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Interpreting Nonverbal Behavior: Representation and Transformation Frames in Israeli and Palestinian Media Coverage of the 1993 Rabin–Arafat Handshake

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Consistent with calls by O'Sullivan (1999) and Rogers (1999), we use mass communication theory to help understand what are often thought to be largely interpersonal communication processes. Specifically, we contend that investigating media frames found within metapragmatic discourse of nonverbal events can help organize and reveal more specific meanings that can be given to the cues. To provide evidence for our argument, we analyzed Israeli and Palestinian media coverage of the 1993 handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn. Our analysis, across 187 texts, helped us identify two primary frames for reporting about the handshake and media-indicated related behaviors (e.g., co-occurring facial expressions or subsequent actions). We labeled these frames representations *and* transformations. *Within these two frames, we also identified an array of more specific meanings given to the cues. These frames, and the meanings embedded within them, help reflect the diversity and structure of interpretations that can occur for nonverbal cues.*

Keywords: Nonverbal; Handshake; Framing; Politics

According to Gumperz (1982), our ability to communicate with others depends on 'shared interpretive conventions' (p. 3). To make sense of talk between people,

communicators must have language-based and socio-cultural knowledge that allows them to use information in and around an utterance to help choose from an array of meanings that could be given to that utterance. This convention-based view of communicative practice becomes complicated when applied to the use and understanding of nonverbal[1] behaviors require interpretive processes (i.e., when the tie between an action and its referent is automatic; Buck & VanLear, 2001). Nonetheless, many nonverbal cues that occur in communicative contexts are, like language, open to a range of meaning attributions and necessitate communicators understanding the set of interpretations that may be attached to the cues through contextualized and conventionalized practice (Burgoon, 1994; Goodwin, 1981; LeBaron, 2005; Manusov, 2002; Smith, 1995).

One way to think about conventional interpretive practices is with the idea of *framing*. Frames are definitions for communicative events that guide our subjective involvement (Goffman, 1974). According to Gumperz (1982), frames 'enable us to distinguish among permissible interpretive options … [and the] typifications reflected in … interpretive frames derived from previous interactive experience are the foundations of the practical reasoning processes on which we rely in the conduct of our affairs' (pp. 21–22). Thus, a way to make sense of the meanings given to communicative acts—and to understand the larger conventions within which the meanings are embedded—is to assess the underlying frames that support certain meanings for potentially ambiguous cues.

Although many interpersonal communication researchers understand the importance of framing as a means by which people make sense of specific interpersonal behaviors, events, and relationships (e.g., Dillard, Solomon, & Samp, 1996; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Planalp[2], 1985), media theorists have thus far discussed framing much more expansively. According to Entman (1993), 'the concept of [media] framing … offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text' (p. 51). Specifically,

> [t]o frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the items described. (Entman, 1993, p. 52, emphasis in original)

For media framing theorists (e.g., Iyengar, 1991; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Pan & Kosicki, 1993), the results of framing—or choosing certain things to talk about and particular ways to talk about them within texts—is the creation or reinforcement of what is or *should be* salient to an audience, how that audience should evaluate the thing being framed, and, possibly, a move to get the audience to undertake some action related to what has been framed. Although texts (e.g., news coverage) are embedded in a set of institutional practices that may constrain them (Tuchman, 1978), they can also work to construct a reality for those who attend to those texts. In this way, news media are seen as active participants in a larger social drama (Baym, 2000; Ettema, 1990; Vande Berg, 1995), promoting particular performances and not others.

One way to look further into the frames used in meanings given to nonverbal behavior is located in media discourse about nonverbal cues. Jaworski and Galasinski (2002)

referred to the particular set of frames that encompass media talk about communication as *metapragmatics*. They argued that such metapragmatic framing is a useful way to view the textual presentation of nonverbal cues:

> [T]he relative indeterminacy and immediacy of non-verbal behaviour (e.g., facial expressions and gestures) accounts for the great ease with which the media, as well as the social actors in non-institutional, face-to-face contexts can and do use metapragmatic manipulation of non-verbal behaviour … It is often the verbal accounts of non-verbal behaviour that we rely on in disambiguating and/or imposing preferred interpretations on the non-verbal medium. (Jaworski & Galasinski, 2002, pp. 630, 634)

The authors used this argument to investigate several British newspapers' coverage of Clinton's nonverbal communication during his grand jury testimony regarding his relationship with Monica Lewinski. They found, among other things, tremendous variety in the interpretations of (or meaning given to) Clinton's nonverbal behaviors by different newspapers, and these presentations of the behaviors largely mirrored the political orientation of the sources.

Viewing the representation of, or metapragmatics for, nonverbal communication in media texts is helpful for a number of reasons. First, examining the meanings given to nonverbal cues by the media shows potential ways in which audiences are likely to think about the communicative ability of the cues. In searching for evidence of frames in media discourse, interpersonal scholars may also find evidence of conventionalized frames reflecting everyday understandings of what nonverbal cues may mean. Second, investigating potentially diverse media coverage of a nonverbal event allows us to think more about the choice making behind how we use nonverbal behaviors

Although the list of possible meanings given to nonverbal cues is numerous, media discussions—particularly those that may be affected by politics and perspective—provide a largely untapped resource for increasing awareness of the repertoire of conventionalized meanings for nonverbal cues. The primary aim of this study, however, is not to use the discourse to find evidence of political perspective, as was the case for Jaworski and Galasinski (2002), although such a goal is laudable (and, although, discussion of political views occurs in our data). Nor are we concerned primarily with looking at the media texts as representations of culture. Rather, we are interested more generally with broadening the database from which we can learn about nonverbal cues by discerning the general frames, and within these, the meanings, given to nonverbal cues.

