CULTIVATING CREDIBILITY:
A STUDY OF HOW NEWS ANCHORS ESTABLISH TRUST

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines television news anchor credibility cultivation. The establishment of trust is examined through its relationship to station identity and audience construction. Open-focused interviews with news anchors, news directors, producers and make-up artists in a major Canadian television market were conducted. I maintain that anchors' actions and looks can personify distinction and credibility when they reflect viewers' tastes and sensibilities. Perceptions of anchor trustworthiness are the key to viewer loyalty decisions and station identity.

I contend that credibility cultivation requires anchors' entry into a complex system of expressive control which is exercised through constraint and expectation. Institutional needs for trust and an audience, the constraints imposed by the medium, entertainment format and news genre, all contribute to the expressive standards which must be adhered to. The image demands are intensified when viewer reflexivity, continuity and trust needs are incorporated into an already rigid performance regimen. There is room, however, for anchors' authentic expressions which are integral to the construction of trust and necessary reflections of both station and viewer uniqueness.

Findings suggest that anchors who cultivate the appearance of their own accessibility are likely to be trusted because they seem familiar, on some level, to typical citizens tuning in. I argue that while this image is currently in vogue, it is

unlikely to be a permanent mode of trustworthy expression. Dominant styles and viewer loyalty patterns appear to undergo evolutionary transformations. Distrust of the friendly facade could arise from any number of unforseen cultural changes and through changing expectations that are prompted by anchors who continually negotiate the trustworthiness of their image with the audience.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis provides an analysis of television news anchor credibility cultivation and its contribution to audience loyalty and the identity of a station. Audience construction and institutional identity are certainly not concerns relevant only to those in the television industry. Lawyers, physicians and insurance agents also need to garner the trust of their own target audiences, namely prospective clients and patients. Perceptions of the trustworthiness of those who fill these and other occupational roles contribute to the identity of their institutional settings and the authority of their occupations as a whole. While the focus of this thesis could have been on any of a variety of other 'callings', anchors were chosen for the following reasons: (1) The size of their audience on a daily basis far surpasses the portion of the populace who regularly greets those who work in most other occupations; and (2) The obviously staged quality of television news productions makes the anchor performance ripe for analysis.

A fusion of the theoretical works of Anthony Giddens (1990), Joshua Meyrowitz (1985; 1994), Ericson, Baranek & Chan (1987, 1989, 1991) and Erving Goffman (1967; 1969; 1971; [1959] 1973) forms the core analytical framework for this sociological problem. Giddens' notions about trust relationships in the modern era are applied specifically to television viewers and their need to 'blindly trust' news anchors and the authenticity

of the messages they deliver. Meyrowitz's insights into the power of the television medium serve to contextualize the cultivation of credibility within the medium itself, not in the actual content of the words that anchors are speaking. The works of Ericson et al strengthen Meyrowitz's 'medium theory' argument while localizing the site of credibility construction within the specific parameters and specifications of television's entertainment format. Both medium and format considerations set the occupational stage for the adaptation of Goffman's principles which highlight the 'strategic staging' that is required for the cultivation of anchor credibility and the effective management of audience impressions.

Empirical data were provided by key employees of three television stations that produce daily local news in a major television market in Canada. A total of 23 sources were interviewed, including 12 news anchors (six men and six women), six producers, three news directors, and two make-up professionals. They were selected according to the criteria that they either are, or spend considerable time working with, anchors. I assumed that those in these occupational roles would have at least a modest understanding of the factors that contribute to viewer perceptions of anchor trustworthiness.

The open-focused interview was the chosen methodological tool. Questions were designed to elicit information about credibility cultivation from the frames of reference provided by these different industry roles. The drawbacks of using face-to-

face interviews as the sole data gathering technique are no secret (Deux & Wrightsman, 1988). It is certainly possible that I unknowingly either discouraged or promoted certain answers to interview questions. It is also possible that interviewees might, at times, have experienced evaluation apprehension and felt pressure to present themselves or their station in a particular light. But despite these and any other limitations, the open-focused interview method was chosen because it allowed for clarification of unclear responses and more comprehensive development of initially brief answers. It also provided a general conversational direction while leaving room to probe specific thoughts, experiences and observations that were mentioned (Babbie, 1986). This freedom to probe often provided detailed elaboration on critical issues that I had not anticipated prior to the interview sessions.

My initial contact with respondents was by letter which included a description of the research project and their rights as potential participants. I made follow-up telephone calls after mailing the introductory package to ensure its receipt, address any concerns, and schedule interviews with those who agreed to be involved. Most interviews took place in the occupational setting: in newsrooms, cafeterias, private offices and dressing rooms. Other consultations took place in coffee shops located away from the stations. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. All respondents consented to the tape-recording of interviews with the assurance that confidentiality

was guaranteed.

In the first chapter of this thesis, entitled 'Representing Success in Television', the central arguments are established. I contend that audience loyalty is at the root of a station's economic success, and that viewer faithfulness is generated through newscasts which define a station's 'personality' while distinguishing it from cable channels and the local competition. I maintain that while story coverage and topic selection certainly contribute to the character of local news productions, it is the trustworthiness of the newscast image that is at the heart of audience loyalty. Viewer faithfulness is based on the perception that the staged appearance of journalistic excellence is an indication that the news on a particular station can be trusted.

Newscasts are conceptualized as theatrical presentations which feature aural and visual "expressive equipment" (Goffman, [1959] 1973) that is strategically displayed on the newscast set. Things like theme music and graphics are just some components of the expressive package which can suggest to viewers that a newscast is not only credible, but distinctive. I argue that while these and other inanimate features are essential representations of credibility and distinction, news anchors take centre stage because of their capacity to physically embody these qualities. The trust signs that news anchors project onto the television screen have the persuasive power to hook a target audience when they reflect those viewers'

tastes and sensibilities. Trustworthy anchors not only 'anchor' relationships between stations and viewers, they also anchor trust in the journalists, news sources and other players who also appear on the screen.

In the second and third chapters, entitled 'A Way of Looking' and 'A Way of Acting' respectively, the "personal front" (Goffman, [1959] 1973) of news anchors is analyzed from the vantage point of facial appearance, bodily decoration, and ways of acting, speaking and understanding. Detailed descriptions are used to illustrate how each of these image elements can either enhance or undermine perceptions of newscast and station trustworthiness. Characterizations of credible actions and appearances are juxtaposed with what is considered untrustworthy and potentially damaging to newscast and station success.

I contend that a chief component of newscast believability comes through construction of the appearance that a station's anchors have journalistic interest and facility. This component of image is extremely powerful in its capacity to compensate for transgressions in one or more of the other image elements. This potential, though, does not minimize the importance for anchors to create the illusion of authentic interaction and conversation with viewers. In other words, it is critical that anchors be good actors in this cultivated news play. Other signs of trust that mark effective anchors include unassuming body props and faces that are "caricatures" (Hartley, 1982) of the target

audience. I argue that these superficial image components also play a key role in the development of viewer loyalty.

In the final chapter, entitled 'Ways of Connecting', I suggest that audience assessments of the totality of an anchor's expressive equipment are the basis upon which newscast loyalty decisions are made. The desire to watch an anchor repeatedly is determined by the extent to which that anchor embodies viewer preferences and projects those sensibilities onto the screen. Personal identification with a particular anchor serves as a "reflexive project" (Giddens, 1990) for viewers by assuring them of their own identity through a 'sense' of connection with the news anchor's persona. The *reflexive elemental anchor image system* is used to explain how numerous anchor-viewer connections are possible given the diverse tastes and perceptual tendencies of a large viewing audience.

I conclude that 'blind trust' is most likely vested in anchors who cultivate an image of their own accessibility. Anchors who look and act non-threatening while including the audience in their theatrical presentations create the impression that their relationships with viewers are personal, egalitarian and face-to-face. Cultivating the illusion of this type of relationship is congruous with equal access to media information - it reflects the joint informational worlds of anchors and viewers. While the perception of accessibility is a necessary ingredient in the construction and maintenance of audience loyalty, the "bureaucratization of the spirit" of anchors is

just as essential (Goffman, [1959] 1973). I explain how predictable performances and image consistency feed the psychological needs of viewers and function as the ultimate symbol of anchor trustworthiness and station excellence.

CHAPTER ONE: REPRESENTING SUCCESS IN TELEVISION

Local News and the Image of Credibility and Distinction

Public and private television broadcasters require loyal and expanding audiences. The audience is the justification for any station's existence and the key to advertising revenue (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987: 34; Ettema & Whitney, 1994: 5; Meyrowitz, 1985: 73). A television station's survival and economic success at the local level depends not only on a relationship with its audience, but also with individual viewers. The importance of both relationships and their interdependence is briefly explained by drawing on the complementary aspects of two otherwise opposing audience models.

According to the commodity model, the audience is conceptualized as a "common coin of exchange" (Webster & Phalen, 1994: 30). The size and composition of an audience are the key determinants of its economic value. Essentially, advertisers are in the business of buying audiences from stations. The logic is the same whether advertisers are after a share of the mass undifferentiated audience (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991: 44; 1987: 34) or a share of a specialized segment of that audience (Cantor, 1994: 162-4). The greater the share of the sought after audience that a station claims as its own, the more revenue advertisers are willing to pump into the station in exchange for advertising time.

While the commodity model correctly addresses audiences as

effective institutional commodities based on their power to attract advertisers and generate revenue (Ettema & Whitney, 1994: 5), it does not account for the equally critical relationship between television stations and individual viewers. Despite claims that viewers "do not exist as individuals" (ibid), they do. The marketplace model (Webster & Phalen, 1994: 27) addresses this deficiency by suggesting that the audience is an aggregate of individual consumers who make program choices in a multichannel marketplace to suit their needs and tastes. For the purpose of this paper the audience is conceptualized as both a common coin of exchange *and* an assemblage of individual viewers with decision-making power. The construction of an audience with economic value hinges on a station's ability to sell its programming to viewers. At the root of audience loyalty is the faithfulness of individual audience members.

An important way to encourage viewer loyalty is through local news programming. News is not simply a requirement to meet the demands of regulators (Epstein, 1973: 48, 49), it distinguishes local channels from the dozens of others available to cable subscribers. As one producer pointed out, local news has a much bigger impact on the "personality of a station" than most other programming. Local news is aired only on local stations, unlike other entertainment programs which can often be seen on both local and cable channels. For this reason, local news has become the bait used to lure viewers from other programs duplicated elsewhere. One respondent contextualized

this development:

> Ten or fifteen years ago we didn't have much of a choice in terms of viewing habits on television. Basically, we had three channels so there wasn't much competition. There was enough money to go around for all of the stations to survive in the marketplace...but with the proliferation of cable the competition grew fiercer and we really had to separate our product from the rest of the competition ... Seinfeld is going to be available not only on a local channel but it can be available through many other TV stations ... and so you can't really brand yourself by saying that you have the best shows ... and so the question becomes, how do you create a totality to your brand that is totally different so there is equity in that brand and people perceive there is value in that brand? One of the easiest ways you can do that and the best way you can do that is through your news ... because nobody can compete with us on that level, whether it's an NBC station or a FOX station or any kind of network that might come into this market. They cannot compete with our news.

A station's local newscasts are believed by respondents to be the "flagship shows" that establish viewer loyalty for not only those shows but also for the station's other entertainment programming where the "*real*" money is generally made (Matusow, 1983: 254). This logic is consistent with "audience flow" theory which suggests that a sizeable portion of any audience will stay tuned to a given station unless there is a pressing reason to switch channels (Epstein, 1973: 93, 94). In other words, programs inherit viewers from preceding programs and the most logical place for local stations to build a loyal audience in a multichannel environment is through local news. This is deemed the best way for a local station to maximize the chance that viewers will watch Seinfeld or some other syndicated entertainment show on its station instead of an imported cable channel.

Local news not only differentiates local stations from cable stations, it also distinguishes local television broadcasters from one another. Competition for local advertising dollars is ultimately a local competition. The local station with the most successful newscast in a given time-slot stands to generate the most revenue by passing on the largest audience to the entertainment programs that follow the news. Also, research has shown that if viewers respect the news on a given station, they tend to have more respect for that channel's overall programming compared to the competition (Matusow, 1983: 254). This suggests that a local TV station with a respected news operation will draw loyal viewers for not only the news and the programs that follow, but also for entertainment shows that air at other times of the day. One respondent implied that viewers do, in fact, link their favourite newscast with their favourite station. As a result of that linkage they are likely to see what program is on their preferred station when they first turn on their television sets "because they feel comfortable with that station ... it makes the choices easier."

But what is successful television news? What is it about news that generates viewer loyalty? In a word, trust. Trust is defined here as viewer confidence in the reliability of the news production system, and in the authenticity of the news that is broadcast on a particular television station (Giddens, 1990:34). Trustworthy news provides the critical link between

stations and viewers. It is the bonding agent that cements station-viewer relationships.

Local TV news is the ideal site for stations to win viewer trust. This is done by exploiting the complementary trust needs of the news production system and members of the audience. In this period of high modernity, trust is a necessity for expert systems that construct, reconstruct, and disseminate vast amounts of information about the world of events (Giddens, 1990). Television newscasts are components of the larger expert system of mass media news production which also includes newspaper, magazine and radio news. The survival of this system depends upon trust vested in its competence and in the authenticity of the knowledge it provides. And while this expert system in general, and television news in particular, needs to be trusted, viewers need to trust the newscasts they watch and the news production system as a whole. The trust that viewers vest in this system is 'blind trust' which rests upon faith in the proper working of the system. Those who watch TV news are typically not aware of the abstract principles that govern news production and lack full information about the news stories that are broadcast. Most viewers are unlikely to do exhaustive content checks on their own.

The average viewer needs to trust that daily news productions are accurate representations of the news 'as it happened', especially considering the substantive nature of most newscasts. Local television news is synonymous with bad news.

It paints a picture of a risky, unsafe community. Unsettling stories dominate daily news - stories about crime and scandal, sexual predators and their victims, accidents and disasters (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987: 44-50). Viewer trust in the authenticity of news about risk is critical to the extent that it guides individual and/or collective action (Giddens, 1990: 35). If a sexual predator is on the loose, information about attack patterns, victim profiles, and the scenes of the crimes could reduce the danger of viewers who may be at risk by altering their behaviour. Viewers are in a position to trust bad news for their own safety. Bad news is often tempered with good news that previously broadcast dangers are at bay, that the crime or disaster is under control, that the sexual predator is behind bars (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987: 44-50). Viewers are in a position to trust the good news as much as the bad to the extent that it directs, or redirects their activity for the purpose of maximizing personal and/or collective safety.

Trustworthy news has two components: credibility and distinction. The credibility factor is the extent to which a newscast is believable. The distinction factor refers to the properties of a newscast that differentiate the news on competing stations and is intertwined with credibility. One could argue, as many respondents did, that credibility and distinction are simply achieved through journalistic excellence, through quality news coverage according to local industry standards generally and station standards more specifically.

The common industry argument is that journalistic excellence and quality news coverage can somehow be measured by the extent to which a station's news is on the leading edge, by it's depth, balance, accuracy, fairness, integrity, and by the extent, comparatively, to which it is refined and 'up to the minute'.

But despite a station's standing in the ratings, employees of each station argued that its news is as good as, if not a cut above, the rest according to the so-called 'objective' indicators of trustworthy news. This brings into question the extent to which 'objective' journalistic excellence plays a role in establishing station credibility, distinction, viewer loyalty, and putting one station ahead in local ratings. And even if it is true that all local stations provide first-rate news coverage, the argument put forth here is not enough to explain differential ratings time and time again.

