Abstract

Moriarity, Michelle. Beyond deadlines and head counts: A rhetorical analysis of headlines and photojournalism in the 2004 presidential election coverage of The (Raleigh) News & Observer. (Under the direction of Catherine A. Warren.)

Print journalists perpetually struggle with allegations of bias. As with all media, newspapers are under public scrutiny for their representations of news events – and this scrutiny intensifies during election cycles. Scholarship devoted to news coverage of political issues and events has examined ways in which the media fail to cover politics in a way that is fair and adequately reflects of the news of the day. These analyses, however, dominantly focus on news stories and on coverage as a whole – that is, the entire newspaper instead of the individual components that help make up the news product.

According to a 1991 study by Poynter Institute fellows Mario Garcia and Pegie Stark, photos and headlines are the elements of newspaper coverage that readers are most likely to process. If this is the case, then existing analyses may miss the mark in terms of audience perception. Some professional and academic criticism addresses meaning in news photography and headlines, but no research has addressed both, in depth, as tandem creators of meaning in the news product.

Rhetorical criticism offers an analytical avenue for the study of meaning in headlines and photographs. Rhetorical scholarship in the latter half of the 20th century has begun to explore the potential for studying visual and verbal representation of public affairs. Scholar Michael Osborn has addressed both visual depiction and the use of metaphors (a common rhetorical device in headlines) in political discourse in a way that translates to a variety of media and offers a series of analytical questions for the study of news headlines and photographs.
I argue that Osborn’s theories of rhetorical depiction and of metaphor offer a framework for analysis that enables critics to move beyond the label of “bias” and examine in-depth the range of meanings that emerges in news headlines and photographs – thus offering richer explanations to journalists of how readers may perceive the news product.

I put Osborn’s analytical approaches to the test with 2004 election coverage from The (Raleigh) News & Observer, a publication that embodies the challenges that newspapers face during election-time. By studying language in headlines and composition of photos according to Osborn’s frameworks, I found that The N&O presented a variety of meanings that were at times conflicting, confusing, and counterproductive to journalistic values of fairness and balance. Despite journalists’ best efforts, their work suffered, perhaps, because they did not have the opportunity for deliberation over the choices they made in terms of the potential for meaning; additionally, they did not exhibit the kind of rhetorical consciousness that could enable them to more easily and thoroughly scrutinize their work as they do it. Ultimately, I argue that a broad foundation in rhetoric could help journalists do their job in a way that accounts more fully for potential audience responses and thus could begin to combat the pervasive allegations of bias that have come to define the public response to journalism.
Beyond deadlines and head counts: A rhetorical analysis of headlines and photojournalism in the 2004 presidential election coverage of

*The (Raleigh) News & Observer*

by

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Biography

Michelle Charlene Moriarity was born in Buffalo, Minnesota, in 1978. She grew up neither a farmer nor a Catholic in a Catholic farming community and escaped in 1996 to Minneapolis, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism with a minor in history at the University of Minnesota. She published articles on a variety of topics in *The Minnesota Daily*, *The Murphy Reporter*, *ComputerUser* magazine, *Minnesota Monthly*, *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine*, and *Midwest Home & Garden* before pursuing a career as a newspaper copy editor and designer. She worked at newspapers in Minnesota and Fayetteville, North Carolina, before moving to Raleigh to pursue a master’s degree in 2003. She currently works as a news designer at *The (Raleigh) News & Observer*. 
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Introduction

Journalists’ dilemma and the analytical opportunity

*The (Raleigh) News & Observer*, a 150,000-plus-circulation McClatchy newspaper in North Carolina’s capital, has been a target of much criticism regarding its political coverage. Letters to the editor and commentaries in the alternative media (Morman, 2003; Geary, 2003; Hart, 2003) have taken it to task for not adequately addressing the needs of voters. Most notably and particularly in the past few years, critics have claimed that *The N&O* has devoted excessive attention to the campaign of John Edwards in coverage that is not fair or balanced, two of the guiding principles of journalism.

The challenge of trying to produce fair and balanced political coverage is not specific to *The N&O*. Newspapers nationwide struggle with issues of balance and fairness, and commentators, both within and outside of the profession, frequently address a perceived imbalance in political coverage (Effron, 1997; Overholser, 2004; Solow, 2004). Many scholars analyze political messages (Campbell and Jamieson, 1990; Edelman, 1971; Gronbeck, 1992) and how they are conveyed in the media through choices in news judgments and language, as well as the problems that accompany the newsgathering process (Tuchman, 1978; Barnhurst, 1994; LaRocque, 1995; Manoff and Schudson, 1986).

Many media scholars have also addressed the challenges of political coverage and have conducted postmortem criticisms of newspapers’ election coverage (Moriarty and
Popovich, 1993). The results of these studies vary, but the approaches are similar: Many are content analyses of news stories. These studies, however, rarely concentrate on the layers of meaning conveyed by the various elements of a page: headlines, photos, captions, and other elements that can be as significant in news discourse as stories themselves (Barnhurst, 1994).

These previous studies may not be optimally useful for certain journalists – specifically photographers, photo editors, copy editors, and designers – in their efforts to better serve their public. In one of these studies, a seminal examination of the components of newspapers, Eyes on the News, Mario R. Garcia and Pegie Stark of the Poynter Institute, a journalism think tank, found that the typical “points of entry,” or the part of the newspaper that draws readers’ eyes first, are dominant photos and headlines (1991, p. 25). They found, furthermore, that readers are twice as likely to read and digest the content of headlines than the content of stories, and readers will more likely read headlines when photos are nearby (p. 40). This study and further research by coauthor Mario Garcia served as pivotal resources in newspaper redesign in the 1990s (Shepard, 1996). But academic studies of newspapers’ political coverage have rarely acknowledged the implications of Garcia and Stark’s study, nor have they addressed how its results could provide clues regarding potential audience reactions to political coverage. In other words, analyses of political coverage may consider stories emblematic of the entire news product, when in fact audiences may not be basing their judgments on the stories, which demonstrably do not comprise the whole of the discursive content of the newspaper.

I propose a study based on the following preliminary assumptions:
1. Members of the newsroom who participate in the crafting of headlines

perform much of their work intuitively because of the constraints of deadlines.

According to Garst and Bernstein (1982):

…in any case, [the copy editor] must discover what the outstanding point (of the story) is. Usually this news point can be phrased in one short sentence. That is what the seasoned copy editor does, consciously or unconsciously, preparatory to writing the head (p. 112) [emphasis mine].

As professional literature reveals (www.copydesk.org), newsrooms and journalism schools alike are devoting increased time and energy to training and educating copy editors; nonetheless, many of the concerns addressed by newsroom trainers such as Steve Buttry and Anne Glover pertain in large part to handling deadline pressure and fostering better newsroom communication rather than to matters of potential interpretations of headlines, or rhetorical criticism. At the 2004 American Copy Editors Society (ACES) conference, Lexington Herald copy chief Brian Throckmorton’s seminar on headline writing focused on the use of language resources to write interesting and engaging headlines, but his pamphlet, Zing on Demand, shows that the use of rhetorical devices remains largely intuitive: It recommends use of alliteration and metaphor to craft headlines with “zing,” and it cautions against adopting a specific tone and figures of speech in instances that are inappropriate. But it does not examine meanings associated with specific words and phrases.

Photographers, while performing tasks that demand technical precision and ethical insight, are also challenged by the demands of the newsmaking process. Photojournalists work to create innovative images, whenever possible, circumventing the
staged moments provided in “photo ops” (Rios, 2004), but with constraints such as those imposed at political events, they may be forced to rely on conventional shooting techniques in order to produce under deadline. This limitation on photographers may jeopardize standards of fairness: “By following the standard approach, photojournalists may unintentionally reiterate a set of beliefs about people” (Barnhurst, 1994, pp. 54-55) [emphasis mine].

2. Journalists who participate in the part of the newsmaking process that involves headline and photo selection and arrangement believe they are making choices that reflect broader goals: Those of fairness and balance, that enhance readability, and that serve their readers. Lowrey (2002) says the “pursuit of objectivity is not restricted to reporters and editors. Photojournalists also strive for professional legitimacy” (p. 416). It is clear that the various members of a newsroom share the same broader goal; if this is the case, they may not be intentionally creating a rhetorical argument beyond the fundamental aim of integrating word and visual elements to invite the audience to read the newspaper (persuading readers to pick up a newspaper and consume it) (Harrigan and Dunlap, 2004, pp. 285-287).

3. People who read the newspaper are rarely conscious of the challenges and limitations of the newsmaking process. The letters to the editor that I have cited above, which are intended only to represent a small contingent of reader response to The N&O, are reactions to specific stories and headlines – not the process that generates them. Readers may not have the tools with which to examine the hows and whys of their responses to news stories and their accompanying components, but journalists and
scholars do. Thus, journalists have a responsibility to examine the rhetorical implications of specific components of their work – and scholars could contribute to the notion of a more reflective brand of journalism through greater deliberation on headlines and photos.

4. Judging from the wealth of criticism, readers believe a rhetorical argument is taking place in which the newspaper is trying to advance a particular ideology or political stance. If Garcia and Stark’s study is an accurate gauge of readers’ habits, they may be assigning rhetorical meaning to those portions of the newspaper that they find most accessible: the headlines and the photographs. What emerges, then, is a breach in understanding and interpretation between news producers and audiences. Lowrey suggests that journalists can mend this breach between professional and public understanding of the newsmaking process by educating the public about the day-to-day challenges of the profession (2002, p. 416). I argue, however, that if journalists themselves were more conscious of the rhetorical consequences of their choices, they could begin to narrow the breach between newspapers and their audiences.

Rhetorical criticism offers a way in which to examine this breach. Scholar Sonja Foss (1989) characterizes rhetorical theory and criticism as instruments that build understanding of how rhetorical artifacts challenge or violate expectations and values of audiences in a communication setting. “The critic uses theory to improve the effectiveness of communication – to generate ideas about how we and others may communicate more effectively.” Rhetorical criticism offers, potentially, a new way to examine components of a newspaper that could reveal new dimensions of meaning in the choices journalists make in headlines and photo selection. A sharper understanding of
these meanings could contribute to “more skilled, discriminating, and sophisticated” (p. 7) choices on the part of journalists who seek to serve the public interest.

A case study of *The News & Observer*’s coverage of the 2004 presidential election, undertaken here, demonstrates how a foundation in rhetoric can better inform journalistic choices as well as journalists’ understanding of their audience’s potential reactions to these choices.

Past public criticism the newspaper’s political coverage demonstrates how *The News & Observer* is emblematic of the broader struggle of print journalists. As well, *The N&O* was under even greater public and professional scrutiny in 2004 because of John Edwards’ role in the election, first as a candidate for president in the primaries, and later as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate. My study examines the principles and practices of the newspaper’s headline-writing and photo selection, as articulated in interviews with its journalists. Then, I conduct a rhetorical analysis of these components of the news product.

The potential for rhetorical analysis of headlines, specifically, is largely unexplored, yet promising. Copy editors write headlines using a variety of rhetorical devices, including metaphor, simile, and alliteration. These tropes can and do change the fundamental meaning of a statement (Bizzell and Herzberg, 2001), and style and word choice can influence readers’ perception of a text (Reinsch, 1971, p. 142; LaRocque, 1999, p. 28). And yet theories of metaphor and other rhetorical figures exist outside the realm of journalism practice because they are a part of an academic, not practical, consciousness that is often ignored by professional journalists (Clark, 2000). This may be
because the study of rhetorical figures, as part of a broader curriculum in rhetoric and argumentation, are not historically acknowledged as a vital part of journalism education (Walsh, 1999/2000, p. 17).

In his 2004 ACES pamphlet, Throckmorton addresses the use of rhetorical devices and advises against “inappropriate” use of tropes and schemes, based on the tone and content of a story, but he does not address the more specific interpretive potential for these tropes. The study of rhetorical devices in relation to persuasion has not been pursued in specific regard to newspaper content; however, it has taken place in other media. More recently, the study of metaphor has extended to specific components of television political coverage, as in Lule’s (2004) examination of news program “banners” – a component of broadcast news coverage that closely correlates to headlines in newspapers. Lule’s study uses ideas drawn from the canon of metaphorical theory, which originates with Richards (1936), Burke (1962), and Osborn and Ehninger (1962), to study issues surrounding word choices in prominent news copy.

My study of The News & Observer’s headlines in Election 2004 coverage highlights the challenges and the implications of metaphorical content in headlines and moves toward a detailed critical understanding of the craft of headline writing and the ways in which it can influence meaning in a news product.

The study of metaphor has been in existence for most of the past century; in contrast, the study of visual rhetoric is relatively new. Visual rhetoric has emerged as an academic discipline within the past 20 years, with scholars such as Sonja Foss, Valerie V. Peterson and Carole Blair analyzing meaning in visual artifacts, including art and
photography. Peterson (2001) argues that rhetorical analysis of visual artifacts makes explicit those interpretations that are often implicit or intuitive for nonacademic audiences. Given my basic claim that audiences are reading meaning into newspaper content that newsmakers do not necessarily intend to convey, I believe theories of visual rhetoric provide sufficient justification for rhetorical analysis of news photographs. Specifically, Michael M. Osborn’s theory of rhetorical depiction (1986) offers a detailed and methodical analysis of images applicable to a study of news photography. Osborn’s approach, supplemented with Kress and van Leeuwen’s *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, provides a vocabulary with which to conduct such an analysis.

I have chosen *The N&O* as a case study for a variety of reasons. First, as a journalist and news designer for *The N&O*, I have a personal stake in helping to create coverage that is fair as well as useful and interesting to readers, and I understand that my position as a so-called insider privileges me to witness and understand many aspects of *The N&O*’s newsmaking process. Even though this appears to suggest a conflict of interest, scholars argue that qualitative research from a personal angle has its own strengths: “[Insiders’] connection goes beyond theories, researchers, and practitioners, to the life community within which these traditional parties to inquiry relate” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 174). In an effort to be fair to my research subjects (the editors and designers as well as *The N&O* itself), I hope to capture the nature of the newsmaking community by taking advantage of my membership in this particular “life community.” I articulate the values of this “life community” through interviews with those journalists...
who are most directly responsible for the generation of headlines and photographs, including news editors and photo editors.

*The N&O* has earned numerous national awards from industry peers for its headlines and photography and is recognized as one of the best-designed newspapers in the country. Its political coverage has also earned national recognition. Yet, as mentioned earlier, *The N&O*, like most newspapers, is a continued target of much criticism from the public as well as from political and media critics. I use the presidential election coverage on and around Election Day because it is thus contested – suggesting a public demand for coverage that is, perhaps, more liberal or more conservative, but nonetheless different than it is now – but also because the newsroom situations created by fast-paced Election Day events capture daily journalism at its most challenging.

Moreover, this analysis highlights journalistic content that is frequently neglected in the academic community, while proposing a new way in which to perceive news content that could be used by both journalism scholars and journalists in analyzing their work as well as carrying out their critical and professional duties.

**Plan of development**

Here is a summary of chapters and what each will cover.

