely different set of problems that not only go to the heart of adapting ethnography as practices of fieldwork and writing to new conditions of work, but challenge orientations that underlie this entire research process that has been so emblematic for anthropology" (Marcus, 1998:3).

What Marcus is simply trying to convey here is that there is a new way of looking at how one approaches ethnography; although, he has been highly criticized for this argument due to the fact that many scholars believe his new modern notion of ethnography does not withstand the basic requirements of anthropological study. Marcus does not find the traditional and well-known process of a Western figure observing an indigenous society essential to today's anthropology. Consequently, a reason that Marcus utilizes for his argument includes a reference to media, as he argues:

there is certainly more flexibility in the development of dissertations and renewed curiosity about news topics and research possibilities, (Marcus, 1998:4).

More and more, media becomes an ever-present focus of attention in people's lives all over the world, and media outlets, discussion forums and the like create networks and interconnections among numerous groups of people from nearly every corner of the globe. According to 'traditional anthropology', the study of these networks would not be considered classical ethnography in the sense that it has been understood and performed in the past because new methods and techniques are now needed in order to follow human behavior. According to Marcus:

The need for a multi-sided imaginary is very clear...in the techniques that discuss 'redesigning the observed, (Marcus, 1998:6).

Fieldwork now often exists within the frame of public relations, more concretely media anthropology, and this is embedded in a multi-sided imaginary with numerous subjects, such as media producers and their consumers. Marcus encourages such projects to have a goal "to discover and define more complex and surprising objects of study," (Marcus, 1998:14). What this literally does is expand the possibilities, the significance and power of ethnography, while at the same time changing the form of ethnographic knowledge. Marcus goes on to add that:

Graduate students must negotiate...the standard model by bending and stretching it in designing career-making dissertation research projects that reflect new kinds of disciplinary interest for which the standard model is no longer a certain guide, (Marcus, 1998:11).

"In short, within a multi-sited research imaginary, tracing and describing the connections and relationships among sites previously though incommensurate is ethnography's way of making arguments and providing its own contexts of significance" (Marcus, 1998:14). To allow for a clearer understanding of what Marcus is trying to tell us, I offer the following table:

2.1.1 Mutli-sited fieldwork

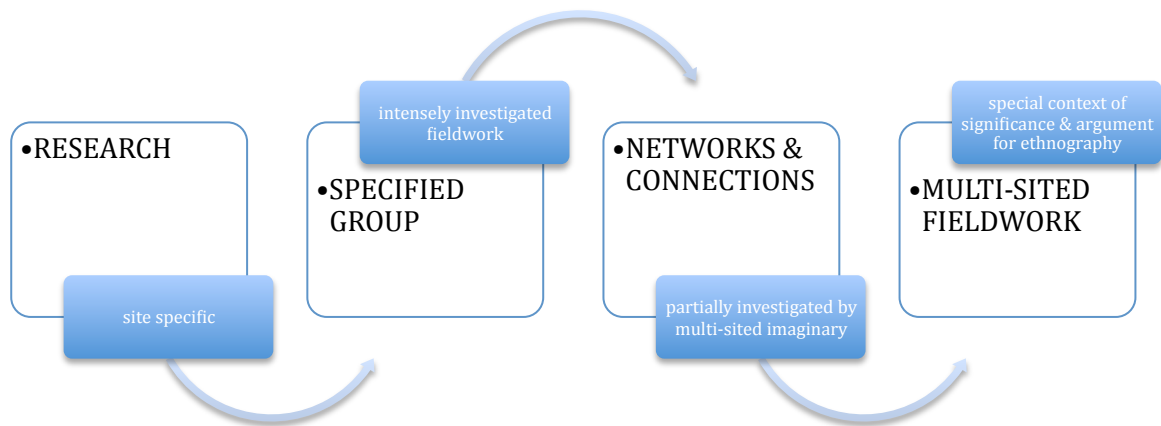


Figure 2.1.1 shows us how a multi-sited imaginary can aide ethnographic research by branching out and focusing on a non-site specific behavioral pattern in order to discover something new, different or undiscovered if constrained by traditional ethnography techniques. Multi-sited research offers anthropologists a realm of possibilities in which he or she is free to discover, determine and discern norms of humanly conduct, which was until recent, inconceivable. Marcus stresses that:

This process should be translated into one that does define a distanced, objectified, realm of study that continues to be fed by the initial fascinations of connection, but now in a subterranean way, (Marcus, 1998:16).

Rather than following a topic that may seem off track of the main subject, what a multi-sited imaginary does is delve deeper into an interest of study and dissects the situation from a different perspective. Multi-sited research strives:

To discover: relationships, connections, and indeed cultures of connection, association, and circulation that are completely missed through the use and naming of the object of study in terms of categories “natural” to subjects’ preexisting discourses about them, (Marcus, 1998:16).

Although multi-sited research is new and atypical, it is clear to see that this new type of research is not only necessary to utilize with today’s technological advances, as many networks and connections are formed by the use of the

Internet, but also that it is essential to explore this type of research in order to discover scapes, which remain to exist unseen by traditional ethnography. “A multi-sited imaginary really, then, creates the space of possibility and discovery in ethnography, and keeps this space open contextually for intensive fieldwork done in is constructed framing” (Marcus 1998:17).

Multi-sited strategies put the anthropologist in places, which were before never considered to be appropriate for study, and now one has endless possibilities to perform research and observe unconventional realms, which can only lead to a better understanding of human behavior. This is achieved by:

developing knowledge of the relationships and connections that extend beyond the frames that have held the traditional act of fieldwork in place, (Marcus, 1998:21).

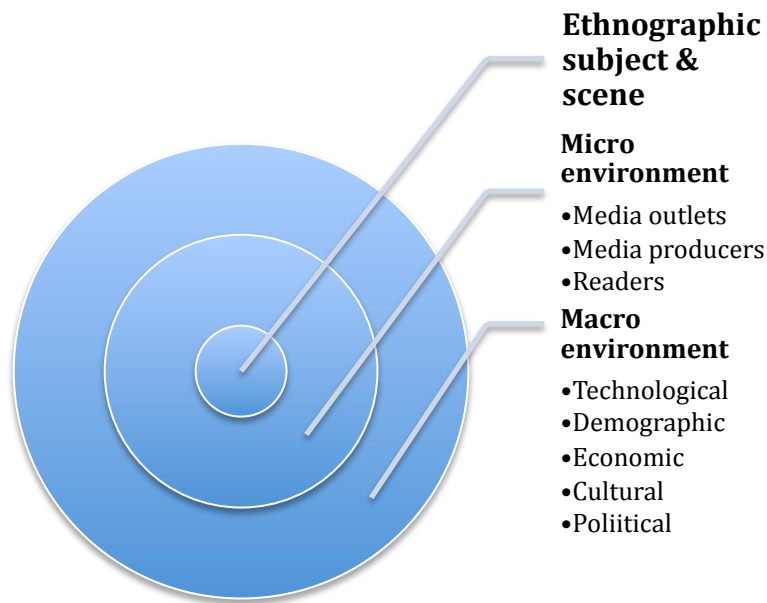
My research is therefore an example of ethnographic research that is not traditionally typical; rather, it is a result of post-modernism and a desire to reflect on my own culture from a distance to discover how we Americans see ourselves confronted with a situation with the ‘Other’. Within the research there lies a juxtaposition of two groups of people, those who have worked in Afghanistan and those who have not. I have strategically bounded the research by interviewing subjects that are all from the same nationstate and who also all identify themselves as Hoosiers, someone born and raised in Indiana, USA. This research project is not typical to anthropological research, but it fills a gap, which is created when one does not recognize or acknowledge realms inside their own society.

To ensure that a multi-sited research experiment remains true to the social science, it is essential to create a holistic approach to the subject, and scholars have established that:

the most common construction of holism in contemporary realist ethnography...is the situating of the ethnographic subject and scene as a knowable, fully probed micro-world with reference to an encompassing macro-world-“the system”, (in Marcus 1998:22).

To better comprehend this concept, the next figure shows how holism “the system” frames the local world.

Table 2.1.2 Imagining the whole:



The above figure shows a relation between global vs local with references to the state and its economy, which all exist together within the world system-capitalism. The ultimate goal of ethnography based upon functionalist theory is to:

envision such a complexification of the ethnographic subject, stimulated by a reimagining of the holistic frame for ethnography that is more sensitive to changes in macro-views of systems that themselves have been shaped by the same crisis of representation that has affected ethnography, (Marcus, 1998:34).

I will refer back to this matter later as it will be explained in more detail, but in short, ethnography in every aspect is changing and moving away from the local one space specific location site and moving towards a more dynamic way of research, which contains multiple sites that occur within a particular binding network that surround a particular phenomena. His ambition for the multi-sited research is to then:

represent something of the operation of the system itself rather than to demonstrate continually and habitually in the spirit of pluralism the power of local culture over global forces of apparent homogenization, (Marcus, 1998:35).

According to scholar Robert Thornton, ethnography should aspire to describe the instance of how a society's economy parallels with individual's personal stories. Thornton stresses the importance of bridging the gap between the economy and a person's confession. To attain this measure, Marcus then proposes that:

This bridge was achieved by the segmentation of everyday life into supposedly universal categories such as religion, economics, politics, ecology and kinship. The classificatory organization of the text, lent a systematic scheme of relationships by the application of abstract partwhole imagery of functionalist theory, allowed the physical text itself to stand for the wholeness of the social reality of which it was a representation, (Marcus,1998:35).

So if we are to accept Marcus's theory and follow his method of describing a society, it is essential to then to utilize functionalist theory, which is the systematic scheme of relationships (categories). For my research, I divide up my data based on this argument. To give you a better idea, I reveal a step in the analytical process:

Table 2.1.3 Functionalist Theory

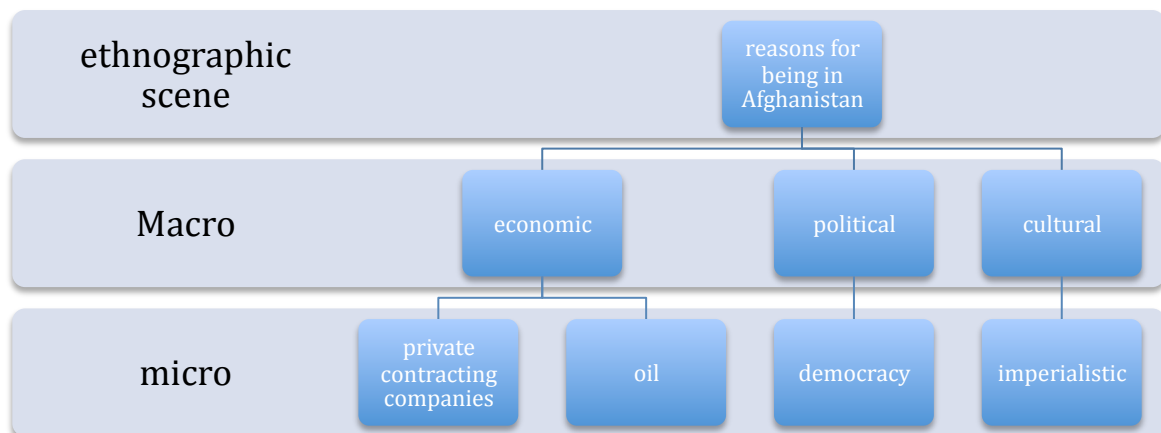


Table 2.1.3 includes the essentials of functionalist theory, and it is one example

of one way of performing an ethnography research in today's modern society, and is the basis of the categorization of my collected material.

However, the research process must go a step further. Ethnography has become a science that desires to discover more and dig deeper into a cultural phenomena, and that digging deeper requires an expansion of the ethnographic scene in today's modern societies because there are networks existing in countless directions that require a larger perspective in able to make a valid generalization that applies to a culture that is ever changing, heterogeneous and extremely dynamic. Marcus outlines a few different approaches that he finds fitting for this 'new ethnography'. I will highlight just one approach:

saying more by juxtaposing multiple levels and styles of analysis. This strategy is very methodology oriented, and is located securely within the traditional epistemological concerns of social science...It hopes to substitute a pragmatic holism that juxtaposes several alternative analytical accounts of the same subject or phenomenon. It is pragmatic in that it recognizes that you can't really say it all; all analyses, no matter how totalistic their rhetorics, are partial. Rather, you can try for a comprehensive display of levels of analysis, of epistemological angles, (Marcus, 1998:37).

His idea of placing a juxtaposition within the research method provides more opportunities to gain differentiating perspectives on one particular occurrence, but how does he exactly going about doing this?

2.1.4 Nesting Levels of Analysis

Fortunately, Marcus also goes on to provide us with an outline to appropriately approach a multi-sited ethnographic analysis. I continue to reveal some of the first steps of the research process based on his suggestions.

Step 1. Construction of reasons for war (macro environment)

Step2. Deconstruct the construction via collecting varying viewpoints and analyzing those very viewpoints (juxtaposition)

Marcus advises that the information should complement and contrast at certain levels. "Each preceeding account liberates the one that follows until you can write about a subject in an unconventional way. Thus holism and "saying more" is in the combinatory strategy of nesting levels of analysis, (Marcus 1998:38).

It is important that I closely dissect the juxtaposition between the different perspectives on the situation in Afghanistan. Another interesting issue that Marcus brings up is Paul Rabinow's conclusions regarding representations, which also play a role in the interpretation of the analysis. Marcus summarizes and writes:

Representations and how they become powerful as social facts become synonymous with world historical processes of political economy themselves. (Rabinow in Marcus, 1998:42).

Therefore, representations will also be focused upon and generalizations will be made as to how those very representations affect and influence how a group of people views a specific occasion.

In addition, it is also essential that the ethnographer is aware of the shortcomings of ethnography. As one attempts to perform a respectful and holistic research project, it is absolutely crucial that one views all of the data and the levels as a whole and not as a collection of parts because they are all linked and connected to each other at some level, and the perspective can only be understood by looking at the big picture, the entire realm of circumstances in which it is encompassed by.

The next point is important to keep in mind as there is a challenge to macro-micro ethnography in the shaping of a macro-oriented and systems inflected ethnography written according to a fiction of the whole as disorganized capitalism, Marcus tells us (1998:48). The main thing to keep in mind while performing this kind of research is that major processes are no longer distinctly place-focused, like understanding a war, for example. Marcus writes:

The implication is that place-focused, single white ethnography provides very partial views of social processes with which it might be centrally be concerned; that is, such ethnography can no longer be in explanatory, or even narrative, control of the subject matter it wants to encompass by description, (Marcus, 1998:49).

For this reason, it is imperative that interview partners are chosen that represent not only one group of people; rather, the informants should have varying parts of

views and come from different backgrounds (while, of course, having one thing in common, which binds them together), but one must be certain to obtain varying viewpoints in order to collect and perform a holistic research experiment.

