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Cosmopolitanism and Suppression of Cyber-Dissent in the Caucasus: Obstacles and Opportunities for Social Media and the Web

Brian J. Bowe, Eric Freedman and Robin Blom

Around the world, social media offer an informal virtual space for citizens who feel disenfranchised to connect socially. But for those who live in countries such as the three former Soviet republics of the Caucasus — where free expression is curtailed and official news outlets are under government censorship — information and communication technology (ICT) offers an increasingly important alternative vehicle for political expression. Recent developments in Tunisia, Egypt, and Iran demonstrate how blogging and social media tools may fulfill a crucial role for non-journalists and oppositional groups that journalism serves in more democratic societies. This article considers the use of ICT in the development of cosmopolitanism by examining recent events in the Caucasus, including a government investigation into Facebook videos in Georgia, the arrest of bloggers in Azerbaijan, and the blocking of oppositional and independent websites in Armenia. It also discusses how Western information/social network corporations may facilitate dissent, the ethical implications of them doing so when negotiating with authoritarian regimes, and the risks to citizens who are at the receiving end of the consequences of these policies.
Keywords: cosmopolitanism, social media, Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, free speech

Around the world, social media offer an informal virtual space for citizens who feel disenfranchised to connect socially. But for those who live in countries such as the three former Soviet republics of the Caucasus — where free expression is curtailed and official news outlets are under government censorship — information and communication technology (ICT) offers an increasingly important alternative vehicle for political expression (Deibert et al, 2010) and a potential tool for creating grassroots bonds of solidarity that may aid in the development of a practice-oriented cosmopolitanism. Such a cosmopolitan perspective to political alliances occurs when groups ‘construct bonds of mutual commitment and reciprocity across borders through public discourse and socio-political struggle’ (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 234). Such bonds are based on recognition of cultural differences in ‘criss-crossing webs of affinity between multiple groups from around the world’ (2004, p. 239).

The use of ICT by organizations and civic initiatives to convey information and air grievances about governments is exploding, both in countries where free expression is protected and in those where it is curtailed (Karlekar and Cook, 2009). In the latter situations, the Internet is becoming ever more important as an ‘engine for protest and mobilization’ and a ‘crucible in which repressed civil societies can revive and develop’ (Morillon and Julliard, 2010, p. 2). Such uses may allow civic movements to organize in ways that foster societal change in a bottom-up fashion, rather than relying on more formal (i.e., top-down) juridical means of achieving results.

This discussion of Internet, new media, and traditional media freedom must be understood in the context of civil society overall, including political and religious rights, transparency and public access to information, and deterrence of fraud and corruption in government. Furthermore, the substitution of a large mass audience for smaller specialized audiences made possible by ICT may require a fundamental revision of earlier theories posited to test questions about mass communication (McQuail, 2010). In this era of mass self-communication using ICT, insurgent political and social movements, as well as large mainstream corporate and political interests, have a stake; that results in a shift of the public sphere from traditional institutions to this new realm of communication (Castells, 2007).

The proliferation of information technology encourages the creation of a society in which the dominant functions and processes are structured around networks (Castells, 1997). These new networks formed by increasing access to ICT have transformed human communication and the power relationships that govern societies, turning media into a social space in which power is determined (Castells, 2007; Hachigian and Wu, 2003). These
network dynamics ‘push society towards an endless escape from its own constraints and controls, towards an endless supersession and reconstruction of its values and institutions, towards a meta-social, constant rearrangement of human institutions and organizations’ (Castells, 1997, p. 409).

But communication scholars have insufficiently addressed the question of whether this emerging network society fosters the development of a cosmopolitan order. Both Habermas and Kurasawa note the effectiveness of computer-mediated communication for human interaction over long distances, suggesting that such technologies may be useful in the development of cosmopolitanism. This concept of cosmopolitanism may offer researchers examining the use of social media for political organizing an overarching theoretical framework in which to situate their work. Kurasawa’s (2007) vision of grassroots cosmopolitanism may provide a context to explore the extent to which advocacy groups use online communications to create bonds among groups. The growing use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter as organizing tools may offer opportunities to test Kurasawa’s framework.

Recent developments in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Iran demonstrate how blogging and social media may facilitate a crucial role for non-journalists and oppositional groups — a role that journalism serves in more democratic societies. This article reviews recent events in the Caucasus, including a government investigation into Facebook videos in Georgia, the arrest of bloggers in Azerbaijan, and the blocking of oppositional and independent websites in Armenia. These countries were selected because of their location and their shared legacy of lengthy Soviet rule followed by two decades of independence. Although they have long and distinct national histories, their location puts them in proximity to two countries with highly restricted media and cyber-media systems — Russia and Iran — and to an emerging democracy struggling with questions of how restricted or unrestricted its own media environment should be — Turkey. Recent events in the Caucasus seem to bolster arguments that information and communication technology networks may hold the potential to transform societies in the way they allow citizens to circumvent official government controls on expression (Bowe and Blom, 2010).

However, while social media at times offer opportunities for citizens to evade government controls, activists do not have complete control of the situation and often must rely on Western information and social network corporations to provide the tools that facilitate dissent. Meanwhile, repressive governments do not surrender control easily, using their positions of power and financial resources to establish technological controls to prevent dissemination of information and legal controls to prosecute organizers. The ability of governments to impede such organizing by exercising control of the communication infrastructure suggests that legal frameworks, as Habermas advocated, remain necessary to protect the work toward global justice undertaken by grassroots activists. Given such
regimes’ determination and resources to maintain political control, it is important not to raise unrealistic expectations about the imminent impact of ICT on democratisation. What Sambrook (2009, p. 221) writes of the citizen journalism movement in South Korea — ‘We have yet to grasp just how powerful this movement is in terms of its longer-term effects on governments and politics in closed societies’ — is equally applicable to the effects of ICT on government and politics in closed societies.

**Means of Control**

The relationship among technology, communication, and power is a contested and conflicted space, as governments exert their structural supremacy over social actors, and those actors resist and challenge such coercive forces in demonstrations of counter-power (Castells, 2007).

Methods employed by governments to circumvent access to specific content from within their territory include: (1) blocking servers, domains, keywords, and IP addresses; (2) compelling Internet sites to register with authorities or establishing a licensing system; (3) setting strict criteria for what content is considered acceptable and unacceptable; (4) expanding libel laws to deter and punish posting of critical material; and (5) surveillance of individual Internet accounts, including policing of cybercafés.

Another method of obstructing online communication is the use of so-called denial of service attacks, which involve forwarding a large number of communication requests to a webpage host. The fake requests subsequently overwhelm the host server, which is unable to react to legitimate requests to access the website. The attacks are an effective tool to block communication, such as happened during the 2005 elections in Kyrgyzstan (OpenNet Initiative, 2005) and when the Russian and Georgian armies squared off in a dispute about the territory of Ossetia (Swaine, 2008).

That does not mean that citizens cannot undermine censorship, as very few countries have taken extreme measures to block Internet communication permanently. Most nations need to provide web access to citizens because of the economic constraints in a globalized market. For instance, businesses need instant access to information that has implications for their financial assets, while youths need the Internet for educational purposes. Regimes take risks by allowing access (knowing that dissenters will try to organize mass movements with the communication tools that the web offers), but are convinced that censorship and self-censorship take away most political pressure. However, in the past decades, ruling elites were not always able to thwart online dissent, leading to fundamental political changes in several countries (Bowe and Blom, 2010).
MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS IN THE CAUCASUS

The three nations discussed here — Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia — are all characterized by governments that are repressitarian, ‘meaning both authoritarian in governance and repressive in human rights practices’ (Freedman et al, 2010, p. 95). After more than 20 years of independence, the three countries have yet to develop sustainable, pluralistic replacements for the Soviet press model, replacements that allow independent and oppositional media to operate, including access to government information. Evidence demonstrates how their longstanding hostility to traditional print and broadcast media is extending to new media. This trend threatens the potential of the Internet and social media as disseminators of alternative sources of information, analysis, and opinion in places where traditional media are restrained, lack credibility and public trust, or are unaffordable.

The U.S.-based NGO Freedom House (2011b) ranks the press systems in Armenia and Azerbaijan as ‘not free’ and in Georgia as ‘partly free.’ The International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) Media Sustainability Index (2011) offers substantial reasons for continuing concern about the prospects for media environment improvements in the near future (see Table 1).

The nations’ three constitutions include provisions for freedom of the press and of speech, but events frequently illustrate the chasm between paper pledges and on-the-ground realities. That is true for both traditional and new media.

