

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY BY MASS MEDIA NEWS SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND EXPOSURE

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I. The Research Background

Social Construction of Reality

The development of symbolic communication has allowed individuals to attain access to information without actually experiencing an event. This has been capable through language, drawings, writing and then printing. After a century of various technological innovations and as we continue introducing new devices, we have created an environment that is absolutely different from what it was a hundred years ago. Audiovisual media can develop an artificial or synthetic experience. Actual events can be experienced in different ways through the modern technological innovations in communication.

The world that we live in has existed from a long time before we were all born and will continue existing long after we have died. This world is structured upon social interaction among people. The way things are interpreted are through a common frame of perception and social interaction of each individual. We are just another existence created in that world. Everyday life, and in the same meaning, the natural world life, is an objective existence. Due to this rationale, Berger and Luckmann (1967) indicated that we live in an ob-

jective reality. Berger and Luckmann (1967) expressed that, a dialectical process exists in that the meanings stated by individuals to their world become institutionalized or turned into social structures, and the structures then become part of the meaning. These systems are utilized by individuals and therefore limit their actions. For example, if a man and woman meet for the first time in an environment without any outside stimuli, they create their relationship and give it a meaning. However, when their children are born into the society constructed by their parents for them, it is a given that limits their actions greatly.

In contrast, our reality structure is based not only on normal everyday life. As mass media develops and as information attains importance in our present society, we are entering a symbolic world that exceeds the arena of direct experience. This phenomenon has been labelled under various terms such as a symbolic environment or an information environment. The encompassing mass media environment that displays a symbolic reality should not be considered as a minor influence. As for the daily news reports in the mass media, they should be considered as equal as, or as a part of the objective reality we live in.

Recently, the theories on the social construction of reality developed by Schutz (1962) and Berger and Luckmann (1967) have been attempted to be adapted to mass media research by Adoni and Mane (1984). They divided the construction of reality among the social interaction of people as objective social reality, symbolic social reality and subjective social reality.

Adoni and Mane (1984,p.325) stated that objective social reality“...is experienced as the objective world existing outside the individual and confront-

ing him or her as facts”, which can be taken as the actual reality we live in or, the daily normal world according to Schutz (1962). Adoni and Mane (1984,p. 326) further defined symbolic social reality as a concept “...which consists of any form of symbolic expression of objective reality such as art, literature, or media contents”. Here, one can clearly see that plural symbolic realities exist due to the symbolic system. The objective reality and symbolic expressions are the input that constructs the original world within us, our subjective reality. Adoni and Mane (1984,p.326) further stated:

The individual’s subjective reality is organized in terms of “zones of relevance” which differ on the basis of their distance from the “here and now” of the individual’s immediate sphere of activity. Accordingly, social reality is perceived along a continuum based on the distance of its elements from the individual’s everyday life experiences. Those social elements and actors with whom the individual interacts and experiences frequently in face-to-face situations are part of “close” zones of relevance. The “remote” zones of relevance are composed of general, more abstract social elements that are not accessible to direct experience, for example, “public opinion” or “the social order”.

Multiple reality divides the real world into an objective reality and symbolic reality. The subjective reality in the individual’s mind is constructed through these two realities. The interaction and relationship of these three realities and construction of symbolic reality in mass media are examined by Adoni and Mane.

Research concerning the interaction between symbolic reality and the two other realities can be divided into; research concerning interaction between symbolic reality and objective reality and research concerning interaction be-

tween symbolic reality and subjective reality. Between symbolic reality and objective reality, focus is on problems such as how the social construction of reality is portrayed in mass media, and how much reinforcement or reflection exists of such portrayals of social authoritarian ideology and values of class structures. Between symbolic reality and subjective reality, the question is how much mass media content contribute to the individual's social construction of reality. Hawkins and Pingree (1981) have conducted much research on the influence of television on subjective reality.

According to Adoni and Mane (1984), a systematic analysis of subjective construction reality through objective and symbolic reality analysis is conducted empirically. The first holistic approaches were studies according to Lowenthal (1957) where, the functions of cultural communication within the total process of a society were examined by the Frankfurt School (Adoni and Mane, 1984). Althusser (1971) dealt with the analysis of the interaction among the social system, the media (their structure, occupational practices and products), and individuals' perceptions and acceptance of the social reality.