Specifically, we argue that an understanding of framing can help link the processes involved in both interpersonal and media-based interpretations of nonverbal cues. Such a goal is consistent with calls to integrate better the interpersonal and mass communication literatures (e.g., Berger & Chaffee, 1988; Caplan, 2001; O'Sullivan, 1999; Reardon & Rogers, 1988; Rogers, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 1985; Wiemann, Hawkins, & Pingree, 1988) and to reach across communication subdisciplines more generally. A framing perspective, particularly the well-developed one used by many media scholars, also provides an opportunity to reveal conventionalized 'organizing principles' (Bartlett, 1932) within which specific meanings for nonverbal cues may be

understood. Given the importance of media for socializing people into the use of nonverbal behavior (Coats, Feldman, & Philippot, 1999), specifically enactments of emotional expression (Zillmann, 1991), and the limited discussion attempting to capture the myriad media messages that may be attributed to nonverbal action (Jaworski & Galasinski, 2002), these goals seem an important step in understanding more fully the nature of interpreting nonverbal actions.

In this study, we use metapragmatic discourse about the 1993 handshake (and other nonverbal cues surrounding the handshake) between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat that was 'guided by' Bill Clinton to assess the frames (and within those frames, the meanings) given to the nonverbal cues that occurred in and around this event. Specifically, we analyze English-language Israeli and Palestinian press coverage, and translations of Israeli Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic coverage, to assess the interpretive frames given to this oft-described 'historic' nonverbal event. We do so with two purposes: (1) to provide evidence of conventionalized media frames for nonverbal interaction behavior; and (2) to assess some meanings for nonverbal cues that occur within these frames. Doing so, however, requires greater awareness (and framing) of the event itself and the cultural and political climates in which the media accounts are embedded.

The Event

The handshake between Rabin and Arafat took place before a long-lasting backdrop of violence between Israelis and Palestinians (CNN, 2003). The unrest between the two peoples had become normative since the founding of the Israeli state in 1948 and, whereas a substantial peace movement existed within Israel at the time of the handshake, most Israelis and Palestinians did not have much hope for a peaceful end to the complex conflict. The issues at stake were never as clear-cut as the Western media portrayed. The basic foundation of the conflict found its feet on one small and coveted piece of land split by outside European interests between two peoples. For the most part, Israelis saw their return to Israel as a return to their historic Jewish homeland, a place of safety that was thought especially necessary following the Holocaust. And, for the most part, Arab countries saw the Israelis' arrival as another wave of colonization. Following several wars waged and lost by Arab countries against Israel, Palestinians began their own uprising on the ground in the form of the first Intifadah.

It was within this climate prior to September 1993 that, in hopes of achieving peace, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat agreed to a series of unprecedented secret negotiations conducted under the auspices of Norwegian negotiators (CNN, 2003). The talks were to culminate and make their public debut in the form of a signing ceremony on the White House lawn. Discussion arose immediately in newspapers, television, and radio about the nature and content of the upcoming ceremony. The handshake itself generated a flood of discussion in various nations' media that has continued to the present time (see Manusov & Bixler, 2003, for an analysis of US media coverage[3]). At the end of 1999,

the handshake was still present enough in media consciousness to make *Time* Magazine's list of 100 events of 'the 20th century we shouldn't ignore.'

The handshake itself occurred on a stage created for the event, and flags and other ceremonial décor accompanied the stage setting. The three primary participants, Clinton, Rabin, and Arafat, walked out from the White House together (with Clinton in between the other two). In descriptions of the event in the US media, once on stage, Clinton used his arms to pull the two other men toward one another. The end result was a handshake *and other concurrent nonverbal cues*, caught in still and moving photographs, which created an enduring image of the event (see www.cnn.com/WORLD/9511/rabin/profile/ for one example of the image). The public ceremony captured on film preceded the primary purpose of the meeting: the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (for a description of what has been termed the 'Oslo accords' see www.memri.org/docs/oslo1.html). In this declaration, the Israeli government recognized the legitimacy of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the PLO agreed to Israel's right to exist. Rabin and Arafat jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 for these efforts.

But peace did not reign (CNN, 2003). In 1995, reportedly in response to Rabin's peace efforts, an Israeli assassinated Rabin. Israeli leadership shifted to the right politically, and currently another 'sworn enemy' of Arafat, Ariel Sharon, is in power. Palestinian leadership also shifted, though Arafat continued as the official leader of the PLO until his recent death in November 2004. Palestinians currently wage a second, more violent and deadly Intifadah, and Israel has commenced building a wall between Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Still, the Israeli and Palestinian governments negotiate off and on with talks that are based on the Oslo Accords, set into motion by Rabin and Arafat's handshake. Coverage of the handshake, and the subsequent events related to it, thus continues within Israeli and Palestinian media.

Israeli and Palestinian Media

Although our focus is not on comparison of these two media groups, some understanding of their role in their larger cultures is important for revealing frames and meanings that emerge across their discourse. Like all national/cultural groups, Israeli and Palestinian communication is likely to reflect the values, characteristics, and tensions within the larger societies. In their review of Israeli-Jews' and Palestinians' interactional communication practices, for example, Ellis and Maoz (2002) asserted that these two cultures 'have each emerged from the special circumstances of its history' (p. 181), and their communicative practices reflect these unique histories.

