

**Foreign Affairs and the Local Newsroom:
Local Television News Coverage of the 2006 Lebanon War**

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Abstract

While media are the primary sources of information about foreign events, we know very little how local television news, the most watched news-source in America, covers foreign events. We examine the local and network news coverage of the 2006 Lebanon War and test for framing differences between the two news outlets. Applying Entman's framing functions we find that coverage of the War in the local newsrooms is significantly more supportive of the Israeli position. We propose that this difference is caused by features of local news such as economic and institutional constraints, as well as newsroom routines, which result in the tendency of the local media to comply with authorities' positions.

There are more Americans who regularly watch local television news than any other singular news source – print, television or internet (Hale et al., 2007; Hamilton, 2005; Stevens et al., 2006). For many Americans these daily newscasts are their sole source of information about local, national, and international events. While Americans are exposed to some information on local and national affairs in their daily activities, for international events they heavily rely on the media. Despite the important role of the local news, we know very little how these news sources cover foreign events (Pevehouse and Goldstein, 2005).

A substantive body of work examines media coverage of foreign events. These studies find that journalists tend to restrict themselves to reporting the views of the political elite – presenting one view when the elite is unified and expanding the range of voices when there is a debate among these elites (Baum and Groeling, 2010; Bennett, 1990; Bennett et al., 2007; Bennett and Paletz, 1994; Entman, 2004; Mermin, 1999). Several factors expand the coverage to views beyond elite discourse such as the existence of an unexpected event (Lawrence, 2001); the ability of government to control the political environment (Wolfsfeld, 1997); the propensity to be a winner in a conflict (Zaller and Chiu, 1996); the perception of the conflict is solvable (Cook, 1996); or the characteristics of the media outlet such as journalistic values and newsroom routines (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Cook, 1998; Graber, 2002).

Recent work suggests that modern international conflicts and advancements in communication technologies have further expanded the range of views. Bennett and colleagues (2007) find that the American media presents positions from other nations when key political policy decisions drift into international institutions or into joint international operations (e.g. the Gulf War). Similarly, Shafer and Gabay (2009) find that positions that oppose views of the American elite may find their way into the American media more easily when the initiator of a specific event or policy is not the U.S. government (e.g., the Israeli disengagement from Gaza). Finally, developments

in communication routines – the formation of social ties between foreign correspondents and their foreign sources, the ability to employ new communication technologies to report instantly on events around the world, and the implementation of effective public relations systems by foreign nations – all work to widen the range of opinions expressed in the U.S. media by making information easier to access and present (Bennett et al., 2007; Livingston and Bennett, 2003).

These studies, however, focus mostly on national television, radio and newspaper and thus fail to examine local television news – the most frequently watched news in America (see, for example, Baum, 2003; Baum and Potter, 2008; Bennett et al., 2007; Bennett and Paletz, 1994; Soroka, 2003).¹ Figure 1 plots a time series of the reported primary news sources of Americans from 1994 to 2008 (Pew Research Center Biennial News Consumption Survey). The figure illustrates that despite the decline of television news viewership since the 1990s, local news has maintained its lead as the most consumed news in America.²

[Figure 1 about here]

A limited body of work examines local news coverage of local and national events and suggests that news-gathering and news-reporting routines of the local newsroom are different from other news sources. They are characterized by smaller budgets, stronger effect of market forces, more limited coverage time, and a different tradition of objective journalist reporting (Berkowitz, 1987; Eliasoph, 1998; Kaniss, 1991; McManus, 1994; Reese and Buckalew, 1995).

In sum, local news stands out as a main source of news about national and international events for a majority of Americans that is distinct from other news sources. In this paper, we assess the difference in coverage of foreign events on local and network news broadcasts, by examining the reporting on the war in Lebanon during the summer of 2006. Our data include local television newscasts in the Chicago media market and three primary news networks. Applying Entman's (2004) framing functions to the coverage of the event, we find differences in how the two news

sources framed the war – mainly, that the coverage on local news was significantly more supportive of Israel. We discuss the effect of local newsroom routines on coverage of foreign events and contend that future analyses need to account for local news as a prominent and distinct source of news for many Americans.

The Local Newsroom

Local and national newscasts are characterized by very different news-reporting traditions as a result of their unique newsroom routines including immense time and budget limitations, additional market forces, and a looser sense of objective reporting (Eliasoph, 1998; Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000; Kaniss, 1991; McManus, 1994). These differences may have a significant impact on how local news differs from network news coverage of foreign events. First, local newscasts cover local issues and which limits their time for reporting national and international issues. Local news reporters often rely on their affiliated networks as their main source of news but have to cut the stories they receive to accommodate the time limitation. Budget restrictions further require local channels to spend more time on advertisements at the expense of reporting news. Table 1 illustrates this by summarizing an average newscast breakdown of local news during the last two months of the 2004 election campaigns. During this time, on average, more than half of the airtime was spent on advertising (29.5 percent) and sports and weather (21.2 percent), and only three minutes were devoted to the elections (local and national). Despite the raging war in Iraq (thirty-nine US soldiers were killed during these two months), it was covered on average only twenty-eight seconds a day.

[Table 1 here]

Second, local anchors tend to present facts, and usually side with the authorities' position and avoid commentary and critique (Kaniss, 1991). Budget limitations of the local newsrooms require local journalists to depend on easily accessible sources and rely on external news sources

such as press releases, wire services and other local television channels or newspapers in their area (Berkowitz, 1987; Kaniss, 1991). In doing so, the local newsroom tends to defer to authorities' position, the most readily available information. This tendency is expected to be even stronger when covering international news stories, where there are very few foreign correspondents, a limited access to direct sources, and when a clear official position is usually available.

McManus (1994) views the tendency of the local newsroom to defer to authorities' position as a consequence of market forces that curtail the news-reporting on local channels. News is the local channels' primary source of profit and, therefore, investors and owners – who see the news as a commodity – have significant interest in its content and prefer to exchange adversarial reporting with deference to the authorities' position. In foreign issues, where a clear debate among elite rarely exists, siding with the position of the administration limits any possibility of presenting critique.

Third, local news reporting tends to be less objective. Eliasoph notes that the notion of an objective "balance," which constitutes the representation of each side in the debate, is usually unwarranted in local newsrooms. She documents that in the local newsroom "reporters assume that most everyday stories [are] straightforward, not full of opinions and choices for framing, not really need of analysis" (Eliasoph, 1998: 224). One can assume that this would be even stronger in issues of foreign affairs, where the public has little understanding of the complexities of the issues, and the event is usually portrayed in binary terms of good vs. evil (Entman, 2004).