In the case of Armenia, for example, the U.S. State Department (2011) detailed how the government has failed to respect those rights. Its human rights report observed, ‘There continued to be incidents of violence and intimidation of the press and press self-censorship throughout the year [2010]. The media, especially television, continued to lack diversity of opinion and objective reporting.’ Its report highlighted a number of incidents, including a police officer’s assault on a photojournalist, the detention of two reporters for opposition newspapers, and the breaking of an independent television channel’s microphone by members of the prime minister’s entourage. And as indicator of the difficulties in covering public affairs, the report noted drily, ‘The government’s relationship with journalists, particularly those who were independent of, or regarded as hostile to, the authorities was not constructive.’ The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) (2011) cited new legislation that granted sweeping new powers to award and revoke licenses for broadcast media organizations without explanation, resulting in pervasive self-censorship. On the positive side, the National Assembly decriminalized ‘libel’ and ‘insult,’ a move advocated by press rights groups, although CPJ described the move as essentially symbolic.

In neighbouring Azerbaijan, the U.S. State Department (2011) cited findings by two NGOs, International Crisis Group and Article 19, of a deterioration of free expression. It
found a diversity of viewpoints but little ‘objective, professional reporting’ in print media, while broadcasters almost always reflected ‘a pro-government line in their news coverage.’ The international broadcasters Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Voice of America, and British Broadcasting Corporation were banned from national television and FM frequencies.

In early 2011, an Azerbaijani journalist with the opposition newspaper Azadliq was kidnapped and beaten by masked assailants who warned him to ‘be smart’ (International Press Institute, March 28, 2011). Meanwhile, authorities freed six journalists and two bloggers from custody in 2010, but the editor of the shuttered Russian-language Realny Azerbaijan and Azeri-language Gündalik Azarbaycan remained in prison as of 1 December 2010 on fabricated, politically inspired charges, according to CPJ (2010); he had accused the regime of covering up the murder of another editor. As of April 2011, he had been imprisoned for four years, despite a European Court of Human Rights order for his release (International Press Institute, April 21, 2011).

The traditional press in Georgia also faces serious challenges. The U.S. State Department (2011) reported that throughout 2010, ‘NGOs, independent analysts, and journalists accused high-ranking government officials and opposition politicians of influencing editorial and programming decisions through their personal connections with news directors and media executives and by directing advertising (and through it, advertising income) using their personal connections with business owners.’ Press rights watchdog organizations such as CPJ, Moscow-based Centre for Journalism in Extreme Situations, IREX, International Press Institute, and Reporters sans Frontières also pointed to unbalanced political coverage, low levels of professionalism at regional television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Freedom of Speech</th>
<th>Professional Journalism</th>
<th>Plurality of News</th>
<th>Business Management</th>
<th>Supporting Institutions</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
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<td>Armenia</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.09</td>
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<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>1.66</td>
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<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>2.07</td>
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By Brian J. Bowe et al.

With the difficulties for activists posed by the overall media environments in the Caucasus, the Internet becomes even more critical as an organizing tool. The importance of the Web as a tool for activists in the region was underscored in 2009, when Freedom House released its first report on Internet freedom, covering fifteen countries including Georgia. Its second such report, *Freedom on the Net*, appeared in 2011 and covered thirty-seven countries, including Georgia and Azerbaijan, both of which received ‘partly free’ ratings as to Internet freedom (Freedom House, 2011a).

In the case of Georgia, the report found no recent government restraints on access or content and said censorship does not pose a major hindrance; however, it noted that high costs and poor infrastructure create obstacles to Internet access, especially in rural and low-income areas. The report cited a weak telecommunications infrastructure that sometimes impedes access to international websites, described the blogosphere as weak as well, and attributed occasional cyberattacks to political tension between Georgia and Russia. Facebook is the country’s most popular site, and entertainment is Georgians’ principal use of the Internet, it said, observing that Facebook also has become an important platform for the exchange of information and discussions.

Freedom House reported that the Internet is less restricted in Azerbaijan than are traditional broadcast and print media, which remain the public’s primary news sources. As with Georgia, high costs impede citizen use of the Internet, as do computer illiteracy, socio-economic conditions, reliance on dial-up technology, and gender. And the availability of blogging platforms in Azerbaijani has spurred bloggers to write about issues that traditional media don’t report on.

**The Internet as a Cosmopolitan Organizing Tool**

Both Habermas and Kurasawa suggest that the struggle for human rights and social justice is best solved through the emergence of a cosmopolitan order that would be ‘sensitive both to difference and to social equality’ (Habermas, 1996, p. xix). This humanistic worldview would result from a ‘cosmopolitan stretching of the moral imagination, to the point that distant strangers are treated as concrete and morally equal persons whose rights are being violated or incompletely realized’ (Kurasawa, 2007, p. 3).

The effectiveness of social justice organizations may hinge on those groups’ ability to use media to organize. Habermas asserts that nongovernmental organizations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International play a large role ‘in the creation and mobilization of transnational public spheres,’ which he adds is ‘at least an indication of the growing
impact on the press and media of actors who confront states from within the network of an international civil society’ (p. 177). Such organizations, which usually are handcuffed by the government, may be able to use social media to bypass traditional mass media and take their messages directly to key audiences. Therefore, traditional news outlets may not report criticism of officials and may completely ignore anti-government sources that provide such accusations (Krasnoboka, 2002; Kulikova and Perlmutter, 2007).

There are examples of groups sidestepping the traditional media in the nations of the South Caucasus, although there has been only limited academic research published so far into the expanded use of social media in the region. Among them, Pearce (2011) used interviews to examine how Armenians use multimedia mobile devices for peer-to-peer sharing of content. She found that the two primary types of content are entertainment and political information, which she characterized as ‘newsworthy content, although it is not necessarily mainstream news’ (p. 517). Especially relevant for this article are her respondents’ comments on the broadcasting of ‘politically charged clips via Bluetooth’ at protests and rallies (p. 519) and content-sharing about such issues as domestic abuse, abuse of military conscripts, and a teacher’s abuse of a student.

In Georgia, news stations refused to air an investigative report — provided without charge by two independent journalists — about alleged fraudulent actions by government officials. Instead, the news story about the arrest of two innocent citizens who were jailed, tortured, and convicted was published on the World Wide Web (Idsvoog, 2008).

Imposition of governmental and extra-governmental pressure on new media, including creators and disseminators of information via the Internet and social media, as described in the State Department and Freedom House assessment and elsewhere, is disturbing.

For example in 2009, two bloggers in Azerbaijan were charged with ‘hooliganism’ for their YouTube posting of a video showing a donkey giving a mock government news conference. The arrest of Adrian Hajizade and Emin Milli drew international attention. Their defence lawyer attributed political motives to the charges, while authorities countered that it was simply a criminal case. Both men spent about a year in jail. After his release, Milli told an interviewer that he was unsure of the reasons for his arrest but assumed it for ‘just for telling the truth, for free thinking, for free expression, and this video was part of it.’ He described himself as a cross among social activist, blogger, and politician, said he intended to continue blogging, and added, ‘I think Internet deprivation is a new form of torture for people of our generation’ (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2010). Also in 2009, the editor of two independent online media outlets was the victim of a murder attempt. The same year, a state university expelled a student who wrote a blog post about corruption during exams, and the government temporarily blocked sites that lampooned the nation’s president. Other incidents included a denial of access to RFE/RL’s Azeri-language site, pre-election blocking of sites belonging to an independent NGO, and routine blocking of sites
in the enclave of Nakhchivan.

As for efforts to impede new media in Georgia, the government imposed restrictions on access to the Internet, and a 2010 law makes it easier for police and the security service to monitor email, chat rooms through ISPs, mail servers, Internet cafes, and other business entities. During the 2008 Georgia-Russia military conflict, access to Russian — .ru domain — sites was denied. Concerns have arisen about protection of privacy for users and their information.

There has long been an acknowledgment that increased development of online communications poses both opportunities and risks. Duve (2003) pointed out that the Internet as ‘a revolutionary technical infrastructure changed not only forms of individual communication but also the way news is distributed within countries and across borders. What has not changed, however, is the principle of freedom of the press and the fact that free media are an essential part of modern democracies’ (p. 9). Such an assertion of a strong relationship between free media and democracy is rooted in well-established journalism practices (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

In today’s environment of new media and social media, press freedom and free speech extend far beyond traditional print and broadcast media as authoritarian regimes work to block avenues for political expression, political dissent, political organization, and political advocacy. In addition, insufficient revenues from online news and inadequate technological knowledge impede the ability of traditional media to expand effectively into the Internet (Freedom House, 2011a).

**GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AND COSMOPOLITANISM**

The growing significance of the concept of cosmopolitism inextricably relates to the blurring of borders through economic globalization and the ability to communicate quickly and cheaply across great distances. In this increasingly globalized world, the formal sovereignty of nation-states is becoming ever more usurped by the rise of nongovernmental entities such as multinational corporations and large private banks (Habermas, 1996). The aggregate effect of this reduction of national autonomy is that individual states become unable to insulate their citizens from the consequences of decisions made by actors far beyond national borders. Simultaneously, parts of the decision-making process are disconnected from national democratic processes through international treaties and trade agreements (Habermas, 2003).