Little research has focused thus far on Palestinian media specifically, but Arab media[4] generally have been examined in some depth. Specifically, El Affendi (1999) argued that a weak economic base, Arab nationalism, the development of a politicized Islam, and cultural norms all affected the development of Arab media. As well, most Arab journalists are particularly likely to work toward the preservation of Arab culture (Rugh, 1987). In addition, Amin (2002) argued that, in general, Arab governments and internal (media-based) values both limit freedom of the press. Importantly, freedom of

the press may be limited because of concerns with libel and slander, consistent with the cultural values of harmony and the importance of personal reputation (Amin, 2002). Israeli media are, on the other hand, defined as multivoiced, reflecting a range of ideological 'camps' that are consistent with ideological divisions within the larger nation (Liebes, 1992; Peri, 1997). In particular, newspapers have been characterized as reflecting the 'variety of opinions within the public at large' (Peri, 1999, p. 329) and often present quite different interpretations for the same event (Nir & Roeh, 1992). Overall, Israeli coverage tends to be quite direct and confrontational (Peri, 1999).

Despite these differences in history and style, the media in both cultures are concerned greatly with politics. Bloch (2000) contended that Israelis are particularly interested in 'issues of the public domain' (p. 48), and the Israeli media are considered 'the central arena for deliberation' (Peri, 1997, p. 436). More specifically, First (2002) described Israeli media as 'naturally preoccupied with the Arab-Israeli conflict' (p. 175). Likewise, Amin (2002) described the media as playing 'an important role' (p. 125) in the Arab world, and El Affendi (1999) asserts that the Arab media have particularly close ties to politics and political movements. It is within this full cultural context that our analyses are drawn.

Summary and Research Question

Assuming that using various media texts allows for greater access to conventionalized frames for nonverbal behavior, the present study looks across a range of Israeli and Palestinian media sources for the primary interpretative structures (i.e., frames) apparent in the metapragmatic discourse surrounding the handshake. We also wanted to identify particular meanings given to the handshake and other related nonverbal cues. Based on these goals, we ask, across our collection of media texts, *what are the most notable frames and meanings provided for nonverbal communication surrounding this event*? We used the following methods to help assess this research question.

Methods

The first step in our project included collecting a corpus of data from which to find general frames and specific meanings apparent in discourse surrounding the handshake and its related behaviors. Because of language limitations, we limited our search for the present study to English language and already translated to English Israeli and Palestinian media that originated from within Israel or the Palestinian territories; we note the constraints of this choice in our discussion section.

Data Gathering

Search engines
English-language Israeli press is relatively plentiful, but English-language Palestinian press and translated-to-English Israeli and Palestinian press are neither plentiful nor easily accessible. Data, therefore, were gathered using a variety of search engines and

methods. The search engines that we used were Lexis-Nexis, the Index to the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), and the World News Connection. For Lexis-Nexis, we used the search terms 'Arafat' and 'Rabin' and 'handshake' on full texts. FBIS, which only existed through 1996, is a limited search engine, so we did our searches more broadly, using the terms 'Arafat' and 'Rabin.' We did two searches of World News Connection, a successor to the daily reports from FBIS that provided translations of non-US print and broadcast media: an open search using 'Rabin,' 'Arafat,' 'handshake' not combined; then a Boolean search using 'Rabin,' 'Arafat,' and 'hand*.' In addition, we searched the Palestinian Report Online directly, using search terms 'Arafat' and 'Rabin' and 'handshake' on full text.

Media sources

The media sources that provided the data derived from the above search engines represented a range of outlets. Israeli media were more accessible and, therefore, formed the majority of our data. The data comprised articles that were a majority news stories and a minority opinion pieces and letters to the editor. Letters to the editor and opinion pieces, though often not authored by media professionals, were included in our study based on the understanding that their publication in the press, as well as their editing by journalism professionals, consist of media choices of how to represent an event. All our media searches garnered multiple publications that we then narrowed down to articles *that addressed the handshake in some substance*, ranging from describing the handshake with at least one adjective to in-depth description of the handshake. Articles that mentioned the handshake but did not apply any description or attribute any meaning to the handshake were discarded and not included in the study.

Lexis-Nexis archived the *Jerusalem Post*, an Israeli English-language daily newspaper, and the *Jerusalem Report*, an Israeli English-language magazine published biweekly in Jerusalem. Each was available archived from before the handshake until the present. Lexis-Nexis also recently picked up *Ha'aretz*, the Israeli Hebrew-language daily that is the paper of record and that recently started to publish an English version. The earliest *Ha'aretz* story found was dated July 16, 1999. The *Jerusalem Post* provided the most articles ($n = 126$). The *Jerusalem Report* provided the second largest amount of articles ($n = 35$). *Ha'aretz* provided fewer ($n = 3$). Lexis-Nexis archived no Palestinian press. FBIS directed us to US government translations of news, providing four articles from between September 9, 1993 and December 31, 1993: two from Israel's *Qol Yisra'el* radio news program, one from *Israel Television Network*, one from *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, an Israeli daily newspaper; and, again, none from Palestinian media.