Finally, local news tends to focus on local content and to connect events of national and international interest to the local communities. Local news reporters often interview people from the local area who may be affected by the events or have a specific interest in them. In a study of local news coverage of decisions given by the Supreme Court, Cavari (2006) demonstrates that, when possible, local news coverage focused on the local ramifications of the decisions. For example, in the coverage of the Supreme Court ruling that capital punishment for people who

committed a crime while they were eighteen years old or younger was unconstitutional, local news channels focused on local inmates that might be influenced by the decision.³ In places where the decision had no direct local implication, local news channels covered trials with broad national interest such as the one of D.C. Sniper, Lee Malvo.

These differences in the news-gathering and news-reporting routines as well as the economic and institutional constraints are linked to content. They provide the underpinnings for ideological frames of reference. They structure reporting, impose their own logic, and generate unique framing of the events (Reese and Buckalew, 1995). By examining the news coverage of a foreign event, the war in Lebanon during the summer of 2006, we connect between these routines and the framing of the news on local television.

The War in Lebanon

The advantage of examining the war in Lebanon – refers to the military conflict between Israel and Hezbollah during July and August of 2006 – is threefold. First, the event allows for presentation of a wide range of views. The war in Lebanon did not involve any American troops, did not directly affect any economic interests, and was discussed and eventually resolved in international tribunals (the United Nations). The distance of this issue from direct American interests limit the rally effect in which the American media initially reflects a unified American position (Baum and Groeling, 2010). In turn, the high involvement of the international community generates a wide range of viewpoints that are presented by the American media (Bennett et al., 2007; Shafer and Gabay, 2009).

Second, the event presents the opportunity to examine the extent to which different media sources are influenced by the position of the administration. American administrations have traditionally supported Israel in the Middle East conflict (Freedman, 2009; Organski, 1990; Page and

Bouton, 2006), and the Bush Administration has stood out in its support toward Israel during the war in Lebanon.⁴ In contrast to the international community, the United States had continuously supported the Israeli actions.⁵ The lack of debate among political elites about the Israeli position and the strong support for Israel by the American government makes it almost impossible for journalists to present a wide range of viewpoints about the war, unless they rely on other sources, outside the government spectrum.

A final advantage of examining the war in Lebanon is the close association between news source and public attitudes toward the conflict. Two weeks into the War, a Gallup poll showed that seventy-six percent of Americans blamed Hezbollah for the military escalation in the region (Gallup; July 21-23, 2006). Ten days later – and just a couple of days after the disastrous attack on Qana – a CNN poll showed that sixty-eight percent of Americans sympathized with Israel compared to only six percent sympathizing with Hezbollah (CNN; August 2-3, 2006). During the final days of the war, Israel was strongly criticized in the international community for advancing its forces in an effort to gain military gains before a peace treaty is signed (August 11) and implemented (August 14). And yet, a Pew survey conducted during the final days of the war (August 9-13) showed that the majority of Americans (65%) viewed Israel's military actions as appropriate.⁶

Our analysis of the survey data on public support for Israel further indicates that there are significant differences in the attitudes of Americans about the Israel actions based on their news source. Table 2 summarizes the public support for Israel's actions using the Pew Survey run during the final days of the war (August 9-13). Approval is coded positive (+1) for responses that approve the actions of Israel in Lebanon (53%), negative (-1) for disapproval (28%) and 0 for those who refused to answer or said that they don't know (19%).⁷ Overall, each group of media users – television, newspapers, radio or internet – has approved the actions of Israel, with television viewers the most supportive and radio listeners the least. Yet, when we break down the television viewers to

sub-groups based on the source of news from television (column 2), clear differences are found.

The difference among the two public sources – local and network television news – is most striking: local television viewers were ten points more supportive of Israel than network viewers.

[Table 2 here]

This difference holds also when we apply more rigorous statistical testing that controls for alternative explanations for American public support toward Israel and demographic characteristics. We estimate a logistic regression model of the effect of media sources on approval of Israel's actions (1 if approve military actions, 0 otherwise) controlling for religious views of Israel (Holsti, 1996; Mayer, 2004; Page and Bouton, 2006) and the general public support of Israel as the western outpost in the Middle East (Page and Bouton, 2006). We also control for conventional demographics: age, gender, party affiliation, education and race. The results indicate that there are no statistical differences between the viewers of each of the broad news-sources (Table 3, Basic Model). Yet, once television news is broken down to local, network and cable television outlets, clear differences are found between local and network viewers (Table 3, Television Model).⁸

[Table 3 about here]

To further support our expectation of an association between news source and attitudes, table four demonstrates that the different support of local and network viewers are not uniform across education levels. Concurring with Zaller's (1992) Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) model, the least educated and most educated groups were remarkably similar across television audiences, indicating that the attitudes of these groups are not affected by exposure to information.⁹ In contrast, the two intermediate education groups, who are most likely to be influenced by media messages, follow a very different pattern of support among local and network news audiences. Of those who regularly watch local news, the gap is approximately fifty percentage points. Of those who regularly watch network news, the gap is only twenty points. This indicates that the difference in approval of Israel

actions in Lebanon between local and network news viewers is among the moderately aware individuals, those who are the most susceptible to media messages.¹⁰

[Table 4 here]

An alternative explanation is that the people who watch local news are different in a way that also affects their support of Israel. This, however, is not supported by our evidence showing that the effect of local news was strong and positive while controlling for demographic and political differences among the public. Furthermore, studies have shown that there are little demographic and political differences between local and network news viewers (Pew Research Center Biennial News Consumption Survey). Therefore, for the argument that local news viewers are inherently different from other news consumers to hold, one must argue that people who watch local news differ in ways that are not related to the demographic or political differences we control for: party identification, religious affiliation and practice, education level and race, gender and age. We find no theoretical basis for such a difference and thus find this argument difficult to sustain.

In sum, the association between news source and attitudes towards the Israeli actions are strong and significant. While the data do not allow us to draw a causal relationship between the news source and the attitudes on the issue, we argue that they indicate that the message on local news may indeed be different than the message transmitted on network news. It is therefore pertinent to examine how the two news sources differ in their coverage of the war.

Framing of the War

To illustrate how local and network news covered the war, consider the striking differences in the report of the events occurring on July 20 on the ABC network evening news and the late night ABC affiliate in Chicago (WLS-TV). On this day Israel launched an air strike on a target in

Beirut where Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, was believed to be hiding, and began a ground invasion into Lebanon.

The report on the network begins with images from the airstrike in Beirut, described by the ABC anchor as “Israel’s biggest airstrike yet.” The footage shows an Israeli airplane hitting a bunker followed with images of a heavily ruined area and wounded children at the city hospital and an ABC reporter interviewing a family of a wounded girl. Turning to Haifa, Israel, an ABC reporter describes Israeli forces moving across the border in Lebanon and discusses the risks of a ground invasion with local specialists. A third story on that same newscast focuses on the search for diplomatic solutions. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, is shown in an address to the UN council saying that: “While Hezbollah's actions are deplorable, and as I've said Israel has a right to defend itself, the excessive use of force is to be condemned. And Israel's disproportionate use of force and collective punishment of the Lebanese people must stop.” This is then followed by a clip of the Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations delivering an address to the council: “When you operate on a cancerous growth, you do not stop in the middle, sew the patient up and tell him, keep living with that growth until it kills you. You make sure it's totally removed”.