On this stage, multinational technology corporations have become powerful actors. A backlash against ICT corporations that facilitated repressitarian regimes sparked the
founding of the Global Network Initiative (GNI), by Yahoo!, Microsoft, Google, nine human rights and press freedom organizations, five investment corporations, and representatives from four universities and think tanks. Their aim is to create a ‘corporate commitment to meaningfully integrate the protection of freedom of expression and privacy into both business practice and corporate culture’ (Maclay, 2010, pp. 87-88).

Meanwhile, grassroots organizations use the Internet to connect with one another in networks that allow them to work together when desired, while maintaining autonomy at other times. This view of cosmopolitan connections focuses not on the legal framework but the labour of global justice in his vision of cosmopolitanism (Kurasawa, 2007). This labour should devise ‘ways of living together that reconcile the ideals of equality and difference, by challenging the deeply entrenched assumption that a sense of togetherness and an egalitarian socio-economic order requires cultural homogeneity, or conversely, that the acknowledgement of cultural alterity necessarily erodes the social fabric and leads to uneven treatment’ (Kurasawa, 2007, p. 158).

In Kurasawa’s conceptualization, globalization should not primarily concern itself with corporate profits but rather with issues such as fair trade, cultural diversity, democracy, peace, and environmental sustainability in ways that embrace ‘the simultaneous existence of multilayered local, national and global identities’ (2004, p. 240). He posits a constellation of five modes of practice — bearing witness, forgiveness, foresight, aid, and solidarity — that taken together, ‘constitute the work of global justice’ by performing tasks that include recognition of pluralism, networked affinities, and creativity of action (Kurasawa, 2007, p. 16).

One example of the use of Internet communication to build solidarity among civic movements came in the aftermath of the successful protest movement that triggered the overthrow of the regime in Egypt, an event that inspired protestors in Azerbaijan to engage in a movement that attempted to connect networks of individuals to engage in creative demonstrations against their own regime. In early 2011, a Facebook group called ‘March 11 — Great People’s Day’ was launched in an effort to spark a protest movement on the one-month anniversary of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak’s resignation. One founder of that Facebook page, Elnur Majidli, appealed directly to youths to join the movement, suggesting that protests could manifest themselves in many ways. ‘Dozens or hundreds of different protests may take place on that day, one person may hang a flag from his/her house, another may wear a T-shirt with the event’s slogans, another may distribute leaflets, etc.’ he said (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2011).

That call did not draw a great deal of support on the streets, and the demonstrators it did attract were arrested or dispersed. One reason cited for that lack of support was the fact that most of the Facebook youth movement organizers live outside of Azerbaijan (Sultanova and Champion, 2011). The one moderator of the page who lived in the country, 29-year-old
Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, was arrested (Krikorian, 2011). Hajiyev, a graduate of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and a former candidate for parliament, claimed to have been beaten, tortured, and threatened with rape by police while in jail. He staged a hunger strike to protest his treatment (Tharoor, 2011). However, one activist told EurasiaNet.org that the primary goal of the Facebook group organizers was to encourage Azerbaijani youths to become more politically active rather than to stage large Egyptian-style protests (Abbasov, 2011).

Even if the numbers of participants were small, indications are that the government took the movement seriously. The Interior Ministry specifically warned activists against organizing on Facebook, and students at Baku State University were threatened with expulsion if they protested. Azerbaijani attorney and human rights activist Intigam Aliyev told EurasiaNet.org that Facebook protestors ‘represent a new generation of youth . . . who are able to lead people and fight for their rights... They could become a big headache for the government’ (Abbasov, 2011). More than a dozen Facebook activists were arrested in the run-up to the March 11 protests; 43 activists were arrested on that day — with particular focus on members of organized opposition parties (Ismayilova, 2011).

To illustrate the potential role of new media to fill informational gaps in the region, a panel of journalists in Armenia commented that mainstream media do not cover some important stories; ‘bloggers and citizen reporters, on the other hand, cover all events without hindrance’ (IREX, 2011, p. xiii). The IREX report said its panelists credit citizen journalists, social networking platforms, and online publications with abetting such changes as the resignation of Yerevan’s mayor over an assault incident and derailing a plan to restrict maternity welfare benefits. ‘Traditional media often pick up topics from these online sources,’ it said. ‘Issues raised in online media, blogs, and social networking tools like Facebook or YouTube eventually seep into traditional media coverage, allowing for greater impact’ (IREX, 2011, p. 131). In Azerbaijan, the blogosphere’s popularity expanded in 2010, partly due to interest in parliamentary elections; citizens used such channels to share information and to comment about the campaign, ‘boosted by several young parliamentary candidates who used new media heavily to reach their audiences’ (IREX, 2011, p. 143).

Officials in the Caucasus have discussed imposing additional constraints and regulations, according to Freedom House (2011a). For example, the Azerbaijani minister of communications and information technology and the head of the National Television and Radio Council have advocated licensing of news websites.

Overall, the three Caucasus nations remain safer havens for Internet users and bloggers than several other independent former Soviet republics. Reporters sans Frontières (2011) ranks Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan among the world’s top-ten enemies of the Internet, with Belarus and Russia on the press rights watchdog organization’s roster of countries ‘under surveillance.’ Even some government leaders recognize the potential reach
of new media in distributing official information and viewpoints: The prime minister of Armenia launched a blog on Livejournal, a global blogging platform.

As IREX observes:

The use of the Internet, social networking tools, and mobile platforms in Europe and Eurasia today may, in some cases, still have some catching up to do to approach that in neighbouring Western Europe. Nevertheless, contrasting the current situation now to 2001 [the tenth anniversary of post-Soviet independence] is stunning in how fast these technologies have become entrenched. (IREX, 2011, p. xiii)

Data on Internet penetration in the three countries highlights that change, although access to the Internet varies among them (see Table 2). Access also varied within the countries. To illustrate, the U.S. State Department (2011) noted that online media readership in Armenia ‘remained limited, especially outside Yerevan,’ the capital. Importantly, mere penetration rates do not indicate how the citizenry uses the Internet — for personal email? business communications? access to government, oppositional, or independent news media? games? Skype or telephone conversations? movies and music?

**CONCLUSIONS**

Newer methods of communicating cheaply, quickly, and broadly across borders may be used to create an engaged and organized cosmopolitan public, and Kurasawa (2007) notes that the Internet has a significant role in his cosmopolitan concept. ‘If the Internet is not the democratizing panacea whose advent technological determinists have been heralding for years, it remains an important device through which activists and other citizens can communicate with one another, as well as share and spread information’ (p. 108).

However, the use of computer networks to promote the development of cosmopolitanism from below faces undeniable pragmatic limitations. Although the Internet is useful for mass organizing over long distances, the infrastructure behind it is owned...
variously by government and private industry, whose interests may conflict with those of organizers. The most recent U.S. Department of State country reports (2011) reflect the subjection of new media in the region to governmental constraints, as does Freedom House’s *Freedom on the Net* report. This trend is of particular concern in light of the Internet’s potential as an alternative supplier of a plurality of news sources — (Freedman, et al, 2010) — albeit mostly without the mediating influence of professional news judgment.

As global economies become increasingly intertwined across borders, and as the budgets of the largest multinational corporations dwarf the GDPs of some nations, boundaries between traditionally established nation-states are shrinking — at least from an economic standpoint. However, the effects of such an opening of economic frontiers on individuals within those nation-states remain in question. As cross-border economic linkages rise, one may ask whether human rights will necessarily recede as collateral damage in a war for ever-cheaper labour and more corporate-friendly tax policies? Or might a new solidarity among diverse peoples of the world arise to demand equal rights on a global scale? As recent events in the three non-democratic Caucasus countries demonstrate, online social media tools offer alternative ways to disseminate information and opinion, enabling non-journalists to assume some of the responsibilities that journalists exercise in democratic nations.

**REFERENCES**


Were Corporate Newspapers Less Critical of Bush’s Global Warming Policies? Another Test of the Theory of Structural Complexity

Tae-hyun Kim

Environmental activists, scholars and policymakers often argue that U.S. mass media failed to give enough coverage to the issue of global warming during President George Bush’s administration. Many argued that corporate media are particularly susceptible to this criticism, because they place profits above all other goals and are cozy with American industry. In contrast, David Demers’ theory of structural complexity contends that corporate media would be more critical of Bush’s policies and fossil fuel industries, partly because they employ more highly educated professionals who respect science over politics. Using a national probability survey of editorial editors at daily U.S. newspapers, this study found that newspapers exhibit the characteristics of the corporate form of organization, they become much more, not less, critical of Bush’s policies on global warming and fossil fuel industries who discount scientific evidence.