Cultivation Analysis

The Cultural Indicators project under Gerbner and his associates have conducted much empirical research on the interactions between subjective, symbolic and objective reality. The first reports of the Cultural Indicators project were published in 1969 and in 1972 (Signorielli and Morgan, 1990). Cultivation analysis lies on the fact that mass media, namely television, plays a vital role in the lives of many individuals. The Cultural Indicators project concerns three interrelated questions.

1. What are the processes, pressures, and constraints that influence and underlie the production of mass media content?
2. What are the dominant, aggregate patterns of images, messages, facts, values, and lessons expressed in media messages?
3. What is the independent contribution of these messages to audiences' conceptions of social reality?

(Signorielli and Morgan, 1990, p.9)

Like so many projects in the history of communications research, Cultural Indicators was launched as an independently funded enterprise in an applied context (Signorielli and Morgan, 1990). The research attempted to clarify the degree of violence on television: it documented the range of violence that predominated most dramatic television programming, described the nature of this violence, and established a foundation for long-term monitoring of the television environment.

Fundamentally, the Cultural Indicators project and cultivation hypothesis proceed with research with foundations on the fact that persons with heavy exposure to television consequently develop discrepancies in perception of the real world compared to people who are exposed to less television. The discrepancy in the research that was focused in the Cultural Indicators project was television violence leading to construction of reality of a "mean and violent" world (Signorielli and Morgan, 1990). Television is the leading creator of artificial patterns of cultural behavior (i.e. information) among the many societies influenced through mass media technology. A common symbolic environment is formed through the instrument of mass media, namely television. The audience of this instrument receives a common and stable pattern of messages that becomes an information channel contributing to the audiences' con-

struction of reality (Gerbner et al., 1978).

Probably three classes of variables exist that might affect the way the mass media constructs a person's social perceptions: individual differences, situational variables, and content differences. Most cultivation studies are based on measures of exposure to television, but as Hawkins and Pingree (1981) indicated, differences in content in patterns of action and characterization might influence the cultivation impact. Moreover, the behavior in television exposure has changed with cable, computers, and VCRs providing more diverse programming into the home, the audience is much more selective.

Potter (1986) evaluated adolescents' and adults' beliefs about the reality presented on television on several dimensions (their perceived reality). Correlations between the amount of television exposure and the degree of social construction of reality occurred for those who trusted television to be an accurate representation of actual life, and not for those skeptical of television. Potter's argument is that people who believe entertainment television to be more real, accept its messages as more applicable to the social construction of reality.

The result of The European Value System Study Group¹ presented that Japan was the only country that had trust in the mass media system more than distrust. Other countries consider the mass media system to be a target of distrust rather than trust. From this, one can infer that mass media source cred-

1 Stoctzel, Jean, *Les valeurs du temps present: Une enquete europeenne*, Paris, P.U.F., 1983. 1200 samples from each nation, age over 18 in Belgium, W. Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, Ireland, N. Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, England, U.S.

ibility may be a factor that has great weight when conducting research on social construction of reality through mass media in Japan.

An integration of the critical theory of mass communication and the American tradition of empirical media effects is most suited and according to Adoni and Mane, the media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach and Defleur, 1976) is a bridge that possibly integrates the two approaches to research of this topic. Ball-Rokeach and Defleur (1976) called “ambiguity” to be a main condition under that people affected should be highly dependent upon media information resources. Ambiguity is defined as a condition of either lacking information to define a situation or lacking information to select one definition of a situation as opposed to another. Media system dependency is defined as a relation in which the attainment of goals is dependent upon the resources of the media system. Ball-Rokeach (1984) divided media system dependency into two types, “understanding dependencies (for instance, ‘What is happening and what does it mean?’) and orientation dependencies (‘What actions should I take and how can I interact with family, friends, and community?’)”.

News Influence In Mass Media Research

News has an enormous amount of influence in our daily routine. The way we dress up, what we plan and practically how we live is affected by news in the media. As Lippmann (1922) indicated, the news media is a factor that determines the structure of our perception of reality, in all dimensions of our normal lives.