The coverage on the ABC channel in the Chicago media market begins with a report on the increased calls by the international community for a cease fire, but mentions that the US is “staunchly standing up for Israel’s right to defend itself from terrorism.” Pictures of Israeli soldiers entering Lebanon are the first images broadcasted. ABC local news anchor states that “Israel said it has no intention for occupying the country.” This is followed by the images from the Israeli airplane dropping bombs on Beirut but with no images of the ground devastations or of the wounded. The anchor then mentions the call by Kofi Annan for a cease fire, but he does not mention his critique of Israel and there are no images of Annan speaking directly to the council.

The segment of the Israeli Ambassador addressing the council using his metaphor of a cancer disease, however, is included in the news story.

Americans tuned to one of these television images may reach a diametrically different conclusion regarding the conflict. Specifically, it seems safe to conclude that the events as reported on the network allude to disproportionate Israeli actions whereas the local television news emphasizes Israel's right to act in self defense. To systematically assess the difference between local and network news coverage of the Lebanon War, we examine the framing of the war in both news outlets.

In recent decades, media scholars have identified that the way journalists frame stories and issues plays an important role in shaping public opinion and influencing political debate (Entman, 2004). The frame of a news story gives meaning to the individual events reported. Frames are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.” (Gitlin, 1980: 7). In other words, the way in which a journalist tells the story is the story frame. It shapes *how* people think about an event.

Data and Method

To examine the news coverage of the war we take advantage of a dataset available from the News Lab Project at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which archived local television news in the Midwest during 2006. Our analysis focuses on the local news coverage on four local channels in the Chicago media market. This media market is the third largest media market in the nation, and was found by previous studies to have substantial and consistent coverage of the events in the region (Cavari and Unger-Cavari, 2006).

Furthermore, with regards to the Middle East conflict, the audience in this media market also seems to be a balanced one. Chicago has long been the home for a large Jewish population, a

popular immigration city for Jewish Israelis, and has become one of the main centers of the Palestinian immigrant community in the United States. The Pew Survey examined above indicates that the aggregate attitudes about the conflict of people who reside in the Chicago media market is more balanced compared to the national average. The national average approval of Israel's military actions in Lebanon was sixty-five percent. In comparison, in the Chicago market, the approval rate was only fifty-six percent. This is also an outlier in the Midwest region or the state of Illinois which respectively have a sixty-nine and sixty-four percent approval rates for Israel's actions.¹¹

Included in our data are all evening newscasts of two networks – ABC and NBC – from July 12 to August 16, and all late night newscasts on the four main local channels in the Chicago media market – ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC - from July 17 to August 16.¹² We extracted from these newscasts all stories (N=316) covering the war.¹³

To test the difference in coverage we examine how local and network news frame the war. A frame is “schemata of interpretation” that serves as “a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue.” (Goffman, 1974; Gamson, 1989: 157). In our analysis we rely on Entman's definition of framing as “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004: 5). According to Entman, substantive frames carry out at least two of four framing functions when covering political events, issues, and actors (Entman, 1993, 2004):

- *Defining effects or conditions as problematic* – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits.
- *Identifying causes* – identify the forces creating the problem.
- *Conveying a moral judgment* – evaluate causal agents and their effects.
- *Endorsing remedies or improvements* – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects.

Each of these four functions helps to sustain the others, thus creating a cultural logic that has the capacity to stimulate support or opposition to the sides in a political conflict (Entman, 2004: 6).¹⁴

Based on these framing functions we created a detailed code book for our frame analysis. The unit of analysis is a complete news item and can include all framing functions, some or none. Two coders were trained for several sessions before conducting the content analysis. An inter-coder reliability test showed a Cohen's kappa of at least .78 (40 news items compared).

Finally, to assess the influence of government officials on local and network coverage of the war we examine the official viewpoints articulated by these elites during the war. We used our code-sheet to analyze all messages of the President (N= 37) and the Secretary of State (N= 40) during the same time period (thirty items were coded by two coders for reliability tests, showing at least .84 Cohen's kappa).¹⁵

Results

The conflict was widely covered both on local and network television news, yet more stories were broadcasted on network news. Table 5a further indicates that on average each story on network news (133 seconds) was more than fifty percent longer than the average length of story on local news (82 seconds). The prominence of the war in the news coverage on both local and network news was high, airing the majority of the stories in the first ten minutes of the broadcast (Table 5b). This was stronger on network news where twenty one percent of the stories about the war were lead stories, compared to only six percent of the stories on local news.

[Tables 5a and 5b about here]

Most of the coverage on the local news replicated the national sound-bites relying on the reporters of the network channels. Local newscasts added very little additional discussion of the conflict beyond the national footage. Small number of newscasts included interviews of Chicago residents that have been directly influenced by the war. At the outbreak of the war, the U.S. Army

evacuated American citizens from Lebanon. Following the network coverage of the evacuation, local channels in the Chicago media market, interviewed Chicago family members of the evacuees, and eventually the evacuees themselves upon their arrival to the Chicago area. These interviews focused on the personal dimension of the evacuation and rarely dealt with the conflict itself.

The analysis of the framing functions reveals a strong support for our expectation that local news coverage of the war was significantly more supportive of the Israeli position compared to network news coverage (for analysis that compares between each of the four local news channels see appendix). Not every single story in the data expressed a clear frame. However three of the four frame functions were expressed in most of the news stories. Only the framing function which defines solution to the problem was articulated in less than fifty percent of the news stories. Due to their relatively extensive length, network news stories presented, on average, more frame functions compared to local stories.

As Table 6 illustrates, the definition of the problem on local news was clearly in favor of Israel, whereas the network news seemed to project a balanced view. While a small majority of the broadcasts on network news (53.2 percent) defined the problem as Israeli aggressiveness, only forty percent of the local news broadcasts defined the problem in the same terms. In contrast, sixty percent of the local news broadcasts defined the conflict as Hezbollah aggressiveness.¹⁶ The difference between the two groups is statistically significant (Pearson $\chi^2(1, N=270) = 3.829$, $p=0.050$).