There is another problem with this argument. While employees of each station defended the journalistic integrity and superior status of its news quality, there was also hesitant admission that there may not really be all that much difference between the 'quality' of news on competing stations. One interviewee recognized that "there isn't a great deal of difference in the coverage of the main items". Another acknowledged that "all three newscasts are going to be about the same ... there might be more journalistic integrity in our pieces but that would be debatable, probably, by each of the stations." And where 'objective' differences of news quality do

exist in the eyes of industry and/or station experts, there is certainly no guarantee that audiences pick up on those differences. The results of focus group studies led one news director to the conclusion that journalistic 'standards' do not necessarily distinguish competing stations in the viewer's mind.

> We know that if you show the same story done by three different stations to a focus group they don't see some of the journalistic differences that we see. They don't necessarily pick up on the things that we think are glaringly obvious, you know, the aspects of the story that were completely left out on another station or the balance element.

Viewers cannot be expected to assess news quality according to the same criteria that industry insiders deem important. Members of the audience are, for the most part, "'naive' spectators" (Bourdieu, 1984: 4). News production practices and standards are self-referential and internal to the profession. The notions of news quality that serve as guiding forces within the broadcast news industry only have meaning and value within that industry and in relation to its history. Viewers cannot possibly judge news quality with the same cultural competence that television journalists rely on to judge each other's work.

While it may be desirable to provide viewers with 'quality' news content, it is certainly not sufficient for winning viewer trust. 'Quality' journalism alone (objectivity, balance, accuracy, etc.) guarantees neither audience respect nor station success in terms of ratings and/or revenue. 'Quality' news coverage does not ensure that viewers will perceive the news to be of high quality. And it certainly does not ensure that

viewers will perceive the news on one station to be more trustworthy than news on competing local channels. Ironically, despite station attempts to compete for viewers on the basis of internal journalistic values, "by any objective standard - there is remarkably little news on television" (Meyrowitz, 1985: 90), and the scanty details that are provided tend to be forgotten by those who watch TV news anyway (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991: 29). Those truly in search of lengthy and comprehensive local news coverage are far better served by newspapers which offer much less redundant and simplified stories than TV news provides (ibid: 24). The argument that viewer trust is simply won through objective indicators of 'quality' story coverage and topic selection is, clearly, faulty. It fails to explain why so many people feel that television provides the most "trustworthy" news compared to other news sources (Meyrowitz, 1985: 106) and undermines the complexity of how viewer trust is actually won.

The key to winning viewer trust has less to do with industry standards of 'quality' news content as defined above, and more to do with the projection of a trustworthy image that is staged. The intent here is not to draw a sharp distinction between the two, or to suggest that the construction of appearances is completely separate from considerations of balance, factuality, etc. The point to underscore is that 'quality' television news depends first and foremost on 'staged appearances' and viewer perceptions of those appearances (Goffman, [1959] 1973). Viewer perceptions of credibility and

distinction come not simply through objective content indicators of those qualities, but through trust in the televised images that represent those qualities (Griffin, 1992: 139; Meyrowitz, 1985: 62; Wexler, 1986: 247). There is no other way of seeing and experiencing credibility and distinction and commanding respect. Television is, after all, a medium of perceptions, a medium of images, of subjective impressions (Meyrowitz, 1994: 57). In the words of one producer, "our business is built on perceptions ... you're dealing with pure perceptions all of the time." It only makes sense to cultivate the image of credibility, distinction, and journalistic excellence, especially since viewers remember TV images, more than specific details about news content (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991: 29).

What I have implied but not stated thus far is a 'medium theory' (Meyrowitz, 1985; 1994) approach to understanding the complexities of why television news is considered by viewers to be the most believable. Audience trust generated on the basis of credible images and strategic appearances points to the power of the medium and its capacity to command respect while revealing very little in the way of detailed information. The effects of the medium on viewer perceptions has less to with the news that is conveyed and more to do with the actual method of its transmission. Trust in the authenticity of TV news content is underscored by viewers' predisposition to trust the technology, and the nature of the imagery that is projected on television.

TV has sewn the seeds for its own blind acceptance by playing a pivotal role in the transformation of culture in the mid and late twentieth century. Social organization, ways of thinking, acting and being have all been altered through the impact of the television medium. TV has not simply changed the consciousness of a culture, it has reshaped the very fabric of social reality and how people experience it. The medium has created a culture which mirrors its own image and, as a result, has become *the* way people experience individual and collective existence. TV has set the stage for its own domination by creating and reinforcing cultural assumptions that 'reality' actually happens "in, on and through television" (Meyrowitz, 1994: 72).

Trust in the medium breeds trust in the message which is shaped and defined by the unique format and expressive characteristics of television. TV is an expressive platform which feeds a culture's addiction to sensory embellishment. This is why assessments of the authenticity of TV news are made more on the basis of what the news looks, sounds and 'feels' like, than on the actual essence of news content. The cultivation of believable images for display on the electronic stage of daily experience is driven by the format of television which stimulates audience perceptions of the authoritative certainty of both the message and the medium.

TV news is constructed and delivered within the parameters of an entertainment format (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991: 36;

Snow, 1994: 47). Format considerations, like credible and distinctive images, are at least as, if not more, important that actual news content (Snow, 1994: 34, 35, 40). In fact, the entertainment format actually heightens the necessity for a trustworthy image since it, like the TV advertising format it is modelled after, offers viewers no opportunity to judge or challenge the truth claims that are presented (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991: 35-37). Television news is not about discussion and debate, it is about trust that there is no need for debate, that truth claims need not be challenged. The entertainment format demands that daily events be sensationalized through dramatic and captivating sounds and visuals that are interspersed with short clips of people asserting their knowledge and authority. A trustworthy image serves as a protective mechanism to shield from viewers that TV news is as much a product of the creativity and imagination of journalists and sources as it is an 'objective' representation of the stories that are covered (ibid: 26). A trustworthy image is pivotal since the purpose of TV news is to convince viewers that it delivers accurate and reliable accounts of the 'truth' as opposed to subjective, entertaining, reconstructions of reality designed to meet format specifications (Lasch, 1979: 137, 142).

But what is a trustworthy newscast image that represents credibility and distinction? The answer to this question is audience specific. A producer succinctly stated that news, in the end, is about "meeting the needs and expectations of target

groups." The construction and projection of a trustworthy image requires that stations not only tap into the tastes of desired viewers, but claim those tastes as their own, and display them during their daily news shows (Bourdieu, 1984). A trustworthy image comes through effective displays of expressive equipment - through the show of signs and symbols which reflect the tastes, the values, of a station's target news audience (Goffman [1959] 1973). The ultimate image of distinct credibility is one that satisfies the trust needs of desired viewers by appealing to their particular sensibilities.

Television news is a theatrical production (Cayley, cited in Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987: 51). The TV screen, or the "front region" of a news program, is an elaborate staged setting full of all kinds of expressive equipment designed to elicit viewer trust (Goffman [1959] 1973: 22, 107, 134). Since television is a visual, audible medium, anything that appears on the screen and emanates from the speaker is a stage prop with the expressive capacity to represent credibility and distinction. The choice of news content, how it's organized, written and filmed, are among the many subjective elements of a set which contribute to the feel of a newscast, the image of a station. Graphics, logos and background elements together with theme music, the presence or absence of news desks and opening animation are other important props which also suggest to viewers, 'we can be trusted', 'we have integrity', 'we hope you feel at home in this newscast setting'.

Although differences may be subtle in some cases, expressive equipment does differ from station to station in sound, colour, design and combination. A distinctive style and a credible image rest on the ornamentation of the screen viewers' experience when they take in a newscast on television. A trustworthy image of journalistic excellence comes not simply through industry notions of superior story coverage and topic selection, but through the expressive qualities of anything that appears on the screen including its labelling, packaging and presentation.

News Anchors: The Embodiment of Distinctive Credibility

Successful bodies are at the core of any successful organizational image (Featherstone, 1991: 191; Turner, 1984: 111). As pieces of "expressive equipment", TV news anchors are, in many ways, more effective than non-human parts of the setting (Goffman [1959] 1973:220). While content, graphics and logos are important contributors to a station's image, they don't have the same power anchors do to physically embody credibility and distinction. The value of news anchors lies in their ability to personify both of these trust components and to project that trustworthiness to the viewing audience. One respondent captured the power of this potential when he declared that "the anchor is the message".

Whether anchors are aware of it or not, their body language speaks volumes to the public. It provides a definition of the

self, of their personal situation (Goffman [1959] 1973; 1961; 1971; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1984). Their television image reflects not only their character but also their values, beliefs, emotions, attitudes, tastes and aesthetic ideals (Bourdieu, 1984; Featherstone, 1991; Shilling, 1993). All of these qualities available for viewer assessment ideally suggest to the audience that the anchor in question is a trustworthy messenger.

Delving into the complexities of an anchor's image requires the visualization of their "personal front" (Goffman [1959] 1973: 24) as a composite of signs and symbols which can be broken down into two general types (Finkelstein, 1991). Some components of their personal front are authentic and genuine, and exude the core, distinctive essence of the anchor-person as a unique inner and outer behavioral, spiritual, verbal and visual person. These components are either impossible, or extremely difficult to change. They include gender, age, size and race together with personality, vocal quality, innate facilities and charisma. Physiognomy is included here too: the size and shape of their lips, eyes, ears, chin, nose and teeth, and the unique combination of these features on their face. Other authentic components of an anchor's image include their disposition, how they experience life and the accumulation of their life experiences. These factors all contribute to an anchor's character - their values, attitudes, personality and tastes.

All these components of an anchor's personal front are relatively fixed. They do not vary greatly, if at all, from one day to the next except, possibly, through therapy, surgery, or additional life experience. These elements of an anchor's image are, essentially, what contribute to remarkable differences between anchors themselves, their newscasts, and competing television stations. An anchor's embodiment of authentic distinction cannot be duplicated by another anchor or a different station.

Other components of an anchor's personal front are cultivated, nurtured or manipulated. These signs and symbols consist of the more superficial elements of an anchor-person's image that are styled and shaped. They include the colour and design of things like clothing, make-up, jewelry and hair: anything that enhances bodily appearance. Speech is malleable too. A desired pace, tone and cadence can be nurtured. Other cultivated components of an anchor's personal front include the style of real and imagined interaction, plus any practical and theatrical skills that can be, or have been, picked-up.

These cultivated components of an anchor's front are relatively unfixed and can be easily manipulated. They are, essentially, what engender the perception of anchors as credible purveyors of local news and other events from around the world and across the nation. The embodiment of cultivated credibility looks, sounds and feels remarkably similar between anchors at the same and competing local stations. News anchors, from this

perspective, are relatively interchangeable.

The signs of trust that mark an effective anchor are comprehensible within the shadowy confines of the fusion of opposing elements just presented. It must be made clear that cultivated credibility and authentic distinction are typologies for the analysis in the following chapters of this paper. The boundaries of both categories are permeable, and elements of each are interwoven with the other. But before moving on to the specific trust signs expected of anchors in the local broadcast region studied, it is important to clarify how their overall image serves to 'anchor' the trust needs of stations and viewers.

Clearly, a news anchor's image is extremely potent in its capacity to communicate numerous messages to a television audience. It provides viewers with not only a definition of their personal situation but also with a definition of the newscast and the television station (Edelman, 1964; Goffman, [1959] 1973; 1961). A distinctly credible anchor represents the station and serves as a front for the entire organization. This is why news anchor image is so important. It can define the station as trustworthy in the mind of the audience. It only makes sense for executives in television to use bodies as organizational emblems to represent their position (Finklestein, 1991; Hochschild, 1983).

Television in general, and the TV news format in particular, has an edge over other mass media news formats when

it comes to generating audience trust. Television facilitates the display of embodied trust signs in a way that neither print nor radio can (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991). Newspapers and magazines, on the one hand, are forced to nurture reader trust strictly through static visual information about its 'trustworthy' representatives including, importantly, sources as authorized knowers (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987; 1989). Readers must base their judgements about a paper's character and believability on the printed words and tiny still photographs of editors, reporters and columnists and news sources. Radio, on the other hand, attempts to cultivate listener trust through the fluid auditory cues of its announcers but fails to provide listeners with visual information about them. Both print and radio are restrictive formats. Neither medium can offer their audience a comprehensive representation of their spokespeople. Viewer assessments of their trustworthiness are based largely on imagination, mystery and limited expressive information.

The most effective way to generate audience trust and loyalty is not through mystery, but through audience perceptions that there is very little mystery about those who front a media organization. Television is the least mysterious of all news media (ibid). Its rich auditory *and* visual dimensions are life-like. Television news anchors are presented to viewers through moving, talking pictures. The audience is given far more, and much richer, expressive information about TV anchors than they are about the announcers and writers that front radio and print

news organizations. The format features of television ensure that character assessments of anchors are based, not on mystery, but on the abundance of authentic and cultivated expressive signs that they project onto the television screen.

The TV screen is not simply an elaborate staged setting full of expressive equipment, it is also the "access point" which connects viewers to stations and the news production system (Giddens, 1990: 83-88). Since anchors have the power to define stations as trustworthy, it is critical that they appear at this access point. Through their regular television appearances, anchors provide the link between viewer and station trust (ibid: 115). Viewer trust in particular stations and newscasts depends on perceptions of the anchors' believability and on a sense of connection with them (ibid: 113-115). Personal trust relations with anchors are powerful and psychologically rewarding for viewers. Effective anchors who project signs of trust can make those who watch them feel safe and secure about the news they deliver - that it is accurate and reliable. The presence of news anchors at TV's access point can literally 'anchor' the complementary trust needs of stations and viewers in a way that the expert news production system itself cannot.

The 'anchoring' effect, though, is not a given. There is no guarantee that a station's desired audience will perceive its anchors to be trustworthy (ibid: 90-99). As mentioned, expressive trust signs are subjective, not objective, indicators

of trustworthiness. Anchors embody distinctive credibility only to the extent that the audience is convinced that they represent those qualities. For this reason, the television screen that connects viewers with anchors is a place of tension and vulnerability for both audiences and stations. Viewer decisions about which station provides the most trustworthy news hinges on their character assessments of the various anchors. It only makes sense that viewers are drawn to watch newscasts hosted by anchors that display authentic and cultivated qualities that they recognize to be distinctly credible. This subjective component means that viewer trust must be worked at and negotiated with the audience.

I have already stated that the goal for stations is to win sought after viewers by fulfilling their trust needs during local news productions. I also have argued that stations do this by tapping and flaunting the tastes and sensibilities of those viewers. If the front of the anchor and, hence, the station plays on the affections of desired viewers, commands their respect, and displays the appropriate signs of credibility and distinction, it will nurture audience loyalty and bring success to the station. Displaying the trust needs of viewers, though, requires that stations and anchors have some understanding of who their target audience is (Cantor, 1994; Ettema & Whitney, 1994).

Each of the three TV news operations studied is driven by an audiencemaking philosophy which I have coined 'intercasting'.

Intercasting is literally the fusion of narrow *and* broadcasting. The narrowcasting dimension represents a contemporary trend in television audience targeting (Barnes & Thomson, 1994; Cantor, 1994). The goal is to capture a specific segment of the mass audience. The broadcasting dimension represents the traditional audience targeting approach (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991; Meyrowitz, 1985). The goal is to attract a large share of the mass undifferentiated audience. Both components of this intercasting philosophy shape respondents' accounts of the subjective qualities of an effective news anchor persona.

Respondents from each station clearly cited the desire to draw a 'younger' segment of the mass audience. While the specific target range varies slightly between stations, the attempt to connect with the 25-49 year old age group is common to all three. Interview data suggest that this tendency towards narrowcasting is partially driven by pressure from advertisers who are currently after this particular segment of the audience, especially those in their early to mid-thirties. The belief is that brand loyalty for products is developed during these years.