Journalism creates an environment that is constructed in a background setting, and persuades the audience into a setting where some highlighted top-

ics are selected. The problem returns to the concepts of agenda setting by the mass media dealt previously.

One cannot express the systematic structure of symbolic reality in a single word, for symbolic reality is constructed by various mass media such as television, newspapers, magazines, and films. For television, symbolic reality is constructed by news programs and drama each based on its own theory. In other words, symbolic reality is just another existence in the world of multiple reality.

For instance, one person can be watching a television broadcast of the Olympic games at home in Japan, and another person can be actually watching the Olympic games at the stadium where the games are being held. The Olympic games that are broadcasted on television will be transmitted throughout the world via satellite. However, this broadcast that is received throughout the world by many viewers, will be just another symbolic reality. The original objective reality that is happening in the Olympic stadium is deliberately altered into a symbolic reality through the construction process of the mass media. For example, the distance of a marathon race, 42.195 kilometers, is difficult for a single person to cover for a long duration by himself. The objective reality of the marathon race in the stadium, may allow a spectator to see only the start or the finish of the race. However, the symbolic reality of the marathon race through instruments of the mass media will present coverage of the entire event, varying from “zoom-shots” on different competitors to bird-eye views of the race to display a “big picture”. The media can highlight on specific competitors or keep a focus on the top competitors of the race. The television broadcast can split the screen and show various angles and viewpoints of the entire race. Furthermore, background music and other effects

can be used to dramatically alter the nature of the objective reality.

As one can clearly see, the topic of accuracy of the media displaying some event of objective reality is not the entire problem. If the objective reality lacks an aspect of drama, the mass media can utilize the available high technology of modern broadcasting and construct a symbolic reality that is "more real".

Adoni et al. (1984) conducted a study that examined the perception of conflicts in society, politics and economy and how they are presented in television. According to Kriesberg (1973), the definition of social conflict is a relationship between two or more parties who believe they have incompatible goals. For understanding the concept of conflicts in society, this definition is adequate for examining the construction of social reality of conflicts. A symbolic reality of a social conflict is constructed by the media derived from a certain part of the objective reality that portrays a limited viewpoint or angle through the selection by the individual or group who devised the symbolic reality. Adoni et al. (1984) further attempted to suggest three dimensions of social conflicts that cause "bias" when constructing symbolic reality. The foundations are complexity, intensity and difficulty of resolution of social conflicts². Social conflicts have dominant influence in the processes of social change and as a covered topic in news reports. They also try to stereotype opinions leading to the solution of conflicts and distract empathy to the actual problems leading to social conflicts. Adoni et al. (1984) also indicate that the media dependency theory, is effective in connecting the construction of social

2 Another attempt to define dimensions of social conflicts appears in the work of Ross Stagner, *The Dimensions of Human Conflict* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967) which has some overlap with present conceptualization but also differs in several respects. (Referred in Adoni et al., 1984)

reality of social conflicts through mass media.

A topic that is popularly reported in Japanese news coverages is the “economic friction” or trade imbalance between the U.S. and Japan. This topic is basically detached from the objective reality of most Japanese citizens and exists as a symbolic reality constructed in the news media. Some factors in the relationship between the U.S. and Japan are believed to have incompatible goals, therefore fall upon the previously dealt definition of conflict according to Kriesberg (1973). Due to these facts, inference can be made that the relationship and socioeconomic conflicts between the U.S. and Japan may be a topic that can be conveniently evaluated as a socially constructed reality developed through the media.

In a most recent survey result conducted by NHK and ABC³, results showed opinions of U.S. and Japanese citizens towards each others’ nation. The questions dealt with various trade policies, U.S. and Japan overseas investments, quality of manufactured products and basic impressions of citizens towards each others’ nation. The results of this survey can be utilized to measure the social construction of reality by mass media news sources.

The valid question item content in the survey by NHK and ABC was considered as the measurement of social construction of reality of socioeconomic conflicts between the U.S. and Japan for this study (look at **Table 1**).