This simple fact underlines my defense of interviewing varying people throughout the state of Indiana. My study underlies this notion as the research proves people from the same region have developed extremely varying viewpoints regarding the reasons and/or debates of the war.

To end this portion and highlight Marcus's main points of how multi-sited research can work within a holistic functionalist theory framework, he concludes:

The particular feature of a whole that multi-locale...tries to fictionalize is that of the effect of simultaneity. One wants to demonstrate how action in connected contexts occurring at the same time has implications for and direct effects on each other. The multi-locale ethnography embodies within itself a comparative dimension, through which, quite independent of the connections linking locales, the latter might be juxtaposed or artificially engaged with one another by the analyst to explore what sort of mutual critical commentary they make upon each other. The point then is that multi-locale ethnographies can reveal new opportunities for critical comparative juxtaposition, that otherwise might not have made sense, (Marcus, 1998:52-53).

And the recognition of the connections and how they interact with one another is the goal of the research method. The acknowledgement of networks, which certainly occur but do not share the same space will be dissected and discussed in relation to one another as well as similarities and differences among the juxtaposition that is also set in place in order to stay as true to the holistic research process as possible.

2.2 Media Theory: *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*

Moving on to another aspect of media theory, I include a short excerpt from Brian Larkin, Faye Ginsburg & Lila Abu-Lughod's *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Before one can begin the research process, it is essential to have a solid understanding of how previous scholars have confronted media within the social sciences. In the introduction of Larkin's book, the names of Marcus (who we should already know by now) and Appadurai are often mentioned. It is

important to note the fact that Appadurai invented the concept of mediascapes, which is a concept that Appadurai considers to be essential to media anthropology. In the introduction, references are made to Marcus that we have not gone over yet. According to the next text, Marcus stresses:

Anthropologists...track the social players involved when one 'follows the thing'...as it articulates through various milieux. Such strategies help us see not only how media are embedded in people's quotidian lives but also how consumers and producers are themselves imbricated in discursive universes, political situations, economic circumstances, national settings, historical moments, and transnational flows, (Marcus in Larkin, 1996: 2).

Larkin and his colleagues begin to dissect multi-sited media and commence with the notion that since anthropology actually follows a person or a story, this can occur in varying places, which also simultaneously co-exist in the daily lives of a group of people in a realm where consumers and producers (of media) are involved and all play a distinctive role. The situation is just as much embedded in larger scapes, where certain other notions of connections are present and guide the process at hand.

Larkin and his colleagues performed their own research based upon media consumption within transnational flows and discovered:

The strong historical link between broadcast television and 20th century nation-building, for example, relied on a capital-intensive terrestrial technology that could be controlled and tied to state interests with relative ease, (Larkin, 1996:2).

This finding is extremely interesting to this particular project, and I request that you keep in mind the connection between media consumption and nation-building, and how it is controlled by state interests.

Satellites and Internet technologies, however, have opened up other kinds of spaces that cross cultural and geopolitical borders more easily, have increased privatization of media ownership, and have created new markets. They have also facilitated new social configurations, (Larkin 1996: 3).

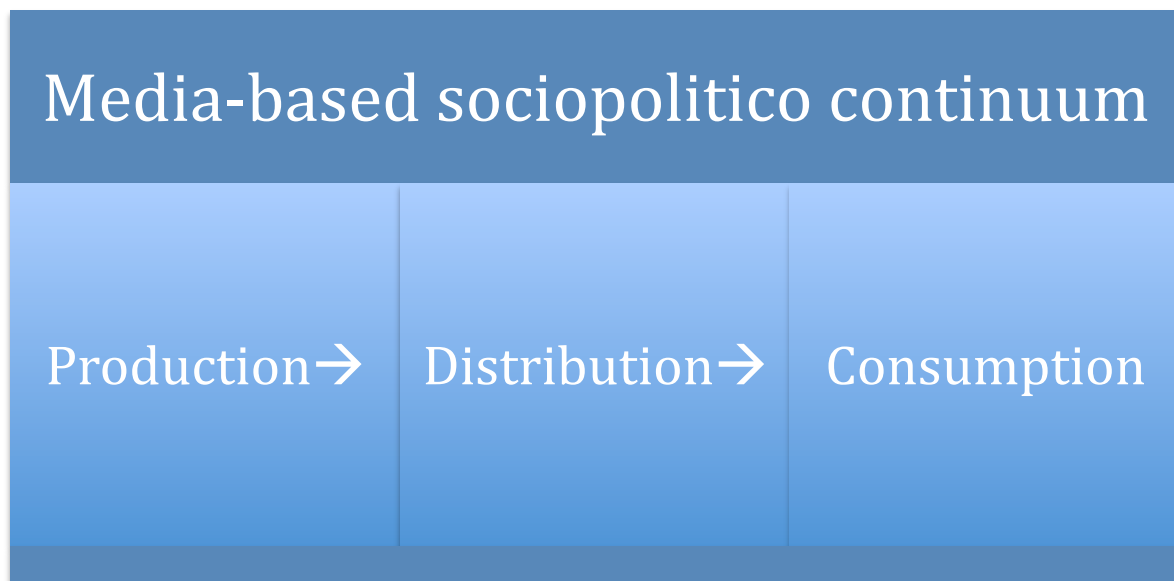
The new social configurations are also of interest here, as new technology is changing the face of state-controlled public information and allowing a 'space' to be inhabited by people that did not have access to information outside of the state's control before.

Situating media as a social practice within these shifting political and cultural frames enables us to speak to the larger concerns we share with many of our colleagues in media studies: how media enable or challenge the working of power and potential of activism; the enforcement of inequality and the sources of imagination; and the impact of technologies on the production of individual and collective identities, (Larkin, 1996:3).

This highlights how media itself and the way that it is not only consumed, but produced as well, is changing, as more people have new opportunities to produce media and not be so reliant on the state and its needs, but in order that we do not want to get ahead of ourselves, let us quickly refer back to Appadurai and what he has contributed to media anthropology. Larkin and his colleagues summarize:

Appadurai's work draws on anthropology's longstanding theoretical interest in the complex subtleties of exchange of objects, narratives, and technologies – and the implications of these processes for culture-making and personhood (Mauss, 1967; A. Werner, 1993 in Ginsburg, 1996:5).

This means that by focusing on smaller categories, one can make fair assumptions about the greater process and how it influences individuals and the culture that they are a part of, but before one concentrates on the smaller categories, let us ensure that one understand how the media's flow of information functions in **Table 2.2.1**.



The media-based sociopolitical continuum shows us that production is the first step in the dialogue that is created among producers, distributors and consumers. The truth of the matter is that the producer is the main factor, which chooses the topic of discussion in the dialogue. Larkin and his colleagues refer to Appadurai and his media theories and add:

Appadurai suggests the world 'culturalism' to denote the mobilization of identities in which mass media and the imagination play an increasingly significant role, (in Ginsburg, 1996:7).

This comment is useful when describing the role that media generally plays in society, where many people still passively consume and simply take in what information they are provided with without taking an active role, rather allowing themselves to be strongly influenced by the opinionated and/or biased information they receive.

To also introduce a notion, which appropriately applies to this research, Larkin, Ginsburg and Abu-Lughod have discovered how producers, the initiators of the dialogue, view themselves within their own nation or imagined community.

Although many people may consider themselves to belong to subnational or transnational communities, the nation is the primary context for the everyday lives and imaginations of most of the people who produce media and constitute its audiences. Even if nations are always in relations with other nation and transnational entities or ideas...the nation is still a potent frame of reference, especially in the many countries where the state has been the prime actor in the creation and regulation of media networks, (Larkin, 1996:11).

And due to the fact that the producers, while aware of transnational movements and perhaps even while maintaining a cosmopolitan point-of-view, still remain to view the world within the main context of the nation-state in which they belong, this has a direct effect on the consumers, or receivers, as well because they are in turn viewing information within the same context.

The authors also include insights from Anderson, where he has stated:

nations are imagined communities, we must recognize that media...play crucial roles in producing nations and shaping national imaginaries, (Anderson 1999 in Larkin, 1996: 11).

What Anderson's insight actually deals with is identity and one way in which it is created, by the media that is consumed. One is directly influenced by the information that is transmitted, and this in turn creates some sort of 'imagined community', which he refers to and underlines the significance of the media's role in the formation the individual's identity and belonging to the imagined community. In a closing statement, Larkin includes Stuart Hall's remark concerning the nation-state and adds:

Most radio and television has been state-controlled or in the hands of culture industry professionals who, as Stuart Hall has argued, tend to share the "dominant codes" of the nation-state...media have been viewed as powerful tools for hegemony or social transformation, (Stuart Hall, 1980 in Larkin, 1996:11).

Let us recognize the state's intention of hegemony, which is achieved by utilizing dominant codes, which are state-controlled and are used as a powerful tool by media producers and large corporations, and since the U.S. media has such a large presence in not only American consumption, but mass media consumption world-wide, it is just as important to realize how media is used by the state to gain and maintain power.

2.2.2 Media and National Politics

To now become more concrete in exactly how media research is to be conducted based on Larkin's methods, there are questions that the researcher must ask. Keep in mind that this is just one example of how hermeneutics can play out and be performed. The first step is to ask the question, (which is encouraged by multi-sited research)

1) What is the relationship between media professionals in the 'culture industry' (producers of media that sometimes work in correlation with other institutions) and the state? Larkin and his colleagues discovered:

Early studies of cultural imperialism rightly stressed that cultural domination was exported through models of professionalism and professional standards instituted through Western training of non-Western media producers, (Larkin, 1996:12).

For this project, we will go ahead and assume that this conclusion is true, as the interviewees are Americans (Western consumers), which consume mostly

Western media. The issue at hands deals with a situation where the space is located outside of the United States' borders, and the notion of cultural imperialism is also suggested throughout the this text. Moving on, we must ask ourselves the next question:

2) What happens to media when states interests are complex and contradictory?

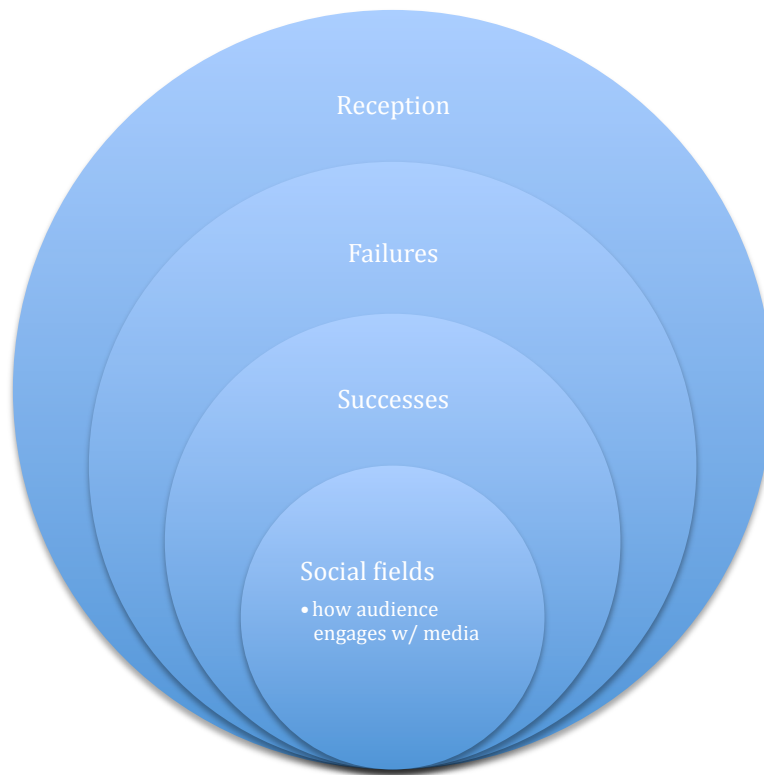
Since I find this an appropriate inquiry to relate to this research, I will come back to this question and provide the reader with a response based upon the results. Lastly, Larkin suggests asking the question:

3) How effective are state media products –or any media products- in achieving their goals of influencing audiences?

This question may be difficult to answer because it is nearly impossible to determine the failures and successes of how the information is perceived by the receivers, but in the questioning of a specified group, it is possible to make a fair assumption of media is perceived, although an assumption of the media's intentions will have to be in order, which I am honestly hesitant to do. Nonetheless, the notion is introduced, and we will see how this method can possibly be fit in to the analytical process later.

As a visual aide, we have the next figure, which shows how question #3 can be approached within the realms of reception, failures, successes and social fields, which is how the audience engages with the media. See figure 2.2.3 below:

Table 2.2.3



At the center is how the audience engages with the media. This is the focus, where the research process begins. Then, you can observe both the successes and failures by interpreting the informants' responses and make a generalization as to how the information is received while making only suggestions as to the motives and intentions of the media producers and the state, assuming that they are working in correlation with one another.

Larkin, Ginsburg and Abu-Lughod's challenge for researchers of media is to outline and pinpoint how or why media messages either go awry, shape lives and threaten audiences. Hence, a goal of this project will concentrate and attempt to discover how media messages are received by either becoming awry and/or by shaping lives by threatening audiences.

CHAPTER 3 THEORY

3.1 Orientalism

In 1978, Edward Said wrote his famous book entitled *Orientalism*. He gained world-wide fame from this text, based upon notions he presents, as to how the Western world has dominated the Orient in a professional, political and academic matter, dating back to the first encounters between the East and the West.

I begin this portion of the text with Said's *Foreword*, which was written roughly twenty years after the publication of *Orientalism*. The *Foreword* gives us an up-to-date look into current matters, which are also applicable and directly related to the main theme of the thesis, namely, the United States occupation of Afghanistan. Followed by this first portion will then be a deeper look into Said's theories and the history of Orientalism. Representations will also be focused upon and lastly, we will take a look at Orientalism in American pop-culture.

3.1.1 Excerpts of Said's *Foreword*

We commence by examining Said's reflections twenty years after the publication of *Orientalism*. Upon reflection, Said begins by stating:

In the US, the hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalization and triumphalist cliché, the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt of dissenters and "others", has found a fitting correlative in the looting, pillaging and destruction of Iraq's libraries and museums. What our leaders and their intellectual lackeys seem incapable of understanding is that history cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that "we" might inscribe our own future there and impose our own forms of life for these lesser people to follow. It is quite common to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad people can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar, (Said, 2003:xiii).

There are quite a few issues that Said has mentioned here that require our attention. First and foremost, I would like to mention that although Said refers to Iraq, the U.S. government's tactic in Afghanistan is quite similar. Assuming this is true, we can go on to recognize how Said makes the readers conscious of the fact that due to the 'success' of American imperialism, the country's policy

makers have become numb and inappropriately generalize the needs and wants of the country, which has been or is in the process of being taken over. He implies that this generalization is a mistake and that the disassociation with the 'others' along with the process of doing away with the 'other's' nation-state's culture is simply not possible. He also seems to doubt the achievement of the super power's tactics and intentions to imperialize while practicing such techniques.