The push to attract this segment of the audience is also fuelled by the stations themselves and is informed by the advertising philosophy just mentioned. Many respondents stressed the importance of attracting viewers when they are 'young' since this is when they are most likely to develop station loyalty as well. If, however, any of the three stations

were committed only to this narrowcasting approach, their programming and imagery would be designed to appeal only to the trust needs of actual and potential viewers within the target demographic. CITY-TV in Toronto, Ontario is one example of a station with an unwavering commitment to narrowcasting. Its 'disco-journalism' newscast style is designed to appeal specifically to the young 'Much Music' generation. While the image of its anchors and all other expressive equipment on the set are tailored to the needs and tastes of this specific target group, the newscasts are sure to turn off many other viewers. The stations in the local news market studied are not willing to take that risk.

Each station's commitment to attract a 'younger' demographic is tempered by the desire to remain accessible to actual and potential viewers outside of the 25-49 age bracket. News anchor imagery, then, must not only cater to the needs of younger viewers, but also serve the trust needs of the entire mass audience. The most effective anchor image for a broadcast audience is one least likely to be considered untrustworthy by the multitude of diverse viewers that might be watching. An anchor persona considered "Least Objectionable" (Meyrowitz, 1985: 73) to the masses is more likely to remain on more television screens than one with high appeal to only a certain segment of the heterogeneous aggregate.

One anchor aware of both the narrow and broadcasting dimensions to her station's audiencemaking approach stated that,

"Hopefully we can make a younger audience interested in our program without forfeiting the viewers we know we can already depend on which is generally an older audience." Another respondent from a different station also stressed the importance of retaining a large share of the mass audience while at the same time appealing to the specified 'younger' demographic.

> Demographics have become more important than sheer numbers over the last, say, five or six years. But for us, we hope that we cater to all kinds of people, all kinds of ages, all kinds of job descriptions and so on. We don't program specifically for anyone, although segments of the program do.

These comments clearly suggest that audience specialization, while important, does not override the attempt to bolster total audience size. On one level, intercasting can be understood through its relationship to the advertising industry. If effective, it not only serves to appease advertisers who want to develop brand loyalty in the 'younger' segment of the viewing audience, but also satisfies advertisers who are impressed by mass audience numbers (Barnes & Thomson, 1994: 85, 87, 91). On a different level, intercasting is informed by the awareness that news audiences are difficult to target. According to one producer,

> those that are interested in current events turn it on and they can be in any age group. Even though at times there is an effort made to put a younger spin on things, those who watch news, watch news. Those who don't, there's no way you're going to get them anyway.

This belief is what keeps these stations from relinquishing their efforts to reach the mass audience while attempting, simultaneously, to develop 'younger' viewer loyalty.

The challenge, then, for anchors in this TV news region is balancing the trust needs of an intercast audience through their projected on-air imagery. Their authentic and cultivated signs and symbols must appear distinctive and credible to 'younger' members of the audience while not appearing untrustworthy to any others who might be watching. The specific signs of anchor trust outlined in the following chapters are those considered to best meet the demands of this intercast audience, both the narrow and broadcasting dimensions.

CHAPTER TWO: A WAY OF LOOKING

Beauty, the Beast, and Real Looking Anchors

A fitting place to begin is with the unadorned body, the naked face, the most basic element of on-air appearance that contributes to the authentic distinctiveness of anchors and stations. Everyone, except possibly identical twins, has a different facial appearance. But despite the wide range of looks that exist in the general population, there are limits within that range that are desirable, and outside of which can cause problems for news anchors on television. In other words, a distinctive face is an essential given, but not suitable if too rare or atypical. Crossing the boundaries of acceptable limits is believed to undermine the credibility of, and attraction to, the anchor, their newscast, and the TV station. Any attempt to categorize facial appearance along an 'objective' continuum involves treading on territory that, for some, could be considered not only provocative and objectionable, but also impossible on grounds that any assessment of beauty or unattractiveness is subjective and individual. The goal here is not to challenge that stance, it is one on which there is full agreement. Subjectivity is, after all, at the foundation of this analysis. But objectifying appearance and assigning various looks to sections along a continuum of attractiveness is essential to the understanding of the role various looks are believed to play in the subjective assessments of an audience.

With this in mind, objectifying the unacceptable extremes of facial appearance is critical for full comprehension of what actually is deemed legitimate. At one extreme is 'perfect' looking people: the outstandingly handsome, the flawlessly beautiful, those whose face appears as though it may have been constructed by a cosmetic surgeon. Some interviewees referred to this as "Barbie and Ken" or the "classic American[1] cookie cutter anchor" that has high appeal south of the Canadian border. One make-up artist recalled her impression of an anchorman who once worked, for a short time, in this market and fit this description: "He was the tiny perfect little person. He looked like he came out of a box. You just carried him in, took him out of the box, and sat him in the chair. That's very American, we're not in that market." One producer stated this same point differently when she said that an anchor "can't be too good looking because could you imagine a supermodel reading the news? They just wouldn't bring the credibility". Several other producers and directors agreed with this perspective and referred to themselves as viewers when they suggested that people are less likely to trust news anchors that look unflawed and unreal.

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[1]This and other references to 'American' anchors is in no way meant to imply a parallel analysis of what constitutes trustworthy anchor expressions within the United States context. For the purpose of this thesis, respondent references to 'American' anchors should be interpreted only as attempts to establish local market identity as distinct and separate from their United States counterparts which have infiltrated cable stations locally.

'Perfect' looks can be counterproductive in attempts to cultivate a credible newscast and station image because 'perfect' looking people are so closely linked with Hollywood, the movies, and the high fashion industry. In the words of another producer, the news "is not a fashion show" and his station "doesn't want to look as if it's just putting pretty people on the air" without any foundation for what they're doing. Even though TV news is as much entertainment as soap operas, fashion shows and feature films (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991: 26, 27), most producers and directors in this TV market said they want to draw a distinction between news and these other forms of entertainment. They don't want viewers to equate news anchors with the stars of other theatrical presentations. 'Perfect' looking anchors make it difficult for viewers to make this distinction since movie stars, models and soap opera characters are often featured solely on the basis of their extremely attractive appearance. Also, these other genres are promoted as fiction and the superficial attributes of the starring characters help to promote viewers' escape into fantasy and otherworldliness. News, however, is promoted as neither fiction nor fantasy and the task of anchors is not to propel viewers into the world of escape but into grim daily reality. The chance that 'perfect' looking anchors will complement the serious tone of the genre and be perceived by viewers to be telling the 'truth' and to understand the news events they are promoting is undermined by the stereotypical impression that

extremely good-looking people are superficial and, somehow, not intelligent. Insiders in this television market are unwilling to risk the unfounded perception that overly attractive anchors are more interested in being 'stars' than serious, seasoned, trustworthy messengers.

'Barbie and Ken' not only have the potential of appearing to lack credibility, they also have the capacity to make viewers feel ugly. Images, naturally, invite comparisons (Featherstone, 1991: 78), but the face of an anchor should not be so exquisite that it encourages viewers to reflect on what they do not, and might never look like. The idea behind a distinctive, credible image is not to make viewers feel challenged or threatened in terms of the embodiment of their own authentic distinctiveness. An informant articulated this point while reflecting on her feelings as a viewer about the anchors at her station:

> Our people are attractive but they're not stunning. Like, they're not unusual. Most of our people, if you saw them just out in the general public, you wouldn't stop on the street and say, "Isn't that a fabulous looking person?" You might notice them but you wouldn't gaze at them in stunned silence. We don't want Barbie and Ken reading the news. I don't want to feel competitive while I'm watching the news. I don't want to be interrupted by worrying about comparing myself to that person.

'Perfect' looking anchors run the risk of offending viewers by making them feel unattractive and inferior through their own comparisons with them. If an anchor's looks leave viewers feeling less attractive than before they tuned into the news on that channel, they may choose to dislike that anchor and stop watching that newscast, reducing any chance of developing a

sense of loyalty to that anchor, newscast or station. It could, of course, be argued that the extreme attractiveness of other entertainers could cause equally devastating audience comparisons. While this certainly is possible it is important to restate that those characters are supposed to embody otherness and fantasy which is the antithesis of the grounded, serious, everyday reality that anchors are hired to represent. The implications of viewer comparisons of their own facial appearance with the looks of anchors and other dramatic characters are surely tied to the different sets of assumptions upon which the respective genres are based. The purpose here is not to delve into a detailed comparative analysis of the impact that exquisite looking anchors and other entertainers are believed to have on the loyalty of an audience. The point to be made based on interview data is simply that 'perfect' looking anchors are "fatally attractive" (Bourdieu, 1984: 193) to the extent that station credibility and viewer esteem is challenged or threatened.

Transcending the norms of human facial appearance can also occur at the opposite end of the attractiveness continuum. Facial appearance at the extreme of unattractiveness is equally undesirable for television news anchors for similar reasons. According to various respondents, a person with an "obvious physical deformity", "scars" or "birth defects" will, most likely, not break into this side of the business. Neither will someone with "buck teeth", "excessive weight" or "gross acne".

One station executive claimed that "repulsive people wouldn't attract an audience...maybe there's a curiosity factor that would last for a couple of days, but beyond that people don't like to look up and see unattractive people."

The threat that the so-called 'repulsive' poses to station success and viewer loyalty is similar to the problem posed by the 'perfect' people, the ravishing. Again, credibility is at risk. Extremely unattractive people are at the mercy of invalidated, stereotypical assumptions that such people are stupid or simple. And while 'repulsive' people are unlikely to make others feel competitive or inferior, they still invite comparisons that may be unpleasant reminders, for some, of what they, themselves, look like; and for others, what they might, someday, resemble. From this perspective, the unattractive are no less potentially threathening to viewers than the stunning. An extremely imperfect looking anchor is 'fatally unattractive' to the extent that either station credibility is undermined, or viewer fears and sensitivities are challenged or threatened. Either extreme of facial appearance is not the type of authentic distinction that insiders in this television market say would be effective on their stations.

One producer and former anchor spoke for his station, viewers, and the local industry in general when he stated bluntly: "You don't want them to say, 'Gee, is that one ever ugly!'; or, 'That one is so pretty I can't believe it!'...You've got to be middle of the road somewhere." The ability to

articulate the accepted standard comes through the process of elimination. Any type of face that falls between the extremes on the attractiveness continuum is considered ideal. The requirement is that an anchor's face look authentically distinct to the extent that the anchor appears pleasant, not jarring. The wide range of pleasant looks that fall somewhere in the middle are believed to be experienced by viewers as comfortable, non-threatening and credible.

News anchors with a 'middle-of-the-road' appearance are believed by many respondents to be perceived by viewers as "real people". To be sure, any assessments of 'reality' and 'real' looks are based neither on objective nor quantifiable facial characteristics but on subjective viewer assessments that anchors reflect what most people in their own reality actually look like (Hartley, 1982: 12). Interview data suggest that 'real' looking anchors are a "caricature" of the mass audience (ibid: 96). They have a down-to-earth, everyday facial appearance and don't look so different from the average viewer that they seem 'alien'.

A news producer recalled two examples of the role 'real' looks have played in the effectiveness of anchors. His descriptions illustrate this logic at work in different ways. He said the anchorman in question "doesn't look like a Ken doll, he looks more credible in that subtle way because he's less handsome and less perfect, viewers will actually give him more credence." The anchorwoman he referred to was "the girl next

door image". He said "she wasn't a supermodel, but was nice looking, trustworthy and friendly". The principles at play in these descriptions and the sentiments expressed with respect to the news anchor appearance standard suggest a 'vox pop' sensibility and the attempt to minimize the appearance gap between anchors and viewers (Lasch, 1979: 159, 162). The facial appearance, then, of 'real' looking anchors does not cross the 'fatal' boundaries of attractiveness already mentioned. Those whose looks are within the stated limits are considered to be perceived by viewers as the most trustworthy. Perfect looking news anchors, according to the stated anchor ideal, are authentic and credible because they don't look 'unreal'.

Before moving on to the analysis of another component of news anchor body language, it is important to acknowledge that there are always exceptions to rules. In the current and past history of this television market 'exceptional' looking anchors who come close to or transcend the outer appearance limits have, in fact, made it to air. Their success or failure with viewers and ratings has depended, largely, on the extent to which other components of their on-air image counteract their extreme looks and the challenges they create. For these people, and those like them, other elements of their television persona take on a heightened importance in their ability to compensate for their potentially 'fatal' appearance and the threats that appearance can pose to credibility.

News Anchors as Business Executives or Bankers

The bodies and faces of news anchors serve as canvases and hangers on which other signs and symbols can be displayed on the set. Things like clothing, make-up, jewelry and hair are selected and combined for show on the air. Ideally, the choices made will contribute to the cultivation of the desired impression of distinct credibility. What is and is not acceptable is best analyzed in a similar fashion to the facial appearance standards in the previous section. What exists along the grooming continuum is the wide range of facial paints, hairstyles, clothes and accessories that could possibly be used to enhance an anchor's appearance. But there are limits within this range that are desirable, and outside of which are considered unacceptable for news anchors on television. In other words, not all costumes are believed to be inoffensive to the masses or to reflect the credibility required by stations and viewers of anchors.

The analysis of a trustworthy costume comes, partly, through accounts of what is considered intolerable. The 'fatal' extremes of ornamentation mark the boundaries between what is and is not considered too unique or distinctive. Excessive distinctiveness in facial and bodily decoration is exactly what employees in this television market said is too precarious in its capacity to elicit potentially damaging audience perceptions. In the words of various respondents, the 'fatal' extremes to be avoided include anything that could be considered

by viewers too "flashy", "trendy", "weird" or "dishevelled". Also on the list of things they said should be sidestepped are those that could be construed as too "cheap", "expensive", "casual" or "formal". The style of an anchor's costume least likely to offend a viewer's better judgement and/or the preferred character of a station and its announcers, is a style that will most likely not be thought of as too adventurous or wild given the rest of the newscast setting. The wide range of specific ill-suited body props that were mentioned during interviews include "denim shirts", "the latest fashions from Paris", and anything "low cut", as well as "pin striped suits" and "big chunky earrings and necklaces". Quantity is another concern. Some said it is a bad idea to cultivate the perception that an anchor has too many costumes. The following quote is from a woman who, over the years, has assisted with anchors' wardrobes:

> I don't believe they should have too many clothes because then I think it sends a message to people that are watching that they are somehow richer or better...It's almost like you can have the public build up a resentment to them, I would think, if they're always coming in with great new stuff that's flashy and trendy.

As previously stated, images invite comparisons (Featherstone, 1991: 78). Based on this supposition, the costumes of an anchor should not be so exquisite or plentiful that they encourage viewers to reflect on what they do not, and might never have in their own closets. The idea behind a trustworthy costume is not to make viewers feel challenged or threatened in terms of the cultivation of their own distinctly

credible public persona.

Also on the 'out' list is overly done make-up, coloured eye-shadow and lip gloss. Long hair, for men and women, is also deemed taboo, as is 'blond lacquered hair and hair that is 'bullet proof'. Hair that fits these descriptions is considered to make news anchors look too much like 'Barbie and Ken'. The potential effect on viewers is particularly 'fatal', especially if combined with a face also perfect and chiselled. One news director recalled her impression of an anchor team she saw in a different TV market that fit this description. She used them as an example of what is inappropriate and potentially damaging.

> We always called it the Barbie and Ken show because they really did look like Ken and Barbie dolls and they came across that way. And I for one, as a viewer, never for one minute believed that they had any journalistic credibility whatsoever...And I think that most Canadian stations have, either consciously or not, tried to stay away from that to a certain extent because it has been more of an American thing to have your presenters just be the latest in the hot look in fashion.

The fashion show analogy and reference to 'Barbie and Ken' anchors that are shallow individuals who care more about how they look than with the words they are speaking again suggests a desire to separate credible news from stylized entertainment programming.