3 The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research (February 1992.)

Table 1 Items for Social Construction of Reality from the NHK-ABC Survey

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- Do you think Japan should lower trade barriers concerning the importing of rice? ***
 - Do you have a good impression towards the Japanese (Americans)? ***
 - Do you think Japan (the U.S.) is a trustworthy ally that we can cooperate with? ***
 - Is the strength of the Japanese economy a threat to the U.S. security? ***
 - Are products manufactured in Japan higher in quality when compared to that of the U.S.? ***
 - Do you still resent the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese? *
 - Japanese enterprises are investing in many directions in the U.S. Do you think this is positive for the U.S.? ***
 - Do you think investment from Japan to the U.S. should be regulated? *
 - Do you think investment from the U.S. to Japan should be leviated? **
 - Do you think Japan is conducting fair trade with the U.S.? ***
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* Answered by the U.S. respondents

** Answered by the Japanese respondents

*** Answered by both U.S. and Japanese respondents

(Translated from the “50th Anniversary of the Opening of The War between Japan and the United States” *The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research*, February 1992)

II. Hypothesis

Upon consideration of all factors and past research dealt in the previous content, the main objective of this study is to clarify the relationship of mass

media source credibility and exposure causing the social construction of reality. The elements of exposure and source credibility are configured to news sources. Related research concerning television exposure and social construction of reality has been conducted as mentioned in the previous sections. However, printed news media must also be considered as a valuable news source. These two different types of news media may both lead to the social construction of reality, therefore, newspaper news source credibility and exposure are included as independent variables of printed media in this study. The independent variables of exposure and source credibility are limited to audiovisual and printed mass media news sources in this study. This is to control other extraneous variables (for example fiction or drama programs on television) that might be influencing the social construction of reality. The dependent variable, the social construction of reality is configured under the topic of socioeconomic conflicts between the U.S. and Japan.

To conduct this research, the following hypotheses are tested with randomly selected college students.

- Hypothesis I: Concerning television news sources, high source credibility and heavy exposure to the news source cause social construction of reality closer to actual reality.
- Hypothesis II: Concerning newspaper news sources, high source credibility and heavy exposure to the news source cause social construction of reality closer to actual reality.

III. THE METHOD

Subjects

To control the demographical factors of sampling, college students were selected for this survey. 570 randomly selected subjects were taken from the freshmen and sophomore students of international Christian University, Sophia University and Kanagawa University. The ages varied from 18-21 years of age.

Procedure

This survey was conducted from April 6, 1992 to April 15, 1992 at:

- International Christian University campus in Mitaka, Tokyo (suburban Tokyo)
- Sophia University Yotsuya campus in Yotsuya, Tokyo (inner-urban Tokyo)
- Kanagawa University campus in Kanagawa prefecture (Kanagawa prefecture)

A questionnaire was distributed and collected by a mail and group administration method. The composition of the questionnaire consisted of a face sheet and five sections. The face sheet explained directions concerning the questionnaire. The first section measured the exposure to television news sources and the second section measured the exposure to newspaper news sources. The third section measured the television news source credibility and the fourth section measured newspaper news source credibility. The fifth section measured the items of social construction of reality of socioeconomic conflicts between the U.S. and Japan.

Questionnaire

Television News Exposure

In order to measure television news exposure accurately, all major 29 news programs from the six television networks in Tokyo were selected and displayed in the questionnaire for the subject to circle each news program viewed. After time-overlapping programs circled were exempt from the results, each program length was measured and added up to indicate the amount of exposure to television news sources.

The selected programs are as follows:

NHK: Morning Wide, Evening Network, SHICHIJI NO News, News Center 845, News "21", Prime 10

NTV: Zoom In!! ASA!, 11:30 News, News Plus 1, KYOUNO-DEKIGOTO, ASUNOCHOKAN

TBS: News Call, Big Morning, World News, News NO MORI, CHIKUSHI TETSUYA News 23

FUJI TV: World UP Link, Speak, Super Time, News COM

TV Asahi: CNN Daybreak, PROFEEL, Station EYE, News Station, CNN Headline

TV Tokyo: Businessman, Wide 11, Evening News, World Business Satellite

Newspaper News Exposure

For measuring newspaper news exposure, first the subject would select the newspaper(s) read and then circle the time amount read from a time scale indicating 0 to 60 minutes and divided by every 10 minutes. The total amount circled would indicate the amount of exposure to newspaper news sources.