Said's discontent for Washington's Middle East foreign policy is clearly stated, and he gives the reader a good analogy, as to how a people cannot simply be changed and transformed the way the United States attempts to do so. He also highlights the fact how the U.S. does not acknowledge that what it considers correct and true simply may not be so in another culture. By this he implies that in another culture, cultural norms differ, and it is acceptable for people to practice various cultural norms.

There has been so massive and calculatedly aggressive an attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment and democracy are by no means simple and agreed-upon concepts that one either does or does not find, like Easter eggs in the living room, (Said, 2003:xiv).

Of all the notions that Said lists here, I point out the concept of democracy. Democracy is often a term that finds its way into conversations surrounding what America can bring to a developing Eastern country. From my own personal experience, I can attest to the fact that democracy is not only a key belief in the American cosmos, but democracy is also utilized in foreign policy jargon, as it is often the reasoning for engaging in international politics.

Said is also certain to mention the involvement of the media in the political process. He briefly mentions how scholars play a role in imperialism, but he then quickly makes the connection to mass media.

Accompanying such warmongering expertise have been the omnipresent CNNs and Foxs of this world... (Said, 2003:XV).

Omnipresent was a wise choice of words here, as Said captures the verity of the placement of media. Media is everywhere, all around us. When something is omnipresent, one is not able to escape its presence. As news outlets, such as CNN and FOX are omnipresent entities, it is only logical to assume that these media distributors help to both support the identity of the nation-state and form the majority of the discussions, which take place in American homes.

In the last part of the *Foreword*, Said brings up a heap of factors that relate directly to this research project. Be sure to pay close attention to his observation:

In the demonization of an unknown enemy, for whom the label “terrorist” serves the general purpose of keeping people stirred up and angry, media images command too much attention and can be exploited at times of crisis and insecurity of the kind that the post-9/11 period has produced, (Said, 2003:xx).

First, Said acknowledges the fact that “terrorism”, (note the quotation marks, which implies a stage of doubt), is often used by the media to provoke strong emotions. In turn, the emotions are strategically played upon when an opportunity of crises arises, for example, the 9/11 tragedy.

3.1.2 Historical foundation of Orientalism

For Said, it is imperative that he first and foremost acknowledges the notion of hegemony. According to the author, this particular phenomenon is (more or less) the answer to my research question- why is the United States in Afghanistan? When one takes a closer look at the pattern of America’s foreign policy, one discovers how hegemony has played and continues to play a large role in its international relations. Referring to Gramsci, a well-known scholar, Said writes:

In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West. It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength, (Said 1978:7).

Due to the strong presence of hegemony in the West, namely in the USA, Said’s notion of Orientalism continues to exist, and its dimensions can continually be

redefined, as there are new examples of how the West exploits the East, or the Orient.

My idea is that European and then American interest in the Orient was political...but it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically along with brute political, economic, and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that it obviously was in the field I call Orientalism, (Said, 1978:12).

Notice how Said recognizes the relationship between culture, politics and economy and how Western interests concerning these three realms together support the establishment and continuation of Orientalism.

The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West... for the poor Orient, (Said 1978: 21a).

It is also crucial to point out that the Orient has in the past never had the opportunity to represent itself. The West is and was the major player in the transmission of information in the form of both producers and distributors of information. Here Said shows sympathy for the Orient, as they are not granted the same chances to produce their own information, which can be widely distributed throughout the West.

However, this particular issue is slightly changing with the wide use of the Internet. Although the Internet is not available to every person on the planet, it has recently become possible for certain figures in the East to have a voice. In 1978, when Said first published *Orientalism*, he called for exteriority, in an effort for people to obtain a better understanding about the information that they receive.

Another reason for insisting upon exteriority is that I believe it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not "truth" but representations, (Said, 1978: 21b).

At this point, I propose an argument because some of the Middle Eastern representations that Americans see or hear about in the media are, in fact, true representations of who these people are (Afghanis in this case). Women, for example, who are raped and forced to marry their rapists is something that

Americans hear about in the news, soldiers hear about it on the ground, and reporters do report about these atrocities. Although there are clichés and false or misleading representations, all of the representations of the Orient that are found are not necessarily false either.

As a matter of fact, the truth is actually quite the contrary. These people, terrorists and women forced to marry their rapists, do exist. Said is a bit too ideological in his hopefulness and ideas that the media and/or scholars alike will ignore the criminals in Middle Eastern societies. Without being clear and coming out and saying it, he writes as if he would expect anyone covering a story in the Orient performing research there should only concentrate on the positive aspects of the society, which is simply not realistic. He fails to recognize that these representations have not been solely created by intellectuals and media producers alone, rather, there are actual people in Afghanistan that do serve as representations of the images we repeatedly see or hear about, which is certainly based (at least in part) on true facts.

Anyone resident in the West since the 1950s, particularly in the United States, will have lived through an era of extraordinary turbulence in the relations of East and West. No one will have failed to note how “East” has always signified danger and threat during this period, (Said, 1978: 26a).

Said makes the above comment as if an Eastern threat against the West did not exist. I agree with the fact that many texts have been created from varying realms from academia to news broadcasts, which accentuated the threat and are guilty of perhaps exaggerating the matter. Hollywood is one of, if not the most, popular means in which the Eastern threat has been highlighted upon, but when you confront this particular topic, then it is also fair and correct to state that there has in fact, since the 1950’s as Said mentions, been some sort of threat from the East.

The Eastern threat has come in many forms, a few of which are the attack on Pearl Harbor from the Japanese, the Cold War with Russia (the Cuban Missile Crisis to be more exact), and yet again the most recent and well-known attack on the World Trade Centers on 9/11. Said does not make a point to mention this

fact, which one cannot afford to do when discussing the political culture between the United States and the East, or better said the Orient.

One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed, (Said, 1978: 26b).

Once again, Said makes a false accusation. As the data will discover and suggest later in the text, the electronic and the postmodern world also serves as an outlet of information, which is more accessible to people, in the United States, in this case. One has opportunities that were never before imaginable to gain information about people on the other side of the world and create relationships and networks based upon similar interests as opposed to before. Up until the late 1990's, people only had the opportunity of becoming members of groups and/or communities, which were geographically dependent on the individual's residential location.

Moving on, Said goes on to claim that there are three reasons why it is nearly impossible to discuss Arab and/or Islam issues outside of a political realm, and one reason is due to:

the history of popular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West, which is immediately reflected in the history of Orientalism, (Said, 1978: 26c).

Here Said doubts the intelligence of Westerners, or Americans, as he is convinced that the texts that are produced (textbooks, newspaper articles) are the only influence and means of information that regulate how people think. It is important not to forget that humans are also capable of thinking for themselves. Although one is undoubtedly influenced by surrounding outlets found within the society, that still does not change the fact that many people can and do question the information that popular sources provide them with.

He goes on to argue that:

it hardly needs saying that because the Middle East is now so identified with Great Power politics, oil economics, and the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terroristic Arabs, the chances of anything like a clear view of what one talks about in talking about the Near East are depressingly small, (Said, 1978: 27).

Small but nonetheless not impossible, and people with a desire to gain a better understanding and more subjective perspective of the world and others now have more tools than ever, which provide them with the freedom to discover information about other cultures from first-hand, experienced voices. It is crucial to make this point and underline this aspect. Also, due to the fact that there are open-minded people seeking more information about others that do not simply believe everything they hear and read on the news or even what they are taught at a university institution, the possibility for one to gain a clearer view of the Middle East are more probable now than ever before. This study actually shows that this trend is occurring ever more frequently in an increasingly matter while Americans, both young and old, partake in discussions about the credibility of media outlets, among others, as they become more aware that media is often biased and recognize that media is also opinionated and often one-sided.

Arthur James Balfour, an English politician who spent time in Egypt as the British were in the process of colonizing the territory and forming a British state, made a statement justifying the colonization of the Egyptians. Referring to the Englishmen that were creating a governmental blueprint so-to-speak, Balfour stated:

What makes their work of governing people possible is their sense of being supported at home by a government that endorses what they, (in Said, 1978: 34a).

Balfour's statement is included here to be seen as a parallel in the current occupation of Afghanistan as not only the American military are stationed in the region, but bureaucrats and policy makers are also involved with Afghan politicians to attempt to ensure that the Afghan policy complies with American policy. This is done in the name of democracy and freedom, which almost all Americans will support and justify as many are in fact convinced that the USA is the best country in the world.

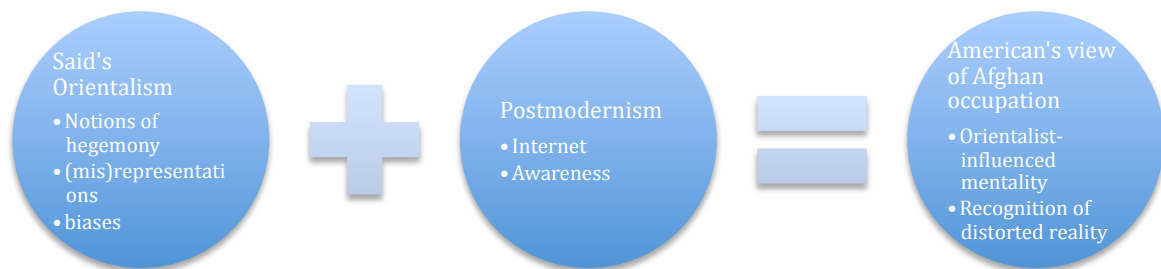
Said analyzes some of Balfour's statements and states:

Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes “the very basis” of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation, (Said, 1978 34b).

Here we see yet another parallel between the East and West regarding occupation, where the occupied prefer that the occupiers remain grounded in their territory. This example can also be applied to how American imperialism and ideology are the initial motives behind the Afghan occupation.

Although there are striking similarities between Said's historical perspectives and today's occupation in Afghanistan, there is also a change in mentality from the Westerner's point-of-view, and this is the point. Since most Americans do not have ready access to a dialogue with Afghanis, this research falls into a typical Orientalistic text, as the opinions of Easterners are not considered. This research is actually guilty of leaving out the voice of the Orient because it does not include interviews with Afghanis. On the other hand, as previously mentioned and as the graph below shows, Americans now have more opportunities than ever to gain a better understanding of the Orient.

Figure 3.1.3



Let us take a closer look at the parallel between England's Egypt and America's Afghanistan. Egypt finds itself in an inferior position where they are not even able to function as a self-governing state without the British. In 1910, Egypt was forced to maintain this British-like self-governed state and only at the benevolence of English officials, as their knowledge and presence was required to run the colonized nation-state. The country had never before seen a bureaucratic nation state in this form and was helpless in the struggle and fight against an occupation of this kind. It was ideas and statements like Balfour's that began to pave the way for the Orientalism state-of-mind, which is crucial to the Western perspective of the East even today.

Said goes on to analyze Balfour's statements:

He does speak for them in the sense that what they might have to say, were they to be asked and might they be able to answer, would somewhat uselessly confirm what is already evident: that they are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves, (Balfour in Said, 1978:35).

Here we see another parallel that can be applied almost exactly to the American-Afghanistan situation that is the focus of this thesis. As Said describes Balfour's attitude and way of dealing with the Egyptians, speaking for them and treating them as a subject race where the dominating culture makes decisions as if it knew what was best for the Egyptians just as Americans sometimes claim to know what is best for Afghans.

Moving on, it is also of the utmost significance to highlight what Said writes a few paragraphs later as he stresses the importance and truthful fact that when referring to Balfour's theories utilized in the justification of the occupation:

...it worked, and worked staggeringly well. The argument, when reduced to its simplest form, was clear, it was precise, it was easy to grasp. There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power, (Said, 1978: 36).

This single event was just the beginning of Western imperialism, which continued to form a pattern and influence many cultures, both in the East and West, until

today. In order to understand today's political maneuvers and strategies it is crucial to realize that hegemony in this form has existed for over a hundred years and is influenced from America's precedents, the British.

Due to England's dominance and effective manner in which she governed, this ideological, orientalist and racist occupation managed to embed itself in numerous countries throughout the eastern hemisphere for decades upon decades. What Said has laid out for his readers are the origins and roots of successful Western occupations in the East throughout Europe and America's history, dating all the way back to the 18th century.

Said provides many examples how Orientalism began, but in the end the point is to recognize that the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks and he poses the question where do these come from? This is a question that this text will ask again later upon the discussion of the media and its influence on the psyche of American consumers.

Said continues to provide us with his insightful theories. He tells his readers:

For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")...local interests' are Orientalist special interests, the 'central authority' is the general interest of the imperial society as a whole, (Said, 1978: 43-44).

Yet again Said introduces an amazingly appropriate parallel to today's American occupation in Iraq. First, focusing on what Said writes concerning political interest, his point is that the Western interest overrides the interests of the Orient, but the Western actor does this within the walls of the eastern hemisphere. Also, the decisions that are made and business that is to be conducted in the region is also in the interest of the Western politicians, who not only behave but also truly feel as if they are justified in making decisions in their (the Oriental's) interest, to profit themselves and their circles and to even perhaps better the Orient, based on the terms and conditions of the particular Western perspective. The term 'central authority' also highlights an interesting topic and maneuver often used in the take-over of the 'Other'. The United States has particularly concentrated on

centralizing the Afghan government in an effort to carry out their political goals. The U.S. government has used this strategy, and it is simply another example in this case of its imperialistic nature.

In addition, I also want to make the point that Said has made an assumption, which I do not entirely find to be true, claiming that Orientalism was essentially a strategic political creation, to be more exact 'a vision of reality' that promoted the differences between 'us' and 'them'. Although Orientalism is very well utilized within political spheres, I am not convinced that it is in any sort of way a reality that highlights the differences between the two opposing hemispheres, rather a rationalization to help politicians convince themselves of a justification of their imperialistic behavior.

The book then begins to tell the story of how American foreign politics became involved in Orientalism, which is of most interest to this study. Henry Kissinger wrote an essay entitled *Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy* (1966). He quickly makes a distinction simply in the title. There is the internal and the external, the United States and everywhere else. More importantly, he then goes on to divide the contemporary world into two halves, the developed (the Occident) and un-developed (the Orient). Said notes:

The first half, which is the West, 'is deeply committed to the notion that the real world is external to the observer, that knowledge consists of recording and classifying data – the more accurately the better...the point he [Kissinger] makes is sufficiently unarguable to require no special validation. We had our Newtonian revolution; they didn't. As thinkers we are better off than they are, (Said, 1978:47).