Perfectly sculpted and shellacked hair is no more desirable than curly, uncontrollable hair with a mind of its own. The unwanted perception is that curly, twisted locks reflect a similar character of the anchor whose head it's on. According to one woman who has worked with anchors' hair, natural curls

and perms have the tendency to make them seem "flaky". She said "it makes them look like they're spinny, like they just don't have it organized". Television technology enhances the possibility of this negative audience perception. If a person with curly hair is in front of a chroma-key background, the chroma-key will show through the spaces inside of, and between, the curls. The result, on screen, is either green or blue patches all over the person's head. Coloured patches scattered throughout a head of curls could be perceived by viewers as quite odd. If anything could make an anchor appear 'alien', this would be it. Combine spinny and flaky with random green or blue splotches and the overall impression, while certainly distinctive, could be insulting to the audience and threaten credibility by not appearing quite 'serious' enough for the daily local news genre.

The 'fatal' region on the grooming continuum also includes unpainted anchor faces. The term 'fatal' is highly appropriate here since that is how most anchors described their on-air appearance when their face is under hot lights and without proper colour, powder or foundation. Some anchors said they look like a "ghost", others thought they looked "sickly". Make-up experts stressed this point too. The naked face on camera, they said, looks very "gritty", "sweaty" and "blotchy". It could be argued that this looks 'real', but, most likely, not pleasant or healthy. Another point mentioned was that male anchors with their beard line not covered could create the

impression that they are shifty.

Any of the listed extremes that surpass the 'fatal' boundaries on the grooming continuum are least likely to be considered credible on their own, or in combination with an extreme facial appearance. Ornamentation most likely to not engender viewer trust, is also potentially annoying to news watchers and is, in most cases, avoided when possible regardless of anchor or station.

A trustworthy news anchor costume that falls within the acceptable limits is least likely to draw any undue attention to the costume itself or the anchor underneath it. One anchorman's adornment dictum, "I don't want anybody to notice", is the basic guideline followed by other anchors also faced with complex grooming choices. An unassuming uniform is considered by respondents to be "generic", "staid" and "neutral". Other catchwords commonly used by producers, groomers and anchors are "conservative" and "mainstream professional". What these terms translate into on the bodies of anchors are 'serious' clothes which, basically, are suits, ties and shirts for men and the equivalent for women. Face paint, on men, should not be noticeable and on women it should appear as natural as possible. The goal is simply to counteract the 'deadly' effects of harsh lights. Conservative hair for male anchors is not too close-cropped, but short. This is also an option for women. Other choices for female anchors come under the rubric of 'serious hair'. A woman from one station's grooming department

explained:

A: When we talk about hair in this business we talk about serious hair. You have serious hair for news, and you can have Mary Hart hair if you're doing that kind of entertainment or tabloid show. So everything has a different kind of look to it. So you want serious hair for news.

Q: What is serious hair?

A: Bobs. Predominantly bobs.

Q: What is it about bobs?

A: Because it doesn't go anywhere. It just stays put and it's generic and it's always in, and it's classic. It's like having a navy blazer. It never goes out of style. There are variations on the theme of it, but it's still a bob.

A producer continued this explanation when questioned on the same 'serious hair' issue:

Q: What is it about hair that's defined as serious and hair that's defined as not serious?

A: It's hard to grasp, but don't you make that conclusion when you're watching someone? Two anchors could be saying the same thing, but they project a slightly different image. You know, big poofy layers versus blunt. Maybe the words you use to describe the hair could almost be used to describe their style.

Both comments reinforce previously made arguments which suggest the desire to distinguish news anchors from entertainers who are featured in other genres. These and other respondents are convinced that powerful connections can be made between an anchor's character and the style of their tresses. Generic hair that doesn't attract undue attention is considered appropriately conservative and serious for the desired tone of local news productions. Hair designed in this fashion is believed by many in the industry to facilitate audience perceptions of

credibility through it's embodiment on anchors' heads.

Respondents often used analogous reasoning (Shearing & Ericson, 1991: 492-96) to convey the overall sensibility of the grooming style expected of anchors. Typically, comparisons were made with the ornamentation styles of those who work in other industries. The comments of this female anchor reflect her attempt to provide the interviewer with a vehicle for grasping the sensibility out of which she feels she ought, and ought not, present herself.

> I don't always wear a suit, but whatever it is I'm wearing would be the same type of thing as a suit. I guess like a business executive...or if you went to see the manager of the bank to get a loan, what is the bank manager wearing? Probably a suit and a tie, or if it's a woman, a suit. And if they were wearing a mini-mini-skirt and had big red hair and twenty earrings it just wouldn't look appropriate. It wouldn't be that credible. You'd think this person doesn't look the way I expect a serious bank person to look.

Others interviewed also referred to executives and bankers as having the appropriate 'look' that is suitable for anchors. The specific analogies chosen reflect not only similarities in appropriate wardrobe, but also in terms of the function the stated ideal costume is believed to play. Anchors, bankers and business executives appear ready to 'get down to business', to discuss 'serious' issues like high finance and daily local news. Their 'look', together with the rest of their personal front, serves to enhance the possibility of attracting the trust and/or money of either clients or an audience. The 'look' of anchors contributes to their power to attract viewers, and through that power the potential to attract lucrative advertising revenue.

Another source of evidence that conservative facial and bodily decoration is considered the most credible is in-house focus group studies. As described by one interviewee:

> We've done forums in the past and have had young doctors and other professionals in the audience. And people seem to believe somebody who's wearing a tie more than somebody who has an open shirt...the response in the audience for the person who's wearing the tie is that they know what they're talking about as opposed to the person who isn't. So image is really important that way.

One result is that anchors are often considered interchangeable in terms of their overall outer appearance. The conclusion of one anchor about the adornment of herself and her competitors is that they "all end up looking the same somehow." A news director echoed this sentiment by suggesting that "outsiders looking in at the situation probably wouldn't see a huge difference". What is suggested here and stated by others is that news anchors are relatively indistinguishable in terms of their traditional ornamentation and packaging.

It must be noted, though, that no two conservative costumes are identical. On the overall scale they are, of course, extremely similar and are unlikely to be offensive or threatening to viewers. Most are also sure to be considered suitably credible. But it cannot be denied that at the level of specifics, within the narrow range of what is deemed legitimate, there are, in fact, variations between anchors and stations regardless of how minor and subtle those differences are. Within the stated wardrobe restrictions there is always room for a particular station to have its anchors' costumes compliment the

desired, distinctive style of that station and all other props on the newscast set - including the body props of any other anchors present. Without attention to such critical details the overall balance of the picture on viewers' screens will be 'off'. The message to viewers about their tastes, as reflected through TV newscast pictures, will not be congruous if the totality of a station's expressive equipment is not internally balanced and consistent. What this means in terms of wardrobe is that a station's anchors can groom themselves in a manner that is either more or less conservative. The particular direction is, ideally, in alignment with the station's dominant style and not too extreme in either direction. One producer, whose station's desired image is slightly less conservative, stressed the importance of finding ways to alter wardrobe,

> to set yourself apart so you can say, 'We're a lot hipper than the anchors at other local stations.' But you don't want to be so hip that the overlap audience that you need to have is alienated...It's kind of a risky thing to be getting into because you know that anybody who thinks that some fashion is a goofy fashion, which is predominantly going to be your older viewers, are going to look at it and say, 'It looks ridiculous!'...So you don't want to alienate anybody. I guess it's a sort of timid, conservative approach to being avant-garde.

This producer's comments exemplify both the limits and possibilities, the need for distinction and credibility, and the capacity for both qualities to be expressed on the bodies of anchors through the display of costumes that don't transcend the 'fatal' boundaries of either industry or station standards.

Within the parameters just mentioned, anchors either do their own shopping or are regularly supplied by a local retailer

or designer. The point stressed here is that anchors are always granted final veto power over what they wear, despite the restrictions and limits placed on their choices. They make individual selections based not only on what is acceptable, but also on their own authentic, distinctive taste and style, however subtly that may be reflected. The same logic is applied to make-up and hair. Also distinctive is the way each anchor 'wears' what they have on, how their grooming choices enhance their distinctive, trustworthy facial appearance, and how both components of image interact with other aspects of their persona on-air.

CHAPTER THREE: A WAY OF ACTING

Anchors as Characters and the People Who Play Them

The personal front of news anchors is more than bone structure, lips, clothing and hair. It also includes their demeanour, their manner, their way of interacting with viewers on the air. The expected way of being is well summarized by a male anchor who said that his "cardinal rule has always been 'be yourself'". This way of thinking about an appropriate way of being is consistent regardless of respondent. Another male anchor with many years of experience recalled receiving 'be yourself' advice as a young burgeoning broadcaster. He was told this was the way to be if he was going to do well in this business. A female anchor articulated this same point differently while reflecting on her fans and the reasons for why they might like her. She said, "I think what appeals to people about me is the genuineness that comes across. I'm not trying to be something that I'm not." In other words, 'being yourself' on the set and with viewers is believed to be perceived as being genuine and real. According to industry insiders, 'being yourself' is the only way for news anchors to be. A news director suggested that this only makes sense since "television anchors are not actors." What they are instead, he said, are "real people" that viewers can relate to.

At the root of this reasoning, and the problem with it, is the assumption that interaction between viewers and anchors is

face-to-face and authentic, even though the interaction is mediated through electronics (Meyrowitz, 1985). This may be true, to some extent, from the viewers' perspective, since they observe the faces and conduct of anchors as they appear on the screens of their television sets. However, it is not true from the perspective of anchors who, while in the studio delivering the news, have no sight, whatsoever, of any member of their audience. The live interaction from the vantage point of anchors is, to be sure, electronically mediated, but neither genuine nor face-to-face. It must also be noted that the flow of images and information is not reciprocal. It is entirely one way except for occasional viewer calls or letters of praise and complaint. In this sense, the supposed interaction between anchors and their audience is not interaction at all.

Authentic face-to-face 'interaction' between viewers and those they watch anchor local newscasts is an illusion of reality that is staged (Lasch, 1979: 160). Despite the argument that anchors are not actors, they are. With no physical presence of audience members, anchors act as if they are, in fact, present, as if they are together on the set exchanging images and information while sitting face-to-face. News anchors act as if the so-called face-to-face 'interaction' is with sentient members of the television audience, not with the inanimate lens of the camera that is actually positioned in front of their face.

This 'be yourself' philosophy as expressed by those cited,

and other respondents, is useful for anchors, not literally, but as a model for their expected on-air action (Shearing & Ericson, 1991 492-96). The best character for anchors to portray in this cultivated news play is themselves, the person they know best. This approach, in the end, is the one believed most likely to appear to viewers most credible and genuine. The analogous reasoning outlined here is not unlike the parallel logic used to incite anchors to groom 'as if' they were bankers or executives. 'Being yourself' on the air and with viewers is also a subjective metaphor which suggests a sensibility appropriate to anchoring: 'Being yourself', for anchors, means acting that way.

Those with the ability to create the illusion of authentic interaction are said by respondents to "melt the lens" and "go right through the camera" as though the camera was the gateway to real face-to-face interaction. The camera's true function, though, is to simply facilitate the creation of this illusion. It is important to note that this staging is not void of genuine authenticity since the models for action are, essentially, based on real, distinctive, individual people, that is the anchors outside of their professional role and costume.

Anchors who do not act themselves while on-air are said to give questionable performances through their inability to construct the illusion of a 'real' way of being with people who aren't there. One male anchor illustrated this point through his recollection of an anchorwoman who, years ago, switched

characters. He said she stopped acting herself based on the advice of talent coaches, and the result on-air was disastrous.

> There was this anchor who was brilliant. She was really bright, very attractive. She would have been great. But she went to this training session and, in my opinion, they ruined her. You know, they just tried to make her do things she wasn't comfortable with. They said, "you should do this when you read, you should do that when you read" and "hold eye contact after every sentence" and all these bizarre things that somebody thinks works...but I've always been of the opinion that you either be yourself or it doesn't work, and it didn't work for her. She followed all of those rules and looked, to me, very uncomfortable, kind of scolding...you could just tell it was a facade there.

The facade of any anchor should not be apparent, but likely will be if their act is based on another person, real or imagined. Meyrowitz (1985: 105) states that expressive messages are extremely individual. This is why it is so difficult for most people to correctly imitate someone else's expressions, or to create expressions as dictated by another individual. According to one veteran anchorman, "don't try to be a copy of somebody else, or you'll just be a bad copy." In cases where the pretence is discernable, as in the case just mentioned, viewers may be uncomfortable with the anchor's manner, distrust them and what they're saying, and therefore question the integrity of the entire news production.

The best way for the act of anchors to seem authentic and credible is for them to not act as characters which do not reflect their own essential, personal image off-air. The illusion of authentic demeanour is best achieved when anchors use themselves as models for how to act on the screen. What is distinctive about anchors at the same and competing stations,

with respect to demeanour and ways of 'interacting', is the characters their roles are based on and the people who play them.

While it may be difficult, as Meyrowitz states, to play the role of someone else and to accurately mimic their expressions, it is no easy task for anchors to act out the role of themselves and to accurately mimic their own expressions. The challenge is especially evident for young anchors still developing their acting potential as anchors. One young anchor said that 'being yourself' is hard, and that "it takes a while to be natural and find yourself on-air". In other words, it takes time and practice to get the act down pat. Other anchors with many years in the business spoke differently. They didn't say they 'try' to be who they are on-air, they just 'are'. The act of being natural, over time, becomes not an act at all (Goffman, 1971: 239, 259). Peter Berger's (1963: 98) classic line captures the essence of this process: "It is very difficult to pretend in this world. Normally, one becomes what one plays at."

It is critical to mention that news anchors not only 'become' their roles with respect to demeanour, they also become, over time and with experience, the expectations of other components of their image and appearance. The following example illustrates Berger's principle in progress from the perspective of a young anchor in transition from 'acting' appropriately to 'being' who he is naturally.

A: I took out the earring.

Q: Why?

A: Because I figured that in daily news people don't want to see a guy with a gold stud.

Q: So you just made that decision? No one told you?

A: Ya.

Q: Why?

A: Well I can't do things that are completely off the wall because there are guidelines and there's a format which I have to follow...However, I want to do what is right for me. What I'm doing I'm doing for me. I'm not doing it for the station. Removing the earring was for me, not the station...It's who I am.

The perceived taste of the station and genre is 'becoming' this anchor's own sensibility in terms of who he is and how he reflects his altered taste through his grooming as an anchor. This, combined with other components of an anchor's image are all part of the 'act' that becomes 'natural' for them. Anchors who come across as distinctive and credible, do so through their ability to 'act' themselves and then 'become' on-air, and in the studio with absent audiences, who they are as individuals.

Cultivating the Illusion of Authentic Conversation

The staged illusion of authentic interaction is bolstered by the standard upon which the news is supposed to be read by anchors. Integral to the appearance of real interaction is the capacity for anchors to create the perception that they are engaging in conversation with viewers that is also genuine.

Analysis of this desired reading style suggests

juxtaposition with the 'fatal' way of speaking characteristic of anchors in previous times. It used to be commonplace for anchors to read their scripts as if they were news gods making pronouncements. They appeared as bigger than life authority figures talking at the audience in the style of United States national news legend Walter Cronkite. The impact of this style of presentation was reinforced by what respondents referred to as the "big ballsy", "deep booming" anchor voice. This dominant reading method was deemed unacceptable in the local market studied. One news director expounded the thoughts of many respondents when he said, "It's an old format that doesn't fly anymore." Autocratic anchors who shout at the camera while projecting their voices run the risk of being perceived by audience members as patronizing. Not only is this style considered by many interviewees to be potentially offensive and 'off putting' by being too stiff and preachy, it is also riddled with credibility problems because it seems artificial and phoney. News god anchors and their way of speaking at imagined viewers is far too removed from the illusion of authentic conversation with viewers in reality.