Newspapers excluding sports papers and evening tabloids were selected as follows:

Asahi SHINBUN	Yomiuri SHINBUN	Sankei SHINBUN
Nihon Keizai SHINBUN	Tokyo SHINBUN	Mainichi SHINBUN
English Newspapers (i.e. Japan Times)		

News Source Credibility

In order to measure news source credibility, the method according to Gaziano and McGrath (1986) was adapted. The Gaziano-McGrath Factors are as follows.

Can be trusted	Concerned mainly about the public interest
Separates facts from opinions	Reporters are well trained
Factual	Watches out after your interests
Tells the whole story	Patriotic
Accurate	Concerned about the community's well-being
Unbiased	Moral
Fair	Cares about what the reader thinks
Respects people's privacy	Does not sensationalize

Fifteen out of these sixteen factors were utilized to measure television and newspaper news source credibility. The factor "Patriotic" was excluded from this survey because this factor does not comply with the concept of credibility in Japan. The Likert scale or summated rating approach was used for measurement. This scale was a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest.

Social Construction of Reality

For measuring the degree of social construction of reality, 16 factors were selected from the result of the joint survey by NHK and ABC "50th Anniversary of the Opening of The War between Japan and the United States" in *The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research* (1992). The survey indicated the frequency distribution of the results of the survey.

For example, 60% of the respondents indicated that U.S. citizens considered the strength of the Japanese economy as a threat to the United States. In order to measure the degree of social construction of reality, the survey for this study asked the respondents to guess what percentage of U.S. citizens consider the strength of the Japanese economy as a threat to the United States. The closer the response is to the actual result, the more social construction of reality is inferred to exist. The respondents are asked to circle their guess on a scale with a span of 10% for each degree of graduation. The closest possible answer was given a score of three, with a percentage error of 10%, a score of two was given and with a percentage error of 20%, a score of one was given. Anything with an error of over 20% was given a score of zero.

Method of Analysis

All the data are numerically processed into a MS-DOS computer data file. The exposure to television and newspaper news sources are indicated by minutes. The credibility is the sum indicated on the Likert scales that are prepared. The social construction of reality is the sum of the degree of correctness of all percentage scales.

First, the correlation will be calculated between the dependent variable of the degree of social construction of reality and the independent variables: television news source credibility, television news source exposure, newspaper news source credibility and newspaper news source exposure. In order to find out the amount of contribution of each variable, multiple regression will be used to calculate the beta weights of the independent variables and the multiple correlation coefficient.

IV. RESULTS

Results and Analysis

260 subjects out of the 570 answered and returned the distributed survey sheets. 16 were considered to be invalid after screening of incomplete responses. The following statistical computation of the results were conducted on the SPSS/PC+ statistical analysis package for the NEC PC98 series personal computer. Out of the 244 valid subjects, the gender-age distribution is shown in Table 2.

The subjects were randomly selected, however, concerning the age group of 18 years, the male-female distribution is not equal, causing the male-female

Table 2 Gender-Age Distribution

Age	18	19	20	21
Male	43	30	4	2
Female	132	27	5	1
Total	174	57	9	3

distribution to be heavier on the female side. However for the other age groups, the distribution is approximately equal.

The variables measured through this survey were television news source credibility, television news source exposure, newspaper news source credibility, newspaper news source exposure and the degree of social construction of reality. The means, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values are in Table 3.

The credibility index is measured through the Gaziano-McGrath factors. Exposure is measured in minutes, therefore, one can see that the television

Table 3 The Means, Standard Deviations, Minimums and Maximums of the Independent and Dependent Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Television News Source				
Credibility	44.42	7.92	15	65
Exposure	175.59	93.13	0	420
Newspaper News Source				
Credibility	46.79	8.37	15	67
Exposure	20.79	14.17	0	90
Social Construction of Reality	25.91	5.24	12	37

news source exposure average among the subjects is about two hours and fifty-five minutes and newspaper news source exposure is about an average of twenty minutes. The degree of social construction of reality was measured according to the factors that were in the NHK-ABC joint survey “50th Anniversary of the Opening of The War between Japan and the United States” in *The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research* (1992).