**Chapter 1: A justification for the study of metaphors in headlines and the rhetoric of news photography**

This chapter surveys the conflicts that arise as journalists work to fulfill their broader goals of fairness and accuracy, and contemporary research on political coverage.
A review of literature pertaining to headlines and images focuses on what research contributes to the scholarly and professional dialogues about journalistic values.

**Chapter 2: Rhetorical theory and the analysis of photos and headlines in newspapers’ political coverage**

This chapter studies the bodies of research in rhetoric that pertain to metaphors in public discourse, and visual imagery. A review of literature from these areas reveals some of the parallels between the concerns of rhetorical critics and journalism critics, thus forging a meaningful connection between the disciplines of journalism and rhetoric. Rhetorical scholar Michael Osborn offers perspectives on politics, metaphor, imagery, and persuasion that lend themselves to the analysis of headlines and photographs news coverage. Osborn’s theory of rhetorical depiction opens a door to the study of components in imagery that can offer insight into the interpretive possibilities for news photography. Similarly, his study of metaphor in public address could function – with slight translation – as a means to examine the particular implications of individual metaphors in headlines and how audiences may react to them. Osborn’s research in each domain contributes criteria that inform my study of The N&O’s headlines and photographic content.

**Chapter 3: The (Raleigh) News & Observer: A case study**

This chapter will commence a close examination of the inner workings of The News & Observer, beginning with Osborn’s analytical question “What are the inventiona
processes of the rhetor?” The answers to these questions, provided by news and photo editors, helps contribute to a clearer understanding of journalistic invention:¹

1. What are the basic goals of *The N&O’s* election coverage?
2. How do you expect to achieve these goals?
3. What guides your selection of photos under extreme deadline pressure? How much time do you generally have to choose and edit photos under election deadline pressure?
4. How are headlines written, and by whom, when late-breaking stories are put in the newspaper? How much time is allotted for headline-writing under these circumstances?

After addressing the inventional processes that guide the journalists’ decision-making, I will study *The News & Observer’s* choices in metaphors and images in its presidential election coverage on Nov. 2-4, 2004, using Osborn’s approaches to interrogate the visual and verbal significance of journalists’ individual choices.

**Conclusion: Implications of rhetorical theory for newspaper coverage**

This chapter briefly addresses the implications of my analysis and findings, suggesting a course for further research that could bridge the gap between public and professional perceptions of news coverage. Furthermore, opportunities may arise from a greater rhetorical presence in the journalism curriculum for criticism and practice.

This chapter also examines how the criticism and the content of my interviews with journalists inform each other and seek to answer the larger question: How can journalists who work with dominant elements of newspapers better understand the implications of their work?

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¹ The generation of these questions marks how my experience as a copy editor and designer contributes to a heightened awareness and understanding of journalists’ inventional processes. As a member of the “life community” outlined by Denzin and Lincoln, I can better span the professional and scholarly communities – similar to critics who are former practicing journalists, such as Geneva Overholser. “Invention processes” is a specifically rhetorical term that I can examine in concrete detail as a practitioner.
Chapter 1

A justification for the study of metaphors in headlines and the rhetoric of news photography

Daily journalism professionals face the daunting task of trying to address public perception and combat allegations of bias. Academics, too, try to work toward resolving issues of bias by offering insight into journalistic processes and content. Academic and professional analyses of journalists’ work have peppered the critical landscape for decades; readers, however, still express significant dissatisfaction with journalists’ efforts to produce fair and unbiased coverage (Wizda, 1999; Overholser, 2004). The role that critics try to play as mediators of news practices and audience interpretation may not actually help journalists embrace practices that are perceived publicly as fair and accurate.

Despite common goals of fairness and accuracy in mainstream print journalism, the process of newsmaking is inherently fragmented – different journalists produce different parts of the news product. Therefore, in order to move toward an analytical approach that would speak to journalists, it is necessary to break down the news product based not only on how readers absorb content, but also on how journalists produce it. Particular attention must be devoted to the elements that command the greatest attention from newspaper readers: headlines and photographs.

Only in the past 20 to 25 years have headlines and photographs been addressed with any detail in academic and professional discourse; even so, examination of these
components of newspapers has operated within a fairly limited frame of reference. This chapter will examine the broader dilemma of combating perceived bias; reflect on how recent criticism has responded to perceived bias in photographs and headlines; and how attitudes regarding journalism practice and interpretation might offer an opportunity to re-read headlines and photos from a rhetorical perspective. Ultimately, this approach seeks to move beyond the simple labels of “biased” or “objective” and offering new insight into the creation of meaning in a newspaper’s dominant elements.

**Bias in journalism: The big picture**

The terms “biased” and “objective” have offered a way in which journalists can articulate contemporary news standards. The idea of objectivity in journalism emerged in the 20th century from the pursuit of “neutrality,” or detachedness, particularly in political coverage. That concept, however, has receded with the contemporary determination that journalists cannot achieve “objectivity” because they are citizens who cannot necessarily remove themselves wholly from public life. Rather, according to Jamieson and Waldman (2003), journalists today try to pursue “fairness,” although this principle is problematic as well, as they illustrated with a typical dilemma for reporters. “Quote an environmentalist, balance with an industry lobbyist. Although the resulting reporting is balanced, that balance may be a false one. Both sides of a dispute do not necessarily have equally valid claims” (p. 169). The act of quoting two individuals or parties with two distinct opinions does not necessarily bring about fair reporting because stories have more than two sides.
In political coverage, as well, fairness is not necessarily so cut and dried. According to Davis “Buzz” Merritt (1995), a former newspaper editor and critic of traditional journalistic practices, journalists contribute to a “myth” of objectivity grounded in the theory that each story only has two sides (p. 20). Like Jamieson and Waldman, Merritt acknowledges the multidimensionality of news content, particularly with issues pertaining to democracy and the political process. Despite the perception that political stories have two sides, political coverage is actually more complicated.

The body of criticism of political coverage has grown significantly in the past 20 years. This criticism addresses the shift in public perception toward a view of the media as deliberately controversial (Capella and Jamieson, 1997; Merritt, 1995). As these perceptions have emerged, critics and practitioners have developed and examined a particular newsmaking process that responds to public perception with the belief that attentiveness to the public’s voiced needs for news coverage can help to reduce negative sentiment toward news coverage, particularly during political campaigns.

Merritt’s “public journalism” articulates the need for journalists to participate in “public life” – that is, they must engage with audiences in a way that re-ignites public participation in democratic processes. Thus, journalists cannot operate under the more traditional notion of detachment but must do their work with a sense of “purposefulness and declared intent” (1996, p. 30).

This re-conception of journalism, especially in today’s divisive political climate, rejects the notion that either “neutrality” or “objectivity” is possible or even desirable. Instead, it calls on journalists to assume greater responsibility for finding out and
reporting on what is important to their audiences, and to not divorce their roles as citizens from their roles as watchdogs of policy and public officials.

This sense of “purpose,” as outlined by Merritt, assigns a degree of rhetorical agency to journalists that heretofore has not explicitly been acknowledged. Professional and academic literature on the journalistic practices of photographers and of copy editors, who write news headlines, alludes to this same sense of purpose, suggesting that photographers and copy editors, too, may be embracing a greater degree of rhetorical agency than is traditionally acknowledged by journalists.

**News photography: Professional practice and critical responses**

Photographs have become one of the most important parts of newspapers. Scholars and practitioners emphasize, in addressing some of the many challenges they face, that the growth of mass-media culture has driven newspapers from a largely print medium into a multimodal medium. “The impact that news photography has on readers is as vital to a newspaper’s mission as are the words that its reporters write” (Rios, 2004, p. 39). Emerging research on the implications of photojournalism as part of a newspaper’s content reflects this attitude.

Above all, photojournalists, as well as their critics, agree that news imagery must carry the same basic news values as news stories: fairness and accuracy. Scholar Julianne H. Newton describes the purpose of photojournalism as instrumental in people’s understanding of the world around them:

Good visual reportage may very well be the only credible source of reasonably true images in decades to come. The heart of
photojournalism is reporting human experience accurately, honestly, and with an overriding sense of social responsibility. The key to earning and maintaining public trust is increasing awareness of the process of visual reporting and its potential to inform or misinform (2001, p. x).

Much criticism of news photography centers on photojournalism practices, in an attempt to raise public awareness of the challenges of visual newsgathering – a similar approach to the one suggested by Lowrey (2002) pertaining to newsroom practices as a whole.

A practical, methodological approach to photo criticism has greatly influenced the kinds of studies that have emerged on photojournalism. Barnhurst describes three main critical approaches: the first involves the study of images for form and content; the second involves observation of photographers and photo editors as they work; and the third, less prevalent, category involves audience response to content or form (1993, p. 63).

All of these analytical approaches serve to address the issue at the center of photojournalistic debate: ethics. Scholars and photojournalists agree that photojournalists’ difficulties hinge on their ability to achieve fairness and accuracy under conditions that are rarely comfortable, largely because “reporting the news frequently and necessarily focuses on people in distress.” Toward the goal of protecting photojournalists’ rights as well as upholding standards of discretion, many media organizations have professional codes of ethics that “stand as guidelines for not harming subjects” (Newton, 2001, p. 71).
In addition to ethical considerations, scholars have developed what are commonly referred to as “codes” that photojournalists follow in their day-to-day work in order to elicit the most natural visual response from a subject and do so in the fairest way possible (Barnhurst, 1993; Schwartz, 1992). What emerges from such considerations of the making of news photography are a prescribed set of routines that help normalize the kinds of images that are available for news photographers and photo editors to choose from in planning a day’s coverage. This normalization has its drawbacks. “By following the standard approach, photojournalists may unintentionally reiterate a set of beliefs about people. As played out in photo essays, the planned shots often assume a hero and a victim” (Barnhurst, 1993, p. 62). In order to combat this kind of stereotyping, Barnhurst suggests innovation in content and in form.

A significant portion of the professional criticism of photojournalism centers on the practical challenges of political coverage. Campaigns actively seek to stage every public move a candidate makes, thereby limiting the opportunity for photojournalists to pursue innovative and spontaneous shots (Rios, 2004; Irby, 2004). Thus, journalists who do not have special access to the less-public aspects of campaigns frequently cannot capture the kinds of “more genuine” shots that can help circumvent the cultural stereotyping that Barnhurst says is counterintuitive to journalistic values. The environment that photojournalists need in order to make photos that meet news standards requires “delicate balancing of building relationships while at the same time maintaining editorial independence” (Irby, 2004, p. 42).
Rios, however, assigns responsibility for news judgment in political photojournalism to more than just the photographer on assignment.

In fairness, candidates do make impromptu stops and visits in the frenzy of the daily campaign. And these spontaneous moments, these candid slices of life, make for better documentary photographs. But at the end of a reporting day, when most newspaper editors need to make decisions about what the paper’s political coverage is going to look like, these more candid pictures usually don’t win out over the more elaborate, well-crafted photo op from a scheduled campaign stop where a speech was made or a major rally held (2004, p. 39).

In other words, photographers alone are not responsible for coverage. Images appear in newspapers as part of a collaborative effort of photographers, photo editors, and other editors who contribute to the visual news judgment of the day.

And yet this collaboration is made difficult by the demands of the day-to-day routine. “The constant deadline pressures and daily demands on photo editors to produce relevant, newsworthy images can leave little or no time for meaningful discussions regarding the photographs’ impact on readers” (Rios, 2004, pp. 39-40). This absence of deliberation and/or inability to deliberate on meaning in images may be a contributor to the alienation of readers: If editors are not able to weigh fully the consequences of their choices, they may choose images that leave unintended impressions on readers.

Much of the academic criticism that has emerged in the past 20 to 25 years seeks to include issues of interpretation in the dialogue on photojournalism practice, based on the broad categories that Barnhurst identifies.

The role of image-making in political photojournalism was first addressed in the 1980s. Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987) discussed the fact that public relations consultants for political candidates have the ability to shape candidates’ images in a way
that can influence voters’ preferences. “At stake is the belief in a responsible electorate – an electorate which is able to see the candidates for who they are and vote accordingly” (p. 31). This determination, which came just before the emergence of Merritt’s public journalism, begins to explore the ways in which strategic communication is working against journalistic values. Studies during that same period by Moriarty and Garramone (1986) and Moriarty and Popovich (1991) focused on how candidates’ facial expressions in photographs influenced readers’ perceptions about a newspaper’s attitude toward a candidate.

Waldman and Devitt (1998) worked with the criteria for evaluation developed by Moriarty and Popovich to conduct a study of news visuals in the 1996 presidential election. By studying photos using five measures – expression, activity, interaction, background, and camera angle – they argued that photos conveyed a variety of “subtle cues” regarding a candidate’s abilities (pp. 305-306).

Ultimately, Waldman and Devitt found that audience perceptions of newspapers as having “liberal bias” are largely unfounded, and that most instances of bias in visual depictions of candidates are strategic – that is, they favor a candidate’s “relative position” in a race as ahead or behind. Despite their deliberation on a campaign’s visual strategies, though, the authors said that campaign strategy is not the only factor influencing the visual outcome of the news:

A day’s worth of campaigning will produce a variety of photographs of a candidate, some happy, some glum, some determined, some silly. Newspaper editors must choose which of these shots to use in the next day’s edition and which to discard. These choices will have a substantial effect on how the candidate is perceived by readers. In some cases, how complimentary a photograph is to a candidate will be
Beyond deadlines

out of the editor’s control. Indeed, a well-run campaign will make sure to show the candidate in flattering scenes. (1998, p. 309)

Visual depictions of candidates, as illustrated here, rest not just with campaigns that are actively manipulating both the candidate and the media, but also with photographers and – perhaps most importantly – the photo and news editors who actively exercise news judgment in their daily choices. Visual journalists work to reclaim rhetorical agency from campaign strategists – not for the purpose of advancing a particular agenda, but for the purpose of innovation as a means to depart from the so-called “canned” nature of political events.

Coleman and Wasike (2004) were the first to examine visual coverage of an election in respect to the goals of public journalism, which in the past 15 years has become widely practiced among major metropolitan newspapers. With public-journalism visuals defined as those that focused on citizens’ concerns and policy issues rather than on “horse-race” aspects of the campaign process, the authors found that visual coverage that is public-journalism oriented is increasing but still a significantly small part of the overall visual coverage. “These findings are not a very clear and convincing sign of holistic integration of public journalism goals. It should be fairly easy to translate many of these public journalism characteristics into graphic elements, yet that is not being done” (p. 469).

Many newspapers are shifting their focus away from the so-called horse race aspects of political coverage, or at least devoting a more proportionate amount of attention to citizen concerns. Thus, earlier studies that focused solely on how visual
representations of candidates may not offer sufficient insight into how a newspaper is depicting campaigns as a whole. Trends in visual research demonstrate the desire among scholars to find newer and more reflective ways to study images in the media.