[Table 6 about here]

Based on the framing function of the definition of the problem, we compare the tone toward Israel on local and network news over time. Each story is given 1 for a frame function that supports Israel (definition of the problem is Hezbollah attack), or -1 for a frame function that is negative of Israel (definition of the problem is Israel attack). We then generate a mean of tone on

each news source – local or network – for each day. Figure 2 compares the two news sources from July 17 to August 16. The difference between the two sources is especially evident when compared at significant dates during the war. On July 23, Israel launched a massive ground operation into Lebanon. This was reported positively on local news yet with neutrality on network news. In contrast, the Qana incident on July 30 was reported with a negative tone toward Israel on the network news but received little negative reporting on local television news. By the last week of the war, Israel was anticipating a UN resolution and was therefore pushing to achieve military gains before the ceasefire would be signed (August 11) and implemented (August 14). During this time, the tone on network news was negative of this Israel aggressiveness, while local news coverage was relatively positive of the Israeli actions.

[Figure 2 about here]

Similar patterns are found when comparing the second framing function, identification of the responsibility for the conflict (Table 7). While network news stories were relatively balanced, with a slightly more emphasis on Israeli actions as responsible for the conflict, a large volume of local news stories found Hezbollah to be the primary cause of the war. This difference is statistically significant (Pearson $\chi^2(1, N=264) = 6.049, p=0.014$).

[Table 7 about here]

The third frame function, the moral function, measures how the actions of Hezbollah and Israel are portrayed on a moral—immoral scale (+3 to -3 scale). Figure 3 plots the error bars (two standard deviations above and below the mean) for the moral judgment frame of both local and network news. Local television news tended to frame Israel as moral ($M=0.28, SD=1.360$), while network news portrayed Israel as immoral ($M= -0.58, SD= 1.686$). The difference between the two groups is statistically significant ($t= 4.249$). The dominating message on local news was the right of Israel to defend itself and the belief that Israel has no choice but to win this war (imposed on Israel

by the Hezbollah). Conversely, Israel was typically portrayed as the aggressor in network news, which often used words such as ‘bombardment,’ ‘crippled,’ ‘demoralized,’ ‘seizure,’ and ‘targeting bridges and food reserves’ to describe the actions of the Israeli military. Similarly, although both network and local framing of the war presented the actions of Hezbollah as immoral, the image of these actions was significantly less moral on local news (Local: $M = -1.76$, $SD = 0.711$. Network: $M = -1.38$, $SD = 0.732$). The image of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization was more common in local news compared to network news. The latter, in contrast, used the term ‘militia’ when referring to Hezbollah, and emphasized their lack of specific targets or aiming capability when shooting at Israel.

[Figure 3 about here]

The fourth and final framing function is the solution for ending the conflict. During the war, several solutions were suggested by actors involved in the conflict including: total defeat of the Hezbollah, immediate withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon, immediate ceasefire, US intervention without further elaboration on its role, and the deployment of UN or International Peace Corps to the region with or without the disarming Hezbollah. The majority of these solutions were covered by the news reports. We group these solutions into two categories: (1) solutions following the Israeli position (at least at the start of the war) which is the disarmament of Hezbollah in accordance with the 1559 resolution; and (2) solutions that include different kinds of suggested remedies, none of which involve disarming of Hezbollah. We then compare how these two groups were reported on local and network news broadcasts (Table 8).¹⁷ Although most of the stories on local and network news suggested solutions in which Hezbollah is not disarmed, local news coverage was more likely to discuss a disarmament solution (46 percent of all news stories on local news compared to 31 percent of all news stories on network news). Despite the fact that only about one half of the stories mentioned any solution to the problem, the difference between the framing function of each television source is significant (Pearson $\chi^2(1, N=143) = 3.529$, $p=0.06$).

[Table 8 about here]

Our analysis of the government statements reveals that all but one of the US government messages and statements defined Hezbollah as the aggressor and its attacks as the main problem in the conflict, thus, as we expected, the US government showed strong support for the Israeli position during the war. As Figure 4 illustrates, these statements appeared on almost half of the local news stories, yet on only a quarter of all network news stories (Pearson χ^2 (1, N=316) = 11.535, $p=0.01$).¹⁸

We further find that coverage of government statements supporting Israel was significantly higher on local news with twenty two percent of all local news stories including at least one government statement supporting Israel, compared to only eight percent of all network stories. This difference, illustrated in Figure 5, is statistically significant (Pearson $\chi^2=13.575$). By using these statements as the primary focus of the local news, the local news coverage is inevitably more supportive of Israel.

[Figures 4 & 5 about here]

Discussion

Despite the fact that local news coverage is the main source of information for most Americans, studies of media and public opinion examine only national – cable or network – television news. We argue that local news should be considered as a key factor in shaping public opinion about international events. Using Entman's four framing functions we show that the local news coverage of the War in Lebanon during the summer of 2006 was more supportive of the Israeli position compared to network news coverage. Local news tended to echo US government position, therefore supporting Israel's actions during the war. Network news, in contrast, gave room for challenging voices thereby producing frames which were less supportive of Israel's actions.

This difference, we suggest, can be explained by the nature of the local newsroom. As discussed above, certain media routines contribute to widening the range of viewpoints reported in the news. These routines are absent from the local newsroom. Time constraints limit the time available for coverage of factual information with little presentation of multiple views, deep analysis of the events, or for critique. Budget limitations further restrict the use of foreign correspondents thus eliminate live reporting and social ties between correspondents and foreign sources. As a result, local news coverage is limited to short segments taken from affiliated networks, and readily accessible sources, such as statements of government officials. For example, a pre-packaged daily report that ABC makes available to its affiliates might highlight developments on the battlefield, a brief statement from the Israeli foreign minister, a quote from a U.S. State Department official, and a speech in the United Nations by Kofi Annan that is critical of Israel. Because of time constraints, local news producers have to choose which story to air.¹⁹ We demonstrate that in their selection of which story to air, local news channels prefer the U.S. authority's position. While our data do not allow us to determine how local news editors decide which story to air, existing work on local news suggests that their decision may be explained by the tendency of local news to refrain from disputed positions and to follow a more accepted view (Berkowitz, 1987; Kaniss, 1991; McManus, 1994). In doing so, local channels significantly alter the framing of events.

Our data of local news include only the Chicago Market, yet there are strong reasons to believe that broad conclusions can still be drawn from them. Arguably, unique characteristics of the Chicago media market – that may be different in other media markets – lead the Chicago local channels to present a pro-Israeli coverage. We find little support for this possible explanation. As discussed above, local channels are influenced by similar systematic news-gathering and news-reporting routines, such as time and budget limitations.

Other features that are more specific to the characteristics of individual media markets include the effect of owners of the local news, the bios of anchors and news-writers in each local station, as well as unique audiences in each market. We find strong similarity between the four local channels in the Chicago market (appendix). This makes it unlikely that the supportive view of Israel is due to channel ownership and personal bias of anchors and news-writers.