Kissinger has drawn the lines, and it was easy for his readers at that time to understand, and they accepted his simple argument because of his statement that the West has gone through a scientific, or Newtonian, revolution that dates all the way back in the 16th century, and hence, drawing a line and dating the époque of the beginning of 'our' modernity. In contrast, the un- or under developed countries have not had the same enlightenment; 'we' are therefore more capable of making informed and rational decisions for both 'us' and 'them'

due to 'our' ability to evolve 'our' minds and intelligence academically, politically, economically, and so on.

The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then is a system of representations framed by a while set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire, (Said, 1994: 203).

Said is surely aware of the fact that this definition seems to be politically related and that it because Orientalism is politically related. Western political figures have created, supported and fed the concept of Orientalism for primarily political reasons, although not sense of reality as I argued before but rather as justification process to rationalize the extension of an empire.

3.2 Representations

As one is now aware of the motives and thought process behind creating the representations found within the discussion of the Orient, let us now explore exactly what kind of representations are found when referring to this 'Other', whether the representations are created, exaggerated, formed, or whatever the case may be. What associations are there to be discovered?

The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved...(Said, 1994:207).

Herein lies the beginning of a very problematic occurrence. I start off with my critique here as Said includes women in his list of negative Western equivalents. It is not clear here what his point is when he uses women as an example of something of a negative nature. He could have clearly made his point without including women in his list, putting them in the same category as people considered social outcasts in Western society.

The term social outcast is a fitting term I will use to describe the other representations in Said's above-mentioned list. In order to understand Orientalism and what it really means is also essential to keep in mind that,

according to Said, Muslims are to be understood in view of their primitive origins, (Said, 1994: 234).

In order to gain a better understanding of Orientalism thought, Said also provides us with a brief description of a stereotypical way in which an Orientalist understands someone from the Orient:

...the Oriental was incapable of appreciating or understanding himself. Partly because of what Europe had done to him, he had lost his religion and his *philosophie*; Muslims had *un vide immense*, 'an immense void', within them; they were close to anarchy and suicide, (Said, 1994: 271).

Said hits the nail on the head with this comment. Note how anarchy and suicide are two incidents that many Americans also utilize when describing Afghanistan. It is interesting that he considers these incidents as a result of Western imperialism and not a fault of the people that inhabit the Orient.

To provide one last picture of how former Orientalists viewed people from this region, I mention the French scholar Massignon's description as he referred to the Islamic Orient as: spiritual, Semetic, tribalistic, radically monotheistic, un-Aryan, (in Said, 1994: 271).

What one must be aware of is that Massignon's description was just as popular among anthropological texts during this time, as they had a similar description of Islamic Orients. While anthropologists may have had the intention of describing the behavior in the Orient in an objective manner, either their Western and superior background was reflected in their observations, or perhaps, anthropologists made suitable remarks concerning their way of life and how they view the world around them. In the end, how can any Western scholar be sure to make an appropriate and objective observation?

The real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language...culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer (in Said, 1994: 272).

Said brings up a valid point. How can we be sure to make any generalizations because Orientalism in itself has been created by and exists within the Western

cosmos? What the Orientalist studies and observes constantly involves some sort of influence from the West, therefore, making it extremely difficult to proclaim something of significance about an Orient culture. Furthermore, representations are then used because that is all that there is for researchers to employ, and they are sufficient enough for the researcher's task.

...representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks, (Said, 1994: 273).

In the end, the representations that are then employed serve the purpose of the task at hand and nevertheless aide in the comprehension of the 'other'.

The Orientalist provides his own society with representations of the Orient that respond to certain cultural, professional, national, political, and economic requirements of the epoch, (Said, 1994: 273).

Whether the representations are correct and fair is not always the point. Orientalists distinguish representations in order to perform a task that is related to their own society's needs, where we once again come back to the realms of politics and economics, among others in order to move forward with a Western motivated mission.

3.3 Orientalism in American Pop-culture

Let us now take a look at Orientalism and how it is used and perceived today according to Said. He begins with mentioning the U.S. and its involvement in wars with the Orient.

Since WWII, and more noticeably after each of the Arab-Israeli wars, the Arab Muslim has become a figure in American popular culture, even as in the academic world, in the policy planner's world, and in the world of business, very serious attention is being paid the Arab, (Said, 1994: 285).

With that said, Said establishes how someone from the Orient, namely the Arab, has been brought to the American public's attention. I remark that the connotation that goes along with the Arab is already a negative one, but Said makes us aware of a wider scope of how the Arab is seen.

The area specialist...lays claims to regional expertise, which is put at the service of government or business or both, (Said, 1994: 285).

What Said means is that there is someone that is proclaimed as a specialist in a particular region in the Orient, and this 'expert' is then responsible for providing a specific entity with representations and images of the particular Oriental character.

These are the new forms in which Orientalism is being utilized today. An example of a 'popular' image of how the Islamic Orient is represented is given by Said as he describes an event held at Princeton University, which had an Arab theme with initially robes, headgear and sandals. In 1967, there was the June War and due to this the theme had changed:

the class was now to walk in procession, hands above heads in a gesture of abject defeat. This was what the Arab had become, (Said, 1994: 285).

This example underscores how Arabs were to be seen by Americans- typical with robes, headgear and sandals while in a discouraging condescending manner as objects of defeat.

There are other stereotypes to be found, as well: camel-riding nomad and Arab sheiks cartoons with gasoline pumps, sharply hooked noses, evil mustached empty facial expression of blood-thirsty dishonesty. These are all examples, which create stereotypes and paint a picture for the Westerner of what an Islamic Oriental looks like and what he associates himself with. Notice how I use the common noun 'he' because men are mostly pictured. Said also stresses the fact that the Arab is especially seen as an oil supplier, which he says:

is another negative characteristic, since most accounts of Arab oil equate the oil boycott of 1973-1978 (which principally benefited Western oil companies and a small ruling Arab elite) with the absence of any Arab moral qualifications for owing such vast oil reserves, (Said, 1994: 286).

The next thing that happens is that people begin to question why the Arabs are allowed to have such power and keep the civilization, democratic free- world threatened. That is why, in turn, there is now an American justification of a U.S. invasion of an Arab oil field and occupation by a foreign Western government because the Arabs should not be permitted to hold such power. From an American point-of-view, the Arab superiority simply cannot happen.

As an indirect result, the stereotypes that we all know so well, which are produced by the media and its constituents, continue to find themselves on the big screen. The Arab appears as:

an oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous and low. Slave trader, camel driver, moneychanger, colorful scoundrel, (Said, 1994: 287).

These were all popular stereotypes found in American pop culture, and the fact that Orientalism has spread to America and found itself embedded in the American culture was no mistake or coincidence. This ideology has followed in the footsteps of European thinkers and been institutionalized via scholarly programs founded and supported by the federal government. Numerous university Middle Eastern studies have supported this doctrine for decades, as opposed to questioning its problematic sensations.

In 1958, there was a government related institute conveniently called the Middle East Institute, which produced a report that stressed on the importance of Arabia to oil-company executives, technicians, and military personnel. In return, Said points out that the report goes on to read:

The United States need wait no longer in developing its foreign language program, ' thus Oriental languages are part of some policy objective, (1958 in Said, 1994: 292).

I include this to make Said's argument clear that the United States foreign policy is economically driven, as oil is a main priority, and this fact is seen through examples, which find themselves among cultural norms in the American society.

3.4 Response to Said's Theories

Orientalism is apparently not objective, but the problematic herein lies in that from a Western point-of-view (which Orientalism ultimately is) is presented as if it was objective, as if it was the solid truth. This belief is also not often questioned and therefore even deepens and widens the roots of Orientalism in the minds of, in this case, the American people. It is accurate to say that an Orientalist dogma has not ceased to exist, rather it is engrained in American policy.

On a more political horizon, Said gives a clear example of how Orientalism is being used in modern day politics and how it affects a people. He even makes the argument that Orientalism governs the Israeli policy towards the Arabs.

To sum up Said's personal thoughts and to make his point of the book clear, he states,

I have been arguing that the Orient is itself a constituted entity, and that the notion that there are geographical spaces with indigeneous, radically "different" inhabitants who can be defined on the basis of some religion, culture, or racial essence proper to that geographical space is equally a highly debatable idea, (Said ,1994: 322).

Said recognizes the fact that it is nearly impossible to generalize a large group of people with various cultures, languages and histories. An accurate picture of the Orient will never come about because it is not possible to create. He also adds:

...while there are dozens of organizations in the United States for studying Arab and Islamic Orient, there are none in the Orient itself for studying the United States, by far the greatest economic and political influence in the region. Worse, there are scarcely any institutes of even modest stature in the Orient devoted to study of the Orient, (Said, 1994: 324).

The fact that there aren't any institutions in the Orient that study the United States, which is the major player in world economics, and since there is not even an institution that focuses on the Orient in the Orient, the likelihood of a more suitable and appropriate representation of the Arab world is very small. It seems as if Said does not even have any hope that Orientalism and how it is seen today, or back then, will ever change. It is easy to get the impression as one reads that he would offer some sort of solution to this problematic bias of the West on the East because he is so critical of its ideologies, but in the end, he is perhaps more realistic in his diagnosis of Orientalism and the impact that it also has within the Orient.

However, Said does offer some interesting insights. He says,

"What better norm for the scholar than human freedom and knowledge? Perhaps too we should remember that the study of man in society is based on concrete human history and experience, not on donnish abstractions, or on obscure laws or arbitrary systems. The problem is then to make the study fit and in some way

be shaped by the experience, which would be illuminated and perhaps changed by the study, (Said, 1994:328).

Here Said offers a vague solution to Orientalism's problematic nature. This solution would involve Western researchers to have some sort of awakening by acknowledging the mishaps in Orientalism as it is today and approaching the Orient in a completely different manner.

Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed also to see it as human experience. The worldwide hegemony of Orientalism and all it stands for can now be challenged, if we can benefit properly from the general twentieth century rise to political and historical awareness of so many of the earth's peoples, (Said, 1994 328).

My main criticism found against Said has to deal with the fact that he fails to paint an accurate picture of the Orient. While he criticizes the writings of Orientalists throughout the decades and highlights their inaccuracies in the representations of the region, he provides no alternative. As his readers gain a better understanding as how the Western image of the East, more specifically the Near East, has been created and developed over the centuries with distinct and even racist trends, Said fails to provide his readers with a counter image. His writings lack an actual, truthful, or Eastern perspective of their history. This could possibly be due to the fact that since the Orient is such a large geographical area, which includes various languages and cultures, it is impossible to generalize the Orient as sharing one history. However, Said could at the very least include an example of one particular region, country or culture found within what he refers to as the Orient and expand in detail a history of a society that disproves and/or rejects popular stereotypes and false representations that so often occur.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

4.1 Qualitative content analysis

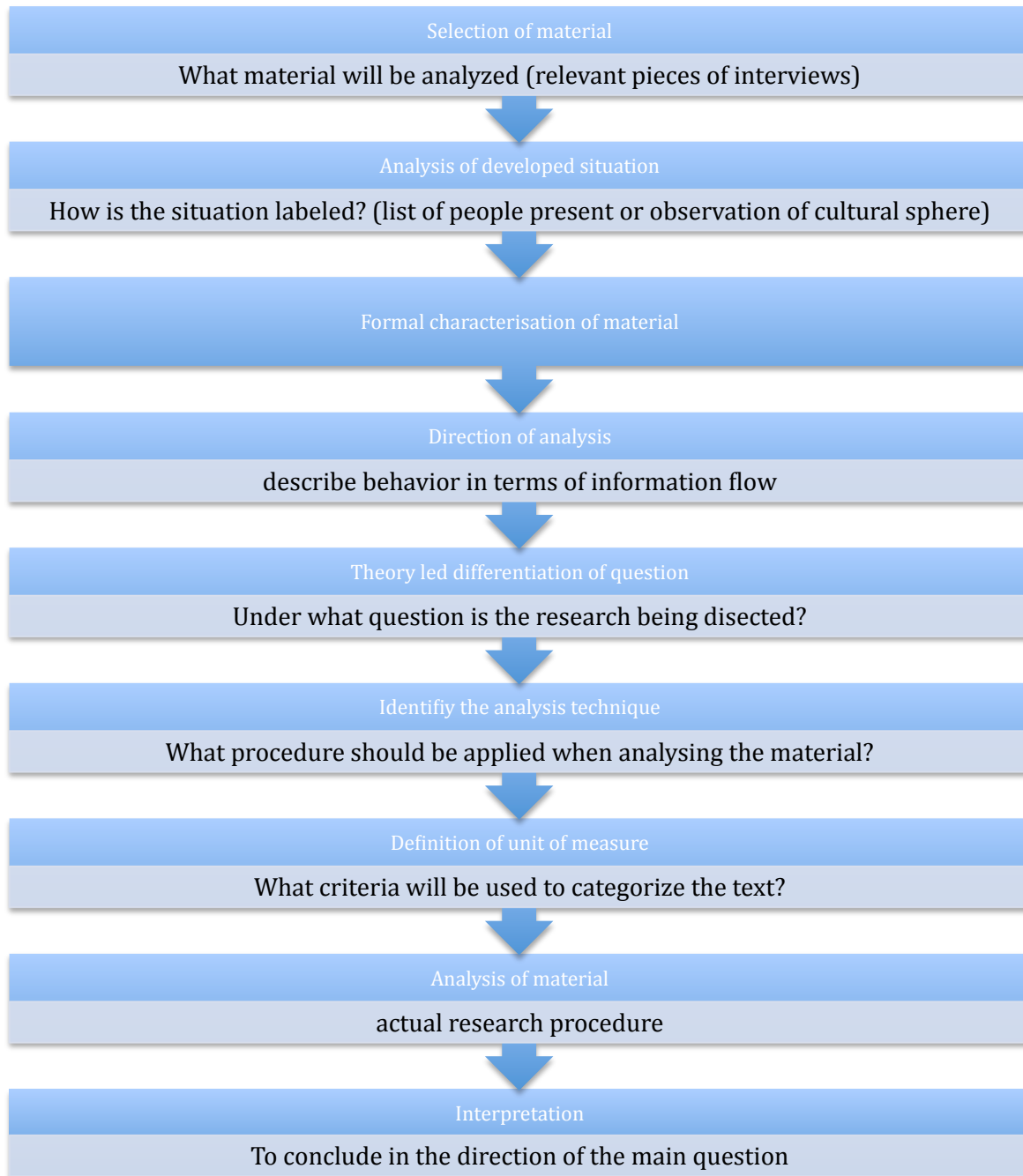
As described in the introduction, the United States has a large influence on world affairs and the culture of the global village. I find it crucial to take a deeper look into exactly how and why citizens form decisive views and opinions regarding foreign relations, which affect so many people in ways that are immeasurable, and underline the significance of the interviewees' responses.

Media consumption also plays a large role in this research, thus it is important to just as importantly confront the topic with a media research technique at hand. In *Media Research Techniques*, Arthur Asa Berger outlines the essential tools one needs in order to perform research having to do with media. Berger highlights that there are many things to keep in mind while 'in the field'. I was sure to ask myself simple questions, such as who, why, how, what, when, which and where regarding the dynamic spheres of why Americans believe we are in Afghanistan.