Searches of the World News Collection unearthed 11 Palestinian articles and 3 Israeli articles, with the earliest dating February 13, 1999. Palestinian outlets providing articles were print and internet versions of Jerusalem's *Al-Quds* ($n = 5$), the largest circulation Palestinian newspaper and an independent outlet that supported the peace process and the Palestinian Authority, and print and internet versions of *Ramallah's Al-Ayyam* ($n = 6$), an independent newspaper supportive of the Palestinian Authority. Israeli outlets were limited to *Ma'ariv* ($n = 3$), Israel's second largest circulation

Hebrew-language daily newspaper. Five stories were culled from a search of the *Palestinian Report Online*, an English-language publication billed as Palestine's only independent news digest, the earliest dating June 28, 1996.

Analytical Procedures

The above searches resulted in 187 texts for analysis: 171 from Israeli coverage, and 16 from Palestinian/Arab coverage. The group of articles was divided into two content-balanced halves, with one half going to each researcher. The researchers each reduced the content of their halves to handshake-relevant sections of the articles and then combined the cut-down versions. Although there are a number of methods used to analyze data for framing studies, we chose to use a grounded approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Given that no previous research provided likely frames identifiable in our data, we followed Strauss and Corbin's reasoning that the best approach was to create an interplay between ourselves and the data, allowing for the emergence and subsequent modification of concepts in our data. To do so, we used Strauss and Corbin's three steps: (1) examination of the data to develop an initial classification scheme (i.e., open-coding); (2) a return to the data after the initial classifications were defined and named in order to assess their fit with the data (i.e., asking questions); and (3) choosing from amongst the many classifications those that appeared most salient or relevant to the analysis (i.e., trimming).

For step one, both researchers read the full set of texts separately and made notes about possible frames (i.e., general ways to talk about the handshake and other cues) that appeared to be apparent in the data as well as specific meanings (i.e., interpretations of the cues). We then compared our open codes. We identified seven possible frames and termed these, initially, *motivations*, *symbols/metaphors*, *change agents/transformative*, *denials of importance or meaning*, *choreographed*, *political/oppositional*, and *emotion producing*. The list of specific meanings was more extensive and included the following: dependency, trust, personal characterizations, emotional expressions, peace/end of hostilities, change in role, contact, legitimacy/recognition, breaking a taboo, time marker, empty of meaning/symbolism/value, pledge/promise/agreement, political exigency, resignation, hope, attempts to humanize, betrayal, creating a dialogue, reluctance/hesitance, violence, distaste, exuberance, curse, invoking, irreversibility of process, mental transformation, change in relationship, wishing to be somewhere else, good will, honor, vision, betrayal, and reciprocity/understanding.

For step two, the first author returned to the data to see if the initial frames defined the data well, could be described adequately as frames, and were inclusive enough to represent the data. From this assessment of fit, it seemed, for example, that certain frames (e.g., 'political' and 'emotion-provoking') were better seen as important to discuss *across the data* rather than as framing devices. The first author also looked at the data in comparison to the list of meanings created in the first round to see whether there were others that were not included previously, there was too much overlap between any of the meanings, and if there were enough data to suggest that such meanings were salient in the texts.

At the third step, the first and second author discussed the data in terms of these criteria and worked to 'trim' the categorization process to those frames and meanings that were most identifiable within the data corpus. The second author then returned to the full data set to assess her view of the frames and meanings that emerged after step two. With some minor modifications, the second author confirmed the strength of the frames and meanings identified by the first author. It is the results of this third step that we discuss in our analysis.

Results

Although what counts as a 'frame' may itself be subject to interpretation and dependent on the researchers' goals, we determined that frames in these data were large level conceptualizations of what functions the nonverbal cues served in this interaction (for additional, but quite different from our use of the term, discussions of nonverbal functions; see Burgoon, 1994; Patterson, 1982). These larger frames did not appear to dictate a particular meaning. Instead, they can be seen as a sort of 'meta-level meaning,' within which more particular interpretations fit. Our final exploration of the data reflected two primary, *although not mutually exclusive*, frames. We call these selected frames *representations* and *transformations*. Within each frame, we identified specific meanings that cluster in and characterize the frame.

Representations

One overarching frame that we saw in these data involved the conceptualization of nonverbal cues as a 'stand in' for a larger process, issue, or state. This type of frame worked to conceptualize nonverbal cues as representative of something intangible/ abstract and based in the larger event or context in which the behaviors occurred. The most notable referents (i.e., specific meanings) for the nonverbal cues framed as representations were peace/hope/optimism, authority/legitimacy, agreement/promise, violence, betrayal, anguish, and dislike. In one account, for example, Arafat's handshake represented *peace*: 'We want to tell President Bush again that President Yasir Arafat is a symbol of national liberation and a freedom fighter, and that he still extends his hand for a fair peace, a peace that Israel rejects' (*Al-Quds*, January 31, 2002). Another asserted, 'the handshake … meant simply peace, no more *intifada*, no more Israeli soldiers in the streets' (*Palestinian Report*, February 13, 1998). Relatedly, Leah Rabin, Yitzhak Rabin's widow, was quoted as saying that '[t]he handshake (of Yitzhak Rabin) two years ago with Yasser Arafat symbolized *hope*' (*Jerusalem Post*, November 16, 1995, our italics), and another noted that the handshake could be viewed as a representation of *optimism* for conflict resolution, 'the historic handshake … has since come to symbolize the inherent solubility of all international conflicts' (*Jerusalem Post*, August 16, 1996, our italics).