Keywords: global warming, corporate structure, newspapers, social control, social change, structural complexity

Environmental activists, scholars and policymakers often argue that U.S. mass media failed to give enough coverage to the issue of global warming. Former Vice-President Al Gore, who won an Oscar Award for his independent documentary about climate change, An...
Inconvenient Truth (2006), argues in his recent book, The Assault on Reason (2007), that this failure is no accident. One of the reasons it took people so long to take the environmental warnings seriously, he writes, is that the nation’s “new generation of media Machiavellis” and its political elites are dangerously intertwined (Gore, 2007, p.16).

Information about the global climate change had long been available, Gore contends, but the journalists were too timid to challenge the fossil-fuel industry or largely ignored it as an issue. He attributes this problem in part to media consolidation and the decline of “family-run media business with deep pride in its independence and a journalistic tradition that has survived over half a dozen generations” (Gore, 2007, p. 99).

Veteran environmental journalist Ross Gelbspan (2000) also argues that mass media have failed to cover global climate change in a way that is commensurate to its scope and potential consequences. In 2000, British newspapers gave three times more coverage on global warming than did U.S. major newspapers (Gelbspan, 2005).

New York attorney and Harper’s Magazine contributing editor Scott Horton argues that the corporate media are complicit with the Bush administration, which he says was intent on blocking the Europeans from setting an effective agenda to address the global warming (Horton, June 4, 2007). Even when the media do decide to cover global warming, it’s usually “low profile, brief, and focuses on some utterly meaningless initiative that President George W. Bush has taken” (Horton, June 4, 2007).

Such criticism of corporate media is nothing new. In fact, many critical scholars, such as Noam Chomsky, Robert McChesney and Herbert Schiller, have attributed “corporatization” of the mass media as the root cause of media’s failure to draw attention to many social, political and economic problems. In other words, large-scale corporate media are alleged to have a less critical view of the status quo, are less likely to publish stories that promote social change, and are more critical of dissident groups that challenge the status quo. As a consequence, corporate news organizations are said to produce news and commentary that favor industry over environmental groups (Beder, 2002; Kennedy Jr., 2004; Lee & Solomon, 1991; Molotch & Lester, 1975; Nader, 1965, 1970).

Critics of corporate media rarely provide a clear definition of what they mean “corporate.” Most equate “corporate” with profit maximization.

Drawing on the writings of sociologist Max Weber (1947), this study conceptualizes corporate mass media as organizations that exhibit the characteristics of a complex bureaucracy — i.e. an organization that has a complex hierarchy of authority, a highly developed division of labor and role specification, formalized rules and procedures, employment and promotion based on individual merit, and greater rationality in decision-making (i.e., finding the most efficient means to reach a goal). Although the term “corporate media” may be extended to any organization that is involved in delivery of mass-mediated messages to large numbers of people, including television, radio and the Internet, the
primary focus of this study is the newspaper industry, which empirically has more variance in terms of corporate structure than most other media industries (Demers, 1996, 2007). Although environmental activists and mass communication scholars are convinced that the growth of the corporate form of organization in journalism is inimical to journalistic ideals and democratic principles, systematic empirical evidence does not provide a strong support for their position. In fact, most of the evidence suggests just the opposite (Demers, 1996; 1999; 2007).

The purpose of this research is to empirically examine the impact of corporate structure on editorial-page coverage of global warming. If the critics are right, mass media — as they acquire or exhibit the characteristics of corporate organization — should be less likely to criticize President George W. Bush’s policy on global warming, which has taken a decidedly pro-business, anti-environmental stance. In particular, Bush refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol, which would have helped reduce the amount of greenhouse gas pollution worldwide. Bush argued that signing the protocol would unfairly burden the growth of American economy. More specifically, the primary research question to be explored here is: As newspapers exhibit the characteristics of the corporate form of organization, are they less likely to criticize the Bush Administration when it comes to the issue of global warming?

GLOBAL WARMING DEBATE

Global warming can be simply defined as a rise of the Earth’s average surface temperature caused by concentrations of Greenhouse Gases, mostly carbon dioxide from combustion of fossil-fuel, such as coal, oil, and gas, in the atmosphere. Relying on a greater sophistication in the modeling of climatic patterns, environmentalists and scientist now believe that there is a “discernible human influence” on global climate (Bruce, Lee & Haites, 1996).

Currently, the United States is, by a wide margin, the world’s largest greenhouse gas-producing country, responsible for 36 percent of GHG emitted in the world even though it has only 4 percent of the world’s population (National Environmental Trust, 2001). In December of 1997, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) developed the Kyoto Protocol, which calls for industrialized nations to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The Kyoto Protocol would require the United States to cut the emission to 1990 levels over the next 10 or 15 years (Grubb, Vrolijk & Brack, 2001). Because of increasing pressure from international communities, the Clinton-Gore administration signed the Kyoto Protocol during the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 12, 1998.
However, the treaty was never ratified by the U.S. Senate (United States Senate Republican Policy Committee, 1997). In March 2001, newly elected president George W. Bush had officially walked away from the Kyoto Protocol, and the United States had pulled out of all debate and negotiations with the rest of the world on global warming. During a White House press conference on June 11, 2001, Bush said:

Kyoto is, in many ways, unrealistic. Many countries cannot meet their Kyoto targets. The targets themselves were arbitrary and not based upon science. For America, complying with those mandates would have a negative economic impact, with layoffs of workers and price increases for consumers. And when you evaluate all these flaws, most reasonable people will understand that it’s not sound public policy (Bush, 2001).

Prior to his withdrawal from Kyoto, President Bush declared he would not accept the findings of the IPCC, because they represented “foreign science” (even though about half of the 2,000 scientists who contribute to the IPCC are from the United States). Instead, Bush called on the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to provide “American science” (Gelbspan, 2005, pp. 78-79). Environmental activists argue that opponents of the Kyoto Protocol are not acting in a vacuum. They contend that U.S. withdrawal of Kyoto Protocol is a product of fossil fuel lobby groups’ seven-year campaign of deception and disinformation, much of which has been aimed at the science of global warming. In April of 1998, The New York Times disclosed the existence of a $5 million public relation campaign by the American Petroleum Institute (Cushman Jr., April 26, 1998). The plan, supported by Exxon, Chevron and the Southern Company, called for recruiting the leading “greenhouse skeptics,” such as Robert Balling Jr., Patrick Michaels, and S. Fred Singer (Gelbspan, 1998b; Sample, 2007).

Environmental sociologists McCright and Dunlap (2000, 2003) contend that the campaign’s success can be measured not only by legislative changes but also by how effective it has been in keeping the issue of global warming a non-issue, one that is off the public radar screen (McCright & Dunlap, 2000, pp.499-522). For instance, according to two polls by Newsweek, 35 percent of Americans said they thought global warming was a very serious problem in 1991. Five years later, in 1996, even though the scientific evidence had become far more robust and the IPCC declared that it had found human influence on climatic change, only 22 percent thought global warming was a very serious problem (Gelbspan, 1998a, 2005).

**Critical Views of Corporate Media**

Mass media, according to the critics, produce content that keeps ordinary citizens from recognizing the social injustices of capitalism (Gitlin, 1980; Herman & Chomsky,
Critical scholars further argued that mass media produces content that delegitimizes challenging groups, such as anarchists, feminists, racial minorities, environmental activists, organized labor and homosexuals. According to Edward Herman, “The dominant media companies are large profit-seeking corporations, owned and controlled by very wealthy boards and individuals. Many are run completely as money-making concerns, and for the others as well there are powerful pressures from stockholders, directors, and bankers to focus on the bottom line” (1990, p. 90).

If the primary goal of corporate media is profit-maximization, then presumably they would be less willing to invest in producing news, including scientific news, that criticizes prominent corporations or governmental agencies (Mazur & Lee, 1993). Thus, critics argue, corporate media’s editorial coverage of global warming problems would be simplistic, fragmented and shallow, which might result in American citizens being poorly informed about the intensity, extensity, and urgency of the global warming issues. From a structural perspective, the presumed inability of corporate media to objectively cover environmental problems can be interpreted as benefiting powerful corporate elites. Thus, according to the critics, corporate media thus function as hegemonic institutions that help weaken revolutionary elements in society not by coercive measures, but by controlling news and cultural information (Gitlin, 1980).