A make-up artist commented on the transformation in news reading styles, from the one just mentioned to the new format currently in fashion. She took the perspective of herself, friends, colleagues, and people everywhere, as viewers watching.

> Now we want to be on a level where we feel really comfortable, like they're our buddies instead of being our mentors. Because the world now wants to assume that it knows more than it did before. We as humans, instead of

saying "teach me a lesson", are saying "just inform me, don't teach me, just tell me."

The current standard, the proper cultivation, is anchors reading scripted news as if viewers are their personal friends they are telling intimate stories to. A news director recited the advice he gives potential young anchors before he screen tests them: "It's like you and your best friend are meeting over the back yard fence and you're recounting something that's happened." Audience members should not get the sense that anchors are doing what they're doing, reading news off a Teleprompter. The sensibility embedded in the news director's aphorism can be stated differently. While anchors are pretending to be engaged in an intimate exchange, they shouldn't give the impression that they are, basically, alone on the set talking at a camera and to themselves. Effective anchors are good actors, not only in their ability to act themselves, but also in their ability to 'lift the words off the page', as if the stories they are reading are spontaneous, unscripted and interactive.

This prescribed sensibility is supposed to translate into a way of speaking that, in style, tone and volume, is conversational and chatty (Meyrowitz, 1985: 105). One young anchor working hard to perfect this storytelling method is convinced that "if you're talking in a conversational tone it's much easier for a person to listen to you than if you're shouting at them". The intent, in part, is to make viewers feel as though they are on the same level as anchors, that they are

not being talked down to, that anchors are 'real' people that they can relate to.

News anchors are considered more credible and easier to identify with if the voices they use to tell stories are 'real' sounding, not like the voices of old-time anchors. The deep booming voice of times past has given way to vocal quality standards that are much more relaxed. A producer who has been in this business for years said that, these days, anchors "don't all have great voices" and as long as they are comprehensible and articulate they don't have to. There are, of course, fatal limits not to be transgressed, which include any type of voice that could sound irritating to those in the audience that are actually listening to what is being said. The range of the acceptable includes any vocal quality likely to be comfortable and pleasant. The logic used here is not unlike the reasoning used to explain the value of imperfect anchor faces. Real voice and real faces are more trustworthy because they pose less of a threat.

Anchors who are effective storytellers are not that way simply because of their acting ability or their tone, volume or vocal quality. Their capacity to 'lift the words off the page', to act 'conversational and chatty', is contingent upon the script they are reading and how, and by whom, it was written. An effective script for local news should look somewhat like a transcript of a story that was actually told, not like an academic paper riddled with big words, complex thoughts and

semi-colons. The fundamental rule is colloquial language and frequent use of the words 'us' and 'you'. The belief is that this writing technique will make the script 'close to home and personal' and easy for the anchor to not only act, but to read. The attempt is to bridge the gap of physical distance between anchors and viewers by personalizing the news. A veteran producer stressed the importance of this casual writing approach, and the power of this type of script to draw viewers in to identify with announcers through the words coming out of their mouths.

> We tend to personalize our news a lot more than they do in the major networks. The word 'you' will pop up in our intro and about five or six times during the course of a show to try to go right through the TV sets and grab 'em by the throats and slam their heads into the screen ... That's a big secret in local television I think. You never see the national news doing that, or very damned rarely. You never see them inviting you to personally identify with something in one of their stories.

This personal style of writing local news is believed by respondents to help anchors appear as though they have something important to tell individual viewers. The vernacular is the one most likely used by many in the audience in everyday casual verbal encounters, and the one least likely to be misunderstood. Constructing the illusion of authentic conversation is believed possible through the subtleties of the scripted word.

The trick to writing scripts that enhance the accessibility and trustworthiness of anchors amounts to more than the technique just mentioned. Effective scripts and stories - that when read by anchors sound as if they are not written - are

scripted in a manner that reflects how particular anchors themselves would be most inclined to tell those stories. How different anchors would choose to recount a given story is likely not the same, but distinctive. If scripts are not tailored to the personal styles of anchors, there is a greater chance that the news they are reading will not come across as stories, but as written pronouncements that destroy the illusion of authentic conversation.

Some anchors write their own scripts, but others have special writers or producers responsible for script preparation. Anchors with producers and writers to do the work for them are the ones most likely to run into credibility and authenticity problems with the audience. One producer gave a detailed comparison of anchors who do and don't get involved in how their scripts are written, and the differential outcomes in their effectiveness as distinctive, trustworthy conversational storytellers.

> The anchors who are not involved in the writing process will have trouble delivering in a conversational style because it's not a conversation. They're often reading something for the first time. They haven't written it themselves so it's not their own conversational style. And I find that if you're trying to emulate someone's style it never sounds like their own. And so it can never be conversational because it's always going to sound slightly stilted. And so I think that the anchors who don't write have a harder time with that, definitely. Because they're reading someone else's words so how can it sound like their own? The anchors who are involved in the writing can read it, get to know it a bit, change it to suit their personal style, and I think then it does sound more conversational, like they're talking to you, not just reading, which I guess is the ultimate goal.

The message here, with respect to ways of speaking, is

identical to the message made with respect to ways of being. Expressive messages are individualized, at least within the format constraints of the television medium and local station's style. This individualization is why it can be difficult for anchors to correctly imitate the conversational style of telling stories as written by another individual. In cases where the facade is transparent, viewers may be uncomfortable with the anchor's way of speaking, distrust them and their news stories, and question the validity of the news show they are perceiving. The best way for anchors to seem authentic and credible is for them to get involved in the process of writing the stories they pretend are theirs, are spontaneous, and haven't been written.

Although the speaking styles of past and present are dissimilar, what they have in common is that they both are cultivated. Neither, in reality, is any more genuine in terms of two-way dialogue or face-to-face interaction. The fundamental distinction between the two styles, despite the aforementioned similarity, is *what* each style manufactures. The old style of reading manufactures authority *over* viewers; representing the anchor as teacher, mentor or parent speaking *at* the audience. The new style of reading manufactures intimacy *with* viewers; hence, the anchor as buddy, confidant or friend having a conversation *with* individual audience members. Although the dialogue between viewers and anchors has nothing at all to do with actual conversation, the latter style is believed by respondents to be more powerful than the former in its

capacity to bring anchors and viewers together.

It is critical to consider that not all electronically mediated television 'conversation' is cultivated, scripted or acted to the extent just mentioned. To be sure, 'lifting the words off the page' is required for anchors to appear as if they are telling stories to, and conversing with, viewers. But in local TV news, anchors do have conversations that *are* reciprocal, authentic and interactive. Not all conversations are illusions, or as rigid as the ones that are pretended. Live mediated face-to-face conversation is not a dialogue between anchors and viewers. The exchange takes place between anchors, news sources, reporters and co-hosts. The live interaction occurs with either both parties in the studio, or with just one in the studio and the other on the screen via satellite or repeater while actually out in the field at some specified event or location.

The live studio interview and casual banter among hosts before commercials or at the close of the show are 'real' conversations. So are those between studio anchors and either reporters or news sources speaking from out in the field. It could, of course, be argued that these conversations are not authentic and are just as cultivated as those between anchors and viewers that are complete fabrications. Erving Goffman maintains that *all* conversations are cultivated and that we all do face-work in our everyday encounters whether on television, in the office or out on the street ([1959] 1973; 1961; 1967;

1969; 1971). Other grounds that could be used to support this argument are the format restrictions placed on any verbal utterance to keep within the boundaries of a station's specified news program in terms of allowable seconds for talking and acceptable content of any on-air interaction. While these arguments bear truths that cannot be denied, they are not enough to counteract the reality that live, reciprocal conversation between two people does, in fact, take place in instances like the ones described. Both participants are seen and heard interacting. In this sense, the conversations are authentic. This is more than can be said about the 'supposed' conversations between anchors and their audience that isn't even present.

The opportunity these moments provide for viewers is to catch a glimpse of how anchors behave in real interaction with people audibly and visibly with them on television. One industry insider used an analogy to suggest the appropriate sensibility to be brought to anchors' authentic conversational moments by the anchors themselves and by those in the audience. As a classic example of the effect desired, she referred to a particular studio anchor's live rapport with journalists and how "she doesn't come across as being the anchor and they're the reporter, it's like she's chatting with her friend and you're listening in on the conversation."

The primary role of viewers shifts slightly while they observe and listen to anchors conversing with others. The 'viewer as friend' trope becomes, momentarily, the 'viewer as

friend eavesdropping' allegory. There is, of course, an alternative: the 'viewer as friend and silent group member' homology. The beauty of on-screen authentic conversation is that it leaves viewers with these two options for how they'd like to fit into this drama. An anchor's real, televised conversations could, on the one hand, appeal to a viewer's mischievous tendencies by opening the window for them to feel as if they are anonymously listening to something they are not supposed to hear being said. On the other hand, it is commonplace for anchors to frequently glance into the lens of the camera during live interaction with performers. This could appeal to any desires of inclusion through interpretations that anchors are looking individually at them, the viewers, hence leaving viewers feeling special enough to be privy to what is being said.

What becomes evident here, and must not be forgotten, is that viewers, like anchors, are not only real people, they are actors too, and part of the production. Regardless of the role that audience members choose, they either will or won't like how anchors relate to others on the show and/or to them, while others are the focal point of an anchor's attention. But since viewers are granted the power to select the role they play during an anchor's momentary authentic conversations with others on the stage, they may be less inclined to be critical of the anchor since they are preoccupied while indulging in some aspect of their own distinctive character as they watch and listen to

these portions of the newscast unfold.

Anchors as Journalists and Intelligent People

Viewers are not only silent actors who are part of the show while sitting and watching a newscast from the "back region" of their homes, they also enter the "front region" of TV news productions when they appear in news stories as either the focus of events deemed newsworthy, or as sources who provide the legitimacy, criticism and/or opinionated comments essential to the story's plot development within the context and format of the show (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1989; Goffman [1959] 1973; Meyrowitz, 1985; Thompson, 1995). Viewers, like anchors, are not only real people and effective actors, they are also pieces of expressive equipment who embody the tastes and sensibilities of themselves as audience members when they appear on a show. The 'real' people that viewers can potentially relate to include both anchors and themselves, or some aspect of their own demographic make-up, or their history, their future, or current life context as reflected through sound and pictures at some point during the show. The question to ponder is this: How likely are viewers to admit that their own persona is neither distinctive nor credible? It is plausible that viewers could draw an associative link by attributing their own distinctive credibility they see reflected on the screen to the anchors who embody those same qualities and introduce the stories that they literally, or figuratively, appear in.

Respondents believed that the inclusiveness of television newscasts provides anchors with a solid vehicle for establishing and maintaining credibility in the eyes of the audience. Anchors venturing out of the studio and into the streets to recruit viewers to display as actors on the screen is considered, by many, *the* most critical component of image when it comes to viewer assessments of their trustworthiness and intelligence. The image is that of an anchor who is not simply a 'talking head', but also a journalist. This image is believed to be powerful enough to compensate for 'fatal' transgressions in one or more other image elements.

The overarching belief is that TV news viewers are a dubious lot. One producer explained the crux of the challenge by suggesting that, with respect to anchors, "viewers have to know that there's something behind the facade, that they've got some actual intelligence there." Another producer from a different station clarified the problem through his suggestion that viewer affections toward anchors are based, not simply on personality and looks, but also on perceptions that the anchors they watch understand the issues they are talking about.

> A: People really actually want credibility when they think about it. They want to be able to trust the information...and if you hire somebody purely for cosmetic reasons, that doesn't engender trust. The viewers are not going to trust somebody who's just there to sound and look the part. They want to know that the story that this person is reading to them hasn't been written by somebody else and they're just a mouth piece.
>
> Q: How would the audience know that?

A: Well the first thing that they do is they suspect it. And in fact they suspect it of everybody...that they're just there to dress up a set.

While the facade of credibility as embodied on the faces and bodies of anchors, and through their ways of acting and talking with viewers are important and not denied, they are not enough singularly or jointly to quash potential viewer concerns about an anchor's substance. The facade of credibility believed to carry the most weight independently is the one based on the perception that an anchor has some journalistic interest, depth and ability. The anchor's capacity to tell stories well is believed to depend on audience knowledge that they know how to, and sometimes do, develop story content themselves.

There are several ways for viewers to learn about an anchor's ability to play the role of a news-minded journalist. The most obvious way is through television footage of the anchor in the field, pointing a microphone in the face of potential or actual audience members who are making guest acting appearances in their stories and on the show. Several respondents are convinced that an anchor's credibility is embodied and "built-in" if, before they ever sit in the anchor chair, they are known to have made regular newscast appearances in a journalistic capacity within the same broadcast region that they, eventually, end up anchoring. One producer who agreed with this perspective cited the success of one anchor whose progression in the business evolved in the suggested direction.

She's the first one that we've had who has not had a problem with the audience in terms of credibility because

> she worked for us as a reporter for five years before she started anchoring the news. So for the audience that we already had, credibility was built-in. They had seen her stories and so they knew who she was and what she could do.

Another producer from a different TV station agreed with this philosophy. He said it is a bad idea to let aspiring anchors do that job before sufficient work has been done to foster audience impressions that there is a journalistic component to their overall image.

> I think at this station we'd be inclined not to put them on the air anchoring right away. We'd be inclined to have them be a reporter for a couple of years first because I think that's what we've got to show the audience, that this person has been out there digging and gauging and doing stories and got that credential first before we put them in the anchor chair.

The presumption that is evident in these comments is that viewers are more inclined to trust anchors if they've witnessed their development and their savvy as reporters. The desired and indeed necessary perception is that an anchor's prime concern is, and always was, news and journalism, not acting or modelling. Of course this is a debatable proposition since the data thus far have shown that effective anchoring and the cultivation of credibility require the appropriation of techniques and insights from each one of these occupational areas. Also implied is the requisite viewer impression that an invitation to sit in the anchor chair is *earned* through investigative ability, brain power and cleverness, not *granted* solely on the ability to look, sound and act credible, non-threatening and pleasant.

Providing viewers with the opportunity to observe, first-

hand, an anchor's ascent in the business is the scenario preferred. This is not always possible, though, especially for anchors who cultivated their credibility and developed journalistically in regions other than the one studied. One anchor with a lengthy reporting history gained his 'journalistic spurs' in several Canadian provinces and cities. He is convinced that the writing and reporting abilities he developed elsewhere are what clinched for him the anchor job he's now in.

> I got this job because of my reporting experience, because they wanted someone who was not just a news reader. They wanted someone who...can bring a certain credibility and authority to the program. Um, at least that's what, when I asked them, "Why do you want me?" that was the explanation that was given.

Credibility cultivated in other centres is not undesirable, it just creates other challenges. How does an audience know that imported anchors, like the one just referred to, care about the news and have the histories they take pride in? How do stations ensure that viewers attribute the authority and credibility the anchors are believed to exude during a newscast to their journalistic past, not just to their face, voice, acting ability or clothes?

The resolution of this dilemma is best understood by adopting the logic that Meyrowitz (1985: 50) has used: He suggests that any information an audience has about an individual's behaviour from other situations is taken into account when observing that person execute performances. It only makes sense, then, for stations to rely on background details provided by print reporters of the journalistic past of

the imported anchors that have been hired. What is hoped is that, based on what is written, viewers will be convinced that newcomers from other markets are already credible, seasoned, trustworthy messengers. The news director of the experienced reporter described above explained how unknown information about his background is disseminated to the public.

> Stories get written about him in TV Guide or the newspaper or wherever and they refer to his background and people read that and they remember that, and they have a sense that he knows what he's talking about because he's been out there in the field, he was a national reporter, he has a lot of experience.