In addition to peace, hope, and optimism, some of the metapragmatic discourse we reviewed talked about the handshake in terms of its function for representing *legitimacy* of the process and those involved in it. For one author, for example, the recognition of

Yasser Arafat and the PLO as 'the two legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people … [was] confirmed by the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin in his historic handshake' (*Ramallah Al-Ayyam*, December 6, 1999). For another, '[i]t was Rabin's handshake that lent the Oslo accords the widespread legitimacy in Israel and throughout the world' (*Ha'Aretz*, May 9, 2000). Relatedly, and consistent with previous view of the functions of handshakes, the handshake was seen as an acknowledgement of the handshakers' *agreement* and a *promise* to move forward (e.g., 'He shook hands with enemies because he believed in peace'; *Jerusalem Post*, October 31, 1996).

Although much of the media coverage of the handshake, especially that which occurred soon after the handshake, was positive, other descriptions of the handshake (and the hand itself) as representational were not as positively toned; the discourse provides very different meanings than those we just discussed. The hands, for example, were often discussed as 'bloodstained,' and the discourse using this metaphorical approach appeared to see the hands doing the shaking as representative of *violence*. For instance, one source (*Ramallah Al-Ayyam*, February 13, 1999) noted, '[t]he hands of [the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine's Secretary General] Hawatimah are stained with Jewish blood.' Another made a similar claim about Arafat's hand: 'To the writers of this column who stood on the White House lawn that September day in 1993 and watched an Israeli prime minister shake the bloodstained hand of Yasser Arafat, the atmosphere seemed funereal' (*Jerusalem Post*, July 18, 1996).

Other more negative interpretations were offered in these texts. One meaning, *betrayal*, can be seen in the following: 'Many Israeli Jews saw his handshake with Arafat as an act of betrayal' (*Jerusalem Post*, June 4, 1996). For another, betrayal as a meaning was countered with others' reactions: '[W]hen the peace accords were signed and the historic handshake on the White House lawn took place, my sons and daughters were pleased, hopeful, excited. I was sick to my stomach. How could Rabin do it? Arafat was a terrorist, the enemy, the murderer of small children' (*Jerusalem Post*, June 7, 1996). In a less direct way, an additional source revealed an interpretation of the handshake as betrayal by stating, '[t]he handshake says: 'Terror wins.' 'Eventually, terrorists get what they want.' 'Murdering innocent Israeli men, women and children is the best way to negotiate a deal'; *Jerusalem Post*, November 28, 1993). Such texts reflect the attitudes of the media sources about the handshake and the process it represented. They also present real differences in view about the nature of the peace process within Israeli and Palestinian communities.

In addition to representations of abstract ideas and processes surrounding the participants, additional coverage reflecting a representational frame, and involving an evaluative component to such frames, centered on *attitudes and emotions* of the participants as the particular meanings represented. Many of the texts focusing on this type of representation included discussion of an array of nonverbal behaviors that occurred alongside the handshake and worked to conceptualize it (Gumperz, 1982). One of these particular attitude-meanings was *anguish*. Focusing largely on kinesic cues, a reporter noted that 'Rabin looked miserable and as if he wanted to get out of there … Rabin looked very tight, tense, and self-protected, he stood with his hands hugging himself, rocking back and forth. This is a form of self-protection—autistic children do this a lot'

(*Jerusalem Post*, September 14, 1993). This interpretation was 'confirmed' in a text quoting Shimon Perez: 'After [Rabin] did shake his hand—following a lot of pressure from Clinton—he turned to me [Perez] and whispered: "It's your turn. I went through hell, now you go too"' (*Ma'ariv*, November 2, 2001).

Other texts provided interpretations regarding attitudes toward others, particularly a representation of *dislike*. Dislike as a meaning was apparent in the following: 'Rabin's body language showed more than a thousand witnesses that he found Arafat repellent' (*Ha'aretz*, May 9, 2000); and 'Rabin did not hop into bed with Arafat overnight. It took years before he could bring himself to shake Arafat's hand—and we all remember the look on his face when he eventually did' (*Jerusalem Report*, October 3, 1996). Interestingly, Arafat's behaviors were interpreted typically as more *ebullient* ('Arafat was positively beaming during most of the ceremony'; *Jerusalem Post*, September 4, 1993).

Summary

Overall, the discourse we identified as consistent with a representational frame talked directly or indirectly about one or more nonverbal cues as 'stand ins' for some larger, value-laden, abstract concept. This general frame for the handshake and related nonverbal cues shows an interpretation that nonverbal cues can act as representatives of, or conduits for, a more abstract issue or process. The range of the specific meanings was enormous.

Sometimes these representations—whether positively or negatively toned—were conceptualized as very strategic or orchestrated. For instance, one source talked about how a future handshake ceremony could 'send a signal to rejectionists in the Middle East that they will not be allowed to thwart Middle East peace efforts' (*Jerusalem Post*, August 24, 1995). Another article, quoting Shimon Peres, reflected that the behaviors may have been strategic *for the participants themselves*. It explained, 'Yesterday, he [Rabin] must have been imagining how he was going to be able to shake Yasser Arafat's hand … his wife Leah so aptly put it yesterday, he was going to have to 'swallow it' and extend his hand' (*Jerusalem Post*, September 13, 1993). Whereas other behaviors were described as representative in some more natural or accidental way, other cues were representational of a strategic process. This form of orchestrated representation occurred most commonly for Clinton's role in the interaction (e.g., 'President Clinton, putting his arm around Rabin's shoulder, gently nudging him toward Arafat'; *Jerusalem Post*, August 16, 1996; and 'President Bill Clinton's image of leading former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin over to shake hands with President Yasir Arafat at the White house in 1993 is alive in the international memory'; *Ramallah Al-Ayyam*, October 28, 1999).