In order to collect data one must establish his or her methods and techniques. A method is a general mode of yielding data, for example interviewing, and a technique is a specific means of making particular methods effective, which in my case would include shorthand writing.

As the Mayring model way of qualitative content analysis was constructed for a protocol for open interviews, it is quite natural to follow this analytical method as a structure to analyze the data from my research. Below is the main structure that Mayring has established that will be used as the general format for the analysis:

Table 4.1.1



4.2 Selection of material

The goal of this research is to gather information about the American perspective on the occupation of Afghanistan in order to gain a better understanding of why people that I identify myself with, namely Hoosiers, have a particular understanding of the situation and furthermore, how their ideas are influenced by the information that they have acquired or the experiences they have made.

I have conducted fourteen interviews with a total of sixteen people (two of which were couples sharing one household). The data that has been collected during my research is a compilation of hand written notes and e-mail correspondence. I attempt to utilize all of the information, which falls into the particular categories that I have chosen based on my informants' responses. The entire collection of texts that I have acquired is broken down into the individual categories to be analyzed, diagnosed and interpreted. If there are pieces of text that are not relevant to the specific categories, they are left out; although, every interview is dissected. There is not an excerpt of one or two interviews that serve as examples for the material; rather, the entire experiment and nearly all of its findings shall be included in the analysis.

4.3 Analysis of developed situation

The interviews took place between May 2011 and February 2012. All of the interviewees are "Hoosiers", which is a colloquial term used to describe people that are born and raised in the state of Indiana in the United States of America. The interviewees were specifically chosen based on their place of birth, a state located in the Midwest region of the U.S. I am myself a Hoosier as well.*

* According to www.in.gov, Indiana's official government website, Indiana was the 19th state to join the Union, is the 38th largest state with a size of 36,291 square miles (58,404 square kilometers) with a population of 6,195,643. To put these dimensions into a local context, the state covers just a bit more landscape than the country of Austria and has approximately 2 million less inhabitants.

The Hoosiers that were chosen for the research are divided into two main categories: first-hand informants that have been to Afghanistan and second-hand informants that have not been to Afghanistan; the latter have acquired their knowledge of the occupation through news stories and perhaps recollections of friends of family that have visited the region.

Although all of the informants are Hoosiers, there are differences in their geographic location. Interviews were conducted with Hoosiers from northwest Indiana, central Indiana and southern Indiana in an effort to gain an objective and thorough collection of data throughout the entire state.

The demography of the interviewees differs as well. The informants' ages range from approximately twenty-eight to seventy. They also come from varying social classes, though they are all lower to upper middle class; therefore, the income level varies. The education level is a varying factor as well. All but one of the second-hand informants carry a high school diploma, and three of them hold a college degree. One male informant was attending graduate school. Two interviewee partners were unemployed, two were retired, three were full-time workers, one on sick leave, and one was a student.

Half of the interviews, seven to be exact, were conducted with people that have been to Afghanistan or were currently residing there at the time of the interview. I refer to them as first-hand interview partners. Of the seven first-hand interview partners, five of them were trained and armed soldiers with varying occupations, one was a contractor working as a trained and armed medic, and one informant was a civilian working in a contracting budget and finance office. Five of the first-hand informants were male; two were female.

The second group of seven interviews took place with nine people. As mentioned above, two interviews occurred with two married couples that shared the same household. The additional seven interviewees were with people that have not been to Afghanistan, or second-hand informants. Six of the second-hand informants were male; three were female. Out of the six males, three of

them were veterans having served in the United States Marine Corps (USMC), the United States Navy and the United States Army. The USMC veteran was the only second-hand informant that had served in combat, namely the Vietnam war.

Of the fourteen people interviewed, ten were people that I know personally albeit not all of them; four of them were either friends of friends or people that I had coincidentally just met in the field.

To then briefly highlight the general way in which I have conducted my research, I conducted interviews in person, via Skype and via Facebook chats and messages. I recorded the data by shorthand writing in the first two methods mentioned, and the Facebook chats were automatically written down and saved in my message folder.

The interviews that took place vis-à-vis occurred in varying situations. Due to this fact, the interviews took place at different places and times, the situation and space varied. As I conducted one interview with a 34-year old college graduate in an automobile repair shop waiting room in Martinsville, Indiana, a retired couple overheard our conversation and voluntarily decided to join in. The husband had served time in the military, although he had never been to war. They were very forthcoming in their responses, and anxious to share their opinion. I was very fortunate to make contact with these people at this time, as they were complete strangers and provided me with a lot of information. They did not seem to be bothered that I was writing down their responses as they spoke freely. At the end of the interview, they were extremely thankful and happy to have taken part in the research.

Most of the interviews were conducted via Skype, which still allowed me to capture the vis-à-vis feeling since both microphones and webcams were used, and I could see the reactions on their faces. Meetings were set up to find a convenient time for the both of us, and the respondents were again very forthcoming with their opinions. I had a list of questions, which they could not see, to guide the discussion in case the discourse came to a stop, but most of

them shared their point-of-views with enthusiasm as they seemed to simply be content with the fact that someone was interested in them and basing research on their responses. At times, a few questions that I posed were challenging, and my informants were forced to reflect on matters that they may have never been confronted with before, but nonetheless they all came through and provided me with their version of why they believe America is in Afghanistan. To add, Skype has been used as an enormously useful tool as I was able to conduct interviews with Hoosiers currently residing all throughout the state of Indiana, Florida and Afghanistan.

The third set of interviews was conducted via Facebook, and all of these particular discourses were with first-hand experience interviewees. When I was fortunate enough to chat back and forth, I was able to gain more information, as they were more involved in a dialogue. If a Facebook chat was not possible, I then sent them a list of my initial questions, they wrote back with their responses, I read their responses, wrote them back with a second list of follow-up questions, and lastly, they responded once again. This was the case in most e-mail interviews, but I was unable to acquire responses to the follow-up questions in one or two cases.

4.4 Formal characterization of material

As previously discussed, the interviewees were conducted in a multi-sited field where different methods to conduct the interviews took place- vis-à-vis, via Skype and via Facebook correspondence. The interviews were conducted in the form of open-ended semi-structured interviews.

I have performed deductive research because I am testing a hypothesis against Edward Said's theory of Orientalism (1978), as well as basing the categorization model on George Marcus's World System theory (1998), to distinguish themes which occur in the discussion that serves as a response to my initial research question: why is the United States in Afghanistan? I go about this by way of semi-structured interviews where I have a list of questions for my interview

partners to guide us through the process, while at the same time posing open-ended questions and allowing the respondents to speak freely, tell their own stories and share with me the information that they find most important when it comes to the aforementioned issue.

I did not record the discussions that took place, therefore a transcription is not possible, although I did have a pen and paper in hand while conducting the interviews and wrote down as much information as possible when the interviews did not already exist via e-mail correspondence.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I compiled a list of questions that referred to the American military being in Afghanistan. If the interview was taken place either vis-à-vis or via Skype, it allowed the interview partners to speak more freely about a particular topic, which was of more interest to them. In those cases, the formulated list was not always followed directly. At any given moment, the informant had the liberty to further discuss any topic, which related to the initial research question.

When the interviews took place via e-mail correspondence, there were two sets of questions that the interviewees were requested to respond to. The second set of questions were follow-up questions based on their initial responses. The list of questions that served as a format to the interviews are listed below:

First set of questions

- What is the United States doing in Afghanistan?
- Do you think we should be there?
- What is/was your occupation and responsibilities?
- What were your goals and motives for being there?
- What do you think the Afghan people think of America?
- I have heard some Afghanis want us there and some do not. Why this discrepancy?

-Was the U.S. justified in its initial response and decision to enter Afghanistan in 2001?

-Is there a real terrorist threat to America?

-Who do you think the Taliban are?

-Why do Al Qaeda hate Americans?

-Is there a difference between these two groups?

-How did you feel when Osama bin Laden died?

-Did the U.S. want revenge on Afghanistan for 9/11?

-What news source(s) do you use most and why?

-Do you access these sources via radio, television or Internet?

-How credible do you consider your news sources?

-Do you discuss the issue of Afghanistan with family or friends?

-How important is it for you to stay informed?

-Are there any other media outlets you use to gain information about the war in Afghanistan?

-How important is this issue to you anyway?

-What do you think about our soldiers that are still over there? How do you regard them as people?

-Do you think that they self reflect and question their reason for being sent to work in Afghanistan?

-Any last comments?

Example 1 of follow-up questions

-How would you describe the rebuilding efforts? Would you consider them successful?

-What training did you have prior to your tour in Afghanistan that specifically prepared you for your duties there in the region?

-You responded previously that you were there to make Afghanistan a safer

country. Do you feel that the U.S. is a safer country due to the occupation? Why?

-Did you ever have any direct contact with Afghanis, whether it be at a bazaar, with their military, or a child on the street? If so, could you please recount an instance and the dialogue?

-Referring back to the Taliban, what do you believe their motives and/or goals are? Are they different from Al Qaeda's?

-So you believe the sole reason for Al Qaeda's and bin Laden's hate against America is the fact that we quit supplying them with arms and material?

-Are you not 100% sure then that Osama bin Laden is dead? Why not?

-Lastly, do or did you discuss the reasons for being in Afghanistan with your colleagues while being stationed over there? If so, were there any other perspectives that varied greatly from yours?

Example 2 of follow-up questions

-Regarding bias views in the media, what bias could the news sources you utilize have?

-Why do you choose to discuss mainly the positives issues with friends and family and not the whole picture?

-If Afghanistan is/was home to both Al Qaeda and the Taliban, then why would the United States want to help that country get back on its feet and invest in their infrastructure? What are our motives?

-Have you ever had direct contact with an Afghani? If so, could you please recount that story.

4.5 Direction of analysis

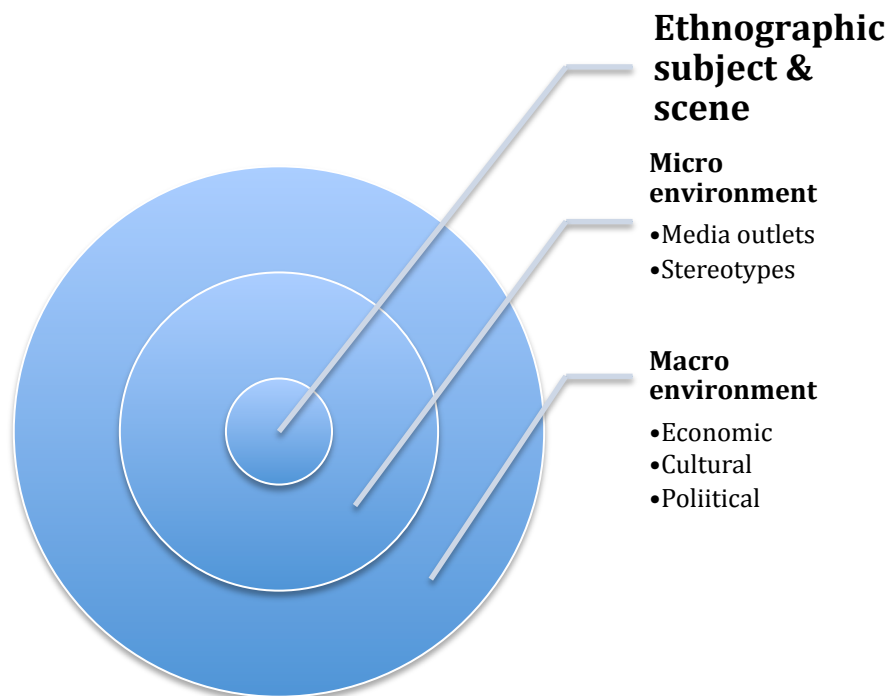
To only utilize relevant pieces of information from the interviews and efficiently structure the data, the analytical process is roughly based upon George Marcus's World System categorization (1998), which embeds macrotheoretical concepts, such as economical, political and cultural universalisms and categorizes them based on microtheoretical concepts in an effort to perform a holistic research that detects local phenomena from a wider, global perspective.

The multi-sited research that I have performed in order to collect the data has developed an architectural design that connects cultural formation among varying

sites of activity where associations are formed. They are formed by not only sharing physical space (Afghanistan in a wide sense and only in some cases), but also due to the research that constructs aspects of the World System through connections created among virtual sites, such as the Internet via media outlets.

A stress on stereotypes and 'Othering' is found within the analysis of the material, but this phenomenon, a micro environmental example, is not the only factor, which is dissected as the graph shows. The behavior of the informants will become clearer to see when the connections of the information flow are actually shown and highlighted accordingly. In order to visualize the concepts, below is a graph that shows the relationship that the ethnographic subject has directly to the micro environment, which is constrained and exists within the outer macro environment.

Table 4.5.1



The goal is then to imagine the whole- a holistic approach to viewing the system from the global (the outer circle), and to frame it from within- from the local (the ethnographic subject).

4.6 Theory led differentiation of question

For Robert Thornton, ethnography is:

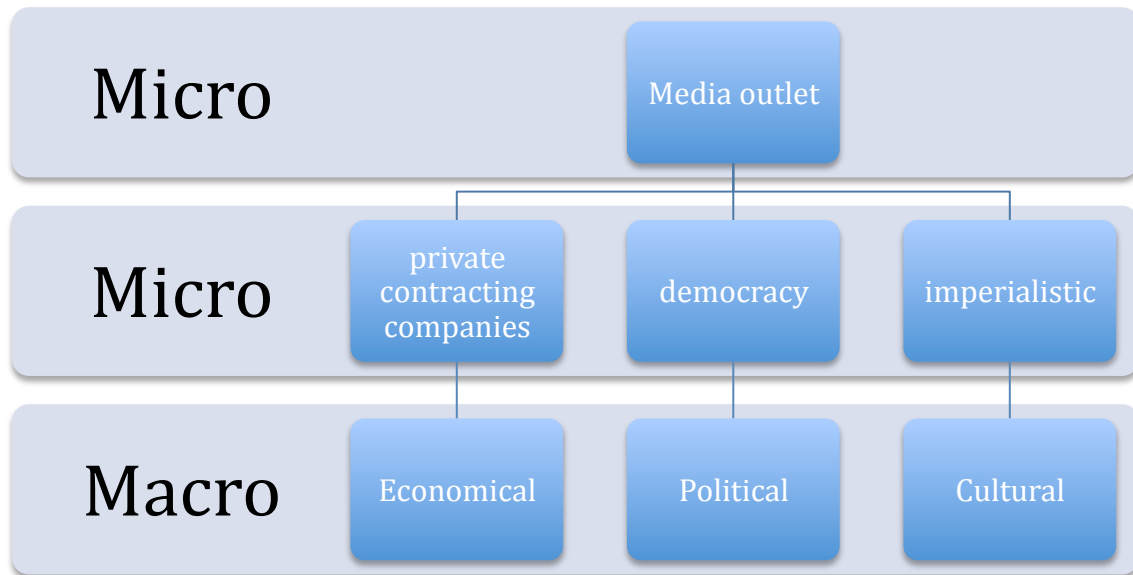
genre in which description of the economy exists side by side with the personal confession, the myth, and the well-worn fireside tale. It attempts to lead the reader to believe that the myth or the personal confession has a definite relation to the way the economy works. It attempts to establish the reality of the connections it describes. The vast apparent gap between the person who confesses and the economy that works must be bridged, (in Marcus, 1988:28).