Our survey data allows us to further reject the possibility that the audience in the Chicago media market influences the local channels to have a uniquely pro-Israeli coverage. As discussed above, the audience in the Chicago media market has been less supportive of Israel's actions in Lebanon compared to the national or regional average. If local channels try to appeal to the public sentiment in their market, then we should expect the coverage in the Chicago market to be even less supportive of Israel compared to other media markets.

Our findings have direct application to the current understanding of public attitudes about foreign affairs. For many years, students of public opinion argued that the public has little, if any, knowledge about foreign affairs and, therefore, their attitudes about foreign policy convey little meaning (Lippman, 1955, 1965; Neuman, 1986; Powlick and Katz, 1998). This view has been recently challenged by scholars who argue that while the information available to Americans may not be full, it is nonetheless sufficient for evaluating government actions. They contend that the scant information available to Americans is added to their existing political attitudes and predispositions to form meaningful preferences about foreign policies (Brewer et al., 2004; Holsti, 1996; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2004; Page and Bouton, 2006). Yet, as our findings reveal, Americans who watch local news are exposed to the government's position and are given little information to critique it. It is therefore questionable whether these people are able to generate meaningful preferences that do not follow the government position.

Recent developments in newsroom routines and communication technologies provide the opportunity for journalists to widen the range of viewpoints presented in their coverage and to challenge government's position. However, local newsroom seems to lack the ability and will to challenge government's official position and tends to accept it. The result is an unbalanced story, articulating the position of the administration. Journalists have a crucial function in maintaining a wide and diverse public sphere. It is their duty to be critical of official sources and to allow access to challenging view-points thereby fostering a genuine debate that provides the knowledge necessary for citizens to make up well informed decisions.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1: Average Newscast breakdown of Local News during the 2004 campaign

News category	Breakdown of broadcast during the 2004 election campaign	Percentage of all news time
Advertising	8 min. 51 sec.	29.5
Sports and Weather	6 min. 21 sec.	21.2
Elections	3 min. 11 sec.	10.6
Crime	2 min. 34 sec.	8.6
Local Interest	1 min. 56 sec.	6.4
Teasers, intros, music	1 min. 43 sec.	5.7
Health	1 min. 22 sec.	4.6
Other topics	1 min. 12 sec.	4.0
Unintentional Injury	55 sec.	3.1
Business/ economy	47 sec.	2.6
Iraq and Foreign Policy	38 sec.	2.3
Government (non-election)	28 sec.	1.6

Source: The Lear Center Local News Archive, February 15th, 2005.

Table 2: Support of Israel Actions in Lebanon by News Source

News Source	Mean Approval of Israel Actions in Lebanon	
	(1) General Media Classification	(2) Breakdown of Television Viewership
Newspapers (238)	.24	
Radio (113)	.19	
Internet (166)	.22	
<u>Television (939)</u>	.28	
Local (128)		.27
Network (296)		.14
Cable – Liberal (274)		.22
Cable – Fox (202)		.62

Note: approval is coded as an ordinal variable where approval of Israel actions is coded as 1, disapproval as -1 and DK as 0.

Source: Pew, August 2006. Approval is based on two questions combined: q65f1 and q66f2. News source is based on the first response only.

Table 3: Support for Israel's actions in Lebanon

	Basic Model	Television Model
Born Again Christian	0.359* (0.174)	0.349* (0.175)
Support Israel in the Arab-Israeli Conflict	1.651*** (0.164)	1.653*** (0.166)
Party (Republican)	0.738*** (0.169)	0.664*** (0.172)
Male	0.333* (0.163)	0.341* (0.165)
White	0.606** (0.222)	0.608** (0.225)
Age: 18-29	-0.488 (0.292)	-0.437 (0.295)
Age: 30-49	0.0209 (0.223)	0.0394 (0.227)
Age: 50-65	0.0882 (0.226)	0.0944 (0.230)
Education: no high school	-0.0250 (0.336)	0.0498 (0.342)
Education: high school	0.301 (0.207)	0.325 (0.210)
Education: some college	0.644** (0.212)	0.655** (0.214)
News Source: Newspapers	0.142 (0.308)	0.135 (0.294)
News Source: Internet	0.00438 (0.351)	-0.00604 (0.340)
News Source: Television	0.144 (0.263)	
In Television: Local News		0.825* (0.382)
In Television: Network News		-0.258 (0.285)
In Television: CNN, MSNBC, CNBC		-0.0343 (0.290)
In Television: Fox Cable		0.681* (0.347)

constant	-1.625*** (0.404)	-1.613*** (0.393)
<i>N</i>	943	943

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Attitudinal differences among the four education groups by television source

Approve of Israel's actions in Lebanon	No High School		High School		Some College		College or more	
	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National	Local	National
Approve	60%	63%	74%	58%	75%	64%	62%	53%
Disapprove	40%	37%	26%	42%	25%	36%	38%	47%

Source: Pew, August 2006. Approval is based on two questions combined: q65f1 and q66f2. News source is based on the first response only.

Table 5a: Air time (in seconds) of war coverage in Network and local news broadcasts

	Air Time				
	<i>N</i>	Average	Maximum	Minimum	SD
Network	208	133	238	21	40
Local	108	82	193	14	47

Table 5b: Position of the story in Network and local news broadcasts

Position of story in the broadcast	Network (%)	Local (%)
Lead story	21	6
First ten minutes	65	53
Remaining of the broadcast	14	41
	100	100
	<i>N</i> =208	108

Table 6: Definition of the problem in Network and local news coverage

Problem	Network (%)	Local (%)
Israeli attacks	53.2	40.2
Hezbollah attacks	46.8	59.8
	100	100
	N=188	82

Note. Pearson $\chi^2(1, N=270) = 3.829$ ($p=0.050$)

Code-book Question: According to the story, what is the most prominent problem?

Table 7: Responsibility for the problem in Network and local news coverage

Responsibility	Network (%)	Local (%)
Israeli	53.8	37.2
Hezbollah	46.2	62.8
	100	100
	N=186	78

Note. Pearson $\chi^2(1, N=264) = 6.049$ ($p=0.014$)

Code-book Question: According to the story, who is the most responsible for causing the problem?