This reasoning is not unlike the logic used to justify the importance of having aspiring announcers act as reporters before anchoring the news. The key difference is that the information viewers receive about immigrant anchors is second-hand. The anchor's image is constructed and expressed for viewers by a writer with a clever pen, not by the viewers themselves actually witnessing on their own pictures of the anchor constructing their own credibility on local streets with a microphone in hand.

Biographical articles, if they must be relied on, function as if they are an anchor's reference letters that are posted publicly for the audience. It is hoped that the chain of thought in the minds of those who peruse the articles goes something like this: If stations and viewers elsewhere supported an anchor's journalistic presence and on-air credibility development, that anchor must, then, be worthy of the anchor chair they have been given to sit in. The purpose is

to lay to rest any audience speculation that the stranger written about cannot be trusted as either a 'friend' or with the scripts they write and the performance they have been hired to carry out. Stations and newsrooms can hope, but not assume, that targeted and other viewers read articles written about outsiders hired to anchor their news, or about anchors that are locally grown. Assumptions cannot be made, either, that everyone in the broadcast region will have witnessed, heard or read the stories that anchors have, in the past, reported on or written during their developmental days in this market in television, print or radio.

One way that stations compliment biographical articles and other 'evidence' of anchors' past journalistic credentials is with promotional footage. Pictures are presented of a station's anchors surrounded by props which suggest to viewers that these people actually spend time working in the field or newsroom, whether they do or not. One example from a station in the broadcast region studied is the pictorial image of an anchor team sporting suits and serious facial expressions walking briskly down the outside steps of a downtown office building. The image creates the impression that the anchor team is heading back to the station after having just retrieved important information to be aired on their newscast that evening. It also suggests that the important information comes from big, important institutions symbolized by the office building, and that the team has just been 'inside' this institution to get the

scoop. Such images are often displayed at the beginning of newscasts or during newscast promotions that air on stations throughout the day.

Another tactic used to incite audience perceptions that anchors are trustworthy, knowledgeable and interested in the news they deliver is based not on past laurels or promotional images, but on images of them actually involved in live and packaged journalism during the shows that they anchor weekly or daily. The news director of one station that prides itself on the ongoing journalistic efforts of its anchors said that "they go out and report, they bring you news, they're not just reading it. They're part and parcel of the process of getting it to you." The following comment of an anchor who works for this news director reflects his understanding of the impression he is hoping to cultivate by reporting on stories.

> Hopefully because I'm out there, because I'm a reporter as well as a host I encourage the belief that it's up to the minute and that I'm involved with things, that I'm not just sitting behind a desk somewhere with some guy handing me a bunch of paper, that I'm involved with the station, that I'm involved with the news gathering so that I know what's going on, that I'm not just a meat puppet.

Viewers are given clues that an anchor's packaged, edited story during a newscast is, in fact, their work. One indication is that the anchor's voice can be heard narrating the report. The other clue is a visual image, shown at least once, of the anchor on the screen with an interview subject at the location where the story was shot. Often the reporting anchor moves their head up and down to indicate their understanding of what

is going on, a gesture sometimes referred to as the 'knowing nod'.

Live journalism is best described as the contemporaneous interview between anchor and source while both are in the studio, or while the source is elsewhere. It is important to note, though, that live journalism is rarely 'live' in the sense of being at the actual news event as it is unfolding. It is simply same-time conversation about events that have happened or are occuring at another location. This type of journalism is not only unedited, but experienced simultaneously by anchor, source and audience. It is the kind of news production that facilitates the display of not only an anchor's conversational abilities, but also their intellect. One anchor who is confident with his capacity to carry off these moments believes that they do serve as more than indicators of an anchor's social skills and interactive approach. He said they also reveal the experience and depth, or lack thereof, of the anchor in focus.

> I think it's probably more in the unscripted moments of a television broadcast, when you're doing an interview, for example, that you reveal that there is a depth of knowledge there. And I'm told that people recognize that. And in addition to the newscasts we occasionally do forums, sort of town hall things, and people have said to me that, "It's interesting, there's a dimension to you that we see when you're doing the forums that we don't see when you're reading the news and it suggests quite a level of journalistic experience and journalistic depth."

Part of an effective anchor's ability to appear smart and 'deep' is due to their ability to display knowledge and experience through live face-to-face interaction with others on the screen. However, they can add to this appearance through a

quick mind and listening skills which demonstrate that the person can 'think on their feet'.

One anchor, according to her producer, gained the necessary image of journalistic credibility not through visual displays of her as a field reporter, but through the sounds and sights of her as a live studio interviewer. Her ability to perform this task sets her apart from others who either don't rely on or have, to the same extent, the aforementioned attributes and skills. Listening and thinking, said the producer, are what pulls her through interviews as if she is prepared, even when she isn't. They also facilitate the impression that she is not only credible, but genuine.

> I think she has proven herself considerably in the way that she handles live interviews because she listens, which is very, very important. Many anchors don't. Many anchors all over the world don't listen. They're thinking of the next question, they're not listening to what the person is saying. She listens. She could be completely unprepared for an interview in the sense that she knows the background, she knows the topic...she's comfortable with that, but wouldn't have scripted questions. And she could still handle it fantastically well, whereas other anchors would look at the scripted questions and not think. She's quite comfortable with doing that and will listen and will formulate a question based on what is said. And to me that's one of the factors that really contributes to her credibility because there's a situation where you have to prove yourself.

The credible perception created by this anchor is authentic since what she says and asks during her interviews is what comes to mind at that second. Her questions and words are not scripted by herself or others; hence, she doesn't appear unknowledgeable or unintelligent through audience perceptions that she is unable to follow a train of thought or respond,

naturally, to another's comments which, according to the producer, many anchors, do. They rely on the cultivated 'act' of conversing at times when that act is not called for. When used inappropriately, cultivated conversations based on scripted material interfere with the authentic interaction that is supposed to characterize live interviews.

Live interview skills not only enhance image, they are also an increasing necessity since the technology that drives present-day television facilitates more frequent use of this journalistic vehicle. According to one anchor who described the transition, changes in the medium allow for, and dictate, more immediacy.

> It's just an evolution, really it is...there are more opportunities given the technology and the way the information is gathered and the way the information can be put on the air. Like, you couldn't go live to whatever was happening before. You couldn't sit in your living room and watch the coup, or attempted coup in Russia while you were having tea and cookies. That was impossible. Now that is possible and it makes for news coverage which is completely different. I mean, all the live reports, they're not scripted, none of that is scripted. It is happening as you are seeing it.

In other words, anchors are often forced to be involved in the process of live news as it is being produced, not simply to act as presenters of news that they, or others, have edited and packaged. With information travelling so much faster than it used to, this anchor said she is often forced to discuss the particulars of pictures and issues she is seeing and hearing about for the first time, along with viewers. During this process of mutual production she may have a few notes about what

is going on, but no detailed script to follow. In terms of the proper image construction during these moments, she, like others in the same position, is entirely on her own to prove herself.

The producer last quoted is convinced that this future trend in anchor imaging is one that relies on anchors to take increasing control over their display of journalistic credibility and distinction. These qualities as represented through embodied and expressive images of depth, curiosity, attentiveness and interrogation.

> You won't have time for a writer to sit down and script your questions for you, and do the research for you, and have it all there for you. And because you won't have a script to turn to the anchors are going to have to think. Imagine! But I think that will increasingly be the way. And the old school seems to be that there were writers, there was an anchor, a strict division of labour. And now I think the lines are blurring...and perhaps some of the old school of anchors are going to have trouble adapting to that.

Multi-tasking and the interplay of talking, acting, thinking and asking, may not only be a challenge for seasoned anchors entrenched in traditional journalistic and anchoring methods, but also for any others in the field hoping to cultivate and sustain the desired journalistic image solely on the basis of those conventional methods. Anchors cannot be assured that an image of credibility established through the display of past and present packaged news reporting ability, will compensate, endlessly, for substantive or other deficiencies when it comes to the display of their live journalistic proficiency. In other words, anchors who have built, or are hoping to construct, their journalistic image with

stellar packaged reporting credentials could damage that image if their live, unscripted journalistic performances are not convincing. There is no guarantee that the carry over effect Meyrowitz speaks of will compensate indefinitely for contradictory evidence of the journalistic credibility of an anchor's image.

The traditional legacy of packaged journalism can no longer come to the aid of, or be relied on, by anchors trying to develop or sustain an intelligent image when they really don't know what they're talking about and/or don't care about the words coming out of their mouths. The potential for such dependence was facilitated in the past by opportunities to piggyback on the skills of editors, producers, writers or others hired to help anchors out with their act. This behind-the-scenes help could function to cover-up what anchors themselves couldn't, or didn't want to, carry out. Possibilities to project the facade of ability are becoming less frequent with the increasing popularity of live anchor interviews. The protective mechanisms built into conventional journalism are absent in the reporting method increasingly used. The mounting pressure on anchors to prove their 'smarts' to viewers singlehandedly is linked to the differential opportunities embedded in live and packaged journalism to create illusions and engage in reality.

While the field report and it's image message is more dictatorial and manipulated, and the live interview more

conversational, interactive and genuine, these distinctions are not absolute. The explanations provided could lead one to draw the conclusion that live reporting by anchors is, in all cases, an authentic, credible display of an anchor's intellect and distinctive social abilities. This is, in most cases, true since live work, as opposed to packaged, edited journalism, can be observed and listened to in its entirety. It is unedited, with no chance to cover-up an anchor's potentially 'fatal' performance mistakes. The illusion, though, of the projected reality is that it is, at times, possible to pre-tape and edit 'live' interviews. This is done in some cases. The quality of images projected to viewers during pre-taped interviews are not unlike those that are manipulated through the process involved in traditionally packaged news journalism. Face-to-face interviews project images to viewers riddled with either authenticity or cultivation depending on whether they are live or pre-recorded and condensed.

The flipside of this clarification is the assumption that an anchor's sustained interaction and display of unedited curiosity, wit, social skills and knowledge is available to viewers only during live interviews, not through observations of their traditional journalistic productions. While this is certainly true based on the images televised, it is, in fact, possible for viewers and others to experience those qualities first hand, whether acted or genuine, if those people are with the anchor in the field as either interview subjects or curious

bystanders. This is an opportunity for them to observe and listen to the live face-to-face interaction in its entirety before the taped version is taken back to the studio and transformed into art that bridges the worlds of fiction and reality, i.e. packaged news. Audience members have the opportunity to not only witness an anchor's live journalistic performance in the streets of the community, but to also assess all other components of their personal front as they look and sound authentically, face-to-face; their image not mediated electronically. There is, then, a live, authentic component to traditional, packaged journalism and the opportunity for anchors to make 'fatal' image errors before members of the audience.

The point to be stressed is that the live components of both types of journalism offer viewers an otherwise unavailable "sidestage" view of the television news production (Meyrowitz, 1985: 47, 48). This makes it is possible for viewers to observe anchors demonstrating their fallibility and ignorance through inaccurate statements and misinterpretations of sources' live comments and news issues (Giddens, 1990; Meyrowitz, 1985). Such displays of inappropriate behaviour might not only make viewers question their perception of an anchor as a trustworthy messenger, but could also raise questions about the authenticity of the anchor's packaged productions. Viewers may wonder if the anchor's edited work benefits from a larger "backstage" rehearsal area where journalistic faux pas are hidden on a regular basis, which they are (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1989;

Goffman, [1959] 1973; Meyrowitz, 1985; Thompson, 1995). If there are concerns about the discrepancy between an anchor's live and packaged displays of intelligence, viewers may withdraw their trust in that anchor and vest it in another whose performances are more consistent and don't raise such doubts.

I have already mentioned that this component of image - anchors as knowledgeable and intelligent individuals - can, if convincing, compensate for deficiencies in an anchor's other image elements. The reverse, however, is not true. Signs of trust as expressed through an anchor's facial, decorative, acting and/or talking credentials are not believed powerful enough to counteract the damage done by an anchor who doesn't appear 'smart' enough. Not only are these other image components considered ineffective compensatory mechanisms, they themselves run the risk of being exposed for what they are, namely signs of constructed credibility. To be sure, the distinctive qualities they represent remain intact, but what can become apparent is that their reflection of credibility functions, not as an indicator of authentic knowledge, skill and ability, but to support an anchor's credibility as constructed journalistically, and through 'apparent' interest, effort and facility. In other words, if an anchor is not able to carry off and display an intelligent illusion and/or the image of its reality, the effectiveness of all other image elements are at risk of being rendered ineffective in what is supposed to be their effective capacity. Their function is not to pick up the

image slack for anchors who perform repeated journalistic blunders.

CHAPTER FOUR: WAYS OF CONNECTING

Cultivating the Illusion of Authentic Relationships

The 'blind' trust viewers have in the authenticity of the news on a particular channel is vested not simply in that station's news anchors, but in the personal relationships that their expressive trust signs impel. In the words of one producer, "viewers have personal relationships with anchors." This relational element, this sense of connection, is the trust bond between viewers and the news production system and the key to audience loyalty and the success of stations. Anchors' embodied trust signs and viewer perceptions of anchor trustworthiness are the foundational elements upon which viewer-anchor relationships are built.

A loyal relationship between an audience and station depends quite heavily on how viewers 'feel' about the anchors' authentic and cultivated expressive information (Meyrowitz, 1994: 58). The desire for a relationship with a particular anchor boils down to viewer assessments of the totality of that anchor's expressive equipment and whether or not they consider it to be distinctly credible and one they can identify with. The following comment is from a producer who is convinced of this:

> If an anchor makes an impression on you and you're comfortable with them and if you find them believable and you can relate to this person, then you're going to turn them on again. And if you don't like that kind of person then you ultimately won't watch.

This producer's thoughts are echoed by an anchor who agrees that viewer loyalty and trust in a station is based on the 'feeling' of a personal connection with the announcer who is reading the news to them.

> If they like you, you've got them hooked and they won't watch anybody else. If they like you then that's what they want to see and it doesn't matter what anything else is like, or if they can get better news somewhere else, or better sports. If they like you as a person and they really link to you then they'll just watch you.

The personal identification that both respondents referred to can be understood as a "reflexive project" in which viewers are assured of their own identity through a sense of connection with a news anchor's persona (Giddens, 1990: 124). In other words, viewers become 'hooked' on anchors who provide them with a "social orientation" to themselves by reflecting back to them their own distinctive tastes and values (Bourdieu, 1984: 466).

Each reflexive relationship between an anchor and audience member is individual (Goffman [1959] 1973: 49). The specific reasons for why a viewer feels a special connection with a particular anchor are, to be sure, multi-dimensional, just as are the plausible combinations to the image puzzle of any effective local TV news anchor. This complex relational web is referred to here as *the reflexive elemental anchor image system.* This system is based on the analysis presented in previous chapters which indicates that each news anchor offers viewers a unique combination of authentic and cultivated expressive elements. Viewers are sure to perceive various combinations of credibility and distinction, or the lack of one or both of these

qualities, as they experience any given element of a news anchor's image. The unique perceptual path that each viewer follows is neither controlled entirely nor completely predicted. Perceptual control and prediction at this micro level, the level of an anchor's specific components of image, is not essential. Viewers are free to explore their perceptual tendencies based on their individual tastes and character.

The beauty of this system is that unique perceptual paths can lead to a common perceptual destination - the desire for numerous viewers to bolster their identity by watching the same anchor again and again on television. An anchor whose overall image is conducive to the formation of thousands of distinctive and enduring relationships is an "expressive superstar" (Meyrowitz, 1985: 107). Such anchors have the uncanny ability to make demographically similar and diverse individuals feel good about themselves while watching them. As I have argued, these personal relationships rest on viewer perceptions of an anchor's embodiment of recognizable trustworthy expressive elements and are the key to audience loyalty and station preferences.