For that reason, it is essential to come up with a way in which the ethnographic subject, the informant, understands and views the subject at hand from his or her local perspective, and to determine which universalism the micro concept stems from in order to establish a generalization and bridge the gap between the local and the global while suggesting how the local situation mirrors the global system in which it exists.

In this study, the bridge is then to be established by categorizing universalisms: economics, politics and cultural norms. The architectural structure in which the data is displayed also provides a visual graph that makes it easy for the reader to make out which relationships occur by the use of connections and displayment of information flow. Consequently, this design also attempts to distinguish part of the imaginary whole, as Marcus (1998) refers to in his description of functionalist theory, which:

allowed the physical text itself to stand for the wholeness of the social reality of which it was a representation,” (Marcus 1998:35).

Functionalist theory is the systematic scheme of relationships (categories), and this is the basis of how the data is divided up. To better illustrate how the data is structured, I have created a basic graphic to help one better understand how the material is compartmentalized in **Table 4.6.1**:



As you can see, there are two conceptualized micro fields. The hierarchy dissects the issues further and shows how media affects a person's perception of his or her reality. The two micro levels are distinguished topics that the data provides, and the macro level is simply shown to enable the graph to display the 'whole' of the system.

The two particular questions that are analyzed and interpreted are:

A. What categories of perception arise in the response as to why the United States is in Afghanistan, and how are these perceptions influenced by the informant's media consumption?

B. What are the similarities and/or differences between media consumers among those that have first-hand experience and those that have not been to Afghanistan?

As two graphs that are based on Table 3.3 will be presented, the analysis introduces a situation in juxtaposed relation to the first- and second-hand interviewees, which furthermore permits the dissection of the differentiation of these two groups.

4.7 Identification of the analysis technique

A plethora of information was gathered, which now needs to be confronted with an analytical technique. By now, the analysis technique should have become clear. To investigate the text that the open-ended semi-structured interviews have generated, the material will be presented in structural form.

George Marcus's World System categorization (1998), which we have already established embeds macrotheoretical concepts, such as economical, political and cultural universalisms, and categorizes them based on microtheoretical concepts. The micro environment notions in this study will be categorized as follows: the rebuilding of Afghanistan, contracting companies, Natural resources (oil), trade, terrorism, democracy, America's support of dictatorships in Muslim nationstates, hegemony (cultural imperialism), women's rights, religion and most intriguingly the awareness and/or recognition of not knowing (?).

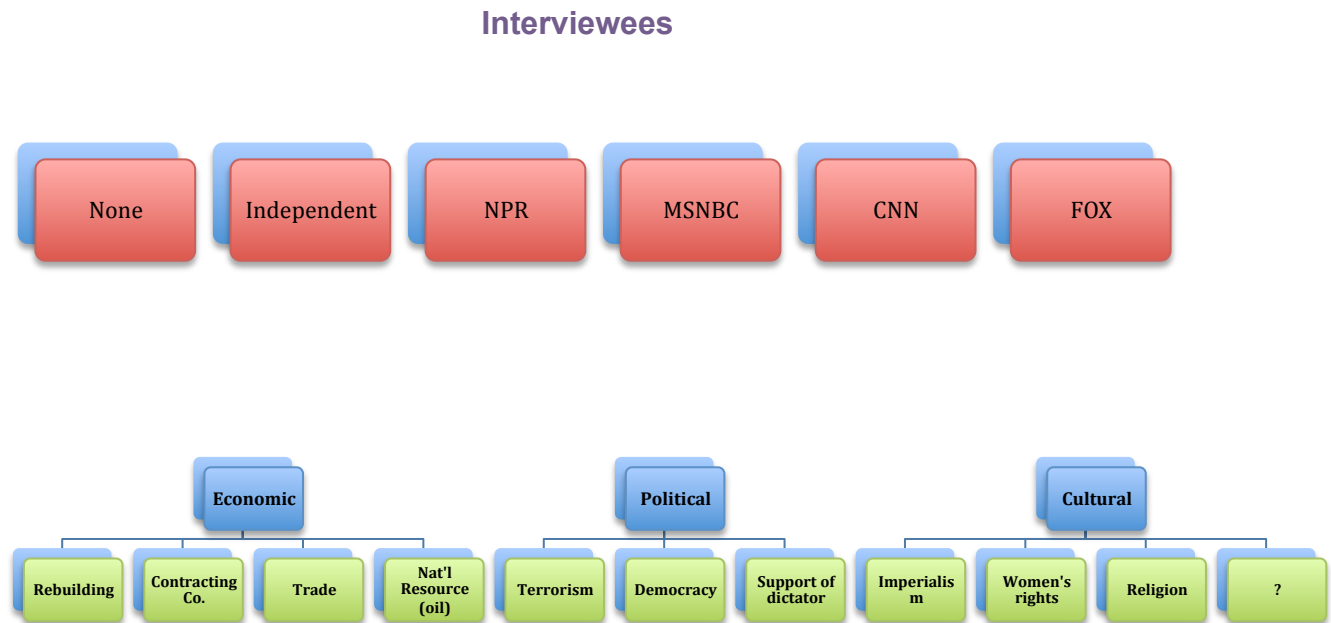
To take the analytical process a step further, the hierarchical graph also highlights where the informants acquire their information. Although one may assume that it is clear where the first-hand group has gathered a majority of its knowledge from since they have been to Afghanistan, this research nonetheless underscores how the consumption of media outlets' information influence a person's understanding of the subject at matter here.

There are two main graphs, Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 that are structured identically but present a juxtaposition between the first- and second-hand informants. The informants' responses are juxtaposed in relation to possibilities about how personal experiences affect the perception of the American-Afghan conflict and also how personal experiences then in turn, affect media consumption.

The graph below highlights how media outlets, or the lack thereof, are utilized and guide the reader in the flow of information to connect the associations between the varying networks that are created and exist within the constraints of macro and microtheoretical concepts of Marcus's World System theory. In

addition to the graph, rainbow colored arrows will be drawn beginning from the media source, going through the macro field and pointing to the micro concept, where the informant's response exists. See table below:

Table 4.7.1



4.8 Definition of the unit of measure

Due to the fact that all of the interviews are to be utilized, it is essential that a coding unit be ascertained in order to place them in the subsequent categories introduced in Table 3.4 and 3.5. All of the informants were asked which media outlets they use most, which is a primary factor. These responses will be the first step in distinguishing the main category. The interview partner is then defined according to where he or she prefers to acquire the majority of their news information. As a result of varying media outlets discussed in the study, they are presented horizontally from left to right, (not coincidentally) according to where they can be found on the political spectrum.

Following the first step, the next level on the chart needs to be determined, and this requires a cognitive approach when going through the material because it is of the utmost importance to fully comprehend what the informant means when using specific terms. Although particular words play an important role in coding the text, the utterances, which represent an expression of an idea, are to be the focus, which then in turn enables me to properly construct the data according to the aforementioned functionalist theory method.

For example, one interviewee revealed that he primarily watches FOX news, and this is his main source of news information. He then goes on to say how the Koran tells 'them' to kill 'them' or turn 'them' into Muslims. As his dialogue partner, I am clearly able to determine that the first 'them' refers to Muslim fanatics, the second 'them' refers to non-Muslims, and the third 'them' refers again to non-Muslims. This informant also described the war as a 'holy war'. Although he did not specifically use the term religion, this utterance would nonetheless be placed in the religion category as the informant finds religion the main reason for the United States finding itself at war with Afghanistan.

4.9 ANALYSIS OF MATERIAL

Table 4.9.1

First-hand

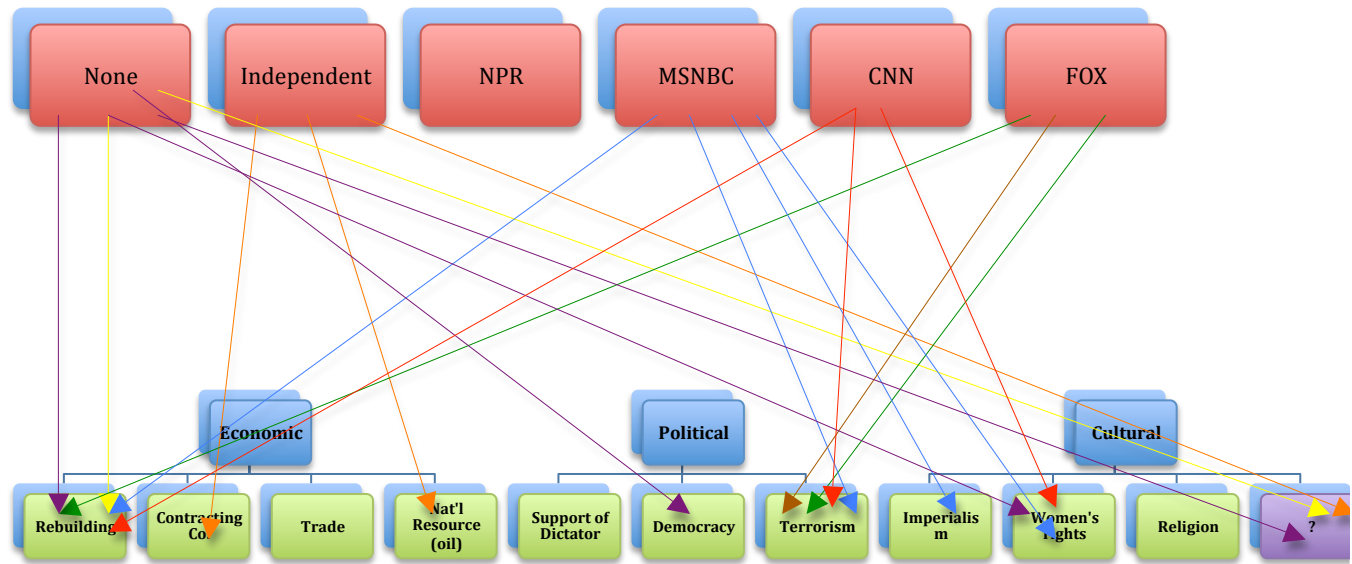
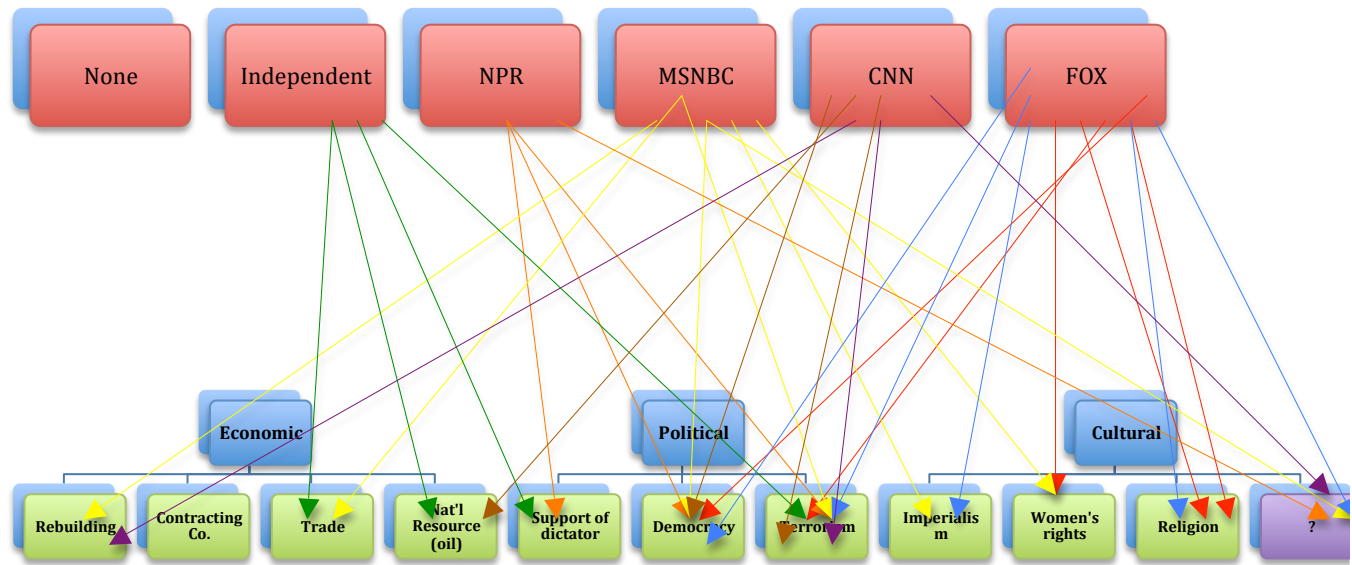


Table 4.9.2

Second-hand



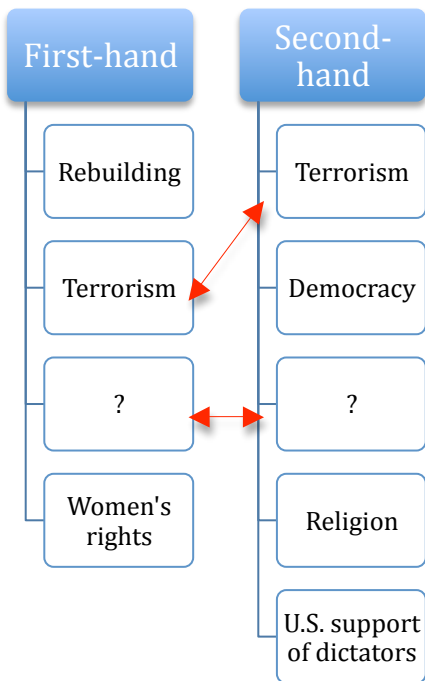
In an effort to efficiently describe the graphs pictured above and present the findings in a clear manner, I first begin with general descriptions and then continue with more complex dissections based on the material.

Taking a look at Table 3.6, it is clear to see that the first-hand informants do not tend to prefer a particular source of news information. Their consumption ranges from independent and/or international outlets to predominantly conservative right-wing media sources. To add, the group 'None' had to be created for this group, as some of the first-hand interviewees have been turned off from the news due to their experiences. This matter will be discussed further in the interpretation of the material.

The second-hand respondents' consumption apparently varies greatly as well, although there was one major difference in that 100% of the second-hand informants took at the very least a minor interest when asked what media outlets they used to obtain news information.