Within this larger way of framing the representational function of nonverbal behavior, there was a cluster of specific abstract concepts (i.e., meanings) represented by the handshake and related cues. These included the behaviors as representing (i.e., standing in for) *peace*, *hope*, *optimism*, *legitimacy*, *agreement/acceptance*, *violence*, *betrayal*, and *emotions or attitudes*. Typically, only one of these meanings was offered within a particular text. The diversity of meanings, especially when representing very different

affective responses, reflects the ways in which the media may provide evidence of *contested* meanings (i.e., showing that one interpretation may be better than another). Perhaps the best evidence of contestation occurred, however, in those texts that provided 'antirepresentative' framing, stating, often explicitly, that the behavior did not have a particular meaning. Despite the denial of meaning, the nature of the frame centered on the capacity of nonverbal cues to stand for (or not represent) a particular, often abstract, referent. Thus, the frame remained the same even if the individual interpretations within it did not.

Transformations

Our first theme portrayed the handshake and its related behaviors as reflections of something *that is*. The second frame apparent in this discourse focused on the potential of nonverbal cues *to bring about some state or process* that did not yet exist. That is, a primary meaning given to the handshake and related cues was as actions or events portrayed as either (1) *having the power to change* situations, things, and people from one way of being to another, and/or (2) *marking a point of change*. What was transformed or changed included many of the meanings identified in the first frame: the legitimacy of the process and the people involved and the potential of the peace process. But the framing oriented an understanding of these nonverbal cues as functioning primarily to bring about, rather than just represent, a new reality.

As noted, some of the discourse using a transformation frame talked about the same specific meanings that we identified in the representation frame. For example, the handshake was described, not only a representation of peace, but also as having agency in bringing about peace. This type of transformation discourse took a number of forms. As one writer stated, '[r]eferring to the historic White House handshake … Clinton said: "As we have seen before at this house … what first seems unlikely, even impossible, can actually become reality when the will for peace is strong."' (*Ha'Aretz*, July 16, 1999). Likewise, 'Veteran Israeli peace campaigner Abie Nathan said yesterday that after 20 years and a handshake … he was closing the Voice of Peace radio station … "I believe the ship did its job—there's peace now"' (*Jerusalem Post*, September 27, 1993).

Another transformation meaning, recalling the representational meaning of legitimacy, asserted that the handshake *brought about legitimacy*: '[t]he successes of the peace process, highlighted by the Arafat-Rabin handshake … clearly pushed the peace groups into a prominent position, in many ways vindicating their previous calls for negotiating with the Palestinians' (*Jerusalem Report*, November 20, 2000). Economic 'legitimacy' was also displayed as brought about by the handshake: '[T]he Big Six firms were petrified by the prospect of angering their clients and member firms in the Arab world. The "historic handshake" … changed all that, so much so that in the course of a single year—1994—each of the Big Six took on board Israeli firms, thereby triggering a series of mergers and a general shakeout in the Israeli profession' (*Jerusalem Post*, January 24, 1996).

Not all of the peace-related transformation meanings were as optimistic, however, nor did they reflect transformations of only those meanings discussed in our first

frame. An additional specific interpretation, for example, was that the handshake *reversed a process* and/or *brought about trauma/trouble*. One text, for example, noted that what 'Rabin did on the White House lawn, with that handshake and with that agreement which he signed … catapulted us 46 years back, to 1947' (*Jerusalem Post*, September 14, 1993). Another stated, '[f]or seven long years since that hesitant Rabin–Arafat handshake at the Whitehouse, we have been tearing ourselves apart over this peace process … we have dug ourselves deeper into our own mindsets, rejected other viewpoints with ever greater force, justified our own intolerance' (*Jerusalem Post*, July 31, 2000). In one more text, '[r]ecognition of the PLO and the traumatic handshake between Rabin and Arafat set off a crisis of confidence which injured, first of all, those Diaspora Jews who are the closest to the State' (*Jerusalem Report*, July 13, 1995). Summing up this view, the event was described in one text as 'the jarring handshake that changed Middle East history forever' (*Jerusalem Post*, October 22, 1999).

In some cases, the trauma was the result of what was labeled a curse originating in the handshake: 'It seems that … Arafat's handshake brings with it a terrible curse' (*Jerusalem Post*, September 21, 2000). Likewise, one reporter stated that '[e]ver since … Rabin shook the hand of war criminal Yasser Arafat … the Jewish-Zionist state has started going downhill with every increasing momentum' (*Jerusalem Post*, September 14, 2000). For another, '[t]he price of that handshake with Arafat can be seen, in retrospect, as a bloody disaster. It killed 200 Israelis and wrecked the lives of hundreds of others. It embittered the entire land of Israel and led to the shameful act of a young Jew assassinating his prime minister' (*Jerusalem Post*, July 18, 1996).

In this last quote, the application of the handshake as a curse bringing about negative outcomes was associated specifically with Rabin's murder: The handshake was discussed as the event that prompted the assassinator's actions. This view of the handshake was mirrored elsewhere. For one writer, 'It was a handshake that also led to Rabin's assassination by Yigal Amir, leading to a new era in the way Israelis relate to one another' (*Ha'aretz*, May 9, 2000). Also referencing the tie between the handshake and Rabin's assassination, one article included this quote from Perez: 'We cannot go on hearing about the Oslo criminals all the time. Yitzhaq and I were criminals? We are traitors? Rabin has already paid for it with his life, and still it goes on' (*Ma'ariv*, July 5, 2001).