It is important to note that the personal relationships between viewers and anchors, while certainly distinctive, are not authentic. They are just as cultivated and unidirectional as the conversations and interactions between anchors and viewers that are acted. The illusion of authenticity is based on the 'feeling' that viewers personally know their favourite

anchor when they don't, or the 'sense' that they have met them when they haven't (ibid: 105, 106, 119). Several respondents suggested that "anchors are invited into thousands of viewers' homes", but never is there a formal invitation or acceptance. Anchors visit homes that they never step foot in and are hosted by 'friends' who are complete strangers to them. This 'sense' of personal involvement on the part of the audience is nurtured not only by anchors' embodied trustworthiness but also by the television medium which facilitates the actual display of their expressive elements.

For viewers, TV can cloud the stranger-friend distinction by fostering the illusion that anchors are physically in the room with them, not just their aural and visual reflections (Meyrowitz, 1985; 1994). But viewers do not invite anchors into their homes, only their televised images. In other words, the 'relationships' between viewers and anchors are staged, one-sided *and* disembedded, with no localized context for the illusory friendships (Giddens, 1990). The 'sense' of a relationship with a favoured anchor is not an indication of shared experience or face-to-face interaction. It is a mirror of the viewer's own persona and, simultaneously, an indication of the type of person that viewer actually *would* befriend and invite into their dwelling.

The cultivation of personal relational connections is synonymous with the construction and maintenance of viewer trust in TV news and the anchors at a station. The specific signs of

anchor trust considered by respondents to be most effective are those most conducive to the formation of narcissistic attractions and illusory friendships. The distinction between the 'fatal' extremes and the range of the acceptable with respect to each of the image elements presented is comprehensible within the context of the type of authority that news anchors do and do not possess.

Authority is based on information control (Giddens, 1990; Meyrowitz, 1985; 1994). Authorities are either 'experts' on some body of knowledge, or front expert organizations that have access to and control over that knowledge. The nature of the information and the mode of its dissemination determine not only who has access to it, but also the nature of expert-audience trust relations. Authorities are most likely to be trusted if their authentic and cultivated expressive elements promote and reinforce the type of association that is compatible with their expertise. Signs of trust are based either on difference or sameness depending on whether the relational connection is hierarchical or egalitarian.

Local TV news anchors are not expert-specialists. They do not have the traditional authority or extensive training of physicians, lawyers, or professors. The expert-specialist's claim to authority comes through mastery of a particular subject area, through in-depth knowledge about certain legal, academic or medical matters. This type of authority is based on deep understanding, not superficial awareness (Meyrowitz, 1985;

1994).

Specialized information is disseminated predominantly through print media. It is accessible only to those with the requisite literacy skills for decoding messages laden with specialist lingo. Highly coded specialized knowledge is incomprehensible to the average individual. This exclusivity fosters private literary circles and distinct information systems. The authority of the expert-specialist is founded not only on 'profound' comprehension of a specific body of information, but also on the restricted flow of that specialized wisdom (ibid).

Control over and access to compartmentalized knowledge promotes hierarchical relationships between expert-specialists and lay audiences. The authority of the doctor, lawyer and academic gives them power over others who are unschooled in the area of their specialization. The distinction between those who 'know' and those who don't is unambiguous. There is a marked differentiation in social status between those with understanding and those ignorant of the intricacies of the expert-specialist's subject area (ibid).

Most patients, clients and other individuals who are denied access to the expert-specialist's 'secret' informational world have no choice but to trust the authenticity of their authority (Giddens, 1990). This 'blind trust' is not simply placed in the professionals themselves, but in the institutions they are a part of and the hierarchical relationships invoked by their

expressive signals. Dress, demeanour and verbalizations that highlight inaccessibility on a personal level are necessary reflections of the knowledge disparity (Meyrowitz, 1985; 1994). Separate informational and social spheres are compatible. The white lab coat, aloofness and obscure terminology are just some examples of how expert-specialists can reinforce the distinction between themselves and those on a lower rung of the informational status hierarchy. These and other expressive tactics suggest to the public, 'superiority', 'mystery', 'grandeur'. A trustworthy persona for those with this type of authority is one that is somewhat 'alien' to the average mortal.

While an 'alien' image is most effective for expert-specialists, it is undesirable for local TV news anchors who are expert-generalists. Interview data clearly suggest that expressive signs that place distance between anchors and viewers are not only untrustworthy but potentially 'fatal' to station success. Anchors who look too extreme in facial appearance and/or bodily ornamentation can be threatening to viewers, especially if they speak and act on-air as if they are hierarchically superior. Ways of looking and acting are deemed unacceptable if they do not suggest to viewers that the anchor is accessible. Narcissistic attractions and illusory friendships are unlikely to develop if an anchor's persona is difficult for viewers to identify with.

The authority of news anchors as expert-generalists is very different from the authority of expert-specialists. The

distinguishing factors explain why personal 'relationships' between viewers and anchors come through expressive elements that stress affinity, not separateness. An anchor's claim to authority comes not through in-depth knowledge about a particular subject, but through apparent comprehension of numerous topics. Effective anchors appear to have at least a modest grasp of general social knowledge including local tragedies, medical breakthroughs and high-profile legal battles. This type of authority is not about focused understanding but broad social awareness.

Television news is available to the mass public. Those with and without extensive formal education have equal access to the general social information that news anchors present. Comprehension of television news is not literacy dependent. The knowledge is simplified and free of jargon to facilitate audience awareness and mass public consumption. The six o'clock news is available to anyone with access to a television set. The authority of the expert-generalist is not based on the restricted flow of specialized knowledge acquired through a fancy education. It comes through perceptions of their broad social awareness and their provision of access to a common information network. While the expert system of mass media news production has control over the acquisition and dissemination of superficial knowledge, TV anchors actually *share* that information.

Equal access to common knowledge promotes egalitarian

relationships between anchors and their audiences. The authority of anchors as expert-generalists puts them on equal footing with the average individual. The distinction between those who 'know' and those who don't is ambiguous. There is no marked differentiation in social status between those with awareness and those ignorant of what was aired on the latest newscast. The lack of distinction is based on the fact that those who don't 'know' easily could, since the informational worlds of anchors and viewers are merged (Meyrowitz, 1985; 1994).

News anchors do not monopolize the sharing of general information in the same way expert-specialists attempt to control the distribution of details about their respective specializations. Medical experts, for example, and their highly specialized publications are the traditional means of access to detailed medical information. But news anchors and the reporters at their stations are not the only expert-generalists who share everyday public information. Daily news about crime and disaster can be accessed through other sources within the expert mass media news production system.

News about risk in a local community is also shared publicly during hourly radio newscasts and in popular print publications (the morning tabloid requires only the most basic literacy skills). Since local news is covered in a more timely fashion on radio and more in-depth in newspapers it is possible for viewers to access these additional sources and become quasi-

expert-generalists themselves. Audience members can easily gain awareness of the latest critical issues *before* anchors report on them during their nightly TV news programs. Egalitarian relationships between anchors and audience members are reinforced by this potential.

The public's lack of dependence on TV anchors for general knowledge about current events does not undermine the need to trust their authority. Audience trust in the accuracy of television news is still critical. Those who read papers and listen to radio may look to anchors for confirmation of news discovered elsewhere. And for those who watch TV to learn about news they are not yet aware of, trust in the authority of anchors is equally vital. In either case, viewers need to trust that the anchor is telling the 'truth' since the news has the power to guide individual and/or collective behaviour to maximize safety in an unsafe world (Giddens, 1990).

'Blind trust' is most likely vested in anchors who foster egalitarian personal connections through a non-threatening expressive image. Trusted anchors project a persona that is familiar on some level to the average 'mortal', they look, sound and act like "average citizens" (Meyrowitz, 1985; 1994). Ways of looking and acting that feature accessibility are necessary reflections of the joint informational realm of anchors and viewers. Anchors who not only look like 'real' people , but include the audience in their theatrical presentations through interactions and conversations invite viewers to personally

connect with them. Featuring 'real' people in packaged and live journalism are other vehicles for audience inclusion in the anchors' world.

While the current push for egalitarian alliances is explained by the shared information network of anchors and audiences, it does not account for why hierarchical anchors with a more distant image once were but are no longer in fashion. I refer here to the larger than life announcer who talks *at* the audience without any illusion of inclusion. It could be argued that this former dominant style was modelled after the image of traditional authority when television was first introduced to the public in the 1950's. There was no other model of authority to follow and the image of traditional authority was unquestioned. The gradual transformation in image expectations simply paralleled the changing cultural norms of social relations and hierarchy that were induced by television and other electronic media (ibid).

Television has played a key role in undermining public trust in traditional authority by exposing private information through news coverage and other programming. "TV has lifted many of the old veils of secrecy" between expert-specialists and average citizens by simplifying complex details about many areas of specialization (Meyrowitz, 1994: 68). This exposure has led to demands that *all* sources and forms of information be accessible to average citizens. The result of this forced openness has been an increasing distrust of distant authority

and the rejection of 'mysterious' images that promote and reinforce hierarchy. This has made it critical for anchors to distinguish their image from the traditional image of expert-specialists' to prevent the deconstruction of their own authority. Cultivating the illusion of authentic personal relationships is not only more congruous with egalitarian access to media information but also gives power to the people which strengthens anchor trustworthiness.

Living Logos: Anchors as Consistent Image Representers

While it is certainly necessary that an anchor's image be conducive to the formation of personal 'relationships', this potential is not believed sufficient to establish viewer trust and audience loyalty. One producer's comment captured the shared belief of most respondents: "You can't have an overnight sensation with an anchor." While initial perceptions of an anchor's distinct credibility are believed powerful enough to capture the attention of viewers initially, actual trust bonds are not developed immediately. It takes time to cultivate the illusion of intimacy. One veteran anchor recalled the years it took to gain public trust and establish viewer loyalty.

> It took time to build that trust with the audience and the community and it didn't happen in two or three years. It took many years for people to get to know me and to recognize me and to build a bond with me ... If you want people to let you into their family you've got to gain their trust and give them a chance to get to know you.

Viewers need repeated opportunities to solidify their initial identification with an anchor's particular brand of distinct

credibility. This process of reflexive familiarization necessitates consistent image representation. In other words, narcissistic attractions and illusory friendships are more likely to develop if an anchor's image is somewhat predictable and regimented.

The various components of an anchor's persona should be presented in a manner that is consistent with their dominant style and contained within the acceptable boundaries of legitimate expression. The following comment is from a respondent who stressed the importance of image consistency.

> I think that viewers expect consistency because they've come to trust this person and they don't want them to change in any way ... and most anchors would probably not make radical changes because they understand that their acceptance is something that you can't jerk around too dramatically ... you've been invited into somebody's home and if you're invited back the next time you shouldn't seem like a different person.

While it is important that anchors *seem* like the same person through consistent presentation of their expressive equipment, it is equally critical that they *are*. Familiarity also depends on repeated exposure of the actual anchors who embody distinct credibility. "You've got to get your anchors in place and keep them there because people like to know that those same people are going to be there every night", said one news director. Image consistency at both the elemental and individual levels is deemed necessary for the construction and maintenance of personal relationships and audience loyalty.

All of us, to some extent, are "creatures of habit" (Snow, 1994: 37). The consistency of an anchor's presence, style and

action are no different than other forms of regimentation in our lives. We all have a propensity to act habitually in everyday casual and formal encounters. Erving Goffman offers numerous detailed accounts of how "strategic interaction" (1969) and "interaction rituals" (1967) are characterized by a high degree of routinization. Also laden with ritual is how we present ourselves to others in our everyday public and private lives ([1959] 1973).

Other forms of predictability permeate the parameters of the personal worlds we navigate. Some start each day with a hot cup of coffee, while the morning shower is more of a priority for others. Work schedules, religion and familial division of domestic labour all dictate some form of repetitive behaviour. Habitual action, voluntary and imposed, can be found in every nook and cranny of daily existence.

Routinized strategies give us a sense of stability and control in our personal lives (Goffman, 1963; Snow, 1994). Some degree of regularity in social interactions and solitary activity instills continuity and order in a world that is otherwise filled with chaos and uncertainty. While injecting some solidity and flow into our lives, habits temporarily numb us to the uncontrollable and problematic aspects of personal existence.

Snow (1994) argues that mass media are powerful forces in the formation and preservation of feelings of personal control and daily social order. Newspapers and electronic media are

characterized by structural and temporal regularity. An individual's consistent, routinized behaviour is fuelled and maintained by these larger systematic forces that provide an external sense of the familiar. Media consistency comes to be expected for the sustenance of an individual's own sense of personal stability.

The predictable flow of TV news programs is partially due to format considerations (Griffin, 1992). Information is organized according to content, with local, national and world news presented before details about weather. Sports coverage follows everything else. This organizational consistency is strengthened by transitions between segments that are marked by commercials and station identification. A high degree of regularity can also be found within each newscast segment. Most news stories, for example, are similarly structured. They begin with an anchor introduction, a transition to the reporter, and video footage accompanied by a voice-over. The appearance of familiarity comes partially through these various forms of structural regularity. Viewers know what to expect each time they tune-in to a newscast.

While viewers can be assured of the structural stability of the news, they can also rely on the timing of the various programs. Noontime, supper hour and late night newscasts air *at* noon, *at* dinnertime and just before midnight. This regimented temporal organization can contribute to the sustenance of personal schedules (Snow, 1994). The standard timing of TV news

can trigger transitions between the various components of one's daily routine. This predictability can be counted on as a monitoring device to assess, as well as 'time', scheduled daily progress. Viewers need not only trust the authenticity of news content, but also its systematic presentation and timing.

While the structural and temporal aspects of TV news can be relied upon to add a sense of order and flow to the daily lives of viewers, news anchors make a pivotal contribution. Viewer trust in the reliability of inanimate newscast features are based on a more "primitive faith" in the reliability of people (Giddens, 1990: 97). Consistent anchors at the individual and elemental levels can be counted on to maintain a "single definition of the situation" through their expressions, movements, appearance and mere presence (Goffman, [1959] 1973; 1963; 1969). They offer their audience a familiar albeit illusory relational environment. Viewers can rely on their solidity regardless of any personal disappointments or daily disruptions.

Image consistency not only reinforces viewer perceptions of an anchor's distinct credibility, it also provides them with the illusion of interpersonal stability. This combination of factors is believed by many respondents to contribute to patterns of viewer loyalty. One anchor shared her speculative understanding of audience expectations of her own and other anchors' 'sameness':

> It just becomes a habit for people and that's why they don't want you to change ... the habit is that at six

> o'clock they turn to our station and they know these two people and they want us to look the same and we're their friends and they just relate to us. And I guess if something changes and they don't relate anymore they don't watch. They may turn to a different station or they may not watch at all.

This comment suggests that habitual viewing behaviour is synonymous with resistance to change. Support for this claim comes from a news producer who recalled the big drop in ratings at his station years ago when a familiar anchor team was replaced by a newcomer to the market. "They were both gone and suddenly there was this new guy. And without people knowing how good this new guy was, they just tuned out. So that's the risk of making big changes."

Other evidence comes directly from the viewers themselves and their phone calls of complaint when the stability of their relationship with an anchor is threatened by an image change. The following comment is from an anchor who recalled the flood of protest calls that came to the station when he wore a bow tie, grew a moustache, and went on vacation.

> I wore a bow tie once and they hated it ... I mean we got a hundred, two hundred calls from people who hated this bow tie. They don't want you to change. They don't want you to be any different than they've known you for the last five, ten, fifteen years. And I grew a moustache once and they went bonkers. Except in that case I had it for about three days before I shaved it off. Well we got another hundred calls, "Why did we shave it off? I really liked it!" ... They want that familiar face delivering the news every night. Even when you go on vacation you get calls, "Oh, is he gone away again? When does he get back?" That kind of thing.