Now to list the main reasons for the war according to the first-hand group in descending order, I list the terms related to the issue that was mentioned by at least three informants: rebuilding of the nation (infrastructure and education), terrorism, ? (acknowledgement of not knowing) and women's rights. The second group's responses were: terrorism, democracy, ?, religion and the United States' continuous support of dictators in the Middle East.

Let us take a look at them a bit more closely in **Table 4.9.3**



One can see from the chart that ‘terrorism’ was often a general response to the initial research question, but be aware of the fact that more than twice as many second-hand interviewees thought that ‘terrorism’ was the main reason for the war at a ratio of 3:7. The second and only other similar response that was given by both groups at least three times was the acknowledgement of not knowing why the U.S. is still in Afghanistan over ten years after 9/11, indicated by a (?).

As we have just taken a look between similarities and differences between the first- and second-hand groups, let us see what patterns, if any, exist within the media outlets and they way their consumers responded. All reasons that were given are listed, and repeated answers are highlighted in like colors below in Table 4.4.

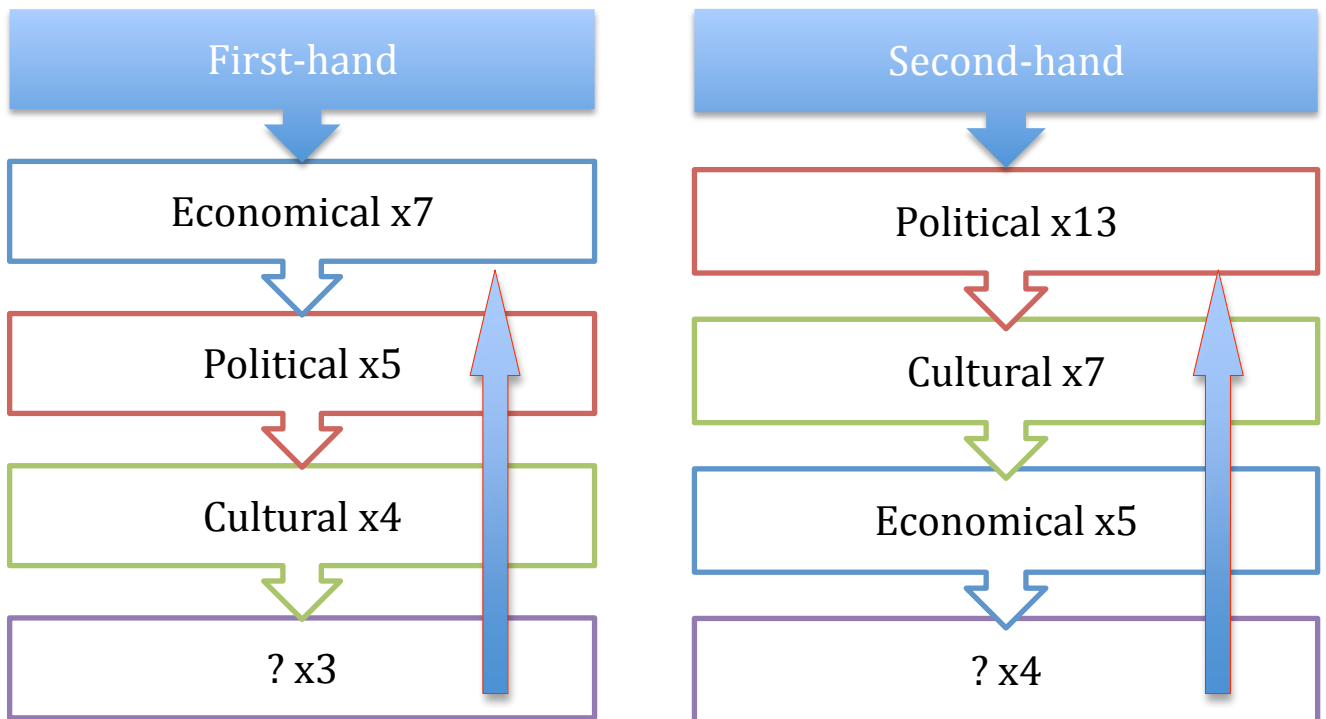
Table 4.9.4:

None	Indy/ Int'l	NPR	MSNBC	CNN	FOX
Rebuilding	Contracting	Support of dictator	Rebuilding	Rebuilding	Rebuilding
Democracy	Trade	Democracy	Trade	Oil	Terrorism
Women's rights	National resources (oil)	Terrorism	Democracy	Democracy	Democracy
?	Support of dictator	?	Terrorism	Terrorism	Imperialism
	Terrorism		Imperialism	Women's rights	Women's rights
	?		Women's rights	?	Religion
			?		?

This graphs helps us see how often the various topics are discussed among the wide range of media outlets. The most frequent discussions are highlighted by the colors you see most often: rebuilding, democracy, terrorism, the symbolic (?) and women's rights. Notice that religion is found only once under the FOX consumer column.

Lastly, I include a graph focused on the macrotheoretical environments in which the micro topics are categorized within, and the comparison is shown and listed between the first- and second-hand respondents.

Table 4.9.5



As you can see, economical themes were most often discussed among the first-hand group, and in the second-hand group, political and cultural themes both outnumbered the major macro concept emphasized in the first group of interviewees. The macrotheoretical environment with the highest number of topics discussed when added together was by far the political realm, which was discussed a total of eight-teen times, thirteen alone among the second-hand informants. The symbolic (?) microtheoretical concept does not belong to a macro environment, but it is nevertheless too significant not to include in the analysis of the juxtaposition in relation to the macro realm of categories, as it is a reflection of the macro environments themselves. The notion of not knowing (?) exists in relation to the economic, political, and cultural aspects of the discussion because in the end, the respondents did not always respond with absolute certainty; rather, the answers provided were filled with confusion and doubt. Table 4.5 underscores this relationship.

4.9.6 Failed attempts

Before we go onto the next section, I would like to provide the reader with an extra portion of the research procedure, which could not be included in the analysis. Unfortunately, there were also a few failed attempts to gather information for my research, as well. There was one situation where a potential interviewee that is currently living in Afghanistan declined to go through with the interview because he felt as if answering the questions would put him at risk of losing his job. He is a civilian that is working in Kabul, but I am not sure what his responsibilities are. It was also not my attention to put his job in jeopardy; therefore, the interview was not carried out.

Most surprisingly, there was one extreme incident that occurred while attempting to perform this research. While out in the city, I coincidentally came across a group of Marines that were all currently serving even though they were not actually on active duty at that time. To my amazement, one of the men was in fact from Indiana, a fellow Hoosier. I began to inquire about his current occupation in United States Marine Corps and the reasons for him being stationed in Europe, but perhaps due to the amount of alcohol he had consumed that day or maybe for other reasons of which I do not know, within the first three minutes of our conversation, the Marine from Indiana stepped behind me and put me in a chokehold. After expressing my disapproval of his behavior, he astonishingly once again put me in a chokehold.

His actions led me to report his improper conduct to the American Embassy the following day. I was treated with the utmost respect by the investigators from the State Department. The case has now been turned over to the U.S. military and is being investigated internally. I may in fact be awaiting trial, seeing that a military personnel investigator asked me if I would be willing to testify against him in a military court of law. Needless to say, I would consider this situation another failed attempt, as I was not able to conduct the interview with the well-decorated and hot-tempered Marine.

CHAPTER 5. INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1 Introduction of Interpretation

As this point, it is essential to interpret the analysis and identify the trends that are found within the experiment based on the categories that were explicitly dissected above. This is a lengthy process, as the material is vast, and the matter at hand contains pluralistic dimensions to say the least.

To commence this section, I interpret the interviews and the reception of the interview partners. I go on to add comments regarding the types of interviews that were performed. Lastly and most importantly, I go into detail about the trends found within the collected data, remaining within the realm of the micro concepts detailed in the analysis and throughout referring back to theoretical aspects of both media anthropology and Said's Orientalism.

5.2 Interviews

To begin interpreting the information, I first refer back to the interviews themselves. Due to the fact that I knew most of the informants personally, there were both advantageous and disadvantageous results. The advantage of 'working' with people that you know is that they are willing to share more information, which I found most advantageous when dealing with the interviewees that had first-hand experience in Afghanistan. Since they trusted me and were not as weary, as they very well may have been if being interviewed by an unknown reporter, for example, the first-hand interview partners were fairly forthcoming with their responses. Some even revealed information that they could potentially get scolded for by a superior or authoritative figure, but due to the trust level most felt comfortable sharing their opinions with me.

However, a number of the second-hand interviewees that I knew personally were conscientious of that fact that my personal opinion differed greatly from theirs, and it motivated them to reply more diplomatically as opposed to how they

normally would during an informal conversation. I was also asked to share my opinion, which I was very hesitant to do and instead, attempted to smoothly avoid answering their questions by describing my goal of the research.

5.3 Data

As far as the data that was gathered is concerned, I must admit that most of the data collected from Facebook was not as rich as the face-to-face and Skype interviews. Their responses were shorter, and there was not as much detail given (with most but not all Facebook interviews). Nevertheless, I was still able to gain crucial information that is needed for the research, and I would still recommend using Facebook as a tool to gather material and connect with informants that one cannot meet with in person or observe. As a side note, Facebook also later leads this project to an active response to the situation, but we will leave that surprise for the conclusion of the text.

5.4 Media Consumption

Next, I will comment on the first-hand respondents' media consumption itself because it is interesting to highlight the difference between it and the second group because only the people that had been on the ground in Afghanistan had made the conscious decision to no longer follow stories about the U.S. and its presence in the region. According to numerous informants' responses, the lack of media consumption is due to the fact that eye witnesses are aware of what is going on there in the violence-ridden region, and clearly do not see a fair representation of what they have seen in the news. Even among the first-hand interview partners that still acquire information about the occupation, there was much doubt and a large lack of credibility in what was being covered and reported on.

Without a doubt, having experience definitely plays a role in media consumption, and most felt that what you see in the media is biased and only a very small part of the reality in Afghanistan. Having experienced the war first-hand, especially

the military personnel, has led to a decrease in media consumption as well as a credibility gap between media producers and consumers.

With that said, second-hand informants also commented on the credibility of the news that they consume, but they had a much stronger opinion regarding why the U.S. is there, and they definitely seemed to be more reliant on their news outlets. Numerous second-hand informants reported reading news articles online everyday, checking their preferred websites repeated times throughout day and even every hour, but therein lies a contradiction among the second-hand informants with this almost “religious action”.

Although the respondents were aware of biased and opinion-based news outlets, it often did not lead to the affect of dismissing the stories transmitted because they religiously continue to consume and keep up with the latest news. Furthermore, the same people that claimed that media outlets cannot be trusted, “you have to take them with a grain of salt”, “you can’t believe everything that you hear”, and so on are the same people in this experiment that in fact, had carried some of the most strongest opinions and acquired the most knowledge, whether it be highly debatable knowledge or not.

The instance of contradiction occurs frequently throughout the interviews, and this is just the first example. Again, while second-hand informants admit to being aware of the fact that their news information is biased and opinionated, they nevertheless heavily rely on their information, and it does in turn influence their perception of the war and the people involved, often perhaps unconsciously adapting to the opinions and viewpoints of their preferred media source.

With that said, the informants did make a conscious effort to mention that they are, in fact, aware of biases in the media. And to interpret this “religious media” consume regardless of this fact, I conclude that by taking an interest in the subject, making an effort to inform yourself about the situation but in the end coming to the realization that due to the pluralistic dimensions, which surround Americans in Afghanistan, one is simply not able to make an accurate

presumption or give an accurate response because there is no way for the public to actually know and understand exactly what is going on behind the scenes. The motives of the U.S. government are also not broadcasted on the nightly news, and the plethora of combinations of media that is used to share information does not provide a clear concise or adequate argument, which satisfies the inquirers' desire to understand this situation due to its severe complexity.

Let us refer back to the similarities and differences among the interviews. Contrary to the second-hand interview partners, there was another major difference in the way in which the first-hand informants responded to the questions. Most first-hand interviewees were despite their openness, very apprehensive when answering the question "Why is the U.S. in Afghanistan?" Most were very unsure and hesitant to give an answer. There is definitely a sense of doubt, insecurity and confusion that surrounds this discussion. The first-hand respondents also did not pretend or even try to pretend that they knew what was going on. They spoke of the situation with an heir of concern, and the only thing that they seemed absolutely sure of knowing was that it is a complex situation, which cannot be easily defined or explained, and it is also not their duty to do so. They do not feel responsible in the slightest to discover the reasons behind the extended occupation and motives for the American presence.

While I do not forget that four out of seven respondents from the first group claimed that 'terrorism' was one of the causes for the war, there was nevertheless a definite uncertainty and disdain that correlates along with that response. Since the experiment reveals that almost twice as many second-hand informants gave terrorism as an answer as to why the U.S. is in Afghanistan, and since the second-hand informants are also more reliant on their news sources, it is fair to assume that the fear of terrorism, (because most are in fact in fear of there being another terrorist attack) is a direct result of media consumption.

In point of fact, it was only the second-hand group that retold stories that they had heard or read about in the news regarding supposed terrorist attacks and

threats that always seemed to be heavily covered. They had numerous examples of what could have happened, of what TSA (the newly founded Transportation Security Administration) had prevented, and about how terrorists had planned this or that, yet there was not one single example of a terrorist attack that has occurred in the U.S. since 9/11. The term supposed is used to highlight the apparent doubt in the minds of all informants, but the truth of the matter is that the second group still recounts the stories of possible or hypothetical terrorist attacks and do believe that one could happen again on their soil.

I go on further to make the assumption that terrorism and the fear that an attack could occur again is used as a justification for the war in Afghanistan and the ongoing presence of American troops there, even if Americans themselves are not aware of the fact that they consider terrorism as the use for justification. This was also another trend found among respondents as a whole, the use of terrorism as a justification of the war.

Terrorism also plays into another role, which has already extensively been discussed in the previous chapter, and that is Said's notion of how Orientalism is a phenomena, which continues to exist and is further produced by western sources of information, namely American news producers to be more concrete. This notion of distancing yourself from the 'other', being convinced of fundamental differences among the cultures, and the reinforcement of stereotypes are all instances that occur, which led to a fear of terrorism, or fear of the 'other', because that is what consumers are led to believe due to factors and reason, which they may or not be aware of.