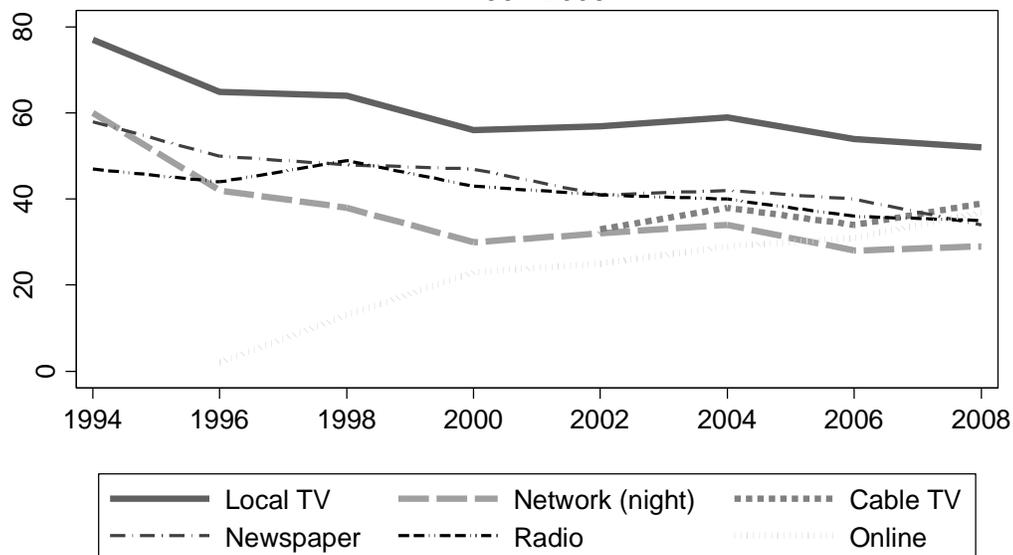
Table 8: Solution to the problem in Network and local news coverage

Solution	Network (%)	Local (%)
Disarmament of Hezbollah	31.1	46.4
Hezbollah not disarmed	68.9	53.6
	100	100
	N=74	69

Note. Pearson $\chi^2(1, N=143) = 3.529$ ($p=0.06$)

Code-book Question: According to the story, what is the most prominent proposed solution to the problem?

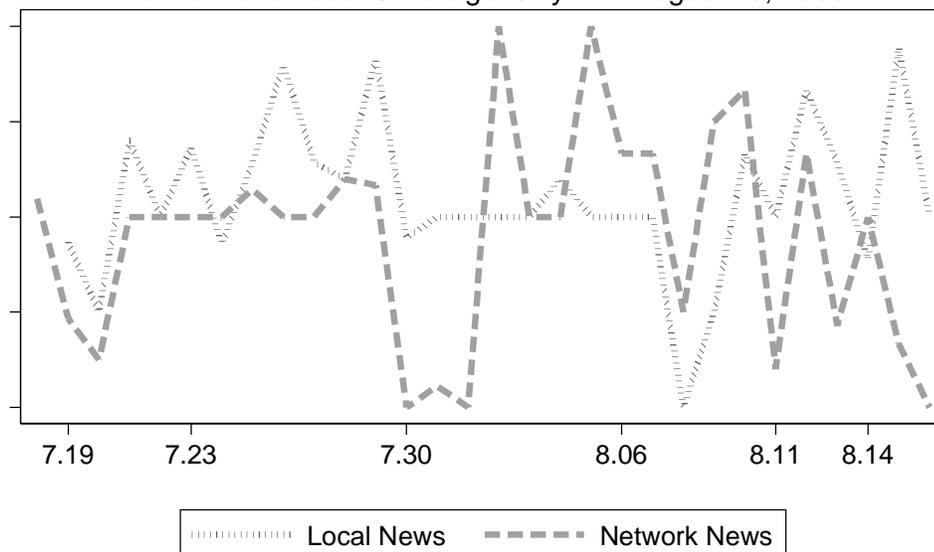
Figure 1: Primary News Sources of Americans
1994-2008



Newspapers and Radio: listened/read yesterday. TV: regularly watch. Online: 3+ days/week

Source: Pew Research Center Biennial News Consumption Survey, 8.17.2008

Figure 2: Tone of Television Coverage of the Lebanon War
 Network and Local Coverage: July 17 - August 16, 2006