It cannot be assumed that all callers like those mentioned automatically switch allegiances to other anchors on different

stations. While their perceptual and relational equilibrium is temporarily unsettled, it will likely be restored if the image change is either reversed to its original state, or adhered to consistently after the switch. It is certainly plausible, though, that drastic changes to an anchor's image *can* lead to viewer reassessments of whether or not they really 'know' the anchor they have decided to make 'friends' with. Relationship continuation may also be questioned if the change does not reflect current cultural norms of trustworthy expression and the viewer's own distinctive values and tastes.

Temporal, structural and image consistency can all foster habitual viewing patterns by contributing to an anchor's predictability. A routine presence and a stable 'relationship' are psychologically relaxing because they are founded on habitual behaviours and appearances (Giddens, 1990). "At the end of the day", stated one anchor, "I may be a comfort factor for a lot of viewers." Viewing habits that are built on consistent perceptions of an anchor's image serve to bolster the psychological security of audience members. The capacity to trust anchors and the authenticity of the news they deliver depends on the confidence that is nurtured through image stability. In other words, there is a high degree of interdependence between reliability, psychological security and the capacity to trust (ibid).

It is understandable why viewers react as they do to substantial changes in an anchor's persona. Not only is their

sense of security shattered but their capacity to trust is temporarily shaken. Changes in the identity of an anchor - some component of image or who they actually are - is also disruptive to viewer identity since their self-definition is partially defined by the anchor they repeatedly watch. It was established early on in this thesis that watching TV news is a "reflexive project" (Giddens, 1990: 124; Bourdieu, 1984: 466). Just as an anchor's distinct credibility reflects back to loyal viewers their own distinctive sensibilities, perceptions of an anchor's consistency is also reflexive. The image continuity of a favoured anchor is central to viewers' feelings of their own continuity and capacity to be trustworthy. It follows that breaks in image consistency are points of equal vulnerability for stations and audiences. Consistent image representation is not only critical to the cultivation and maintenance of viewer trust in a station, but also bolsters viewer perceptions of their own psychological substance.

Audience loyalty to newscasts and stations is no different than consumer trust in the quality of products with distinguished brand names and logos. Nike, Coke and Tide are all brand name products with identifying symbols that over time have become associated with excellence. A station's programming is the product of the station and the brand name is the string of letters used for station identification (eg. CFCN or CKSA). The value of news anchors, from this perspective, is their capacity to serve as the living logos of not only their

newscasts but also their stations. One producer didn't hesitate to state that anchors *are* "the walking, living, breathing logo and the walking living breathing brand as well of the whole TV station." One anchor described himself as a logo while suggesting the perceptual connection he hopes viewers make when they see him in the streets and on his show. He said the anchor-station link depends on a persona that is usually, if not always, the same.

> I'm almost a brand name is what I am. You know, I'm identified with [station call letters] and specifically with my newscast. So just like a logo, your logo is always the same and you don't change your logo. I'm kind of a logo that you put up there and when people see me they hopefully think [station call letters].

If anchors are to function as effective living logos the "bureaucratization" of their "spirit" is essential (Goffman, [1959] 1973: 56). Predictable and continual expressive performances can symbolize anchor trustworthiness *and* a quality newscast and station.

While there is no definitive answer to the question of how long it takes for anchors to become synonymous with the call letters of a station, several respondents said it takes many years. The time it takes viewers to make that anchor-station link may be closely tied to the time it takes for illusory relationships between viewers and anchors to blossom. If this is the case, it only makes sense for stations to start anchors when they are young. This gives time for these necessary processes to develop and for both stations and advertisers to reap the financial benefits from the loyal followings that

anchors develop. A news director explained:

> You've got to nurture young people on the way up because part of the success in anchors is the equity you build in them. So you identify those who can do it, you start them young, and build them up and hopefully they'll stay with you and the audience can watch that person grow up.

The most effective approach for local stations like the ones studied is to nurture and retain a stable of anchors that reflect the tastes and values of multiple generations. This would appease both the younger and older segments of the intercast audience on the basis of viewer identification with an anchor's age and the dominant expressive style considered trustworthy by people of that same generation. While one set of anchors connects with an established following, the younger group who is newer to the audience works on first impressions and *becoming* a comfort factor in the daily lives of the audience. This approach maximizes the chance of a continual cycle of relationship development.

Even for viewers who do not identify with age related expressive variables, the representation of different generations provides viewers with more expressive combinations of embodied trustworthiness to identify with. The sheer quantity of anchors that a local station can accommodate dictates the number of reference points for viewer reflexivity and anchor-station connections. It is also an indication of the extent to which a station is vulnerable in the face of significant image disruptions. As the popular saying goes, "it is never a good idea to have all of your eggs in one basket".

The more pockets of viewer loyalty that a station has tied up in various anchors, the less viewers there are to potentially lose if one makes a 'fatal' image mistake, quits or gets fired. Of course the number of anchors that a station can accommodate is limited by the number of newscasts it produces and the financial resources of the station.

While it is easy to conceptualize the link between anchor and newscast loyalty, it may be more difficult to accept the proposition that newscast and station loyalty are synonymous. Certainly, there is no guarantee of this. But in a multichannel marketplace with syndicated programs available on both local *and* cable stations, it is critical that viewers become aware of anchor-station connections. Audience awareness of these local links at least facilitates the possibility of loyalty transference. One respondent said it best, and with enthusiasm no less: "It's the best that we can hope for ... anchors are the stars and there's a lot riding on them."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to come to an understanding of how television news anchors establish trust. Credibility cultivation was examined through its relationship to station identity and audience construction. Data were collected through open-focused interviews with news anchors, make-up artists, producers and directors who work for three stations in a major Canadian television market. While the interview material served as the driving force in the structuring of this thesis, the theoretical contributions of Erving Goffman (1967; 1969; 1971; [1959] 1973), Joshua Meyrowitz (1985; 1994), Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987; 1989; 1991) and Anthony Giddens (1990) were incorporated into the overall analysis.

Goffman's work provided key insights into the structure of appearances and the 'strategic staging' that is required for the effective management of audience impressions. Of particular relevance was his understanding of social roles in occupational settings and how institutional identities are constructed largely through the staged performances of their public representatives. His claim that strategic human expression plays a pivotal role in the control of perceptions contributed greatly to my positioning of anchors in relation to their audience and within their organizational setting.

There is no performance without a stage. The lawyer's courtroom and physician's office are just some examples of the

settings that serve as occupational platforms for image construction. The news anchor's platform is the TV screen - the entertainment format and the television medium. Like all occupational stages, the anchor's is decisive in determining how human expressions are transmitted and the types of expressions that are featured. The writings of Meyrowitz and Ericson et al provided critical insights into how medium and format considerations shape staging possibilities and performance requirements.

The final core theoretical perspective was provided by Giddens who helped to address the following question: Why is it important for anchors to establish trust in the first place? Anchors, like lawyers, insurance agents and physicians, front an expert system that requires public trust for continued existence. The survival of the mass media news production system, like the medical and legal establishments and insurance institutions, depends on trust vested in its competence and in the authenticity of the knowledge it dispenses. Trust needs, according to Giddens, are not unidirectional. While expert systems depend on public trust, viewers need to trust TV news just as clients and patients need to trust the accuracy of medical and legal information.

Giddens also posits that the symbiotic trust needs of expert systems and lay individuals are met through the trustworthy appearances of those who appear at the 'access points' of institutions. This supported my claim that the

complementary trust needs of stations and viewers are serviced by anchors who display signs of trust at TV's 'access point', or the anchor's performance platform. Anchors who have cultivated a trustworthy persona are the key to 'anchoring' trust relationships between stations and viewers. They also anchor trust in the other players who appear in news productions.

I have argued throughout this thesis that notions of 'news excellence' as defined by those who work in the industry do not form the basis upon which viewer perceptions of news authenticity are primarily based. While I have acknowledged that news content certainly contributes to the overall appearance of TV news productions, my stance has been that anchor trustworthiness is the decisive factor in determining audience trust in their newscasts. Their power of persuasion is attributed to their capacity to embody distinction and credibility and to project those qualities on TV.

Credibility cultivation was examined through the process of deconstructing the news anchor persona. Various components of on-air image were analysed according to respondent accounts of what constitutes legitimate and 'fatal' expression. Facial appearance, bodily decoration, ways of interacting, speaking and understanding were the key expressive elements assessed. Data suggested that anchors who look and act like 'real' people are most likely to be perceived by viewers as believable.

Real looking anchors were described as those with a down-to-earth, everyday facial appearance and conservative

ornamentation reminiscent of executives or bankers. Real looks not only distinguish anchors from entertainers featured in other genres, they are also thought to minimize the possibility of threatening those in the audience. Real acting anchors were characterized by their capacity to cultivate the illusion of authentic face-to-face interaction and conversation with viewers. Their ability to pretend the sharing of intimate tales in the company of friends compensates for medium limitations which prevent this from actually happening. The final expressive element studied was the appearance of journalistic savvy. The construction of this image was deemed critical for the purpose of including viewers in news shows and convincing them of actual substance beneath anchors' hair and clothes.

I claim that these signs of anchor trust are neither absolute nor objective and assessments of trustworthiness are ultimately determined by viewer perceptions. What is evident, though, in the news market studied is that credibility is cultivated through the appearance of anchor accessibility. This preferred style is not only compatible with the informational world shared by anchors and viewers, it also encourages audience loyalty through implicit invitations to personally identify with non-threatening announcers. Those who look and act like typical citizens are more likely to be trusted because they seem familiar, on some level, to the average 'mortal' tuning in.

Credible anchors share many similarities, but I maintain that no two image elements are ever identical or equally

accessible. This variation is what contributes to anchor and station uniqueness. I argue that viewer identification with a particular anchor is a reflexive activity based on a 'sense' of connection with that anchor's unique brand of distinct credibility. In other words, effective anchors provide viewers with a "social orientation" (Bourdieu, 1984) to themselves by reflecting back to them their own distinctive tastes and values.

I have developed the *reflexive elemental anchor image system* to provide insights into how it is possible for anchors to accommodate the individual reflexivity needs of a large viewing audience. This system is dynamic and flexible and accounts for the multifaceted nature of reflexive relationships, perceptual tendencies and anchor image puzzles. While each anchor presents viewers with a unique combination of authentic and cultivated expressive elements, viewers are sure to perceive various combinations of these qualities as they experience any given element of an anchor's persona. While viewers' unique perceptual paths are driven by their distinctive sensibilities, these paths can lead to a common destination which is their desire to watch the same anchor repeatedly on television. Effective anchors are those who maximize this complex relational web's potential.

Another key to the cultivation of credibility is satisfying viewers' continuity needs. I contend that this is just as critical as accessible appearances and meeting viewers' reflexivity needs. I have argued that image consistency at the

elemental and individual levels can provide viewers with a sense of continuity while instilling order into an otherwise chaotic and uncertain world. While this continuity factor together with accessible appearances and reflexive potential functions to meet the trust needs of viewers, it also meets those of the station by defining it as trustworthy in the audience psyche.

The arguments and evidence presented in this thesis might leave readers with the impression that credibility cultivation is an 'expressive burden' for anchors. It requires their entry into a complex system of expressive control which is exercised through constraint and expectation. Institutional needs for trust and an audience, the specific constraints imposed by the medium, entertainment format and news genre, all contribute to the expressive standards which must be adhered to. The image demands are intensified when viewer reflexivity, continuity and trust needs are incorporated into an already rigid performance regimen. The confluence of these components of expectation and constraint ensure that station and viewer identity is embodied and projected onto the screen. But does bearing the burden of trustworthy expression mean that anchors must "assume the role of the dead man" (Foucault, 1979: 143)?

Throughout this thesis I have argued that there is room on the performance platform for anchor distinctiveness. The anchor's authentic voice is not cancelled out under the weight of expressive oppression. It is integral to the construction of trust and a necessary reflection of both station and viewer

uniqueness. While the range of sanctioned possibilities for authentic distinction is limited, it does exist. And not all anchor variations are minor twists on performance prescriptions. I remind the reader that the boundaries that separate legitimate and 'fatal' expression are not fixed. They are dynamic and flexible and can be transgressed.

The oppressive force with the most 'give' provides the window of opportunity for anchors to claim illegitimate signs of their individuality. Viewers are a fertile testing ground for the acceptance of 'fatal' expressions since their readiness for new signs of trust cannot be fully anticipated. Anchors are granted expressive control if ratings increase or remain at least stable. Viewer phone calls and letters are other stamps of acceptance or disapproval. If there is minimal negative feedback or positive audience response, there will be repeated performance chances for those who don't completely conform to all of the various image requirements.

It is critical to acknowledge that an anchor's boundary-breaking authenticity can make mass replication of their innovations possible. This does not eliminate the system of expressive control for followers, but modifies the rules to be broken. What I am suggesting here is that credibility cultivation at the elemental level is characterized by an evolutionary cycle of changing expectations that are prompted by boundary-breaking anchors who negotiate their 'fatal' image with the audience.

The evolutionary process just described is not insular. It is part and parcel of current and future transitions in the dominant expressive styles of anchors. Individual transgressors not only alter expectations with respect to specific components of image, their collective innovations can also contribute to changes in dominant modes of expression. Receptivity to, and the demand for, a new anchor model is certainly facilitated by other forces. I have stated elsewhere that the medium of television has been instrumental in the birth of the new dominant mode of expression. I have also suggested that the current egalitarian thrust is an appropriate fit with anchors' expert-generalist authority, but this fit does not ensure its continued survival. It is possible that staged accessibility will become subject to the same intense scrutiny as the former dominant hierarchical model. Distrust of the friendly facade may arise from any number of unforeseen cultural changes.

The transition between dominant styles is not abrupt. As one model enters the early phase of its decline, another begins its ascent in the system. This leaves room on a station's performance platform for trustworthy anchors at both ends of the spectrum. The transition is also eased by 'hybrid' anchors who embody the qualities of both styles of trust. The co-presence of these various modes of expression is functional. It accommodates the growth and death of dominant models while facilitating inevitable viewer loyalty transitions. Stations who display the evolutionary cycle retain old style anchor-

viewer relationships until their demise while promoting the formation of 'hybrid' alliances and new style friendships. It is critical to note that when dominant expressive styles are in transition and when 'fatal' boundaries are overstepped, audience and station identities also undergo subtle transformations.

The specific findings presented in this thesis are in no way meant to be a general statement about the cultivation of credibility 'at large'. Notions of what constitutes news anchor trustworthiness at the elemental and stylistic levels are restricted to the local television market where the empirical data for this thesis were collected. Additional research would be necessary to ascertain the similarities and differences between regions and nations, although the insights I have offered could certainly facilitate these comparisons.

The conclusions I have presented could also serve as a guiding framework for credibility research in other occupational settings. All organizational representatives are subject to their own systems of expressive control which are shaped by the constraints and expectations imposed by their respective audiences and expert establishments. I also surmise that 'trust anchors' of all kinds are part and parcel of evolutionary cycles as both captives and creators of 'fatal' boundaries and legitimate expressions. These processes as they apply to other professions are ripe for discovery.

While data gathered in organizational settings is critical to understanding credibility cultivation, systematic audience

research would offer key insights from a different perspective. Uncovering the perceptual tendencies of clients, consumers and television viewers would provide balance to any conclusions about the basis of their trust relationships with anchors or other institutional representatives. Such research might also reveal additional image elements that contribute to the trust equation. Gender, for example, was not featured in this thesis but could be identified by viewers as a key component in their reflexive relationships with announcers. The extent to which viewers make anchor-station connections could also be examined. Ultimately, credibility research of any kind would be strengthened with the analysis of data provided by both service providers and the recipients of their expressive information.

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