5.5 Stereotypes

Middle Eastern stereotypes are often found in media, and the consumers reiterate these stereotypes and accept them as truth. For instance, the retired couple in Martinsville went on and on about how Muslim extremists from Afghanistan practice an evil religion. Osama bin Laden, the face of terrorism,

was an evil figure. They also mentioned how they believe and fear that Muslims want to take over the world and convert Christians to Muslims. The stress on religion and another culture attempting to invade ours was the main concern for this couple, and they reported reading their news paper daily and finding their sources interestingly enough, fairly credible. In this instance, the consumer is led to believe that the U.S. military is involved in a war that is surrounded by motives of religion where cultural differences where cultural differences are certainly not the main factor in the war, according to the first-hand respondents. The motives I refer to here are found within the macro environmental realm where economic and political issues play a large role in the motives of the war, but the cultural differences are nevertheless highlighted and used as the scapegoat as to why the United States continues to remain in Afghanistan.

Now, the first-hand interviewees had not only a slight tendency to stress the terrorism factor, which mainly came from right-winged consumers, but they had more of a tendency to stress the rebuilding of the nation, an economical factor. This is a noteworthy differentiation between the two groups. The number one response, the most popular answer to the question was different, which again supports the argument that the situation is complex with its various scopes of causes.

5.6 “?” The Acknowledgement of Not Knowing

Another observation that I made and find particularly interesting is the micro category symbolized (?)—the acknowledgement of not knowing. This small yet significant detail that half of the respondents are honest and willing to admit to the fact that they are unsure concerning the reasons behind the war in Afghanistan confirms the initial research question as a valid and fascinating inquiry because a lot of Americans, regardless of experience do not have an answer to this question. “There is no reason to try and figure it out,” one interviewee stated. It seems as if people are not even interested in actually discovering why their military are occupying another country.

American consumers of media certainly have some sort of desire to discover the truth, or are at the very least motivated to find out more about what is going on in the world around them. However, despite media consumption and having a system in place that provides the public with a platform of how to think, people are nonetheless confused and do not fully comprehend the motives behind particular current events, wars for example.

The second-hand interview partners mostly gave long answers and touched upon a spectrum of categories, which of course varied a bit from person to person, but it is true to say that all of them had a response and attempted to answer the questions the best way that they could. They provided lengthy responses and partook in a discussion when many of them actually did not have much of a clue, as to what they were actually talking about. The point is this-the American consumer attempts to discover a certain truth about a particular event, but what actually happens is that the consumer receives information about a particular event, which may or may not be veritable, but they are aware of the doubtful information while at the same time suspicious and cynical of the motives of the matter at hand. Furthermore, regardless of their suspicion and cynicism the consumers are still influenced by their preferred media outlets, but this influence occurs both more in a passive and unconscious manner. This factor is also an example of the notion of contradiction, which occurs numerous times throughout the interviews.

5.7 Imagined Communities

Do you remember how Larkin, Ginsburg and Abu-Lughod challenged researchers to outline and pinpoint how or why media messages either go awry, shape lives and threaten audiences? I now briefly come back to this notion of national politics and media.

Since we began with the assumption that Larkin's theory (1996) that cultural imperialism is achieved by large industry media producers and their relationship with the state, as media is used as a tool to transmit dominant codes of culture,

we can go on to the second question that Larkin and his colleagues proposed when performing research in media.

2) What happens to media when states interests are complex and contradictory?

I believe that this second question has actually already been answered in the interpretation, as we have already observed that the American occupation in Afghanistan is extremely complex with its pluralistic dimensions. There did not seem to be a major consensus as to why the U.S. is in the Middle Eastern region, apart from terrorism, which we will cover next, but the truth of the matter remains true, and that is the fact that the respondents' remarks varied greatly (refer back to Table 5.1 First-hand and Table 5.2 Second-hand).

The wide spectrum of reasons that were provided and exist in the macro field of factors greatly vary, and there is no common majority answer. It is then fair to say that when a state's interests are complex and contradictory, the media has in turn the opportunity to twist and turn the story as they see fit and particularly concentrate on the issues, which they for whatever reason, deem to be the most important for the public to be aware of.

Finally, Larkin and his colleagues suggested posing the question- how effective are state media products –or any media products- in achieving their goals of influencing audiences? This question correlates with the above stated goal of discovering how or why media messages either go awry and/or shape lives and threaten audiences.

Apart from there being a question mark over the head of the American public due to the fact that they are not sure as to why the U.S. is still in Afghanistan, there was one trend that did in fact about, and that was one of the main reasons why the U.S. is there-terrorism. With the aide of the media, the state has achieved its goal of creating, or enhancing, the notion of the imagined community of Americans. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and with the uprising of the War on Terror, a bi-partisan American society came together and celebrated their unity as a nation-state. Patriotism was more popular than it ever had been in my life

time. To then fulfill this particular goal of the research, I make the claim that the media messages, which induce fear and stress terrorism by threatening audiences help to create an imagined community and provoke feelings of belonging and the strong presence of a unified American identity.

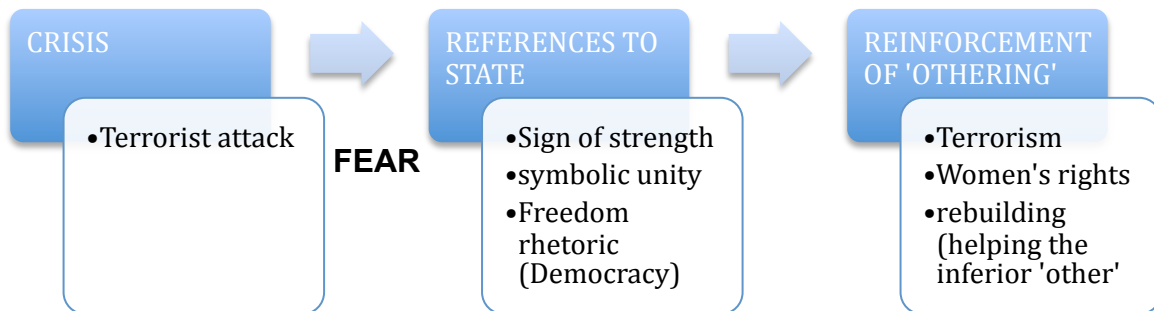
5.8 Us vs. Them

Another situation, which occurred during the interviews and particularly when the terms ‘terrorism’, ‘women’s rights’ and democracy were discussed was this notion of ‘us vs. them’. *We* Americans, the good guys, the ones helping *them* out, *we* are doing *them* a favor, without *our* help *their* civilization won’t develop. *They* practice an evil religion, *their* women need *our* help, *they* need *our* democracy, and so on. Within the discussion lies a sense of *us* knowing what is best for *them*, just how Said actually said Orientalism works. A western society takes an interest in an Eastern country or region, and in the name of democracy or front of bettering a nation, (when the actual motive is usually economic), the dominant nation that self proclaims itself as superior occupies the ‘inferior’ nation and exploits the lesser thrived nation and its people for the powerful nation’s own good. It is a simple textbook example of imperialism, which very rarely came about in the interviews. The fact that the American people are supporting an imperialistic venture without even being aware of the imperialistic value proves the blind influence that the media has over many of its consumers.

5.9 Overall Generalization of Material

In an attempt to make a general conclusion about the data in its entirety, I have diagnosed an original concept of observance in human behavior in the United States. This new concept is based on the experiment and parallels a current American economic process, as well. To introduce the concept, I provide a graph to present how I came to this conclusion:

Table 5.10 New Concept



The concept suggests that a crisis occurs and induces fear, which leads the society to make references to the state and also includes a requirement of political action where then there is a reinforcement of 'othering', which occurs in many forms.

A recent example is the housing crisis and recession of 2008. The crisis induced fear in the American citizens, and the people looked to the government to help solve the problem. As there was a focus on the unemployment rate, and there were government bailouts for large corporations. Four years later in 2012, what does the American landscape look like? Symbolic unity by the Occupy Wall Street Movement has formed where the 99% against the wealthy 1% raise their voice in disapproval of how Wall St. does business. A new political party has also been formed, the Tea Party, where freedom rhetoric reigns the campaign ads, and democracy in its purest form is longed for, as their jargon calls for a return to the Four Fathers of the United States and rebirth of the U.S. Constitution. This is a current example of how the graph above and the concept I suggest plays out in today's society.

The parallel that I have discovered, which also follows this concept began with the crisis of a 9/11. The terrorist attack on the World Trade Centers in 2001 induced fear among the citizens of the United States. Again, Americans looked to the state to deal with this tragedy, and there were also signs of strength and symbolic unity, as American flags were flying everywhere, for example. “United We Stand” was the new motto of the people, and the culture identified itself as a patriotic nation, underscoring the imagined community of the fifty states. The freedom rhetoric is still ringing, as many of the informants reported a reason for being in Afghanistan is democracy. Americans believe they are doing something good, something noble by occupying another nation. This has all led to, as the graph lists, a reinforcement of the ‘Other’ as terrorism, women’s rights for the Afghani women and the rebuilding of a nation in need of our help are used as reasons for an occupation of a country half way across the world.

In addition to this concept, there is also one more factor that happens as a result. There is an expansion of capitalism. The interviews tell us that the U.S. is in Afghanistan due to macro-captured reasons, such as economic and political reasons, which are not as obvious as the cultural reasons that are mitigated by the popular media. The expansion of capitalism exists in the form of oil, trade, democracy and hegemony (women’s rights). Although the notion of cultural imperialism may have already been presumed, it is of the utmost importance to draw attention to the economical factors as, such as the importance of oil and trade, and become aware of the fact that they all occur under the umbrella of the extension of capitalism into the Eastern hemisphere.

5.11 Reaction to Research

All in all, I would consider the research project a success, even though I actually never did come to a concrete conclusion as to why the United States is still in Afghanistan. This wasn’t the goal. At the beginning, I hypothesized that the first-hand interview partners would have a nuanced perception of the war, and this was not always the case either. I find it most interesting that many of the respondents were honest about not actually knowing the answer.

What is important to me and what makes this project significant? I find it imperative that this discussion exists, and I find the significance in the sharing of ideas. A better understanding of how others perceive the situation is of the utmost importance.

As a result of this project, I have created a Facebook site entitled “Americans in Afghanistan”. It is an open group, where anyone with a Facebook account can become a member and join in on the discussion. The motive is found on the About page and reads:

This group has been created to serve as a forum of discussion for people interested in Americans in Afghanistan. I welcome everyone and anyone interested in this topic to please share your thoughts and feelings about the U.S. government and their role in the Middle Eastern country. , about our troops, our friends and families that are sacrificing their lives, or whatever you wish to share. I strongly encourage Americans who are either currently residing in Afghanistan or have spent time over there to please share your comments with those that are listening to what you have to say regarding any aspect of your stay there. Feel free to post pics, links, and don't forget to invite your friends (Arreola, 2011: www.facebook.com).

I created the group back in September 2011, as the tenth anniversary of 9/11 was approaching at that time. Since then, I have led a discussion among not only Americans but Afghanis, as well. A dialogue now exists between American and Afghan citizens, and people from both sides of the occupation are now acquiring information with each other and are no longer forced to solely rely upon media outlets to gain their information. New media and social networking has led to the coming together and dialogue among people who are affected by the same war but in varying forms, and the conception of us vs. them now begins to change.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Conclusion

On September 11th, 2001, the United States was devastated by an act of terrorism. Al Qaeda, a terrorist organization with its headquarters in southern Afghanistan and was then led by Muslim extremist Osama bin Laden, took responsibility for the attacks, and the U.S. government declared a war on terrorism and had troops on the ground in Afghanistan within a few short weeks.

The main source of information that the American public relied upon, then and now, is the wide variety of media outlets that transmit information and create a dialogue with its consumers. Since the United States has a vast amount of media sources and its foreign relations policy has an affect on the entire globe, I found that it only makes sense to ask the question after ten years of occupying a nation half way across they world “Why is the United States in Afghanistan?”

Using media anthropology as a foundation and based upon theories, such as George Marcus’s multi-sited ethnography (1998) and Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism (1978), I raise questions, perform research and analyze the data in a precise manner. The research consisted of fourteen interviews with Hoosiers across the state of Indiana, half of which had spent time in Afghanistan.

The analysis is based upon Philipp Mayring’s qualitative content analysis and in-depth interpretations are made about the collected data. To summarize the trends among the categories and the interpretations of the analysis, which I have come to as a result of reflecting on the collected data in relation to the theory, I once again highlight the discovered notions. To begin with, it is fair to assume that experiencing the war first-hand, especially as military personnel, leads to a decrease in media consumption as well as a credibility gap between media producers and consumers. On the other hand, although the second-hand respondents were aware of biased and opinion-based news outlets, it often did

not lead to the affect of dismissing news stories because they “religiously” continue to consume and keep up with the latest news.

The instance of contradiction occurred frequently throughout the interviews as informants unconsciously adapted to the opinions and viewpoints of their preferred media news source, but one is simply not able to make an accurate presumption or give an accurate response because there is no way for the public to actually know and understand exactly what is going on behind the scenes. In addition, the plethora of combinations of media that is used to share information does not provide a clear concise or adequate argument, which satisfies the inquirers’ desire to understand this situation due to its severe complexity.

Another trend discovered was the fear of terrorism, which is a direct result of media consumption as well as the use of terrorism as a justification of the war. The use of terrorism also exists within the realm of ‘othering’ where stereotypes are reinforced, and cultural differences are highlighted and used as a scapegoat for as to why the United States continues to remain in Afghanistan when the actual motives exist within the realms of economics and politics.

I also underlined the point that the American consumers attempt to discover a certain truth about a particular event, but what actually happens is that the consumers receive information about a particular event, and are aware of the doubtful (mis)information while at the same time suspicious and cynical of the motives of the matter at hand. Furthermore, regardless of their suspicion and cynicism, the consumers are still influenced by their preferred media outlets, but this influence occurs both more in a passive and unconscious manner.

In reference to Larkin, Ginsburg & Lila Abu-Lughod’s media theory, it was concluded that when a state’s interests are complex and contradictory, the media has in turn the opportunity to twist and turn the story as they see fit and particularly concentrate on the issues, which they for whatever reason, deem to be the most important for the public to be aware of. In relation to this section, I also make the claim that the media messages, which induce fear and stress

terrorism by threatening audiences help to create an imagined community and provoke feelings of belonging and the strong presence of a unified American identity.

This claim also correlates and exists in relation to Said's theory of Orientalism, which also plays a role in the current situation. The American people are supporting an imperialistic venture without even being aware of the imperialistic value, and this proves the blind influence that the media has over many of its consumers.

To propose a final common generalization based upon the research project in its entirety, I have also introduced a new concept suggesting that in the United States, a crisis occurs and induces fear, which leads the society to make references to the state and also includes a requirement of political action where then there is a reinforcement of 'othering', and that occurs in many forms. In addition to this concept, there is also one more factor that happens as a result- the expansion of capitalism.

Lastly, I include my own personal reflections and provide an activist approach to continue this discussion by creating an online forum, which offers more possibilities for both Americans and Afghanis to participate in a dialogue with each other, and in return challenging Said's Orientalism-based notion of us vs. them and no longer having to rely solely upon large state-promoted media outlets to acquire information.

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