Although many social scientists subscribe to the hegemonic model, other scholars point out that the model fails to explain the existence of progressive social change during much of the 20th century. Challenging groups have been able to pass legislation that has allowed some of the most remarkable social changes in world history. These include the Civil Rights Act (1965), Affirmative Action (1965), Clean Air Act (1970), and Fair Trading Act (1999), all of which have helped level the playing field, to some degree, in terms of political, environmental and economic equality. The creation of various government agencies, such as the National Labor Relations Board (1935), Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission (1964), Federal Trade Commission (1914), and Environmental Protection Agency (1970), also has helped protect, to some degree, the interests of powerless ordinary workers and citizens from powerful business.

Some critical scholars argue that these progressive social changes might have occurred in spite of the mainstream media, not because of them (Beder, 2002; Kennedy Jr., 2004; Nader, 1965, 1970). Todd Gitlin (1980) also concedes that media are not simply instruments of elite power; they have their own political and economic interests, and to maintain their claims to legitimacy, media at times must report ideas or beliefs that run counter to the interests of the dominant class. Such was the case during the latter part of the Vietnam War, when the anti-war movement in the United States grew in power and respect (Gitlin, 1980, p. 259). However, he and other critics have not developed a theory to explain how and when the mass media play can produce content critical of the status quo.
DEMERS’ THEORY OF STRUCTURAL COMPLEXITY

Corporate media critics back up most of their theoretical arguments with case studies and anecdotes. There is little doubt that corporate media have failed, on many occasions, to live up to journalistic ideals. However, case studies and anecdotes can also be misleading, because they may not represent the population of mass media that are being analyzed. Interestingly, although media scholars are overwhelmingly critical of corporate media, systematic empirical research fails to support their model (Demers, 1996; Demers 1999; Demers 2007).

Although ownership of newspapers is becoming more concentrated in terms of the number of companies that control media outlets (but this does not apply in terms of the number of owners, which have increased with the advent of pension funds and public offerings), there is little evidence showing that this trend has led to a reduction in message diversity (Compaine, 1985; Demers, 1996; McCombs, 1987) or that other media sectors, like magazines and broadcast television stations (Compaine, Sterling, Guback & Noble, 1982). In fact, some studies have found that media in larger, more pluralistic communities cover a broader range of topics and contain more news (Davie & Lee, 1993; Demers, 2007; Donohue, Olien & Tichenor, 1985).

An alternative view is that current declines in newspaper circulation and national network television penetration reflect increasing differentiation of the social structure and that such differentiation can, under some circumstances, promote more criticism of established institutions and greater diversity in media content (Demers, 1998a). Research shows that small, community newspapers often omit news that is critical of established institutions and elites (Breed, 1958; Janowitz, 1952). However, media in more pluralistic communities are much more likely to publish news that is critical of elites or conflict oriented (Donohue, Olien & Tichenor, 1985; Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1980).

Demers has repeatedly shown that corporate newspapers are more, not less, critical of powerful elites and dominant value systems, and that they actually place less emphasis on profits as an organizational goal and more emphasis on journalistic standards (Demers, 1996; 2007). According to his theory, corporate newspapers are more critical of the status quo partly because they are more likely to be located in complex social systems, which contain a greater number and variety of groups and, hence, an informational environment that is more critical of the established groups and elites. He also points out that because corporate newspapers are complex organizations, they are, for a number of reasons, more structurally insulated from parochial political pressures than entrepreneurial newspapers. Finally, corporate media hire more highly educated journalists, who tend to have more respect for and knowledge of scientific ideas, including the oft-reported finding that global
warming is caused by pollution, not nature.

Employing this macro-social perspective, this study posits that, contrary to the corporate media critics’ claim of pro-industry bias:

H1: The more a newspaper exhibits the characteristics of the corporate form of organization, the more editorials it will publish about global warming and the Bush administration’s policies toward global warming.

H2: The more a newspaper exhibits the characteristics of the corporate form of organization, the more critical its editorials will be of the Bush administration’s policies toward global warming.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

A national probability survey of daily newspapers in the United States is employed to test these hypotheses. The data were collected through a probability mail survey of editorial-page editors at 500 randomly selected U.S. daily newspapers. Unlike news stories or syndicated columns, editorials written by newspapers’ editorial board members reflect the newspaper’s institutional positions. Some studies have suggested that editorial orientations of a newspaper set the tone of news sections (Kahn & Kenney, 2002). It was assumed that most editorial-page editors are knowledgeable about the positions their newspapers take on various issues; therefore, the survey asked them about how their newspaper has editorialized on global warming in the past 12 months.

Bacon’s Newspaper Directory 2004 was used as a sampling frame because the directory includes newspaper circulation, mailing address, and personnel information of all daily newspapers in the United States, which is a target population of the survey. Samples for this survey were organized primarily by circulation size of newspapers, rather than geographic locations. Previous studies of newspaper organizations showed that newspaper circulation size is strongly correlated with measures of corporate structure and, thus, can be used as a surrogate measure of that construct (Demers, 1996a, 1996c, 1998c).

Because the circulation of U.S. newspapers is not normally distributed (i.e., most dailies have a circulation of 25,000 or less and only a handful have circulations of 500,000 or more), a stratified nonprobability random sampling method was used. Samples were assigned to five circulation brackets: 1) under 24,999; 2) 25,000 to 49,999, 3) 50,000 to 99,999, 4) 100,000 to 24,999 and 5) over 250,000. To correct for skewed sample distribution, newspapers under circulation 24,999 were slightly under-sampled, while newspapers with circulation over 250,000 were over-sampled. This is a form of restricted random sampling, but the method of selection within each stratum is still random (Moser
On September 19, 2006, 500 survey packets were mailed out. Postcard reminders with personal signatures were mailed a week after the initial mailing. About 136 responses arrived by the mid-October; subsequent responses were returned at a slower rate. On October 20, 390 follow-up packets were mailed out but the follow-up mailing didn’t improve response rate much. By November 9, only about 20 more responses arrived. As the third follow-up, telephone calls were placed to 50 non-responders. Non-respondents were randomly selected. Calling started November 20 and continued until January of 2007, until total of 191 responses, or 39% of sample, were collected.

The primary independent variable in this study is corporate structure. Respondents were asked to provide information on 15 individual measures, grouped into five separate categories or indices. The first set of measures was designed to measure the division of labor, or organizational complexity. Three measures were employed: Number of full-time reporters and editors; full-time employees; and beats or departments. Hierarchy of authority, which is another sub-concept of bureaucracy, was operationalized as the number of promotions needed for a reporter to become editor-in-chief. Three indicators of the presence of rules and procedures were used: Whether the newspaper has its own formal, written code of ethics; whether the newspaper has its own employee handbook of rules and procedures; and whether the newspaper has its own style book different from Associated Press or United Press International style books. Staff expertise was measured by a question which asked whether reporters normally need a bachelor’s degree to be considered for employment at the newspaper. Five measures of ownership structure were included: whether the newspaper was owned by chain or group; whether public ownership was possible; whether the newspaper was a legally incorporated business; whether the newspaper was controlled by one family or individual; and the number of daily newspaper, weekly newspapers, television and radio station owned by chain. Exact wording, means, and standard deviations are presented in Tables 1a and 1b.

Table 2 shows that the 15 items were factor-analyzed using principal components, oblique rotation. Oblique was used because it was expected the five indices would be correlated with each other, yet distinct enough to load on separate factors. A factor loading of .60 was used as a cut-off to determine whether a measure should be included with a particular factor, and measures that had two or more loadings greater than .30 and less than .60 were considered problematic.

Using an eigenvalue of 1.00 as a minimum for defining a factor, the analysis initially produced a four-factor solution. As expected, the division of labor items loaded heavily together on the first factor, but the hierarchy of authority measure also loaded strongly there. These two indices were collapsed together and were conceptualized as structural complexity.
Table 1a. Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables/Corporate index</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Overall corporate index $2+3+4+5+6$</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.54257</td>
<td>-1.34</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Structural Complexity Index$^2$</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.88413</td>
<td>-.96</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of promotions needed for reporter to become top editor</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of beats employing full time reporters</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of full-time reporters/editors</td>
<td>48.53</td>
<td>98.89</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of full-time employees</td>
<td>196.10</td>
<td>377.81</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ownership Structure Index$^2$</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion that are legally incorporated business</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion that are publicly owned</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion in which one family/individual does not own 50 percent interest in newspaper</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion that are owned by chain or group</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rules and Procedures Index$^2$</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>-1.54</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion that have their own formal, written code of ethics</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion having own employee handbook of rules and procedures</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Proportion requiring a Bachelor’s degree for reporters</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ownership items loaded heavily together on the second factor, with one exception: legally incorporated business, which also loaded high on the fourth factor. Because of these mixed loadings, this item was excluded from the ownership index. The third factor included two of the three rules and regulations measures: Whether the newspaper has an employee handbook of rules and a formal, written code of ethics. The other measure, whether the newspaper has its own stylebook, loaded most highly on the fourth factor and posted the lowest final communality estimate. As such, it was also excluded from subsequent analysis. The fourth factor consisted solely of the hire college graduates, which was a measure of staff expertise.