One approach that has emerged in the past decade is the study of visual rhetoric. According to Barnhurst, Vari and Rodriguez (2004), rhetorical studies have been influential in the exploration of “how images construct, memorialize, and haunt aspects of national cultural memory.” Close readings of photographs (such as those pursued by Hariman and Lucaites in 2002 and 2003) study how imagery embodies “moments in history.”

Visual rhetoric has offered an analytical foundation for imagery that crosses boundaries of genre to examine both representation and potential audience response. Much of the work that is taking place regarding visual rhetoric and news imagery pertains to ideology and political iconography and the potential for response – without necessarily directly interrogating an audience. This approach is not unique to rhetoric: “Purely rhetorical studies, like the mass media books and mainline journal articles we examined, consider how major events or photographic histories interact with cultural memory, public myths, and politics” (Barnhurst, Vari and Rodriguez, 2004, p 627). Although this scholarship does not address people interpret imagery in the same way that purely journalistic scholarship does, it establishes a foundation for meaning that deserves greater consideration in journalism scholarship, for it is the *meaning* that reaches audiences and not the process.
The various participants in the professional dialogue complicate the process of understanding and critiquing of meaning in visual content. Journalism scholarship addresses a sense of shared responsibility – that is, shared between journalists and their readers – for the visual result of a day’s news coverage. Scholars also say that news producers must choose visuals that represent political candidates and events fairly and accurately. This challenge is complicated by the work of political image-makers, who seek to represent candidates in the most positive light possible, regardless of the circumstances of the day’s events.

A study of political photojournalism in rhetorical terms offers critics the opportunity to study campaign imagery with an eye for the social, cultural, and political implications of the visual content as well as the processes that help shape the news product. If contemporary photojournalism is grounded in Barnhurst’s “conscious composition,” then the study of imagery must rest on more than candidates’ facial expressions or a few other prominent elements that have been identified by scholars in the past as significant in interpretation. Visual rhetoric gives critics the tools to study all components of an image and thus account for the depiction of the entire moment captured visually – since, it has been established, most political events are carefully constructed in their entirety.

We cannot examine the influence of images on interpretation without also considering the meaning-making potential that headlines also carry. Research has demonstrated that although verbal and visual communication represent two different “subsystems” in a news product, they are intertwined in a way that suggests cognitive and
affective reactions can be transferred and “pooled” (Coleman and Wasike, 2004; Garcia and Stark, 1991). Thus, we must examine the rhetorical invention and potential interpretation of images in respect to the parallel processes that guide the invention and interpretation of headlines.

**Headlines: Professional practice and critical responses**

Newspaper headlines are one of the most important discursive components of newspaper coverage. Professional literature has only recently started to address headlines and headline connotation. In the past few years, this body of work has grown, as professional training workshops and accompanying literature have conducted close examination of the language in headlines. In particular, scrutiny and training have focused on headlines and their ability to engage readers through the use of rhetorical figures (Throckmorton, 2004; Sheets, 2004; LaRocque, 2004). Kramer (2002) said journalists should “cherish” the metaphors that emerge in particular stories. “Metaphors transform, they make a magician out of you. It goes far beyond the expected role of you as a reporter” (p. 15).

If, as Coleman and Wasike suggest, the study of public journalism has shortchanged visual journalism, it has forgotten entirely the craft of headline writing, which is an oft-neglected component of verbal journalism (p. 457). Headlines are largely absent from the scholarly discourse on political coverage, even though headlines work in tandem with images in more than processing terms (Garcia and Stark, 1991). They fall into the decision-making domain of copy editors and page designers, who serve as a vital
link between photo editors and story editors (Harrigan and Dunlap, 2004, p. 255). The bulk of the conversation regarding headlines, in political coverage or news coverage in general, takes place in professional literature.

The academic and professional dialogues regarding media coverage and bias suggest that headlines, as well as images, play a dominant role in the creation of meaning. A critique by Sharyn Wizda, a journalist and contributor to *American Journalism Review*, alludes to this role. “Consider the Washington Times’ headlines on stories about the candidates’ appearances on ‘Oprah’ – ‘Bush opens up to Oprah with humor, candor,’ as compared with ‘Oprah’s softballs allow Gore to score.’”

Journalists acknowledge the interpretive challenges of headlines. ACES devotes significant attention to the craft of headline writing in an attempt to reconcile the values of fairness and accuracy with the desire to employ creative language as a means to get readers’ attention. Conference presenters highlight the value of poetic language, especially metaphor (Sheets, 2004; Throckmorton, 2004), while addressing the journalistic exigencies of fairness and clarity. According to newsroom trainer Hank Glamann, “the (copy) desk writes some of the most important and best-read words in every edition: those in big black type” (Crowley, 2004).

Just as reporters are seeking new ways to report news, often using literary devices such as metaphor, copy editors are working to engage audiences by writing headlines that grab readers’ attention but are still faithful to journalistic principles of balance and fairness. In his ACES presentation, Throckmorton outlined the importance of “startling” newspaper readers with unexpected word choices that are vibrant and evoke compelling
images of the content of a story. Such choices, he said, result in headlines that are rich and lively in their ability to use imagery and metaphor to convey a story’s content.

Metaphor, it would appear, is actively sought out as a means to communicate with newspaper readers. And if headlines are a dominant focus of readers’ and critics’ attention, then it is likely that their focus rests with headlines and the meanings they impart, thus reinforcing the importance of headlines as meaning-makers in newspaper discourse.

Metaphorical analysis could be a useful means by which to examine headlines and their connotations, and thus deal with interpretive problems in news content. Metaphor’s role in the craft of headline-writing is twofold: It demonstrably emerges through the conscious and unconscious choices made by copy editors, but it also is an inherent part of subjects in the news, particularly in political content.

Although metaphorical criticism has not been directly applied to headlines in newspapers, critics have studied metaphor in a variety of other news media, and in the context of political coverage. For example, Baym’s study of the metaphor of “illumination” in coverage of the Watergate and Lewinsky scandals acknowledges the conceptual power of the metaphor. “In a given metaphor, the understandings, assumptions, and emotions associated with a ‘source domain’ are mapped onto a ‘target domain,’ rendering the target knowable in familiar terms” (Baym, 2003, p. 635). The metaphor of illumination is more than a linguistic expression or “surface” metaphor: The metaphor justifies “assumptions, inclusions, and omissions” in coverage (p. 636). In identifying the surface metaphors as well as examining the underlying metaphorical
systems, Baym found that news outlets conveyed authority through the “light” of masculine-dominant authority during Watergate; during the Lewinsky scandal, the same metaphor highlighted the histrionic qualities of the news (news as staged spectacle). According to Baym, meaning in metaphors has much to do with the cultural and political climate in which they are used.

According to Winfield, Friedman and Trisnadi (2002), the media must convey news in a way that is understandable to the public. In their analysis of post-Sept. 11 news coverage, they found that history provided context for the events in the form of metaphor and analogy. “When a horrific event occurs … people naturally struggle with how to understand what has happened. Journalists are charged with helping in that struggle, to explain the why becomes as critical as the basic who, what and when” (p. 298).

Analogies and metaphors assign meaning to events in an immediate sense; once that meaning has been established, the use of metaphor and analogy subsides in favor of economic and sociological factors, parts of what the authors call “the continuous present.” Although political news, in particular, does not necessarily reflect the kind of societal turmoil that the events of Sept. 11 did, it does carry parallels regarding the immediate need for public recognition. Just as Baym found that cultural and political factors influence the use of particular metaphors, this study found that cultural and political factors also influence audience understanding of metaphors.

Jack Lule (2004) acknowledged the potential for metaphorical criticism in a variety of news coverage and urged greater consideration of the influence metaphor has over news coverage - particularly of the 2003 Iraq war coverage. Lule’s analysis is
particularly useful for the purposes of justifying rhetorical analysis of newspaper headlines because he worked with snippets of television broadcasts that are actually communicated in writing, in the form of “banners” across the television screen. These banners help orient viewers to the subject at hand using only a few words, and words chosen to stimulate maximum interest and create maximum impact - just as newspaper headlines do.

In particular, Lule focused on banners that television networks use with their broadcasts, which consist of two or three words that identify and provide context for the text of the story. In his study, he found that specific metaphorical phrases in *NBC Nightly News* worked to promote the administration’s agenda.

Rather than investigate, analyze, or debate the rationale for war, the broadcast instead offered, through metaphor, a dramatization of war unfolding. Accepting that the nation was on a *timetable*, dismissing inspections as the *games of Saddam*, giving voice to the frustration of the White House as it *lost patience* with the process, the broadcast then simply reported how the administration might *make its case* and *sell its plan*. (p. 187)[emphasis in original]

Following this indictment, Lule did not argue against the use of metaphors altogether. He found, like others, that metaphors are an ever-present and necessary part of political discourse. Rather, he studied the implications of particular metaphors and offered alternatives that would highlight the importance of intelligent debate regarding a particular issue (p. 188) – promoting the broad journalistic goal of inspiring dialogue and action without suggesting to the public one particular course of action.
If conventions in headline-writing and news photography are perpetuating bias and other problems in coverage – and literature reviewed in this chapter implies that this is the case – then perhaps it is necessary to pursue an approach that views coverage from outside those conventions. According to Barnhurst, we need to embrace an experiential and critical thinking approach to journalism. Rhetoric, particularly the study of metaphor and of visual depiction, offers a means by which to do this. Selected scholarship demonstrates, through the careful consideration of nuances in political coverage, that journalists are already thinking in rhetorical terms, if not explicitly expressing it using a rhetorical framework.
Chapter 2

Rhetorical theory and the analysis of photos and headlines in newspaper political coverage

Contemporary journalism literature pertaining to headlines and news photography does not directly address the creation of meaning in explicitly rhetorical terms. In the past 30 years, however, rhetorical literature has been exploring the implications of a variety of public discourse, with a particular focus on political speechmaking and the media, which could be useful for arriving at a methodology for analyzing headlines and photographs in newspaper political coverage.

The scholarship of Kathleen Hall Jamieson, in particular, offers a view of the growing correlation between rhetorical scholarship and journalism. Jamieson’s scholarship in the past 20 years or so has deliberately drawn together media and rhetorical scholarship as a means to scrutinize public figures as well as the media for their respective conduct during election cycles. Jamieson and Campbell (1997) argued that media does rhetorical work on two counts. “News is persuasive not simply in what it covers … but also in how it is presented” (p. 78). As evidence of this persuasive capacity, they examined various elements of broadcast and print media, holding up for scrutiny television camera work, print and sound editing, and the use of anonymous sources.

News coverage becomes persuasion when language is used to create insinuations, when news coverage supports or opposes governmental policies, and when self-censorship suppresses certain kinds of news stories…. In all these instances, the news media influence us, not simply by selecting what events they will
cover, but by deciding how these events should be treated and interpreted. (p. 113)

Other rhetorical scholars, as well, have recently made this connection between news coverage and rhetorical theory. Lule (2004), as discussed in Chapter 1, examines metaphors in television coverage from a rhetorical context, specifically using the theories of Burke (1962), as well as Lakoff and Johnson (1980), to provide a critical vocabulary for his work. According to Barnhurst, Vari and Rodriguez (2004), this cross-disciplinary approach is becoming more common but still hovers on the periphery of scholarly work (p. 638).

Jamieson and Campbell’s examination of the media’s influence over interpretation of news events makes explicit a connection between rhetoric and news coverage that is only implicit in the journalism literature reviewed in Chapter 1. Although Jamieson studies the rhetoric of news in a variety of media and a variety of political situations, her work does not carry over to headlines and photographs, the dominant elements of newspaper coverage.

Michael Osborn, a contemporary of Jamieson in the field of political rhetoric, offers explicit analytical frameworks with his research on metaphor in public address and rhetorical depiction. This chapter will follow the path of 20th century research on metaphor and on visual rhetoric to the scholarship of Osborn, who is the first rhetorical scholar to examine the political and ideological implications of both verbal and visual discourse and does so in a way that encourages cross-disciplinary deliberation. Osborn
ultimately offers specific analytical frameworks that can be applied to the study of news headlines and photographs.

**Visual rhetoric and the analysis of newspaper photographs**

The study of visual rhetoric has emerged only in the past 20 years, with concrete and systematic schema, or outline for analysis, following some of the first attempts at applying rhetorical theory to visual media. Foss (1994) offered the first schema for the study of imagery. She argued, citing Brown (1983), that a rhetoric emerges in the texts of “architecture, paintings, sculpture, drawing, photography, and in urban, graphic, marble, steel, clay, glass, paper and ink, not to mention oils, pastels, and acrylics” (p. 213). Foss’ schema rejects previous attempts at establishing criteria that were grounded in aesthetics, in favor of a study of the function of an image – that is, analysis focuses on the effect of an image based on what the function is, how well it is communicated through the components of the medium, and an assessment of the value of the function itself (pp. 215-16). This focuses on what an image communicates without ascertaining or accounting for the creator’s intention: Foss’ schema is directly anti-intentionalist (p. 215).

Foss’ schema, however, has its detractors. Peterson (2001) responded with the contention that analyzing the cumulative effect of an image, by identifying and scrutinizing function, is logically faulty. Looking at an image as a whole, Peterson said, “supports critical circularity, divorces function from aesthetics, and reflects modernist assumptions that may work against important critical projects” (p. 21).
Peterson suggested beginning with visual stimuli in individual elements of an image, including light, line, color, perspective, shading, volume and scale. Reuniting function and aesthetics is critical to avoiding self-fulfilling criticism: “Rhetorical critics would discuss the rhetorical aspects of visual elements, that is, how they shape perception and persuade their viewers of particular ways of thinking and being” (p. 25). Because scholarship on photojournalism foregrounds composition as meaning-maker (Barnhurst, 1993; Newton, 2001; Rios, 2004; Singletary, 1978), a rhetorical analysis of news photography would have to involve the study of the individual parts that make up an image, and not simply the image as a whole. Peterson appears to align with photojournalism scholars in the consideration of perception as instrumental to interpretation.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) have established a vocabulary for the kind of elemental analysis that Peterson proposes. Kress and van Leeuwen offer a “grammar” of visual analysis, or vocabulary with which critics can study images and assign or suggest degrees of meaning and influence. This “grammar” is particularly useful for studying content in newspapers:

The growing enterprise of ‘critical discourse analysis’ seeks to show how the apparently neutral, purely informative discourses of newspaper reporting, government publications, social science reports, and so on, may in fact convey ideological attitudes just as much as discourses which more explicitly editorialize or propagandize, and how language is used to convey power and status in contemporary social interaction (pp. 12-13).
Like Campbell and Jamieson, Kress and van Leeuwen address the ways in which news does persuasive work. Here, however, we begin to see more specific attention to the visual elements of the medium. News products as a whole do serve a rhetorical function, but an examination of visuals within the newspaper offers a more specific look at a component of the news product with significant persuasive powers.

Kress and van Leeuwen, like Peterson, derive the constitution of meaning in a visual text from the components of an image and not necessarily the image-as-a-whole. This approach to the analysis of images goes hand in hand with some of the critical work that takes place regarding photojournalism. However, Kress and van Leeuwen’s work looks at the construction of meaning from the context of visual ideology: “We see images of whatever kind as entirely within the realm of ideology, as means – always – for the emergence of ideological positions, with all the complexities of that argument” (p 12). Photojournalism scholars and rhetorical scholars alike acknowledge the influence of ideology in their work; Kress and van Leeuwen address head-on that influence through the examination of the implications of a variety of components of images.