Even when it was not portrayed as starting another process, the handshake was discussed as, at least a *time marker*, an event around which change could be chronicled. One reported noted, for example, 'more Israelis, almost 100, have been killed by terrorists in Israel since the fateful handshake' (*Jerusalem Post*, October 20, 1994). Most commonly, the handshake was referenced as the event for which the media could mark 'before' and 'after' periods (i.e., 'Gush Katif [a town in Israel] has changed a great deal since The Handshake'; *Jerusalem Post*, May 6, 1994). Likewise, 'Egypt, with which Israel has been at peace since 1979, wasn't interested in selling the gas it has in abundance … until after the 1993 Rabin–Arafat handshake' (*Jerusalem Report*, January 25, 1996),

Although many of the specific applications of a transformation function suggested that the handshake led to or marked a move toward other (hopeful or horrific) events, other discourse portrayed *individuals* as transformed through their relationship with

the handshake. Much of this discourse was toned positively. For example, one writer noted that '[a]fter the famous 1993 handshake … Clinton came to view Rabin as a 20th-century figure of Churchillian proportions, someone whose visage could be chiseled into Mount Rushmore granite' (*Jerusalem Post*, July 5, 1996). For another writer, 'the switch from Arafat the terrorist to Arafat the statesman was … rapid and unexpected' (*Jerusalem Post*, October 3, 1993).

These individual transformations often included *gaining more dependency and trust* in the other, a meaning revealed in the first frame but more notable here because of the emphasis on transformation. For example, 'Clinton's image of leading…Rabin over to shake hands with … Arafat … is alive in the international memory until now. Therefore, it seems natural for the Palestinians to turn to the United States and to ask it to present a flagrant and open initiative for halting the deterioration in the peace process' (*Jerusalem Al-Quds*, April 5, 1998). These texts also reflected, tied likewise to a specific meaning best seen in the representation theme, *a new legitimacy to an individual, organization, or nation*. For instance, one text included the following: the handshake 'catapulted the PLO from the status of terrorist organization in the eyes of Israel and the United States to the governor of a Palestinian proto-state' (*Jerusalem Post*, February 4, 2000). Another article noted, 'the Rabin–Arafat handshake has overnight made Israel a "normal part" of the region' (*Jerusalem Post*, November 22, 1993). In a later story, this report was made: 'the handshake [has] … succeeded in breaking down a good part of the international hostility to Israel' (*Jerusalem Post*, March 11, 1994).

Summary

An overarching frame we saw in these media accounts of the handshakes dealt overtly with the handshake as an agent of change: The handshake's primary function in this subset of texts was as a *creator of transformation* or as a *time marker* that worked to show the point at which things changed. In some cases, the particular transformation overlapped with our first theme, but rather than representing the meaning itself (e.g., existing legitimacy), these discourse presentations focused on the cue as *bringing* about that condition (i.e., through the enactment of the handshake, legitimacy was achieved).

These transformation meanings were not always positive in nature (nor always accurate in terms of where the peace process went in the future). In addition, and just as in the case of the representational theme, denials of transformation existed: As one source noted, '"the only one in military uniform, next to everyone else's suits and ties, was Yasser Arafat. He hasn't put them in mothballs yet, and this is a statement that the armed battle, the terrorism, are not over yet"' (*Jerusalem Post*, September 14, 1993). Others admitted some change, but did so with qualifications: 'The attitude toward Israel in the United Nations has changed—but not fundamentally—since the historic handshake' (*Jerusalem Post*, February 28, 1995). Overall, however, most of these texts framed nonverbal actions like the handshake as an agent of change or as a time marker. As if to sum it up, one journalist noted, 'The handshake changed the rules of the game' (*Jerusalem Post*, June 7, 1996).

Discussion

Our goal in this study was to argue that the media provide frames, through their metapragmatic discourse (Jaworski & Galasinski, 2002), that reveal different meanings for the same nonverbal cues. Some interaction scholars (e.g., Dillard et al., 1996; Goffman, 1974; Gumperz, 1982; Planalp, 1985) have argued already for an incorporation of framing principles in interpersonal scholarship; but framing, as a theoretical and methodological concept, has been used more commonly by media scholars. We thus extend the argument by asserting that a frame analysis of media texts on what can be defined as 'interpersonal' or interactional behaviors can help cross over disciplinary divides to help scholars understand more fully what meanings may be given to nonverbal cues and how framing may work as part of this process.

To help make our case, we chose a range of media texts from Israeli and Palestinian news agencies, not to represent those groups and their cultures, but to show what some of these frames and meanings may be. We found two predominant, overarching functions or structures (i.e., frames) when looking across this body of discourse and labeled these *representations* and *transformations*. Within each of these, more specific meanings clustered. Indeed, we believe that the frames work as structuring devices to organize the large set of particular interpretations (e.g., the specific meanings) seen within these data.

Representations, or portraying the nonverbal cues as 'stand ins' or conduits of some larger abstract concept, for example, included a number of specific referents or meanings. Extending previous representation meanings given to handshakes (e.g., a form of greeting; Morris, Collett, Marsh, & O'Shaughnessy, 1979), for example, we found that, at least within the particular political context we investigated, handshakes were portrayed as representations of peace, hope, optimism, legitimacy, agreement, violence, and betrayal. Each of these used the handshake as an embodiment of a more abstract principle. More fully consistent with existing research, facial expressions and kinesic cues co-occurring with the handshake were discussed as representations of emotions or attitudes (Ekman, 1984), personality (for an interesting discussion of handshakes representing personality see Chaplin, Phillips, Brown, Clanton, & Stein, 2000), including sentiments about one's partner, topic of conversation, or events (Chovil, 2005; Manusov & Koenig, 2001; Rashotte, 2002). In some cases, the discourse we reviewed portrayed these meanings as brought about or revealed strategically (i.e., orchestrated by the parties involved).