In order to view the tendency of relationship between the independent and dependent variables, the correlation coefficients of each independent variable by the degree of social construction of reality is indicated in Table 4.

Concerning the correlation between the degree of social construction of

Table 4 Correlation Coefficients of Independent Variables in Relation to The Degree of Social Construction of Reality

Correlation to Social Construction of Reality	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Television News Source Exposure	.40***
Television News Source Credibility	.19**
Television News Source Exposure	.05
Newspaper News Source Credibility	.15

1-tailed significance: ** p<.01 *** p<.001

reality and television news source exposure, a moderate correlation of .40 was found to be significant at the .001 level. Between the degree of social construction of reality and television news source credibility, a .19 correlation was found significant at the .01 level. The correlations between the degree of social construction of reality and newspaper news source exposure and credibility were not found to be significant.

To further confirm the criterion, multiple regression was used to predict if the independent variables account for the variance of the degree of social construction of reality. Concerning hypothesis 1, the multiple correlation coefficient, R Square and beta weights for television news source credibility and exposure are shown in **Table 5** and **Table 6**.

Through **Table 5**, one can observe that the multiple correlation coefficient and R square for the relationship between the degree of social construction of reality and television news source credibility and exposure can be considered as moderately significant. Also in **Table 6**, one can see that the levels of significance for the beta weight of television news source exposure and credibility are both $p < .001$.

To test hypothesis 2, the multiple correlation coefficient, R Square and beta weights of newspaper news source exposure and credibility in relation to the degree of social construction of reality are also shown in **Table 5** and **Table 6**.

In **Table 5**, the multiple correlation coefficient is .152 accounting for only 2% of the variance in the dependent variable of social construction of reality. As indicated in **Table 6**, the .14 beta weight of newspaper news source credi-

Table 5 Multiple Correlation Coefficient and R Square Between
The Social Construction of Reality and Exposure and Credibility

Television News	
Multiple Correlation Coefficient	.454
R Square	.206
Newspaper News	
Multiple Correlation Coefficient	.152
R Square	.023

Table 6 Beta Weights of Source Credibility and Exposure to
Social Construction of Reality

Independent Variables	Beta Weight
Television News Sources Credibility	.21***
Exposure	.41***
Newspaper News Sources Credibility	.14*
Exposure	.04

*** p<.001 * p<.05

Table 7 Newspaper News Source Exposure Frequency Distribution of Subjects Amount of Exposure

Minutes of Exposure	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	90
Number of Subjects	22	76	65	48	20	6	6	1

bility is significant at the .05 level, therefore, in the case of case of hypothesis 2, it is partly supported in restricted conditions.

To account for the results between the degree of social construction of reality and newspaper news source exposure, the newspaper news source exposure frequency distribution is analyzed in **Table 7**.

As one can observe through **Table 7**, the distribution of newspaper exposure is skewed. Therefore, a comparison between light and heavy newspaper news source exposure leading to the complete testing of hypothesis 2 concerning newspaper news sources becomes difficult.

This result indicates that the age group sampled in this survey is not commonly exposed heavily to newspaper news. Therefore the previous data shown concerning Japanese newspaper news exposure surveyed by NHK does not apply to this sample.

Therefore in comparison to newspaper news source exposure and credi-

bility, television news source exposure and credibility can be predicted to have more weight in contribution to the degree of social construction of reality.

V. DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to clarify the relationship of mass media news source credibility and exposure to the degree of social construction of reality of socioeconomic conflicts between the U.S. and Japan. The mass media news sources of television and newspapers were configured as the criteria for measurement of exposure and credibility. The degree of social construction of reality was measured through the items of socioeconomic conflicts between the U.S. and Japan. Therefore, the two hypotheses of the purpose of this study were tested.

Interpretation of the Results

Hypothesis I: Concerning television news sources, high source credibility and heavy exposure to the news source cause social construction of reality of closer to actual reality.

Concerning direct correlation of the independent variables to the dependent variable, hypothesis 1 was observed to have highly significant moderate correlations between the variables. This result fortified a tendency supporting hypothesis 1. To further-test this hypothesis in order to avoid erratic assumptions, multiple regression was used to analyze the relationship of television news source credibility and exposure to the degree of social construction of reality and to see if an interaction existed. The results were supported at a highly significant level. Through these results, one can infer that in the case of the

sample of this study (college students in the Tokyo area), television news source credibility and exposure can be both important factors leading to the social construction of reality.