In sum, the factor analysis produced four empirically distinct factors composed of 12 of the 15 original measures, which altogether explained 65 percent of the total variance in those variables. An overall corporate index variable was created after the values for the individual measures were standardized and combined:
a) Structural Complexity, b) Ownership, c) Rules & Regulation, and d) Staff Expertise.

Zero-order correlations among the four factors are shown in Table 3. Structural complexity is correlated with rules and procedures, staff expertise, but not with ownership structure. These finding are consistent with recent research which has found little or no correlation between circulation and chain ownership in cross-sectional studies (Demers, 2001).

*Items composing index were standardized before creating index.
The factor exhibiting the strongest intercorrelation was rules and procedures. All of the zero-order correlations between other factors are greater than .18. This finding supports the argument that rules and procedures may be at the heart of the bureaucratic structure and it is the one element in this data that links all of the other dimensions together (Blau & Meyer, 1987; Mansfield, 1973; Weber, 1947). Overall, ownership structure and staff expertise are the two weakest indicators of corporate structure.

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The primary dependent variable in this study is U.S. daily newspapers’ editorial position on global warming. Editorial editors were asked to report how many global warming-related editorials their newspaper published during the past 12 months. They also were asked to rate 13 statements designed to measure the newspaper’s editorial position on global warming issue. The questionnaire emphasized that the respondent was to report on the newspaper’s editorial positions, not his or her personal opinion. The following statement preceded the first question: “By editorials, we mean those opinion pieces that represent the voices of publishers and editors, excluding commentaries written by syndicated columnists or citizen’s letters to the editor.” Twelve questions were introduced by another reminder sentence: “During the last year, our newspaper has published editorials pointing out that…. .” Also, immediately following the 13-item questions, the respondent was asked about his or her personal position on global warming: “How strongly do you, PERSONALLY, agree or disagree with editorial positions taken by your newspaper on global warming?”

The Table 4 shows that 13 items were factor analyzed using principal components, oblique rotation. Once again, a factor loading of .60 was used as a rule of thumb for determining whether a measure should be included with a particular factor. The factor analysis produced one distinct factor composed of 9 of the 13 original measures. Four measures (4, 10, 11, 12) loaded heavily on the second factor and because of the mixed loadings, these items were excluded from the first factor. An overall 9-item editorial vigor index was created after the values for the individual measures were combined. The index showed a high degree of internal validity (Alpha=.90). Exact wording, means, and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

\[
\begin{array}{|l|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Corporate indices/Measures} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\
\hline
1. Structural Complexity & 1.00 & .10 & .30** & .21** \\
2. Ownership Structure & .10 & 1.00 & .18* & .05 \\
3. Rules & Procedures & .30** & .18* & 1.00 & .19** \\
4. Hire College Graduates & .21** & .05 & .19** & 1.00 \\
\text{Corporate Index (Sum of 1 through 4 above)} & .66** & .50** & .66** & .64** \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

*p<.05; **p<.01
### TABLE 4. Global Warming Editorial Vigor Measures Factor-Analyzed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Bush administration’s decision not to sign the Kyoto Protocol was the right thing to do</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Bush Administration is distorting scientific evidence about Global Warming</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Effects of Global Warming are being exaggerated by scientists and environmental groups</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The fossil-fuel industry funds only scientists who believe Global Warming is not occurring</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Government action to counter the effects of global warming is necessary</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Bush administration is doing all it can do to stop Global Warming</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fossil-fuel emissions are responsible for Global Warming</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Taxes should be increased to find ways to reduce Global Warming</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Global Warming represents a serious safety risk to my community</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. If Global Warming continues, the consequences will eventually destroy the world</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. To reduce Global Warming, government should limit the amount of energy that businesses can use</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. To reduce Global Warming, government should limit the amount of energy that individuals can use</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Scientists are in disagreement about Global Warming</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalues: 6.97, 1.29, 1.14, 9.4

Percent of Variance: 53.84, 9.91, 8.76, 72.31

---

*a* Principal Components, oblique rotation (N=151)

*b* Communalities estimates (i.e. total variance explained)

*c* Measure excluded from index because of low or mixed loadings

*d* These items were inverted before summing to create the index
**FINDINGS**

Data from the national probability survey provide partial support the first hypothesis, which posited that the more a newspaper exhibits the characteristics of the corporate form of organization, the greater number of global warming editorials it will publish. Table 5 shows that the corporate newspaper index is positively correlated with number of editorials. Zero-order correlation between the corporate index and the number of editorials is moderately strong ($r=.37$, $p<.01$). All four corporate dimensions are positively related to the number of editorials, but structural complexity shows the strongest correlation ($r=.59$, $p<.01$). Rules and procedures also is significantly related ($r=.17$, $p<.05$). However, the correlations are negligible between the number of editorials and ownership structure ($r=.06$, $p>.05$).
Data also support partial support for the second hypothesis, which expected that the more a newspaper exhibits the characteristics of the corporate form of organization, the more critical its editorials will be of the Bush administration’s global warming policies. Table 5 shows that the corporate index is positively related to the editorial vigor \( r = .22, p < .05 \). However, separate analysis shows that only one of four dimensions — structural complexity — was significantly related to editorial vigor \( r = .25, p < .05 \). This finding suggests that larger, more complex organizations wrote editorials more critical of Bush administration’s global warming policies, but newspaper ownership structure, rules and procedures and staff expertise have no effect. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Demers (1996), who has concluded that the complexity of the organization is the single most important criterion affecting content.

To refine measurement of the dependent variables even more, the frequency and editorial-vigor measures were multiplied together to create a new variable that takes both frequency and vigor into account at the same time \( n = 89 \). That is, a newspaper might have published a larger number of editorials but a sheer number alone does not explain the extent of editorial vigor. Conversely, a newspaper might have written editorials that are highly critical of the Bush administration’s policies toward global warming, but it might have only published a couple of editorials. The combined variable accounts for both quantity and quality of editorials at the same time.

The Table 5 shows that the findings provide even stronger support for the theory of structural complexity. Zero-order correlation between the corporate index and the combined variable is statistically significant \( r = .31, p < .01 \). Consistent with previous findings from two separate variables, structural complexity is most strongly correlated with the combined new variable \( r = .48, p < .01 \).

**SUMMARY**

Contrary to the corporate media critics and environmentalists’ claim of pro-industry bias, this study found that newspapers became more critical of the fossil fuel industries and Bush administration anti-environmental policies as they exhibited the characteristics of the corporate form of organization. Environmental activists and critical scholars’ views toward corporate media are based largely on the “zero-sum” belief that such corporate media seek to maximize profits over all other goals and, thus, are presumed to be less likely to criticize powerful industries and potential advertisers. But critics have relied too heavily on...
anecdotes and case studies to support their model. Survey research, like the one reported here, often fails to support arguments that corporate media place less emphasis on product quality or less emphasis on editorial vigor.

This study also suggests that some critics have overplayed the assumption that newspaper ownership — public or private — would negatively impact editorial vigor. Just the opposite is true. Large, complex organizations facilitate the development of professional standards, which includes seeking the truth despite the impact it may have on the bottom line. Corporate newspapers, as Demers has argued, pursue goals other than profits. Professional managers and editors place a great deal of emphasis on information diversity, product quality, and other nonprofit goals.

The idea that corporate media (or large scale, complex news organizations) have a greater capacity than their entrepreneurial counterparts to criticize the status quo also helps explain many of the social changes that have taken place during the 20th century. Media rarely initiate such change, but their stories often legitimize social movement organizations. This does not mean that hegemonic models are wrong. All media serve a master. Even corporate media produce content that helps maintain institutions and dominant value systems. Rather, hegemonic models just overstate the social control consequences of the mass media and understate the media’s capacity to promote social change. Probability surveys should be encouraged in order to further examine the impact that media management structure has on editorial vigor and content diversity.

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THE CREDIBILITY DIVIDE: READER TRUST OF ONLINE NEWSPAPERS AND BLOGS

JENN BURLESON MACKAY AND WILSON LOWREY

If news organizations hope to keep readers, they must remain credible in the eyes of media consumers. This study considers how different online news formats can affect the perceived credibility of a news medium. Three news media were considered: online newspaper, journalist blog, non-journalist blog. Using an experiment, the researchers studied the effects of media use, media dependency, and political interest on the perceived credibility of a news medium. This study also discusses whether exposure to a medium that is primarily institutional is perceived as more or less credible than a news medium that appears more individualistic. Results showed that media use, dependency and political interest were not statistically significant predictors of credibility, but the non-journalist blog was found more credible than the other two media. The statistical significance might be explained by the non-journalist’s blog’s lack of attachment to an institution.