For the purposes of the study of images specifically in political coverage, however, it is necessarily to look to a scholar who provides a set of analytical questions that build on Kress and van Leeuwen’s vocabulary, giving definite shape to the broad and relatively amorphous field of visual inquiry.

Michael Osborn is a rhetorical scholar whose early work centered on metaphor in public address. In the 1970s and ‘80s, however, he turned to the study of imagery as complex representations of ideas and values within a cultural context. His theory of
rhetorical depiction, or how communicative vehicles function in overtly persuasive ways, has been acknowledged as one of the most influential theories in the study of images in public discourse and the media, according to the National Communication Association (www.natcom.org/research/Profiles/Osborn.html). Depiction “may express implicitly and simultaneously an assertion concerning the origins of a subject, a prediction of that subject’s fate, and the moral stance of the speaker”(Osborn, 1986, pp. 79-80). If journalists are the “speakers” in this rhetorical situation, then this highlights the dilemma that arises out of their desire to paint a fair picture of a political event or candidate. In rhetorical terms, Osborn addresses directly the role of the rhetor/journalist in disseminating and/or perpetuating a particular political stance. Osborn asserts that a wide variety of media and visual genres are instrumental in the spreading of political rhetoric: “Film, television, and large-circulation magazines and newspapers have become mechanisms for imprinting depictions upon limitless audiences, and by their very availability they increase the salience of strategic pictures in modern rhetoric” (1986, p. 81). The consideration of photojournalism as one of a variety of visual influences on societal perception reaffirms the need for a systematic means by which to study the rhetoric of photojournalism. Osborn’s theory of rhetorical depiction outlines some of the functions of persuasive imagery and thus offers a glimpse at some of the ways in which journalists may embrace or avoid overtly ideological imagery in visual coverage.

Osborn identifies what he calls “five functions that rhetorical depiction can serve in public communication” (p.81), which offer the opportunity to examine imagery in
respect to its political and ideological implications. Osborn’s functions provide the basis for a series of analytical questions that can foster the close examination of photojournalism in political coverage.

The vocabulary of Kress and van Leeuwen, as well, offers a way in which we can further explore the ties between Osborn and journalism practice. A key term to emerge from their work is the concept of “modality,” or the credibility of a verbal or visual representation. Just as particular phrases can be of varying modality, “visuals can represent people places and things as though they are real, as though they actually exist in this way, or as though they do not – as though they are imaginings, fantasies, caricatures, etc”(1996, p. 161). Modality offers a parallel to accuracy as a journalistic concept; Kress and van Leeuwen, however, offer a variety of social and symbolic criteria for modality that give greater breadth to Osborn’s theory, which is also based on social and symbolic representation.

In order to demonstrate how Osborn’s five functions may operate in political photojournalism, I include here and will refer to a photo published in The News & Observer on March 2, 2004, that depicts the scene of John Edwards’ concession speech following his defeat in the presidential primaries.
Depiction as presentation. “Depictions can range from the highly reflective, in a
which the rhetorical presence appears minimal or at most fugitive, to the highly symbolic,
in which implicit judgments, predictions, and professions of a communicator’s character
combine implicit judgments, predictions, and professions of a communicator’s character
combine conspicuously to color and shape the perspective offered.” Osborn divides
presentation into two types: repetitive and innovative. Repetitive presentation, he says,
reinforces consensus and “implies shared evaluative outlooks” through culturetypes² and
stereotypes (pp. 81-82).

² Osborn defines a culturetype as a category of culture-specific symbols that “evolve and change along with
the drift in culture” (1986, p. 92). An apt example of this would be the “W” that came to dominate
Innovative presentation, on the other hand, expresses an awareness of the limiting nature of repetitive presentation through metaphor. “By definition, metaphor crosses and disturbs patterns of expectation established by repetitive presentation.”(p. 82).

The issue of repetitive versus innovative presentation plays out in photojournalism as a distinction, for example, between “photo op” images and more original and/or spontaneous images captured during moments that are not necessarily planned by campaign image-makers.

Visual repetition emerges in news photography in the use of campaign literature and symbols – as recognized by photojournalism critics and referred to by Osborn as “icons” and “God-and-devil terms” – and in the potential contrasts that emerge in juxtapositions of events, attitudes and moods, as described by Erickson. Facial expressions and body language are significant in characterizing one candidate as “superior” to another.

In the March 2 photo, the presentation could be construed as repetitive: It captures a variety of campaign icons, including several depictions of the American flag and other patriotic emblems. On the other hand, the image is also innovative in that it does not conform to the typical presentation of a candidate at a lectern following a victory or defeat. Edwards, in fact, is not even explicitly visible in this image – the focus is on the scene and not the candidate.

President Bush’s campaign rhetoric. The “W” appeared on bumper stickers and signs in endorsement of the president; ironically, detractors of Bush have commonly referred to him, in a derogatory way, as “Dubya.” This term (or symbol) is a culturetype because the meaning shifted over time, taking on a different political timbre based on which party used it and how.
**Depiction as intensification.** This function of depiction focuses on the role of *pathos*, a rhetorical appeal to emotion, in the interpretation of images. “By engaging us in our perceptions, intensification counts on a certain tendency of our rationality to establish distance between ourselves and objects of perception. Thus through its intensifying function, rhetorical depiction invites action and discourages us from becoming detached onlookers of life” (p. 88).

Kress and van Leeuwen refer to this notion of intensification as involvement. Involvement, to them, can be gauged by examining the camera’s gaze, and color and composition as signifiers. When photographers capture a scene from the side, at an oblique angle, they remove themselves, editorially speaking, from the picture. “The photographer has not aligned her/himself with the subject … but viewed them ‘from the sidelines’” (1996, p. 141). A frontal angle, on the other hand, demonstrates involvement with the “represented participants” (p. 143).

Likewise, the vertical angle of an image can influence the relationship between the image’s subject and the audience, and thus helps establish an interpretive dynamic based on *pathos* and *ethos*, an appeal to the authority of a rhetor. Kress and van Leeuwen describe the way in which the perspective on a subject can perpetuate intensification:

If a represented participant is seen from a high angle, then the relation between the interactive participants (the producer of the image, and hence also the viewer) and the represented participants is depicted as one in which the interactive participant has power over the represented participant – the represented participant is seen from the point of view of power. If the represented participant is seen from a low angle, then the relation between the interactive and represented participants is depicted as one in which the represented participant has power over the interactive participant. If, finally, the picture is at eye level, then the point of view is one
of equality and there is no power difference involved (1996, p. 148).

According to these assigned values, a subject of an image or a photographer can wield authority. If the subject of the photo overtly conveys *ethos* in a news photo, however, it could potentially be interpreted as an endorsement of that candidate. On the other hand, if the photographer is in the authoritative position – that is, *above* the subject or the activity – it could be potentially interpreted as *ethos* or as journalistic detachment, depending on the content of the image.

For example, the March 2 photo captured the scale of the event because it was shot from above the crowd and the back of the room, intensifying the sense of large-scale support for Edwards and retaining Edwards’ *ethos* through context instead of proximity. This depiction stood in contrast to the news of the day: Edwards was in the process of dropping out of the presidential race based on a lack of nationwide support for his candidacy. However, the angle of the photo, from above and clearly at a distance, suggests a kind of journalistic detachment from Edwards’ *ethos*, or power as a candidate to garner support.

The context of an image also contributes to ways in which intensification could take place: A photograph’s background can contribute to how it interprets reality. “Within the naturalistic coding orientation, the absence of setting lowers modality. By being ‘decontextualized’, shown in a void, represented participants become generic, a ‘typical example’, rather than particular, and connected with a particular location and a specific moment in time” (pp. 165-66). Kress and van Leeuwen offer a continuum of
contextualization that suggests that over- or underarticulation of a subject’s surroundings in an image can contribute to an impression of either a generic moment or one that is “hyperreal,” or exaggerated in its depiction of a subject or event.

Color, as well, can contribute to intensification in an image. Kress and van Leeuwen refer to color in terms of cues that help establish the degree of naturalism of an image. Color saturation is instrumental in distinguishing the “real” from the “hyperreal.” “When [images] are more saturated, we judge them exaggerated, ‘more than real’, excessive. When they are less saturated we judge them ‘less than real’, ethereal’, for instance, or ‘ghostly’” (p. 163).

Kress and van Leeuwen’s visual theories reflect some of the principles articulated in photojournalism scholarship. According to Douglis (2004), “color attracts the eye and stimulates the senses. It also gives an identity to subjects that black and white imagery can’t. Color itself can also symbolize ideas that help convey meaning” (p. 52).

The implications of color, composition, and contextualization are significant in a political situation. Strategically arranged by political image-makers, these events use large-scale campaign iconography as backdrops for a speech or rally, as the March 2 photo demonstrates. In the effort to capture innovative images that do not unnecessarily include such campaign propaganda, photojournalists may sacrifice contextualization and thus end up with a too-generic image.

*Depiction as identification.* Osborn claimed that “another great resource of depiction is its capacity to facilitate identification, the sense of closeness or oneness that
can develop among those who participate in social communication.” Identification occurs with the emergence of shared symbols in a depiction, including culturetypes, stereotypes, icons, and “God-and-devil terms,” which “offer hierarchy and symbolic structure for the developing group identity” (p. 89).

This type of shared identity can also emerge visually as described by Kress and van Leeuwen, through close-up shots of an individual to whom an audience may not necessarily have that kind of access, and through parallel vertical and horizontal angles, which connote closeness and identification with a subject.

An example of potential identification in a news photograph would be a close-up shot of a high-profile person, which would place readers in a kind of proximity with a public figure that they would not normally have. Another possible point of identification would be the portrayal of public figures in a capacity that does not necessarily pertain to their public function, such at home or with family members. Again, these depictions would have to be deliberated on in the context of the news event.

In the March 2 image, identification is fostered through the use of the red, white and blue icons – icons that are not necessarily partisan but relatively far-reaching, demonstrating that identification is not wholly a negative (or overtly persuasive) function of depiction. Conversely, this image does not contribute to any identification with Edwards himself because he is so far in the distance that he is hardly visible. If any human identification takes place – falling into the category of a rhetorical appeal to pathos – it is with the audience members who, through patriotic symbolism, carry the
shared identity of Americans amid the implied shared identity as Edwards supporters. Identification can emerge in a variety of ways.

*Depiction as implementation.* “Implementation includes the classical idea of deliberative rhetoric, for it has to do with designs for the future” (p. 93). These “designs” involve the repetitive presentation and composition associated with a particular person or ideology, encouraging establishment of culturetypes. For instance, if images of a public figure repeatedly show him in moments that foster identification (the pathos of a tight crop revealing a “human” moment, or bonding with family), they may reinforce the idea that the person is sensitive, or family oriented. These attributes can be relevant in a political situation, but the sustaining of such representations by the media may suggest overt editorializing on the part of journalists.

In other words, sustained repetition of iconic elements in an image may contribute to a sense that a newspaper is trying to advance a particular depiction of a candidate. For instance, the depiction of the crowd in the March 2 photo does not necessarily promote widespread support for Edwards, but repeated, similar depictions of such crowds at Edwards campaign events might suggest that support for Edwards is greater than it is, or that the newspaper hopes to sustain an image of the largess of Edwards campaign events.

*Depiction as reaffirmation.* Osborn says that the final function of depiction confirms a particular identity through the stereotypes and archetypes outlined in the other functions of rhetorical depiction. This function is largely ceremonial: “Heroes, martyrs, villains, and the role of the people are recalled and renewed in common appreciation.” This statement evokes the rhetorically challenging situations in which photojournalists do
their work during campaigns. Victory and concession rallies and speeches fall under the umbrella of Aristotle’s epideictic rhetoric, and “successful epideictic often invites us to contemplate in concrete embodiment the great moral truths that continue to offer meaning and direction in our lives” (p. 95).

Photojournalists seek to record moments of success and defeat and capture the accompanying emotions without exhibiting a particular endorsement. The function of reaffirmation prompts questions that pertain to how persistently particular kinds of images and symbols permeate news coverage. Does the image engage ritual to the point of glorification? Or does the image encourage “social judgment and deliberation”? (p. 95). Given that much of the public image-making of politicians serves to establish and reinforce an archetypal notion about candidates or issues, reaffirmation would appear to be a function that journalists should seek to avoid.

Reaffirmation depends to a degree of the cumulative effect of the depictions contained in a variety of visual images. For example, on March 2, the combination of images that depicted Edwards on the day he conceded his loss in the primaries could arguably represent a reaffirmation of Edwards as the ideal candidate: He was shown at home, writing his speech; playing with his daughter, deliberating on a point from the stage, framed by a larger-than-life representation of the American flag; and addressing supporters in the gymnasium of the high school his deceased son attended. These images of great pathos and ethos fulfill all five functions of Osborn’s rhetorical depiction.

Ultimately, Osborn’s theory provides a means to interrogate content, composition and symbolism in images. This interrogation could contribute to a more thoughtful
consideration of how politics influences news visuals. Photojournalists attempt to capture fair and accurate depictions of political events by, among other approaches, avoiding the “staged” moments that help to frustrate broader journalistic goals in a political context. By addressing the issue of how visual representations of political news events operate within Osborn’s “five functions” of rhetorical depiction, we can begin to arrive at some conclusions regarding the fairness of political images in newspapers.

**Metaphor theory and the analysis of headlines**

Journalism literature broadly implies that metaphor and other stylistic devices are separate from the “facts,” or the content of a story (Throckmorton, 2004; McIntyre 2004). However, metaphor is not only prevalent in linguistic expression; rhetoricians have deemed it part of the human conceptual system (Richards, 1936; Burke, 1962; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). In addition to shedding light on the layers of meaning embedded in news headlines, as it has done for other mass media, metaphor analysis might add a critical dimension to journalism analysis that has, up until this point, been lacking: It would study, in depth, the weight of language choices and their potential interpretive consequences. It would also highlight the importance of copy editors’ understanding of the words and phrases they choose to convey ideas in news reporting.

Metaphor criticism originated in the 1930s in the consideration of metaphor as a stylistic device in literature (Richards, 1936). Up to that point, metaphor was largely considered mere ornamentation for plainer language. Richards, Burke, and Osborn and
Ehninger (1962) were the first rhetoricians to consider metaphor as a meaning-making device, particularly in public discourse. According to Osborn and Ehninger, “metaphor in rhetorical discourse may well be a complicated linguistic mechanism which both results from, and gives rise to, even more complex mental experience. Because of this double grounding, the occurrence of metaphor in rhetoric renders particularly challenging and important such problems” as memory, invention, and cognition (p. 234).