Hypothesis II: concerning newspaper news sources, high source credibility and heavy exposure to the news source cause social construction of reality closer to actual reality.

The correlation of news source credibility and exposure to the degree of social construction of reality were measured to see if any tendency of a relationship existed between the independent and dependent variables. No statistically significant relationships existed, however the correlation between newspaper news source credibility and the degree of social construction of reality was moderate. In the case of newspaper news source credibility, a statistically significant relationship at the $p < 0.05$ level between the degree of social construction of reality was found in the beta weight in the multiple regression analysis result. Through this study one can consider that Hypothesis 2 was partly supported in a restricted condition. To examine why this result occurred, the frequency distribution of newspaper news source exposure among the samples were examined (Table 7). Through this result, one can see that not many of the subjects in the sample had heavy exposure to newspaper news sources, therefore a relationship between newspaper news exposure and the degree of social construction of reality is very difficult to be examined.

From the results of this study, one can indicate that in the case of television news source credibility and television news source exposure, these two factors can be considered as elements for the social construction of reality. Also, newspaper news source credibility can also be considered as a possible el-

ement for the social construction of reality.

Reflections

As a reflection, the construction of the questionnaire was complicated causing much trouble for data processing. Also, in the case for measurement of newspaper news source exposure, a different method or different scale might have led to a more successful distribution of newspaper news exposure. Finally, a more homogenized sampling concerning gender would have been better for the data collection and analysis of this study.

Conclusion

Mass media plays a vital role in the lives of many individuals. The cultivation theory conducts research on the foundation that persons with heavy exposure to mass media, namely television, develop discrepancies in the perception of the real world compared to people who are exposed to less television. This process is a dynamic process of interaction among messages and contexts.

As mass media develops and as information becomes important in our present society, we are entering a symbolic world that goes beyond our direct experience. The surrounding mass media environment develops a symbolic environment that is constructed by symbolic reality. This symbolic reality is considered as equal, or as a part of our objective reality that we live in.

An earlier study found that correlations between the amount of television exposure and the degree of social construction of reality occurred for those who trusted television to be an accurate representation of actual life, and not

for those who were skeptical of television. An assumption can be made here that credibility is a large factor, especially in Japan where in comparison to other European nations, it is a nation that has more trust in the mass media system than distrust.

Highlighting a specific category of the social construction of reality, social conflicts in news, a symbolic reality of a social conflict is constructed by the media derived from a certain part of the objective reality that portrays a limited viewpoint or angle through the selection by the individual or group who constructed the symbolic reality.

The main objective of this study was to clarify the relationship of mass media source credibility and exposure causing the social construction of reality.

In the case of television news sources, high source credibility and heavy exposure to news sources was found to cause more social construction of reality in this study. This hypothesis was supported among college freshman and sophomores in colleges in the Tokyo area.

The newspaper news source credibility was statistically significant as a beta weight of multiple regression analysis. This should imply that mass media news source exposure is not the only factor that contributes to the social construction of reality in the case of newspaper news sources. Media source credibility should be considered as an important factor for the social construction of reality.

Further research on newspaper news sources, a major source of symbolic

reality remote from the individual, should be conducted on a different sample of a population, where heavy exposure to newspaper news is evident among the subjects. Such research might fortify the foundation of the results found in this study. Again, social construction of reality does not only imply socioeconomic conflicts between nations, therefore, other symbolic realities which are remote from the individual's subjective reality should to be tested on a wider and more homogenized sample to generalize the hypothesis. Future research on other topics that socially construct reality through the mass media can also be suggested.

Although this study was conducted through a survey on a limited sample of a population, the highly supportive data may imply that further research of the first hypothesis is possible. Much research on the topic of the social construction of reality through mass media until now has been applied on the prediction that only heavy exposure to television sources lead to social construction of reality. However, from the consideration of the result of testing hypothesis 2, this study can suggest that mass media source credibility, is another important factor for the social construction of reality through television.

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