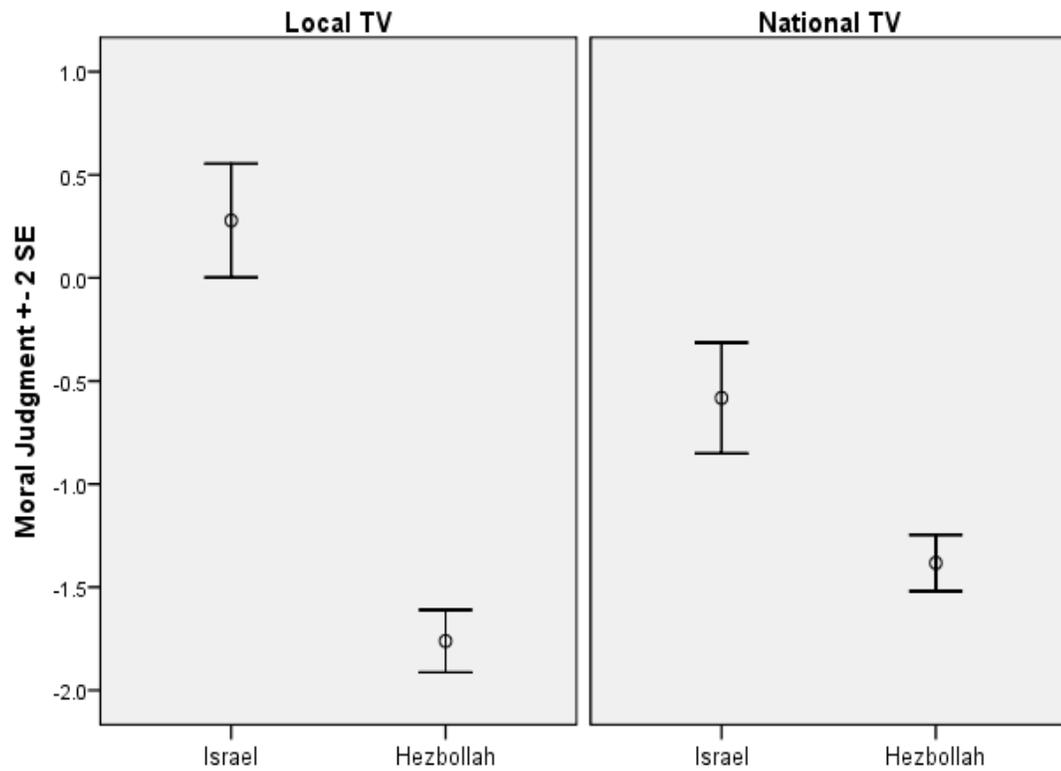


based on Entman's framing function: definition of the problem

Source: content analysis of network and local news coverage of the war

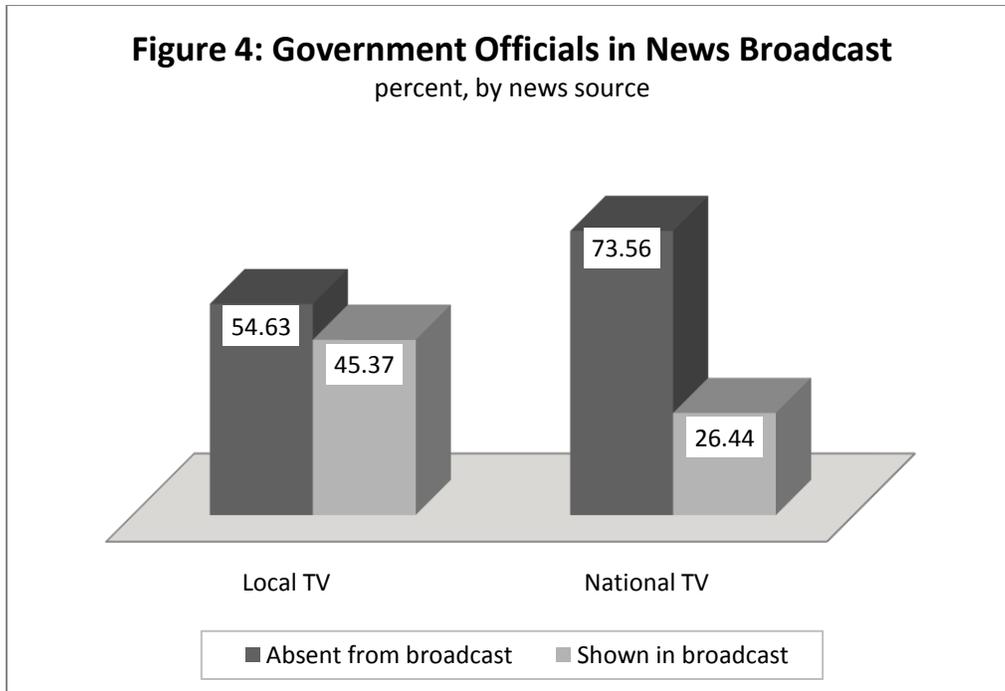
Note. Tone is measured based on the average definition of the problem presented on local and network news for each day. Each story is given 1 for a frame function that supports Israel (definition of the problem is Hezbollah attack), or -1 for a frame function that is negative of Israel definition of the problem is Israel attack).

Figure 3: Error Bars for Moral Judgment

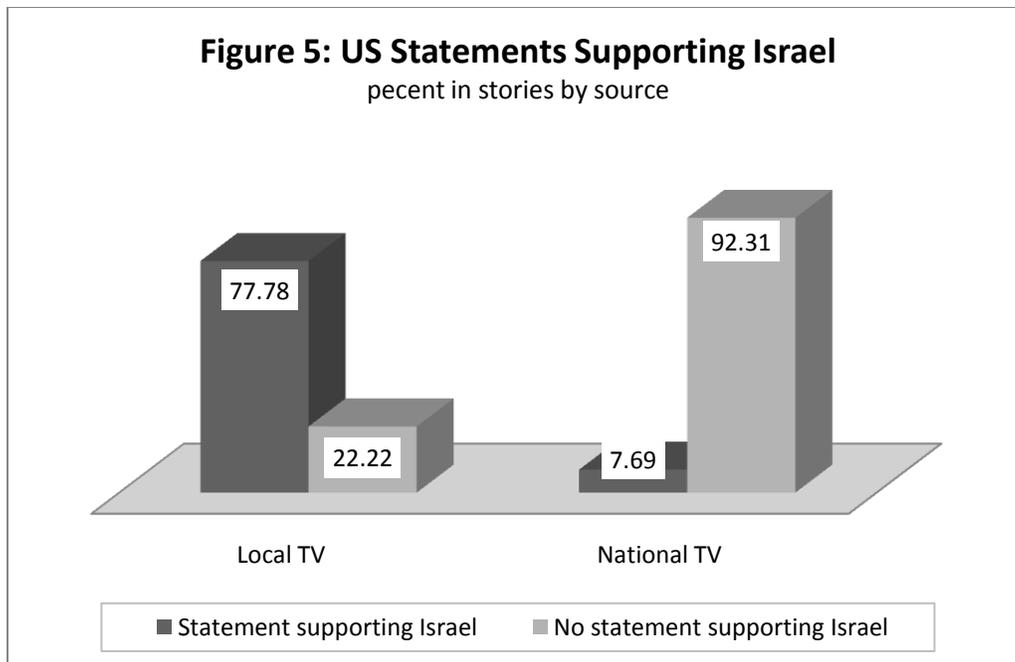


Note. Moral judgment frame function is measured on a scale between +3 (moral) and -3 (immoral). Error bars illustrate two standard deviations above and below the mean for the moral judgment frame.

Code-book Question: How does the story present the Israeli army and officials?



Note. Bar graphs compare the percentage of newscasts that include US government officials in local and Network news.



Note. Bar graphs compare the percentage of newscasts that include US statements supporting Israel in local and Network news.

Appendix: assessing the effect of data limitations

A possible explanation to our results is that our findings are influenced by limitations of our data: the selection of the two Network news – ABC and NBC – and the absent local news videos during the first five days of the war.

Our first concern is, specifically, that examining Fox local newscast – commonly regarded as more ‘pro-Israeli’ – might have altered our results in favor of Israel. However, our results stayed consistent even when we tested the differences between local and Network news without including Fox news. Tables A1 to A3 show that there are almost no framing differences across local channels. In addition, we did not find any differences in the amount of US official appearances between the local channels.

Table A1: *Definition of the problem across different local newscasts*

Problem	NBC (%)	ABC (%)	Fox (%)	CBS (%)
Israeli attack	36.8	47.8	36.0	40.0
Hezbollah attack	63.2	52.2	64.0	60.0
	100	100	100	100
	N=19	23	25	15

Table A2: *Responsibility for the problem across different local newscasts*

Problem	NBC (%)	ABC (%)	Fox (%)	CBS (%)
Israel	31.6	40.9	35.0	41.2
Hezbollah	68.4	59.1	65.0	58.8
	100	100	100	100
	N=19	22	20	17

Table A3: *Solution to the problem across different local newscasts*

Problem	NBC (%)	ABC (%)	Fox (%)	CBS (%)
Disarmament of Hezbollah	50.0	43.8	50.0	40.0
Hezbollah not disarmed	50.0	56.3	50.0	60.0
	100	100	100	100
	N=19	22	20	17

Second, we tested our results looking at local and Network news during the same time period (July 17- August 16, 2006), thus dropping the first five days of Network reports. We expect that if any bias exists, it would only further support our results. During the first five days of the war Israel enjoyed an overwhelming support of both the international community and the American administration. Israel was seen as defending itself against brutal terrorist attacks. It is only after Israel retaliate using massive military force that the Israeli actions were criticized as disproportional. Indeed, altering the time period did not change our results. Our hypothesis was indeed sustained by altering the data accordingly.