Although Osborn and Ehninger largely considered the study of metaphor within the context of oratory, their theory carries significant implications for other forms of public discourse. As Walter Fisher says, all human communication is governed by metaphor or symbolic action (Cooper, 2004, p. 425). The newspaper headline is simply one example of this communication, and frequently headlines work to convey meaning imparted in the context of oratory, particularly in political coverage.

Lakoff and Johnson were among the first scholars to examine specific metaphors that are embedded in our understanding of individual concepts. They position metaphor as both a conceptual and a linguistic structure that helps an audience understand and experience “one kind of thing in terms of another” (p. 5). Furthermore, they examine a variety of familiar metaphors based on connotation and context.

Particularly notable is Lakoff and Johnson’s discussion on systematicity, or how well a metaphor follows established patterns of expression. In particular, they use the metaphor of verbal argument as war to illustrate the symbiotic nature of an idea and its metaphorical system:

Expressions from the vocabulary of war…form a systematic way of talking about the battling aspects of arguing. It is no accident
that these expressions mean what they mean when we use them to talk about arguments. A portion of the conceptual network of battle partially characterizes the concept of an argument, and the language follows suit. Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities (p. 7).

Osborn does this in his examination of archetypal metaphors in public discourse. Archetypal metaphors, or metaphors that create “strong positive and negative associations” through the juxtaposition of opposing images, such as light and dark, have the ability to “express intense value judgments” that can elicit direct responses from an audience (Osborn, 1967, p. 117).

Osborn and others largely consider archetypal metaphors prevalent in political discourse because of their persuasive force. But, as scholarship suggests, archetypal metaphors are more than expressions, particularly in political discourse. In the vein of Lakoff and Johnson’s theory of metaphorical concepts, political events are defined by the metaphor(s) that embody them. In political discourse, metaphor functions as a means of “simplifying and giving meaning” to ideas and events that are otherwise incomprehensible to the public. According to political scientist Murray Edelman, audiences need metaphors to aid in comprehension:

In place of a complicated empirical world, men [sic] hold to a relatively few, simple, archetypal myths, of which the conspiratorial enemy and the omnicompetent hero-savior are the central ones. In consequence, people feel reassured by guidance, certainty, and trust rather than paralyzed by threat, bewilderment, and an unwanted personal responsibility for making judgments (1971, p. 83).
Just as political discourse works to elicit concrete response from an audience, coverage of political events nets some of the strongest reactions from readers and from professional peers and scholars (Wizda, 2001). Wizda acknowledges that elections necessitate images of opposition, as they necessarily pertain to “a stark juxtaposition of winners and losers.” Newspapers characterize this juxtaposition, traditionally, through the “argument as war” metaphor.

The mere presence, then, of archetypal metaphors is in itself not necessarily at issue. According to Lakoff and Johnson, a chosen metaphor “partially characterizes” an argument. The archetypes that are dominant in political discourse and news coverage may be necessary to a clear understanding of the issue or event at hand. Given, however, that these archetypes have systems, we must examine how headlines operate within these systems: what kinds of specific imagery the individual metaphors and their context convey, and how that imagery may be interpreted.

The relationship between and among the public, the political establishment, and the media is complex. The political establishment disseminates an overt rhetoric; the media ideally work to “neutralize” that rhetoric. The public continues to accuse the media of endorsing political rhetoric. The media cannot report on politics without encountering overt rhetoric, and the public needs the media in order to plug into political activities.

Metaphoric analysis could work to make sense of this complex relationship. It could move beyond internal newsroom politics (as well as a variety of scholarly assumptions regarding the newsmaking process) to tap into journalists’ invention processes and discover the inspiration and motivation for metaphor choices. Ultimately,
such analysis enables critics to study the effects constituted by the text itself and “talk about effect without talking about audiences in a sociological sense” (C.R. Miller, ENG 516 lecture, October 21, 2004). Also, it serves to probe motivation and process and thus the origins of metaphorical choices (Osborn, 1967). This kind of analysis acknowledges the ever-changing nature of both newspaper and audience.

The methods on which metaphorical criticism is built vary based on discipline. Cognitive linguists, media critics, and rhetorical scholars study metaphor using a variety of perspectives. What all share, however, is the agreement that the metaphorical ground – that is, the similarities between the originating idea and the image (or system, in Lakoff and Johnson’s terms) applied to the idea – is a vital part of interpretation. Analysis would examine the relationship between the tenor, or the subject of the metaphor, and the vehicle, or “the item for association,” “which in their meaningful action together determine psychologically the appearance and sense of a metaphor” (Osborn, 1967, p. 228). Through the use of metaphors, a rhetor works to direct interpretation without necessarily appearing to do so, and use familiar items for association to guide interpretation.

The tenor and the vehicle are not the only elements that guide interpretation. Beyond the basic components of the metaphor, “qualifiers” create lines of association that aid in comprehension of metaphors. According to Osborn, “qualifiers assure that the associational process by which vehicle is related to tenor will not occur at random, but that, to a greater or lesser degree, the maker of a metaphoric stimulus can predict the
sense in which his figure will be received” (p. 228). The rhetor provides context in verbal cues to guide interpretation.³

The archetypal metaphor of political discourse as war, which correlates to Lakoff and Johnson’s discussion of argument as war, is the dominant metaphor (and metaphorical system) in democratic politics: Elections are “won” and “lost.” Two candidates “battle” and “duel.” Because this is the dominant metaphor for the political discourse at hand, I will return to Osborn’s analytical criteria in his study of the light-dark metaphor, a seminal look at how archetypes influence meaning in political language. “Because of their strong positive and negative associations with survival and developmental motives, such metaphors express intense value judgments and may thus be expected to elicit significant value responses from an audience” (1962, p. 117). The light-dark “family” of metaphors is one of many systems of archetypal metaphors that carry such persuasive weight – the “war” metaphor is another.

Although their goals are different, public figures (who are the focus of Osborn’s study) and copy editors face a similar challenge in choosing metaphors. While public figures seek to attract attention for the sake of political persuasion, copy editors seek to attract attention so an audience will read stories and deliberate on public affairs. Osborn’s early examination of metaphor offers a set of analytical questions that “suggest an initial pattern of inquiry” (p. 125). These questions address the following issues:

³ By way of example, a recent headline in The N&O said “It’s man vs. city in fight over bike on a tree” (A1, 4/11/2005). “Fight” could be construed in a variety of ways, particularly in the context of a news story, but the qualifier “man vs. city” demonstrates that this is not a physical fight but a legal one. Based on the relationship of the headlines, and the metaphors contained within them, to photojournalism in the newspaper, it is logical to consider the possibility that photos can serve as qualifiers for the verbal metaphors.
**Invention:** “What characterizes a speaker’s selection of items for association?”

**Organization:** “How significant is the position of an image within a speech?”

**Ethical proof:** “If he [sic] does communicate some sense of rhetorical determinism, does he [sic] attach conditions, and if so, what is their nature?”

**Motive:** What particular motive does a specific image emphasize?

**Appropriateness:** “At what moments might the non-archetype be preferable to its archetypal counterpart? (1966, pp. 125-26).

The series of questions that Osborn developed for the study of metaphor in public address could be revised to suit the purposes of inquiry into metaphor in the medium of news headlines. The application of these questions could vary based on the kinds and combinations of metaphors used in a particular headline.

Headlines are so widely read and so prominent in the hierarchy of content on a newspaper page that the need for analysis of individual metaphors is significant. Scholars and professionals must move beyond general statements about the importance of metaphors and other tropes to specific analysis of specific metaphors in order to make determinations about the influence of metaphor on news content and its interpretation. These revised questions, meant to frame specifically news editors’ work, reflect this exigency.

*What drives the choices of the news copy editor?*
*How significant is the metaphor to the organization of the news product?*
*Do other elements of the newspaper (including accompanying stories or photographs) attach conditions while engaging in the metaphor?*
*Does the implicit motive of the metaphor match the explicit motive of the newspaper?*
*To what degree do they engage with the rhetorical motives of the subject of the story?*
Are there any instances in which a non-archetypal metaphor would be more appropriate than an archetypal metaphor?

Osborn marks the progression from a theoretical and abstract definition of metaphor criticism (Burke, 1962) to one grounded in specific questions regarding the nature of metaphor (Ricoeur, 1975). Fritch and Leeper (1993) move one step further by suggesting that criteria for metaphor criticism could provide a basis for broader tropological criticism based on the widespread creation of tension between the equivalents of tenor and vehicle in other rhetorical tropes: “Irony, metonymy and synecdoche all rely to varying degrees on the creation of this tension, and studies which uncover the innerworkings [sic] of these tropes might well shed light upon how metaphorical tensions function.”

Lule (2004) echoes this sentiment. “Depending on the researcher, the concept of metaphor can be used for an array of figurative language such as metonymy and synecdoche.” This is particularly useful for the study of news in that it considers “the lexical choice (choice of word, such as the showdown) and the propositions proffered by the choice” (p. 182). If by repeating the metaphors disseminated by the subject of the news coverage the media are endorsing the status quo – which is what Lule implies – then alternatives must emerge that do not model such hegemonic language structures. Lule’s alternatives are still archetypal metaphors: One suggestion, the metaphor of debate, still suggests a winner and a loser. But debate does not position the United States as a winner and the opposition as a loser.
Lule found that news producers must take more responsibility by having a greater awareness of their own metaphorical choices. Osborn’s questions offer such an opportunity by assigning agency to the creator of the metaphor. Politicians receive credit for the metaphors they use in their rhetoric. Journalists, however, do not generally claim rhetorical agency, perhaps because agency suggests bias. Reclaiming this agency requires closer examination of journalists’ metaphorical choices as well as how they choose to portray the metaphors of politics. Inquiry into metaphors and their implications, as undertaken by Osborn, offers critics and journalists the opportunity to interrogate their choices on a level as yet unexplored.

The contemporary rhetorical theories that guide these avenues for analysis of headlines and photographs may use vocabularies and that are not entirely familiar to journalists and journalism critics. The ideas that guide both rhetorical and journalism analysis, however, are demonstrably similar. Taken together, these critical-scholarly views on journalistic values and practices can be accessible to daily journalists and critics of daily coverage.

The purpose of pursuing rhetorical analysis in this context is to arrive at a means by which to study newspaper coverage that accounts for the influence of politics on the news product. Osborn offers ways to study both verbal and visual discourses in respect to the political implications they may carry. Furthermore, he offers thorough and systematic means by which to interrogate these texts. Ultimately, by looking to Osborn as de facto media theorist, scholars can examine the work of news copy editors, photojournalists, and
photo editors in an unprecedented way. Osborn’s approach *begins* with invention – which makes up the whole of some other analyses – and offers the opportunity to look at headlines and news photos both independently and as interrelated parts of a larger news product.
The tug-of-war between representation and perception that all journalists grapple with is especially significant in *The News & Observer*’s coverage of Election 2004. Editors who handle headlines and photos acknowledge the challenges they face in their dual role of serving the public while reporting fairly and accurately the political news of the day.

*The N&O*’s stated goals in its political coverage appear to conform broadly to the goals of public journalism. “The broad goal, the broadest goal, is to serve readers better than we have in past campaigns by focusing not on day-to-day developments while still reporting them but by focusing on issues that are of importance – by identifying the issues that are important to voters, but then studying the state of those issues,” said Eric Frederick, the news editor at *The N&O* who works with copy editors and photo editors to coordinate various elements of political coverage. Frederick said in an interview that a concerted effort has taken place to move away from particular aspects of campaigns that have figured prominently in past coverage, including stump speeches, appearances, poll results, and endorsements. “We de-emphasize what we call the horse-race elements and focus on substantive policy proposals and examining the issues that our voters had told us in polls,” he said. “What voters tell us is important, and we want to study that in light of what the candidates are proposing.”
This philosophy illustrates a shift away from what critics refer to as superficial parts of the campaign process that have received too much attention from the media in the past. And yet, Frederick said, it is not the “horse race” aspects of coverage that are garnering the most complaints: It is often the topic of a story, but most frequently individual photos and headlines.

News editors Eric Frederick and Andy Bechtel said they tell readers to whom they speak that their judgments should not be based on components of an individual day’s coverage. Rather, they say, readers should look at the newspaper’s coverage over time in gauging whether the newspaper is carrying out its goals in political coverage.

A scholarly study that embraces a rhetorical approach (as outlined in Chapter 2), and studies the impact of individual visual and verbal choices, is entirely appropriate in this context. A study of individual visual and verbal choices would better align with the perceptually based criticism of rhetoric. Also, scholarship and reader reactions imply that readers’ judgments are based on individual perceptions of individual images and headlines. A quantitative study would not address this way of reading news, but a rhetorical study would.

This analysis will study headlines and photos from three days of coverage in the hopes of catching an interpretive snapshot that would help journalists understand the potential impact of their decisions on a case-by-case basis. In this chapter, I will study the headlines and photographs of presidential coverage Nov. 2-4: coverage of the day before Election Day; Election Day; and the day after, on which a winner was declared. By using Osborn’s analytical approaches to metaphor and rhetorical depiction, I seek to adopt
critical gaze that accounts for potential audience perception and thus move toward an understanding of how readers might react to individual verbal and visual choices.

Interviews with editors and visual journalists who are responsible for headlines and photos in political coverage help provide a clear understanding of how these journalists approach their work on a day-to-day basis, thus answering (a variation on) Osborn’s first question: What are the invention processes of the journalist?

Then, I will study the headlines and photos that helped shape presidential campaign coverage using the analytical tools that Osborn provides. I will combine my analyses of headlines and photos because, according to Garcia and Stark, processing of headlines and photos are interrelated; thus, it would be most useful to simultaneously consider headlines and photos and their interpretive potential. Only then can we begin to understand some of the possibilities for meaning in these verbal and visual components.

**Headline-writing at The N&O**

As at many newspapers, the process of writing headlines is not a solo venture – it is collaboration between two or three copy editors. So although Frederick is in charge of election coverage at large, he plays little role in the crafting of headlines. “The short answer is that I sort of leave it to the copy desk to do their job,” Frederick said. “The product is finished as far as I’m concerned.” This is the point in the news process at which the story has been edited by an assigning editor and passed to copy editors for additional editing and headline-writing.
Andy Bechtel is an assistant news editor who wrote many of The N&O’s headlines pertaining to the presidential campaign. He says that the beginning of the story is a principal aid in writing headlines. “I look for balance at the top of the article,” he says. “I don’t really have an article start with one candidate making an accusation about the other and going on for several paragraphs and the response coming at the end of the article. I’m concerned about people not reading to the end.” As he tries to make this balance reflect in the headline for a story, Bechtel said, sometimes he has to make sacrifices brought on by the spatial restrictions of the medium.

I look at the lead of a story and try to find a way to get both elements in the headline. It’s not always easy. Sometimes the main headline will be one candidate and the drop headline will be another candidate, their kind of “counterpunch” on that issue. So we might say “Bush says Kerry’s weak on Iraq” and then the drop head would say “Kerry responds he’s best to fight war on terror” or something like that, so you have a response. They might not be in the same typeface size, but that’s a compromise you have to make because you don’t have the space in the main headline to reflect both candidates’ points of view.