Transformation meanings are rarer in previous scholarship on the meanings or functions of nonverbal cues. Whereas nonverbal behaviors are talked about as having a conversation management function, often organizing and bringing about certain language forms (Burgoon, 1994; Manusov & Trees, 2002), and their appearance in the media may create images of what occurs in 'reality' (Coats et al., 1999), scholars have not talked as fully about nonverbal cues as markers for larger social or personal changes. And yet, such interpretations made up an important frame within the discourse we analyzed. Future work would do well to find evidence of such transformative interpretations for other nonverbal behaviors, occurring in other communicative contexts.

In addition to revealing overarching frames and, within the frames, specific meanings provided in the media texts we examined, the data also show the strong emotional responses that may develop naturally from or are attached to nonverbal cues in this context. As noted, in our discussion of analytic procedures, we first saw the evaluative tone of many of the texts to be a particular frame: evaluations or political representations. We came to believe, however, that *emotional tone could occur across frames*. There were many instances in which the evaluation of the writer or the person whom she or he quoted was apparent. For example, one reporter stated the following: It was 'with much disgust and queasiness we even got to that handshake in Washington' (*Jerusalem Post*, August 19, 1994); and as another cited earlier in the paper: 'I was sick to my stomach.' Reflecting a different emotional response, however, other stories read like the following: 'The picture that left an indelible mark and swayed the hearts of hundreds of thousands of Israelis and Palestinians was the Rabin–Arafat handshake' (*Jerusalem Post*, November 21, 1995). This form of positive reaction was common in the US media coverage of the event (Manusov & Bixler, 2003).

Certainly, the fact that the handshake occurred as a ceremonial correlate of the signing of the accords and a commitment to beginning peace talks confounds the potential characterization of—and emotional reaction to—the handshake itself. This confound between events occurred in the transformation frame particularly. That is, it can be argued that it was the peace accords and not the handshake that was the actual change agent or time marker. Our view of these data, however, suggests that the visual and personal nature of the handshake, and the cues surrounding it, appeared to allow the media discourse to portray *the behaviors themselves* as responsible, at least in part, for the transformation. It was the nonverbal action itself that was talked about as an important change agent (e.g., '[I]t is precisely such gestures, spontaneous or negotiated, that may be necessary to bring the peace process to a successful conclusion'; *Jerusalem Post*, November 28, 1997).

Despite the diverse evaluations of the process embedded in the different media framings, one thing was consistent among most of the texts. A closer look shows the saliency and potency that comes along with the meanings presented for the behaviors or cues. Just as Manusov and Bixler (2003) revealed in their assessment of US media coverage of these behaviors, we found abundant evidence that the handshake and its accompanying behaviors were viewed as very powerful in terms of what meanings they can carry, what they can bring about, as well as the evaluative reactions people had to them. Whereas the political and public context in which these cues occurred influenced the potential saliency of the behaviors, we argue that the nature of the behaviors—particularly their capacity to be given diverse and contestable meanings—means that the power of nonverbal cues may be likewise found in everyday action. Certainly, however, this argument requires empirical validation.

It is important to emphasize that the discourse we studied here does not provide a full account of all of the meanings given to the handshake and its related cues nor of the larger issues and processes in which the behaviors were embedded. Given some constraints in conducting this study, we were unable to access or interpret texts that were not originally in or already translated to English. In particular, we were unable to

access much Palestinian coverage, and the majority of our Israeli data were from Israeli English-language newspapers. Thus, we can in no way compare the coverage from the two cultures nor argue that what we have is representative of either culture.

Our aim, however, was much simpler: We wanted to begin to catalog some of the overarching frames and particular meanings given to nonverbal cues within media coverage. We were still able to do this because of the rich, albeit incomplete, array of metapragmatic discussions we found. Our analysis helps reveal the potential for nonverbal cues to be given a variety of meanings and for the media to be concerned with and provide information regarding the way that nonverbal events ought to be construed. 'Because these symbols [including gestures] "acquire a sentimental significance symbolizing the common feelings about the movement, their use serves as a constant reliving and re-enforcement"' (Kertzer, 1988, p. 72, citing Blumer) of what we hold to be important and how we feel about the things the cues represent. This argument is by necessity an important one for both mass and interpersonal communication scholars. Interpersonal scholars would do well to examine media coverage of an array of interaction activities to learn more about how the processes of importance to them are framed by others.

Notes

[1]   Some researchers (e.g., Andersen, 1999) argue that cues ought to be defined *as nonverbal* only when there is a nonpropositional relationship between sign and referent. Although we contend that such a view has utility, it is not a commonly accepted understanding of the term 'nonverbal,' and thus is not used here.

[2]   Planalp (1985) uses the term 'schemata'; 'schema' and 'frame' were introduced as synonyms in the original published discussion of framing (Bartlett, 1932).

[3]   Manusov and Bixler (2003) did not look at meanings per se. Instead, their analysis focused on the *nature of nonverbal communication* as portrayed in US media coverage of the handshake.

[4]   There are, of course, important differences across Arab cultures. Given the paucity of research on Palestinian communication, however, we had to rely here on descriptions of the larger Arab culture and media.

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