¹ Reese and Buckalew (1995) examine how one local news station covered the Gulf War, with a special focus on how domestic dissent was portrayed in January 1991. They find that newsgathering routines influenced the coverage of the domestic dissent and argue that the nature of local news makes it more subordinate to government power. While this study offers an important insight into the influence of newsroom routines on the coverage of foreign events, the focus of the study is not on the war and events in the Persian Gulf but rather on the domestic strife created by the war. In contrast to the Gulf War and its dissent, many foreign events involve no American troops and generate little domestic response. These events may influence foreign policy and have significant implications to public opinion and political behavior, yet we know nothing about how these events are covered on the most frequently watched news broadcast in America. Furthermore, while Reese and Buckelaw make some implied comparisons to network news, it offers no analysis of network news coverage of the same event. This makes it difficult to assess how local news reporting is different than network news or any other news source.

² Most Americans consume more than one news source. Yet, it is likely that the source most regularly watched also has a significant effect on the information available to Americans and their attitudes.

³ *Donald P. Roper v. Christopher Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551

⁴ This support has intensified in recent years due to the American efforts to build a coalition for the invasion of Iraq and the attempt to justify their actions there. Freedman finds that the shared fears against the rise of fundamentalist Islamic movements, the growing power of Iraq and Iran, and the fear of terror have made it difficult for the Bush administration to critique the Israeli actions in the region (Freedman 2007). Similarly, large majorities in both houses of Congress argued that Israel is fighting terrorism just as the United States is doing in Afghanistan and Iraq. Secretary of State, Colin Powell in a speech delivered at Princeton University on February 2004, acknowledged the difficulties United States has in pressing Israel: “It is difficult for us...to put this kind of pressure on the Israeli side as long as terrorism us seen as a legitimate political act on the part of the Palestinians. It is not—it can’t be, not in this post 9/11 age” (quoted from Freedman 2007: 297).

⁵ At the outbreak of the war, on July 15, the United Nations Security Council rejected pleas from Lebanon for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. The only country to oppose the UN action was the United States. Soon after, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution condemning Hezbollah and supporting the right of Israel for self-defense (S. Res 534; July 18). The U.S. Congress also approved the request of the Bush Administration to authorize expedited

shipment of military supplies. The United States blocked UN attempts to condemn Israel or impose a solution not accepted by the Israeli government (July 15, July 19, July 26). And, the United States acted as the broker of the Israeli position in the negotiation over the final resolution.

⁶ USA Today/Gallup poll, July 21-23, 2006. National adult sample, N=1105. CNN poll conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, August 2-3, 2006. National adult sample, N=1047. Pew Research Center Poll: August News Interest Index. Princeton Survey Research Associates International, sponsored by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, August 9-13, 2006. National adult sample, N=1506.

⁷ The variable of interest is public support for the military action of the Israeli forces. This was asked using two interchangeable items summing up to a response rate of eighty-one percent (1227 of 1506 total respondents). To combine Q65f1 and Q66f2 we recode the latter following the binary structure of Q65f1: approve/disapprove of the Israeli military actions in Lebanon. We therefore define our dependent variable as a binary variable where approval of the military actions of Israel is recorded as 1 and disapproval as 0, leaving out all respondents who refused to answer. Q66f2 is recorded as 1 if respondents indicated that Israel has “not gone far enough” or was “about right” – both indicating a support for Israel’s military actions. While merging the two questions raises some problems, we believe that it is reasonable to assume that individuals who thought that Israel’s actions were about right or not enough would have likely selected to approve the military actions of Israel had they been asked this question.

⁸ These findings are not altered when we estimate a multinomial logistic regression that allows for the dependent variable to be supportive of Israel’s actions, non-supportive or don’t know. The logistic regression is more straightforward to understand and therefore presented here.

⁹ Zaller argues that the effect of available information is not a uniform one. Individuals with moderate amount of political awareness will be more likely to be persuaded by political messages compared to individuals whose political awareness is very low or very high: individuals with low levels of political awareness are less likely to understand the political messages, and individuals with high levels of awareness have sufficient contextual information to comprehend the relationship of the messages to their predispositions and thus are able to resist them. Because our data did not include other measures of political awareness, we examine education as our proxy for political awareness (see also Price and Zaller 1993).

¹⁰ When we replace the attention indicator with an indicator for following the news on Iraq, the latter variable is not significant and our variables of interest are not substantively altered. This, together with our control for level of education, confirms that the effect of attention to news about the War in Lebanon is not capturing attitudes of less sophisticated respondents whose answer may reflect their acquiescence with this complex foreign issue rather than thoughtful opinions.

¹¹ Given the small number of observations in the Chicago market (N=32), we cannot draw any statistical conclusions from examining the relationship between the news source and support of the Israeli actions. Although much larger than the Chicago media market, a breakdown of support for Israel by news source in the Midwest census region reveals that people whose primary source of news is local news were more likely to support Israel's actions (68 percent) than any other news source, except Fox cable news (92 percent).

¹² Local media coverage during the first five days of the War was not available. The results are not changed when we analyze the data using only the period in which we have data for both local and network news. See appendix for a more detailed discussion of these data limitations.

¹³ A total of 316 news stories were extracted from these newscasts: ABC, N=107; NBC, N=101; WLS_ABC, N=28; WMAQ_NBC, N=22; WBBM_CBS, N=25; and WFLD_FOX, N=33.

¹⁴ For example, in a study on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Sheaffer and Gabay (2009) find that frames supporting Israel typically defined the problem as Palestinian terrorism; the cause, the Palestinian authority and the Hamas; the moral judgment, condemnation of these agents as terrorists/evil; and the initial remedy as Palestinian concessions and/or war against terrorism. On the other hand, frames that supported the Palestinian side usually defined the problem as the Israeli occupation; the cause, the Israeli government and the Israeli military; the moral judgment, criticizing these agents as the aggressor/evil; and the remedy as Israeli concessions.

¹⁵ Available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.whitehouse.gov> and <http://www.state.gov>

¹⁶ It is important to note that the importance of problem definition lies in its ability to often predetermine the rest of the frame (Entman, 2004 p. 6). In other words, by defining the problem as Hezbollah attacks, other frame functions are more likely to put the blame on the Hezbollah and to present it as the villain, formulating a local news frame that is more sympathetic with the Israeli position.

¹⁷ More than fifty percent of the stories (173 cases) did not mention any solution to the problem.

¹⁸ While local news gave relatively more room to US officials than network news, the results are different when examining the appearance of Israeli officials in the news. Israeli officials appeared on 24 percent of all local news stories about the war, as well as on 27 percent of all the network news stories covering the war.

¹⁹ Alternatively, the national networks' might not even distribute some of the stories to the local affiliate, believing that it would be less newsworthy to local affiliates.