Space constraints provide one set of limitations; language introduces another. Copy editors are limited by space in their word choices, but they also must have a keen awareness of what their word choices connote, especially as they revise their headlines to fit into a certain space – the original meaning of their headline may shift with different word choices (Harrigan and Dunlap, 2004, p. 269).

“I try to make [the language] as neutral as possible,” Bechtel said. “I know that people will read things into things that they don’t really need to, but they will. I try to anticipate that and not use words that will do that.”
The constraints of political coverage, as well, make copy editors’ work difficult. “For better or for worse, a lot of the headlines on the debates are sort of generic headlines. You know, ‘Bush, Kerry duel’ or ‘Bush, Kerry clash.’” Such conventional headlines, Bechtel conceded, do engage figurative language despite his assertion that he and other copy editors work to avoid figured language. But, he said, precedent has helped dictate such patterns in word usage. “I’m sure if you look at 20 years’ worth of debate headlines, you’d see probably the same 10 verbs.”

Regardless of the justification for specific word choices, it is clear that copy editors consciously carry a kind of rhetorical agency in their work, even if they are not pursuing a traditional brand of argumentation. “We’re making the argument that the election is important with a capital I, that you should pay attention to it and we’re devoting all this space and photographs and headlines and energy to presenting the information because it is important to the democracy,” Bechtel said.

Bechtel’s views on headlines are similar to those expressed in journalism education and training literature. “Headlines help audiences rank the importance of stories, tell them something about the content and tone of those stories, and provide cues about the image of the news organization”(Harrigan and Dunlap, 2004 p. 254). Bechtel’s characterization of the roles that headlines and copy editors play in the news product suggests that copy editors have an awareness of their own rhetorical agency that scholarly research does not explore.

In keeping with broad news values, copy editors do not consciously seek to tell readers what to think about news events themselves. Rather, they hope to impress upon
the audience the importance of deliberation on these news events. Unlike reporters, copy editors have little time and space in which to carry out this task. If, in fact, headlines are more-processed than any other verbal discourse in the news product, then this lack of time and space compounds the copy editor’s challenges.

**Photojournalism at The N&O**

As Newton says, photojournalists face similar challenges as reporters and editors, but with the added dimension of the pursuit of visual “truth.” Like scholars and critics who examine the role of imagery in perception of political coverage, *The N&O*’s photo editor in charge of political coverage, Robert Miller, understands the weight images carry and the potential for bias within them.

Miller works with reporters and news and copy editors to try to fulfill similar goals: “to accurately show what’s occurring on the campaign trail and to be fair.” In a general sense, he said, this means that photographers do “not go out of [their] way to show an awkward moment.” Matters of concern when covering political events and news generally revolve around facial expressions and the frequency of candidates’ faces appearing in the newspaper. On the other hand, Miller said, rare “unguarded moments” in campaigns help photojournalists contribute to the broader journalistic goals in political coverage.

Another dimension of coverage is the intersection of artistry and journalism. “As good as a photo may be on the surface, we know that we’re responsible for storytelling,” Miller said. “But there’s that artistic side.” The creative aspect of photojournalism raises
issues not widely addressed in media criticism. Photographers often seek situations in which they can capture the news from a unique angle, or can take advantage of particularly dramatic lighting. Then, he says, editors must consider how appropriate the image is to the news of the day. This scenario shows how the artistic side of photojournalism can conflict with the day-to-day qualities of the news product – much as language and space can put some limitations on the work of copy editors. Just as figures of speech can influence meaning in the verbal components of the news product, artistic and environmental factors can shape meaning in the visual components.

Miller, however, struggles with additional challenges that the editors who deal with type do not face. While news and copy editors have the freedom to substantially edit stories that are from wire services – and thus craft a fairer story, whose fairness would be reflected in a headline – the ability to pick and choose among photos can be hampered by photographers’ access issues.

Particularly, in 2004, The N&O assigned a photographer to cover the Kerry-Edwards campaign because Edwards is from Raleigh, highlighting the local angle of the news situation. Because the photographer, Robert Willett, had followed Edwards since the beginning of his early presidential candidacy, the rapport he had developed with Edwards enabled him to observe Edwards and Kerry in situations that other journalists may not have been privy to. The issues of access and time differentiate the role of photographers from the role of copy editors.
With an introductory understanding of the conditions, limitations, and motives that copy editors and photo editors bring to their daily work, we begin to see that the inventional processes of journalists are multi-faceted and driven by competing demands of time, space, working conditions, and the news events of the day. All these factors and more must be taken into account in an analysis of The N&O’s headlines and photos in presidential coverage from Nov. 2-4.4

**Analysis of headlines and photos: Nov. 2, 2004**

**“Voters to get their say”**

The lead headline uses “say” as a metaphor for “vote.” As well, the use of the word “get” places ownership and agency in the election with the voters. This headline creates a rhetorical situation, through metaphors, in which voters are, first and foremost, empowered to make their voice heard in the election – a message that appears to conform with public journalism’s goal of addressing and giving precedence to the public’s needs over the candidate’s words. Thus, the implicit motive of the metaphor in the headline conforms to the explicit motive of the newspaper – to address readers’ needs and their role in the election.

**“Kerry: The Democratic challenger says the nation’s ‘hopes and dreams are on the line.’”**

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4 Color reproductions of the pages included in the scope of this study can be found in the Appendix.
This subhead that appears under the lead headline uses two metaphors. “Hopes and dreams” taps into a dominant American ideology – that of idealism – as representative of what is at stake in the election. This is a distinctly affective appeal by Kerry that the copy editor chose to include in a headline, marked by quotation marks as Kerry’s own words, thus raising the possibility that the newspaper is deliberately engaging the rhetoric of the Kerry campaign. “On the line” is a spatial metaphor that highlights both the narrow divide between two sides of popular sentiment and the urgency of the need for change. This is the same brand of metaphor engaged in the 1990s by Al Gore in the environmentalist rhetoric of “Earth in the balance.” “On the line” is an archetypal metaphor that suggests the potential for disaster if voters make the wrong choice. Because the archetype used here comes directly from a candidate, it might have been more appropriate for the copy editor to try to produce a non-archetypal alternative, or at least an alternative that did not so explicitly tap into the rhetoric of the campaign.

“This president says he is ‘optimistic about the future of this country’”

This subhead uses more subtle metaphor to convey a message. The future of “this country” is synecdoche for the people of the country, thereby providing a generalized conception of a nation made up of millions of individuals. This generalization, paired

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5 Although the practice of using a news subject’s words in quotation marks as part of a headline is common practice, we cannot exclude these words as signifiers from an analysis of headlines. Garcia (1993) advocates using “pulled” quotes as a design device, to enhance aesthetic appeal and interest. Gibson, Hester and Stewart (2001), however, found that quotations that are “pulled” or used in display type larger than the typeface of a story are influential in audience perception. “Given that it appears to be comparatively easy to influence individuals’ perceptions of social reality through the use of extracted quotation in news reports, it is imperative that journalists, whose role it is to present the most accurate view of the world and its phenomena as possible, take into consideration the manner in which they use this type of informational graphic” (p. 77). Metaphorical analysis offers the opportunity to examine in more depth how quoted matter can influence meaning.
with the aforementioned “optimism,” provides a more vague and less overtly ideological image of Bush than of Kerry.

The images on Page 1 are largely repetitive. Both candidates are shown with supporters on the campaign trail. Both candidates are reaching out to voters, who are not clearly shown; we see more hands than faces. Clearly, news designers and photo editors made an effort to show the candidates in similar positions, with similar expressions and in similar situations.

The image of Bush, however, demonstrates an intensification of the campaign-trail experience because it is a tight, close-up shot of the president, shot from below. The camera appears amid several hands reaching out, and up, to the president. The president is positioned above the hands. Based on orientation and composition, this image asserts Bush’s authority.

The image of Kerry is similar; however, the camera is situated above instead of below the hands and the candidate. Although there is a similar “clamoring” of the crowd, the effect is different because of the angle and the lighting. Kerry carries less visual authority because he appears on more of an equal footing with his supporters. The hands do not appear to be reaching up but rather across.

Neither image appears to foster a sense of closeness that encourages identification. The image of Bush creates an authoritative distance, because of the angle as well as the fact that we do not see Bush actually touching any of the hands that are reaching toward him. Kerry, on the other hand, has less space between himself and his supporters; in fact, his hands appear within the cluster of people. However, the camera
angle places the visual authority with the photographer, creating a sense of institutional distance between Kerry and the reader.

The images of the candidates are secondary to the electoral map that appears on 1A, which is four columns wide and is the dominant image on the page. The map highlights the dominant political climate of each state, using shades of red and blue, and indicates the number of electoral votes that each state has. Although the images of the candidates appear higher on the page, the map dominates both in size and in color saturation. In light of the challenge that counting electoral votes posed in Election 2000, it is clear that the distribution of electoral votes, determined by states’ political affiliations that are marked by color, is a dominant issues in this election. Based on color saturation alone, and the ideological implications of the colors, the map takes precedence over the smaller images of the candidates, even though those images are placed higher on the page.

“Cheney stumps in Colo.”

This headline, which appears on an inside page, uses traditional campaign rhetoric to illustrate Cheney’s activities, which involve last-minute campaigning. The word “stump” is fairly commonly known as a verb that characterizes the act of traveling and giving political speeches. The image is repetitive both visually and verbally in that it depicts a common activity on the campaign trail and it restates the content of the headline.
“Making case in Florida:

Edwards’ final appeal a variation on the ‘better off’ question”

The Edwards headlines – which appear on the same page as the Cheney headline – go into more, and more significant, detail. They deviate from the “campaign as war” metaphor by characterizing the campaign as a court case. The main headline for the Edwards story, which appears adjacent to (and in the same type size as) the headline about Cheney, evokes an image of Edwards in the courtroom and plays on his background as a lawyer. This metaphor is extended in the subhead in the reference to a “final appeal” – which suggests a degree of desperation while similarly making explicit the newspaper’s institutional degree of familiarity with Edwards and his history.

The photo that accompanies it, like the photo of Cheney, depicts Edwards at a late-hour campaign rally. However, the content and composition of the photo is less repetitive than the image of Cheney. He appears running across the stage before making a speech, with a crowd cheering behind him – clearly, the image was taking from onstage or a point near the stage but not facing the podium (unlike the image of Cheney). The creativity of the headline, paired with the innovation in the photograph, make these components appear less “horse-race” oriented than those pertaining to Cheney.

Overall, the headlines and images on Nov. 2 point toward the Kerry-Edwards team as more engaging than the Bush camp, through the use of fewer archetypal metaphors and more dynamic and innovative imagery. The images of Bush and Cheney are largely traditional, and the metaphors used in headlines pertaining to them are highly repetitive. Kerry and Edwards, on the other hand, are depicted as closely engaged with
their supporters and generally vibrant. The metaphors that characterize their final
campaigning use rhetoric that the running mates embraced. Based on the disparities in
representation, coverage on this day could be construed as supportive of the Democratic
candidates.

Analysis of headlines and photos: Nov. 3, 2004

“Bush leads”

This headline very briefly encapsulates the information that Bush was ahead in
the voting tallies, even though no clear outcome was determined on Election Night. The
word “leads” describes his position in the polls, but “lead” is also what a “leader” does
and hints at a more certain outcome than had been established Tuesday night. It also
suggests a spatial relationship between Bush and the American people that suggests a
degree of strength and certainty regarding outcome that had not yet been arrived at.

The effectiveness of the lead headline is called into question because of its
perhaps-inappropriate ambiguity; the subheads that accompany “Bush leads” do not
necessarily convey any ideological or hegemonic implications based on their language,
but they do not qualify the main headline. “Bush leads” demands contextual qualifiers to
aid in comprehension; instead, the headlines below it move on to other material in the
story. Another metaphor, preferably a less-loaded variation on the war/race/battle
archetype, may have served the newspaper’s purpose better.

The dominant image on the page was the only recent image of Bush available. An
informal review of the front pages of newspapers nationwide (www.newseum.org)
reveals that most papers opted to use less timely images such as last-minute campaigning shots, more generic mug shots, or images of voters watching the returns on television. 

*The News & Observer* chose to prioritize timeliness over the quality of the image – which is characterized by poor lighting and composition.

The image does not engage any color or symbolic elements associated with political ideologies. Bush’s garb is black and white, and his surroundings are in shades of green and yellow. The cropping is awkward – we see a person’s arm on the right edge of the frame, but more than half of the image is filled by Bush, suggesting a kind of manufactured intimacy made all the more awkward by the suggestion but not acknowledgement of another person in the vicinity. The fact that the lighting is so harsh, resulting in a shadow, suggests that the photographer did not have the opportunity to pursue shots of the president that make better use of the available light.

The image is not flattering; however, based on traditional modes of criticism, it could be construed as favoring Bush – he is smiling, and his body language is relaxed. Based on Osborn’s functions, however, the meaning is relatively ambiguous. The presentation of Bush is repetitive; he is relaxed and confident. The camera gaze is at Bush’s eye level, so the issue of intensification through strategic angle is not a primary concern. In the context of the headline, however, Bush is reaffirmed as the leader.

“Ohio is key to outcome”

The verb phrase “is key” paints an image of voters in Ohio as large determinants of the results of the election. By choosing “key” to signify importance, the copy editor
likened Ohio to a solution to a problem, or a vital instrument that will bring about
resolution in the form of election results (which would be behind the “door” that the
“key” opens). Although there is a degree of puzzlement in the use of this phrase, it does
not suggest bias toward a particular candidate. What it does, noticeably, is extend the
visual metaphor presented by the electoral map, and the need for electoral votes to clearly
determine the outcome. As in the dominant headline on Nov. 2, this headline directs the
focus of the coverage toward the voters in a way that circumvents the “argument as war”
archetype and thus avoids the issue of political representation of a particular camp.

“Turnout across nation might be heaviest since 1960”

“Turnout,” which means “a gathering of people,” suggests a collective action
even though the act of voting was dispersed nationwide. “Heaviest” is a metaphor for the
number of people who voted. It could be an archetypal metaphor in which “heavy”
denotes “good” and “light” denotes “bad.” Although each of these metaphors is clearly
common enough that comprehension would not be difficult, the combination suggests
multiple opportunities, at least subconsciously, for varied interpretation. Again, the focus
on the voters in this headline suggests a prevailing concern among the news editors that
the public interest be represented in a meaningful way – the whole of coverage does not
revolve around the two candidates.

“Robbins holds its breath:

Edwards’ hometown – friends and foes alike – anxiously awaits the word”
This headline uses synecdoche – “Robbins” is a whole that represents, metaphorically, “some of the people of Robbins,” since logically the entire town of Robbins did not “hold its breath.” “Robbins” and “hometown” are intended to represent the people of Robbins as a single entity, and “friends and foes alike” qualifies the statement so that it does not appear that the story is painting a picture solely of celebration or of anguish. Nonetheless, the headline suggests a degree of urgency in the public response to election results in Edwards’ hometown and gives primacy to the collective community.