Keywords: credibility, media dependency, blogs, Internet news, media use

From new babies and local news to personal digestive abnormalities and celebrity gossip, media junkies record nearly every instant of their lives on the Internet. They preserve that information on social networking sites such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook.

News organizations have plastered their Web sites with blog links. From 2004 to 2005, the number of online newspapers that hosted blogs nearly doubled (Lowrey & Mackay, 2006). Many journalists have their own blogs, which emphasize local issues. Some journalist blogs are more opinionated than others, but regardless of how they are worded,
they often grant readers a more personal account of the news (Singer, 2005). The stylistic qualities of blogs conflict with tried and true American journalism mandates. Old-fashioned grammar rules are heaved aside as journalists write in the first person and ask unanswered questions (Robinson, 2006).

With blogs cluttering the Internet along with scores of stories derived from more traditional news staffs, the Internet has fashioned an information democracy. Readers mingle between the various types of blogs, social media sites and more traditional news sites as millions of news providers vie to be noticed. Some research has suggested that social media sites are becoming increasingly important information sources as some individuals abandon the blog world to pursue other social media options such as Twitter (Lowrey, 2011; Kopytoff, 2011; Zickukr, 2010; Pew, 2010).

The plethora of information sources raises some questions regarding information credibility. How is one to know which online information sources are reliable? Previous research has suggested that readers are less likely to pay attention to information that they do not believe (Gaziano, 1988). Therefore, credibility may be an important factor for new media survival.

This study delves into the credibility of new media. The researchers used an experiment to study how readers evaluate the credibility of a traditional online newspaper in comparison to a journalist blog and a blog written by a non-journalist. The primary goal was to understand whether one medium is considered more credible than the others. The researchers also studied whether media use or media dependency predicts how an individual rates the credibility of a news source. It is hoped that this study will provide journalists and scholars better understanding of how audiences view credibility. Perhaps that knowledge will help news organizations to discover the best methods for marketing themselves and surviving the new journalism paradigm.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Credibility**

Credible sources, or publications, are important to readers (Kaufman, Stasson & Hart, 1999). Hovland and Weiss (1951) found that information from a highly credible source is more believable. Two types of media credibility have traditionally been studied. Source credibility considers the trustworthiness of an individual who constructed a message (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Medium credibility evaluates the overall credibility of a larger entity, such as a local television news station or a newspaper (Gaziaon & McGrath, 1986). This paper is primarily concerned with medium credibility.
Much of the existing Internet credibility research has compared online newspapers to more traditional news formats. The studies have produced mixed results with some research indicating that online media are more credible than more traditional media, while other research suggests that online media are less credible.

**Internet Credibility**

Choi, Watt, and Lynch (2006) found that personal preferences can affect the perceived credibility of the Internet. Individuals who were opposed to the Iraq war were more likely to view the Internet as less supportive of the government and more credible than individuals who advocated the war. Likewise, Golan and Kiousis (2010) found a relationship between an individual’s religiosity and the credibility of the media. Those who had a higher religiosity found the news media more credible than those with lower religiosity. Other personal characteristics have been connected to medium credibility. Melican and Dixon (2008) found that participants who rated nontraditional Internet sources as more credible than traditional news sources also acquired a higher racism score. The researchers argued that nontraditional Web media offer individuals the opportunity to seek out information that agrees with their own ideologies.

Research has shown that age affects credibility attitudes. Bucy (2003) found that college students deemed television news and online news more credible than older media consumers. Older participants, however, found online news to be more credible than television news. Meyer, Marchionni and Thorson (2010) suggested that the perceived skill of the journalist was a strong predictor of the credibility of a message as well the organization. They also suggested that the skill level of the journalist was evaluated through the relationship between the reporter and audience members.

Some credibility research has looked at the specific aspects of online news sites. Flanagin and Metzger (2000) studied credibility across four types of websites. Their study suggested that web credibility may be related to aspects of the sites such as the genre and design: “It is likely that high perceived credibility would result under situations with well-designed, reputable genres of sites, containing highly salient and involving messages of low persuasive intent, viewed by individuals with heavy web reliance and experience” (p. 21). They also suggested that the characteristics of a message and the audience may affect the perception of credibility. Websites affiliated with a news organization were considered most credible while personal sites were evaluated as the least credible. Greer compared the credibility of a highly credible and recognizable online news source, Nytimes.com (the online version of The New York Times), to a personal Web page (Greer, 2003). Participants saw either Nytimes.com or the less credible source and rated the credibility of a news story on the page. The Nytimes.com was judged as the most credible, but the difference was not
statistically significant. Participants also rated the credibility of advertisements on the Web sites. There did not appear to be a relationship between the credibility of the advertisement and the credibility of the news source. Lowrey found that online news credibility was not affected by story design (Lowrey, 2004). One group of participants rated the credibility of a news story written in a traditional, linear style. The other participants read a news story that was in a non-linear online format, which allowed participants to jump from one part of the story to another via hyperlinks. The influence of ownership on credibility also has been tested with radio audiences.

**Blog Credibility**

Those who depend more on blogs more find the medium more credible (Trammell, Porter, Chung & Kim, 2006). In addition, research suggests that bloggers value having credible information (Perlmutter & Schoen, 2007). Johnson and Kaye (2004) found that bloggers tend to find blogs more credible than other media. The study participants recognized that blogs may not be accurate, and most said that blogs were not fair; nonetheless, blogs were preferred over other types of online media. Users who relied on blogs more judged them to be more credible. Schweiger (2000) found that German audiences find the Internet about as credible as television and newspapers. Viewers were more like to believe information from the Web if they used it more frequently and if they had been Internet users for a longer period of time.

Kaye (2005) found that blog readers usually are young, well-educated males. People view blogs for information, convenience, entertainment, political and social surveillance, and interacting with others. Another study suggested that people blog for creative expression and to document their personal life (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). Kelleher and Miller (2006) found that blogs were more conversational. That conversational voice correlated with several variables including trust and satisfaction. The authors argued that when blogs are used by organizations, they might help the organization to build and preserve relationships.

Thorson, Vraga, and Ekdale (2010) looked at how credibility is affected by the context information surrounding a news story. They found that news stories were perceived as more credible when they were surrounding by blog posts that used rude or uncivil comments than when the news story was accompanied by a more neutral blog post.

**Political Interest and Media Credibility**

Johnson and Kaye (1998) examined how individuals who use the Internet for political information judged the credibility of several news media, including the Internet, as well as
candidate paraphernalia. They found online media more credible than more traditional media, and credibility was associated more with readers’ reliance on the Web than with how much readers use the medium. Johnson and Kaye (2002) also found that online newspapers and news magazines were highly credible. The same researchers looked at politically interested Internet users to study the perceived credibility of online information during the 2004 presidential election. Participants perceived online media to be moderately credible, as blogs and online newspapers were considered more credible than cable news or online broadcast news. Advertising research, on the other hand, suggests that individuals find advertising online less credible than advertising that is published through other media, such as television and newspapers (Soh, Reid, & White, 2007). In another study, Kim and Johnson (2009) studied politically interested online media consumers during the 2004 election in South Korea. They found that online newspapers that were not affiliated with a mainstream media institution were more credible for political information than other online news media or traditional media. Exposure to a particular media can increase the credibility of that medium, according to Meader, Whaley, & Dozier (2010). The study found that participants with high levels of exposure to The Daily Show were more likely to find the show as credible or more credible than most traditional news providers.

Credibility and Institutionalization

Limited research has looked specifically at how the affiliation to an institution may affect the perceived credibility of the news media. In their study of politically interested Internet users in South Korea, Kim and Johnson (2009) found media that were unaffiliated with a mainstream organization were perceived as more credible than those media that were connected to an institution. Newhagen and Nass (1989) found that audiences perceived television broadcasters as more credible than newspaper journalists. The researchers argued that the two groups were judged differently because the newspaper journalists were seen as faceless members of an institution whereas the television journalists were judged by their on-camera personas: “Differences in the nature of the media themselves, and how information from them is perceived, may lead to different information processing strategies” (p. 284).

Media Dependency

Media Dependency Theory suggests that people have become more dependent on the media as their lives became more complex (Merskin, 1999). Dependency occurs when one
entity’s satisfaction depends on the resources of another (Ball-Rokeach, 1985). The theory suggests that when individuals have moved into cities, civic group participation, church, and family became less central to their lives. Individuals’ ability to fulfill their goals depends on the resources provided by the media (Ball-Rokeach, & DeFleur, 1976).

There are two levels of relationships that individuals can have with the media. In a macro relationship, individuals become dependent on institutions. Their dependency ebbs and flows in accordance with the stability of those social and media institutions. Micro-media dependency theory considers individuals’ relationships with communication messages. It suggests that individuals that are more dependent on a particular message are more likely to allow the message to alter their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Dependency can be measured by asking participants how helpful they find a medium (Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993).