Although this headline works to balance the “hometown angle,” it could initially be read as a bow to Edwards’ invocation of his modest roots, thus engaging with Edwards’ rhetorical motives. This is an issue of news judgment, however, that does not necessarily originate with the copy editor but rather the reporter.

The photo that accompanies this headline is fairly simply composed, showing two Kerry supporters reacting as they watch returns. There is little political iconography – only a Kerry-Edwards pin, and because the image is black-and-white it carries less overt ideological force. The shot, which is at eye-level with the subjects of the photo, conveys a sense of directness: The photographer did not try for an innovative angle or height. Because of this, this image seems to impart a kind of equal footing with voters, an attempt to see eye-to-eye with those people who “got their say” and are awaiting the results. The urgency of the headline suggests a brand of drama accompanying the wait for results, but the image in tandem fosters a sense of community in the plight of voters and not necessarily just one affiliation or another.
“Town typifies Ohio’s mood: Humor, gentle nature intersect with closely divided politics in Canton.”

Here, Ohio is again synecdoche for voters, and Ohio is personified by being assigned a “mood.” “Humor” and “gentle nature” are intended to characterize the political climate of an Ohio town, but they fail to reveal much about the “closely divided politics” that allegedly characterize Canton. “Intersecting,” is archetypal in that it suggests two distinct subject positions (the “divided” politics) but puts the two positions on equal footing, metaphorically. Here, “intersect” is an appropriate metaphor because it attributes to more than one subject qualities that take the venom out of the traditional “argument as war” metaphor, even if the headline does not reveal much about these qualities.

The content and composition of the photo reflect the light touch taken with the headline. A Kerry supporter who chose body paint to convey his message shows a bit of whimsy that is implied in the accompanying headlines – but not in the rest of the page.

“Edwards works Florida voters: Supporters wait for him in Boston”

This headline is virtually unfigured except for the choice of “works” to represent Edwards’ activity. Although the metaphor “to work a crowd” is common enough in political campaigning, it also implies manipulation. In contrast, the headline on the story below it, “Bush wins easily in North Carolina” contains two more transparent metaphors. “Wins” is a term that is deeply embedded in the American political
consciousness as representative of a candidate earning the most votes. “Easily” is representative of an archetypal value of American culture (per Lakoff and Johnson) – “easily” is a common adverb for something that is good, or that represents a wide margin. In its most literal sense, this headline implies that Bush’s victory in N.C. is a good thing. Juxtaposed with the mental image of Edwards “manipulating” voters, the headline implies, perhaps, a measure of favor for Bush beyond the simple fact that he garnered the majority in N.C. In this instance, the non-archetypal metaphor that characterizes Edwards casts a negative light on him. Regarding the Bush headline, the archetype is warranted, but the qualifier “easily” takes a tone that is perhaps not appropriate to the news situation at hand.

The image that accompanies this story is more innovative than the others on this page because of its subject matter – although a man is depositing his ballot in a ballot box, he is doing so with his son balanced playfully on his shoulder. Again, the photo is black-and-white (and of relatively poor resolution) and does not carry the same affective or ideological implications that images with color saturation do, but at the same time it conveys warmth that Americans frequently associate with family values.6

Overall, the headlines and images from Nov. 3 paint very different representations of the candidates than did the Nov. 2 coverage. Bush is represented as a winner, both

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6 Similar images appeared throughout the special election section of the newspaper on Nov. 3. They were paired with what are commonly referred to as “scene-setting” stories, but also appeared with stories pertaining to specific races at various levels of government. There was a degree of repetition that is particularly notable in light of the general awareness that “family values” is a GOP platform. Regardless of how voting was depicted, it is likely that voting was a dominant public concern regardless of partisanship, given that the runup to the election saw thousands of people voting early so that their votes would not potentially fall victim to balloting malfunctions. Coverage of this concern could easily fall under the auspices of public journalism by a photojournalist.
visually and verbally, and repetitively throughout the day’s coverage. Conversely, Kerry and Edwards “worked” voters and were nearly absent, visually, from the day’s coverage, suggesting a potential diminishing of their role and impact in the election, particularly in contrast to the large and visually intense image of Bush on AA1. This day’s visual coverage moves toward the implementation and reaffirmation of Bush as a leader, and the verbal cues in the metaphors reinforce this depiction.

**Analysis of headlines and photos: Nov. 4, 2004**

“Bush vows to reach out; President sees ‘season of hope’ for nation”

The lead headline has two metaphors. The “vow” is a more solemn, ceremonial term for a promise; “reach out” indicates his expressed willingness (in an appeal to *pathos*) to try to connect with what has been established as a thoroughly divided nation. In the second headline, Bush “sees” is shorthand for a prediction or a forecast; that word choice implies clairvoyance, however – an interesting juxtaposition to Bush’s declared faith and how it has been addressed as an influence in his decision-making. The copy editor uses Bush’s own phrase “season of hope,” a metaphor indicating the cyclical quality of politics applied to the intangible concept of hope, which creates a subject position that opposes, implicitly, the climate (or “season”) pre-election.

These headlines represent a notable shift away from the archetypal metaphors used in the previous days’ newspapers – mainly, perhaps, because the announcement that Bush won was “old news” by the morning of Nov. 4. “Season of hope” engages with the
rhetorical motives of the president; more interestingly, however, is the choice of “vows,” which lends a serious, ceremonial tone to the headline that may not match the explicit motive of the newspaper.

“This Kerry can’t overcome gap in Ohio; Bush wins popular vote with ease.”

This subhead engages an orientational metaphor in Kerry’s inability to “overcome.” He is cast in a negative light that is relatively appropriate given the outcome of the election – because he is not “over” (up, or good, according to Lakoff and Johnson); he is “under” or “below.” “Overcome” is qualified by another metaphor, a “gap” to indicate the number of votes that separates Bush and Kerry in Ohio. Because Kerry cannot “overcome” a “gap,” there is the suggestion that he is caught in a void or absence, or otherwise lost in a spatial or orientational way. The second half of the headline engages the more familiar election metaphors already found and discussed in the Nov. 3 newspaper – “winning” with “ease,” giving the metaphorical competitive advantage to Bush.

The dominant image of Bush and Cheney and their wives is more traditional than the previous day’s lead photo. Laura Bush is waving to supporters, and both men have hands on their wives’ shoulders. The political iconography is minimal: Both men are wearing American-flag pins, which were a hallmark of all candidates’ appearance during this election, regardless of party affiliation.

The angle of the photo is perhaps the most innovative aspect of it; the crowd of supporters is omitted, and the shot is from slightly below but not at as markedly severe of
an angle as the images on 1A the day before the election. The shot is neither a distance shot nor a close-up shot, so there is neither a sense of manufactured intimacy nor a sweeping sense of the magnitude of the event. But because of the lack of context in the photo – all we see is a black background – it is decontextualized in a way that is potentially disengaging for the readers. The image could easily be from any formal occasion at which the president and vice president and their spouses made a public appearance and thus is not necessarily emblematic of the day an election outcome was announced. Given the visual coverage of the day before, this photo helps perpetuate through repetition the image of Bush as the assumed leader.

The same electoral-vote map that appeared for the previous two days on the page appears again, but this time it is only two columns wide, as opposed to three and four columns, respectively, in previous days’ papers. This time, with prediction or unresolved votes no longer the principal news, the visual focus of the page is Bush and his peers. Only Iowa’s electoral votes were undeclared. Bush won, and the timbre of the headlines and photographs affirms this.

Downpage, a secondary image of Edwards and Kerry is paired with teasers to stories inside the section. The image is shot from the side, with Edwards standing at a podium and Kerry standing slightly behind him. Again, the shot is neither a distant nor a close-up shot, and the parallel vertical angle connotes an equal footing between the candidates and the photographer. However, the fact that Edwards, in this photo, is preparing to speak, as opposed to Kerry, suggests a kind of authority on the part of Edwards that is not necessarily indicative of the expressed dynamic of the running mates:
Kerry was the presidential candidate and Edwards was his vice-presidential running-mate. By using an image that places Edwards in front of Kerry in a public forum, the newspaper is advancing an image of Edwards as the more powerful of the Democratic duo – a repetitive maneuver on the part of the newspaper that borders on reaffirmation of Edwards as the so-called dominant candidate. Also notable is the absence of the candidates’ wives from the image, in stark contrast with the dominant image of the Republican foursome at the top of the page.

“Moral stance won Bush support at polls: Economy, Iraq less important”

This headline uses “stance” to characterize Bush’s values-based agenda. Stance is a common phrase, particularly to characterize a political position, but it carries further implications. A stance (as a political position) can be contrived; it can also suggest (physically) firmness in bearing and attitude. By modifying “stance” with “moral,” this headline could be reinforcing Bush’s decisiveness, which was a significant campaign theme that emerged in direct contrast with Kerry’s so-called “wishy-washy” record. In this respect, this headline appears to reaffirm Bush’s campaign rhetoric.

The photo that accompanies this headline is not large, only about two columns wide, but the image is distinctive because of how it uses campaign ideographs. Bush appears at a podium during his victory speech. Behind him, projected onto a screen, is the capital W that appeared on much of Bush’s campaign literature. Downpage, with the jump of the 1A story about Bush’s win, appears a five-column image of Bush supporters waving American flags and campaign posters. This image is shot from above and
captures the motion and array of activity within the crowd as well as the color and ideographs of the campaign. This political symbolism is repetitive in that it uses, repeatedly, the rhetoric of the Bush campaign – campaign rhetoric that has extended beyond the election, as is evident in “W” bumper stickers and other similar icons that Bush supporters display nowadays.

“Count on Edwards returning to the fray”

In this headline, “count on” directly suggests dependability; it also is reminiscent of the “counting” fiasco of 2000. Because “Count on Edwards” appears on the first line of the headline, full comprehension of the headline is delayed. The first line alone could function as a potential endorsement of a failed candidate, post facto. The second line qualifies that statement by saying that Edwards will not necessarily abandon politics – as is indicated in his concession speech as well as in the news analysis of the reporter covering it. “Fray” returns to the archetypal metaphor of “election as war” – affirming that Edwards was on the losing side of the contest, and yet still characterizing him in a positive light. “Count on” is an indicator of the newspaper’s/headline’s/Edwards’ surety, and his return to a “fray” only reinforces his so-called pluck and determination.

The image that accompanies this headline is innovative, simply for its composition, which suggests the photographer was sitting in a seat only a few yards away from Edwards and his family. Edwards is shot from the side in a way that connotes a degree of journalistic detachment – in accordance with Kress and van Leeuwen’s analysis of angle and involvement with photographic subjects. Edwards is gazing slightly upward
Beyond deadlines

and smiling while his peers surrounding him applaud. The size of the image (five columns wide) as well as the visual context – his immediate peers as well as the people shown in silhouette around the edge of the space, which is considerably large – denote the largess of the event. The light is clearly not strategic for the purposes of this image; Edwards’ face is half in shadow. But the tones of the image, and the activity and expression lend themselves to a degree of warmth, painting the portrait of a graceful loser whose *ethos* still remains despite the election’s outcome.

Overall, particularly potent representations of Bush and Kerry that emerged on Nov. 2 and 3 dominated the coverage of Nov. 4. Bush, the clear winner now, is characterized through metaphors that explicitly evoke his agenda in a way that is borderline epideictic or ceremonial. The images of Bush, which were consistently similar throughout the three days of coverage, depict a candidate-turned-leader who was by turns positively self-assured and authoritative. This coverage of Bush works to almost herald his victory in a way that, in Osborn’s terms, suggests implementation of Republican values.

Edwards, and by extension Kerry, is depicted visually as the graceful, authoritative loser. On Nov. 3 he may have been “working” the voters, but on Nov. 2 and 4, respectively, he is dynamic and thoughtfully deliberate: Consider, for example, his “making the case” on Nov. 2 but preparing to “return to the fray” on Nov. 4. This evolution of the metaphorical court battle is complemented by the images of Edwards in situations that are not repetitive presentations of campaigning. The overall message of
Nov. 4 is clear: Bush is the clear winner and upholder of tradition and Republican values, but Edwards, the local candidate, is the one to watch for 2008.

**Bringing it all together**

Overall, based on the headlines and photos that appear in *The N&O’s* presidential coverage Nov. 2-4, it is apparent that much thought was put into the content of these discursive elements. Time, however, hampered efforts – particularly on the night of Nov. 2, – and the struggle to exercise journalistic values was sometimes compromised by a lack of choices for content, as well as by time.

A distinction emerged in metaphorical concepts and expressions that copy editors used to characterize the news and by extension the candidates. Lead headlines and those that pertain to the Kerry-Edwards ticket were more creatively figured, but headlines that pertained to Bush-Cheney, generally speaking, used the more traditional language of the “argument is war” metaphor.

Similarly, the images depicting Bush/Cheney were more traditionally framed than the images of Kerry/Edwards. Bush and Cheney appear in typical campaign situations and, with the exception of the lead photo on Nov. 3, their activities and surroundings reflect the work and the symbolism of campaigning – including far more campaign iconography than appears in images of Kerry and Edwards. As made evident in the interview with photo editor Robert Miller, the journalists’ access to and familiarity with Edwards and his activities helped shape the coverage that appeared in the newspaper. Editors, however, did not address how that might have been leading to a disparity in
depictions of Edwards (and to a lesser degree, Kerry), and depictions of Bush and Cheney. Depictions of the Democratic challengers *may* have led readers to conclude that the newspaper was embracing the Democratic agenda because of the proximity and activity represented within these images.

At the same time, some of the verbal and visual choices relating to Bush and Cheney may have served to reinforce the status quo. Particularly on Nov. 3, the dominant image of Bush strips the news event of its campaign trappings but is so decontextualized that we could be looking at the picture of any moderately pleased world leader – not a candidate who is still awaiting news regarding his political fate. Paired with the headline “Bush leads,” the photo suggests that Bush has already won. *The News & Observer* was the only major metropolitan newspaper to treat the unresolved outcome as such on Nov. 3; as it stands, it hints too closely to a Bush victory, suggesting the possibility that the newspaper favored Bush. Coverage of both candidates, however, at times moved toward implementation and reaffirmation of particular sets of values.

It would be difficult – and counterproductive – to label *The N&O* as conservative- or liberal-biased. But the purpose here is to escape the binaries that other analyses of political coverage perpetuate. Although the newspaper was working with what was clearly a two-sided contest, it was also working with the complexities of a contest that involved a candidate from North Carolina, thus complicating issues of news judgment by involving discussions of the so-called hometown angle. This complication duly colors my analysis.
My findings reveal ways in which *The N&O* creates meanings in its headlines and photos that are at times confusing, mixed and ambiguous, based on the analytical criteria provided by Osborn’s theories of metaphor and rhetorical depiction. This finding suggests that more deliberation, and particularly from a rhetorical standpoint, needs to take place in order to fully understand the implications of metaphorical and visual choices in headlines and photographs.
Conclusion

Using rhetorical theory in journalism

This analysis of *The News & Observer* is not intended to produce any simple answers regarding the nature of political coverage, or provide any concrete solutions to bridge the divide between journalists and their often-contrary audience. Clearly *The N&O* makes an effort to be fair in its coverage, particularly in its headlines and photos. Although there are clear disconnects between the story editors (led by Frederick) and the photo and copy editors, all the participants in the newsmaking process share goals of fairness and accuracy, and seek to create a continuity of meaning in verbal and visual components of the news product.

A close examination of the newspaper on and around Election Day, however, reveals a variety of competing meanings in headlines and images. It appeared that efforts to balance coverage of the two candidates (and their running mates) revolved around the sizes of headlines and images. The metaphors used to characterize the events pertaining to each campaign, however, were varied, sometimes operating within the “argument is war” system, sometimes not. Often, the metaphors were inscrutable. Other times, the metaphors betrayed a sense of confidence in the outcome (“Bush leads” on Nov. 3) or a kind of close familiarity (“Edwards makes his case” on Nov. 3) that does not appear in the words used to characterize the competitor.

The photos, likewise, contributed varying sense of familiarity, authority, and celebration. Interestingly, few imparted a sense of defeat, even when the Kerry-Edwards
defeat was official. The secondary image on A1 on Nov. 4 came the closest to depicting defeat; however, its diminutive size suggests that the impact of this defeat is not as significant as the so-called tenacity of Edwards, as depicted in larger and more symbolic photos elsewhere in the study period.

This mixture of messages conveyed by headlines and photos could potentially perpetuate what Osborn refers to as puzzlement-recoil, or a lack of understanding on the part of readers of what the words and images, together, are trying to convey. Even if the meaning is clear to readers, the connotations and context of the metaphors and ideographs in photographs could lead readers to conclude that the newspaper, at that given moment, is unjustifiably embracing a particular ideology.

Addressing the so-called neutral medium of newspaper in respect to its political content is necessary because the newspaper is a vital instrument for communicating events of the political sphere. Edelman and Jamieson found that metaphors and imagery are imperative to societal understanding of political events. But Lule and others noted the problems that arise in the choices that the media make regarding dominant type and political imagery. Clearly, there is a disconnect in how the media work versus how others perceive the news product.

There is also a disconnect in how the media perceive the importance of the rhetoric that newsmakers use to communicate their own agendas and how it relates to news language. By addressing political coverage in the context of its rhetorical implications, I have arrived at a variety of conclusions regarding the nature of newsroom
practices, criticism of coverage, and the role that rhetoric plays in journalism education and training.

**Rhetoric and journalism practices**

One problem that emerged in this study that could play a significant role in perpetuating journalists’ disconnect with their audiences is their lack of a detailed and explicit rhetorical consciousness. Andy Bechtel, in reflecting on how he works to create a sense of balance in both stories and headlines, suggested that there is a degree of sacrifice that must be made – sometimes, because of spatial hierarchy, one candidate’s name must appear first, he says. Regardless of where a candidate’s name appears, he says, he pays attention to the language he uses in headlines and tries to remain “neutral” and not use words that he believes will trigger a negative reaction from readers.

The fact that Bechtel restricts his expression of the challenge in creating meaning to a discussion of “neutrality” reflects the lack of a rhetorical awareness – the lack of understanding that metaphors are embedded in our consciousness and are not merely means of expression. If Bechtel and his colleagues were aware of the consequences metaphors (and, simply, specific choices within metaphorical systems) have for interpretation, his explanation of the pursuit of “neutrality” may have addressed how he deliberates on particular word choices that are, inherently, parts of metaphorical systems.

Similarly, Robert Miller, as a visual journalist, understands the role that aesthetics plays in the creation of meaning, but appears to face a problem reconciling the informational and creative roles of photojournalism. By not necessarily having the opportunity to examine images in terms of aesthetics, iconography and composition –
beyond the way in which they pertain to news events in a general sense – Miller and his colleagues are not in a position to truly consider the rhetorical implications of the images they choose.

Much of the dilemma of visual coverage revolves around the time element. Newspaper deadlines frequently limit the choices journalists have, as is made evident by the use of the image of President Bush on Nov. 3 – the only recently captured image available of him. The need for immediacy trumped other considerations, such as the aesthetics of the image or the relationship the content of the image had with the content of the story. As a result, the image conveyed a meaning that did not necessarily align with the news relayed in the story; paired with the headline, it was suggestive of a Bush victory before a Bush victory had been confirmed.

Perhaps a reason that journalists are not likely to address their work in rhetorical terms is that they are generally on the defensive against an audience that believes that journalism is inherently “biased” or “slanted.” To discuss journalism in rhetorical terms would be to admit that it serves a rhetorical purpose – and in the 20th century, at least, the ideal of journalism as “objective” has served as a shield against any notion of rhetoric in journalism. Unfortunately, as Merritt has reiterated, the notion of “objectivity” is not helpful in breaking down some of the negative perceptions of the media.

If we consider rhetoric as not the expression of political ideology but the ways in which meaning is created in contemporary discourse, we can begin to see how journalists could approach their work in a way that is more reflective and more aware of the meaningful potential of individual choices. As a journalist, I am aware that one of the
more significant objections to making this type of deliberation a part of the news
production process is that time frequently prevents journalists, especially copy editors,
from making decisions that best reflect journalistic values. The lack of substantive space
in which to craft meaningful headlines, as discussed early in Chapter 4, also contributes
to difficulty in creating appropriate meanings. These are the dominant challenges copy
editors face on a daily basis that often force them to make choices they might reconsider
if they had fewer constraints on time and space.

One idea that this study has highlighted – a point that Osborn addresses in generic
terms – is that newspapers are instruments of social discourse, and despite process
limitations journalists must continually pursue a greater awareness of our contributions to
that social discourse. Osborn himself acknowledges that rhetors are often preoccupied
with “daily problems of survival” that reduce their capabilities for producing the most
thoughtful discourse. However, he adds, “film, television, and large-circulation
magazines and newspapers have become mechanisms for imprinting depictions upon
limitless audiences, and by their very availability they increase the salience of strategic
pictures in modern rhetoric” (1986, p. 81). As mass media images and metaphors
become more powerful, the need to understand their impact becomes imperative.

I am not suggesting a step-by-step rhetorical analysis of work as journalists are
producing it. Rather, I would suggest the pursuit of a larger rhetorical awareness that
would emerge from the knowledge of how rhetorical history and theory can inform
interpretive processes. This awareness would focus, specifically, on the presence and
implications of metaphorical systems (and other figures of speech) as well as the roles
that iconography and ideology play in the interpretation of imagery. By addressing how individual choices influence meaning, journalists may begin to understand how readers are, as Frederick and Bechtel said, “reading into” certain days’ headlines and/or images. Taking into account the possibilities for interpretation would bring journalists closer to their readers without necessarily making assumptions about the nature and/or ideology of the audience.

**Critical possibilities**

Traditional news analyses, as I have examined them here, are helpful in considering political coverage in a variety of ways. They highlight the problem of depicting political figures and events in an unbiased way. They examine some of the nuances of visual coverage and offer ways in which to study political imagery. Some studies have offered surveys of coverage over time that help newspapers re-examine some of their practices and implement checks and balances in the newsmaking process that promote fairness and accuracy. These modes of analysis give journalists the opportunity to take a step back and look at their work more critically by using critics’ conclusions to influence day-to-day decisions.

These analytical approaches, however, neglect a few components that are instrumental in understanding how people might comprehend coverage. They reduce interpretations to an either-or proposition; many conclusions rest on a blanket determination of a publication’s perceived “favor” of one candidate over another. Osborn says that archetypal metaphors are culturally embedded signifiers intended to arouse
binary action but that depiction rests on matters of visual signification and a variety of symbols. The combination of these factors suggests that interpretation is not an either-or proposition and that we cannot simply say a publication “favors” one candidate over another. Coverage is more complex than that.

Rhetorical analysis enables scholars to examine the meaning-making process as a whole and in terms that eliminate this kind of binary. The study of metaphor and imagery begins with the invention processes of journalists, thereby acknowledging the limitations of the medium. It explores the realm of possibility and establishes ties in terms of invention and interpretation to other media and discourse communities. Finally, it acknowledges the audience as a force unto itself, armed with a rich and complex set of beliefs, agendas and hypotheses about the nature of news and of meaning in language and imagery that are not necessarily part of conscious thought processes. Regardless of audiences’ conscious realizations, figuration and imagery are a continual part of the system by which they process and react to ideas.

Osborn’s theories contribute another approach to the canon of journalism criticism in that they offer a series of analytical questions that provide a detailed framework for criticism regarding meaning in political coverage. Osborn moves beyond extant approaches in that he offers an opportunity to study headlines and photographs, which have been categorically neglected in criticism, with a rigor and thoroughness that is well-suited to journalists and critics. Journalists, who are generally their own worst critics anyways, could bring to their work a fresh awareness of the depth and significance of individual choices that could potentially transcend deadline concerns. Similarly, if
critics approach their work with the same rhetorical consciousness that I’m suggesting journalists assume, they may arrive at some new and richer conclusions regarding bias in political coverage.

**Implications for education in journalism**

Rhetoric has been a field of study since antiquity. Conversely, journalism is a relatively new discipline – it has only been a field of study at the university level since the 1920s or ‘30s, and it has been considered a largely practical discipline, pertaining to the processes by which information and entertainment are disseminated on a mass scale.

Journalism, however, is merely a conduit for events that are taking place in the world – events that have shaped and been shaped by the rhetorical tradition. If journalism is to be a “window on the world,” according to Tuchman’s metaphor, then journalists need to think *in depth* about how the choices they make reflect on the events they cover as well as on the institution of journalism and the particular values of a newspaper. A more interdisciplinary education would encourage this kind of deliberation and keep young journalists from thinking only in terms of producing a newspaper. Fundamentally, journalism is not just about the act of producing a newspaper. It is about human events – politics, history, interpersonal relationships, science and nature, education.

There is a burgeoning sense of the role of metaphor in journalism. Scholar Clayton Braddock, who argues for more education on the impact of metaphors, says “metaphorical expression, one of humankind’s most powerful tools of communication, appears to be alive and well in newspaper city rooms, around copy desks, in the quiet
corridors of the editorial page staff, and at many magazines everywhere” (1992, p.80).

“Some journalism textbooks,” Braddock continues, “recognize the role of the metaphor along with other figures of speech. The volume of interest in the subject, however, is not overwhelming” (p. 82).

An increase in interest regarding metaphor would be helpful to journalists’ goals. As well, an education in rhetoric would be a logical part of a well-rounded liberal arts education, which some journalists feel is more important to journalists’ growth than the skills-based curriculum (Walsh, 1999/2000, p. 17).

Conversely, it appears that much of the focus regarding photojournalism in the political sphere lies with issues of access to the candidate and/or the news event of the day, and with broad technical and aesthetic values that help shape photojournalism – composition being among the top concerns. Photojournalists may have a deeper awareness of what various visual approaches – expressed in visual rhetoric terms by Foss and Peterson – can connote about an event or about the shooter’s perception of an event. This awareness, however, does not appear to carry over into the process of photo selection and integration into a larger news product. The study of visual rhetoric, which emerged in the past 20 years, offers an avenue of insight into photography that can operate within the parameters of news values but also works with an established understanding of the creation of meaning in visual imagery that demonstrably translates to photojournalism.

The implication here is that a technical focus does not sufficiently prepare journalists for work in understanding and interpreting human events. I propose that
inclusion of rhetoric in the liberal education curriculum for budding journalists would lay the foundation for expertise in expression through the study of language in rhetoric from classical times through the present. Including rhetoric in general and the study of metaphor in particular in the journalism curriculum would bridge the divide between concept and expression that is so apparent in newspaper discourse. By better understanding the foundation of expression and argument, newspaper journalists – especially copy editors – can go about their day-to-day duties with a stronger understanding of the implications of their work.

This study of headlines and rhetorical depiction in photojournalism in *The N&O*’s election coverage is not intended to provide concrete answers regarding rhetoric in news discourse. Rather, it seeks to reach an understanding of the potential interpretive consequences of verbal and visual choices in dominant newspaper elements. If journalists seek to serve readers, who in turn seek fairness in news coverage, journalists need a greater awareness of the possibilities that surround the choices they make on a day-to-day basis. The audience for a newspaper will never be wholly satisfied with the news product – but that is not the point. Journalists who seek in good faith to achieve work that is as close to a journalistic ideal as possible must strive – more so than they already do – to view their own work critically in a way that accounts for audience members’ potential reactions. They cannot let the limitations of the newsmaking process stand as the justification for their newsmaking choices.
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Appendix
Pages from *The N&O* during the study period of Nov. 2-4, 2004
Beyond deadlines

Figure 2
Beyond deadlines

Figure 3
Beyond deadlines 100
Beyond deadlines 101

Town typifies Ohio's mood
Humor, gentle nature intersect with closely divided politics in Canton

CANTON, Ohio (AP) -- With the most contested Senate race in the country, some things were clearly not the discussion at the First Church of God, a (AP) -- With the most contested Senate race in the country, some things were clearly not the discussion at the First Church of God, a

Bush wins easily in North Carolina

The Associated Press

President
Election 2004: Expanded Coverage

Edwards works Florida voters
Supporters wait for him in Boston

In Lynn Hansen's

Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, both

Beyond deadlines 101

Robbins holds its breath

Edwards' hometown—friends and foes alike—anxiously awaits the word

In Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Figure 5
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Figure 6
Moral stance won Bush support at polls

Economy, Iraq less important

By Brian Moore

President Bush's top economic and political priorities were highlighted Monday as he continued to campaign for re-election against John Kerry. The president said the economy and the war in Iraq are the main issues facing the nation and that he is doing better on both.

The campaign focuses on Bush's record of job creation and his efforts to strengthen the economy, which he says have helped create millions of jobs. He also claims to have made progress on the war in Iraq, particularly in reducing the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, which he credits with improving conditions.

Bush said that the job market is strong and that the economy is in a good place. He also praised the country's financial institutions, which he said are doing well.

The campaign has been focusing on how Bush has handled the economy and the war, and how he has helped create jobs and improve conditions in Iraq.

Bush's record on the economy and the war has been the focus of the campaign, and he has been trying to make the case that he has done well on both fronts.
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The Democrats

COUNT ON EDWARDS RETURNING TO THE FRAY

What they said

SEN. JOHN EDWARDS

"I was a boy and I was a man," the Democratic senator from North Carolina said yesterday. "I've been in politics for a long time, but there's nothing like the feeling of running for president." His campaign has been hitting full swing in recent weeks, with a series of events and appearances around the country. He's been making the rounds in key swing states, and seems to be gaining momentum in the polls.

Debate may help reshape Democrats

Analysts say that leaders must find ways to redefine their focus, widen their reach to turn the party's fortunes around.

In Paris, France

"We're going to have to be more creative. We need to get past the idea that we're just another political party," warned former Vice President Al Gore. "We need to be more than just a collection of politicians. We need to be a movement, a force for change." Gore announced his plan to launch a new organization focused on environmental issues, and is expected to make a formal announcement in the coming weeks.

Figure 8