The degree to which an individual is dependent on the media can be influenced by the goals that individuals have in using the media. Much dependency research has focused on the individual’s need for comprehending society and him or herself, orientation regarding specific, and entertainment or escape. Riffe, Lacy, and Varouhakis (2008) found that people often depend on the Internet for in-depth information. Participants preferred the Internet to magazine, books and human interaction when they sought detailed information. The effects of media dependency are often tested via demographic and social characteristics. Halpern (1994) found that more highly educated people are less dependent on government-controlled media in Chile. Research suggests that demographics are related to the strength of media dependencies and dependency effects. More highly educated individuals tend to be less reliant on attaining information from the media. Studies show that age also is related to dependency.

Jakob (2010) found that individuals who are more dependent on the media tend to trust them more than those who are less dependent on the media. On the other hand, individuals who use alternative media sources feel less dependent on the media than those who do not use alternative sources. In another alternative media study, researchers found that consumers who were dependent on black newspapers trusted cancer coverage from mainstream newspapers and the Internet less than they did black newspapers. Recent research has considered dependency on the Internet. Mitchell and Beard (2010) found that Internet dependency rarely evolves into addiction, and the study also suggested that college students have moderate Internet dependency.

Yang and Patwardhan (2004) found that perceived credibility and dependency help explain how people use Internet current affairs news. Those who receive current affairs news from the Internet tend to depend on the Web more for that type of information. They also perceive Internet news as more credible. In their study of politically interested web users, Kim and Johnson (2009) found that those who relied on newspapers perceived
independent web newspapers as less credible than those who were relied less on newspapers.

**HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The primary emphasis of this study is to understand how online media credibility is tied to individual factors. This study proposes that credibility can be affected by one’s dependency and use of a medium. The research also considers whether other factors might affect the perceived credibility of a medium.

To gain a better understanding of online news credibility overall, this study looks at three types of media: online news produced by a newspaper; a blog created by a journalist; and a blog written by a non-journalist, which will be referred to as the citizen’s blog. These media were selected because they represent different levels of institutional establishments. The online newspaper has a clear relationship to an institution, in essence, it virtually represents an institution. The journalists who write stories are part of that institution. The journalist blog also has a clear association to the institution, because the journalist is writing on behalf of the institution, but as blogs are individualized and more personal, that relationship is a bit softer than the institutional relationship posed by the online newspaper. The citizen’s blog has no institutional affiliation. It represents a medium that is independent, thus the writer has more flexibility in what he chooses to publish.

Research has shown diverse results regarding media use of Internet media and credibility. Jakob (2010) suggested that people who depend more on the media are more likely to trust it more than people with less dependency. Research has suggested that people who frequently use blogs were more likely to consider the medium more credible. Likewise, Len-Rios, Cohen and Caburnay (2010) found that individuals who were more dependent on alternative publications were more likely to trust topic specific content from those alternative publications than they were to trust coverage from mainstream publications. Classic studies also suggest that there is a relationship between media use and credibility (Westley & Severin, 1964). Other research suggests that Internet reliance rather than media use is a stronger predictor of online media credibility (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

Drawing from classic literature as well as the findings of some more research, the following hypotheses are posed:

H1a: Frequency of medium use will be positively related to the perceived credibility of the medium.

H1b: Level of dependency on the medium will be related to the perceived credibility of the medium.
Political involvement has been correlated with an interest in blogs. Kaye (2005) found that political involvement predicted an individual’s motivation to use blogs. Johnson and Kaye (2002) found that some political attitudes predict credibility. To build from those findings, the following hypothesis was posed:

H2: Politically involved individuals will find media more credible than those who are less politically involved.

The degree of institutional association also can affect credibility. Newhagen and Nass (1989) argued that people often find television news journalists to be more credible than newspaper journalists because they see television journalists as individuals. Newspaper reporters are more faceless, and therefore, seem to represent the collective institution.

A similar argument could be made for the relationship between bloggers as compared to newspaper journalists. A citizen-blogger is thought to be totally independent of any institution. He/she is free to publish at will. A newspaper journalist, however, is at the mercy of the institution. The journalist is part of the collective, whereas the blogger is a loner. For the purposes of this study, it would follow that the online newspaper would be considered the most institutional, and therefore the least credible of the news sources. The journalist blog would be slightly less institutional, but still has an institutional affiliation that would make him/her appear less credible. The citizen blog has no institutional affiliation, thus representing the most credible source.

Another argument could be made, however. One could argue that the most institutional news medium, the online newspaper, would be perceived as the most credible because it has an organization standing behind it. That organization not only has resources, it can also institute a system of checks and balances to ensure that the published material is credible. The journalist blog also would be subjected to those checks and balances, so it also would be credible. The citizen blog, however, is missing that organizational system. That could weaken the perceived credibility of the medium.

Because two strong arguments can be made regarding the relationship of the institution to the medium, the following research question was posed:

RQ1: How does exposure to a medium that is primarily institutional or primarily individual affect the perceived credibility of a medium?

**Methodology**

An experiment was designed to test the credibility of different types of online news formats. The 138 participants were recruited from introductory mass communication classes.
at a university in the southeastern United States, and they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: online newspaper, journalist’s blog, or citizen’s blog. About 34% (47) of participants were assigned to the online newspaper condition, 27.5% (38) to the journalist’s blog, and 38.4% (53) to the citizen’s blog. Among the participants, 23.2% were male and 76.8% female. There were 4.3% communication study majors, 5.1% telecommunication, 15.2% advertising, 18.1% journalism, 24.6% some other major, 31.9% public relations.

Stimuli

The researcher wrote four blog-style news stories. The way the stories were written did not change across the three experimental conditions. Because the writing style did not change between the blogs and the news site, it was felt the story style needed to strike a balance between the informal tone of the blog posting and the more formal tone of the news story. The stories were, therefore, written more conversationally than a traditional news story. The stimuli were based on actual news stories, and the stories contained no quotes. The following passage is an excerpt:

Food Fight

A little lettuce turned a quiet nursing home lunch into an elderly barroom brawl. Police said 86-year-old William Hocker became frustrated when fellow Spring Haven Retirement Community resident Lee Thoss, 62, was sifting through the lettuce at the salad bar.

Hocker told the 62-year-old that folks did not want to eat the food that he had been toying with. The conversation was followed by colorful language, a yelling match, and a round of punches . . .

Three mock Web sites were developed to house the stories, and these were loaded onto computers in a research lab (but not placed on a public server). Two of the sites were made to look like traditional news sites created by a news organization, and one site was intended to look like an individual’s site. This was done in order to test for effects from perceived institutional attachment as stated in RQ1. The traditional online news site was called The Daily News. The site contained a number of fake links, which appeared to link to news stories. A menu bar on the left side of the page appeared to contain links to various parts of the newspaper, such as the features and sports sections. The only operating links on the page connected participants to the four blog-style news stories, and these links were
listed at the top of the Web page to make it easier for participants to navigate the site. The page also included an advertisement, to make the page appear more like a legitimate online news site.

The links to the stories included only the first sentence of the story, and participants were required to click on each story link on The Daily News Web site home page to load and read the stories. Each linked story page included the text of the story, the newspaper banner, and menu bar on the left, containing non-operational linked buttons to other sections of the newspaper (Figure 1).

The journalist’s blog was designed to look as though it was affiliated with a newspaper called The Daily News (Figure 2). The page included a banner bearing the newspaper name, and a menu on the left, containing non-operational links to other sections of the newspaper. An information box near the top of the page explained that the blog was written by an editor for The Daily News. The remainder of the page was the text of the four
news stories, which took the form of blog postings on this site (though again, the text was identical to the stories on the news site). Each posting contained a date creating the illusion that each posting had been published on a separate day. The blog postings contained non-operational links that would have allowed readers to post commentary related to the story.

The citizen’s blog was designed to look as though it was not affiliated with any organization (Figure 3). It appeared to be non-professional. The page was called The Newshound’s Blog. The four blog stories were presented in a format similar to the journalist’s blog in that they contained non-operational links to post commentary, appeared to be published on different days, etc. The visual design differed however, to reflect the non-institutional environment. Participants were instructed to access the stimuli materials by clicking on a desktop icon that took them to a mock blog directory page. Participants were told to click on the site that linked to The Newshound’s Blog. The link to the blog was the only operational link on the page. This page also included an ad.

Participants in each experimental condition received a survey packet. The first page of the packet provided directions on how to view the stimuli materials, and the directions
varied slightly depending on the participant’s assigned condition. The remainder of the survey was the same across all conditions. The participant answered the first half of the survey before viewing the stimuli materials, and then the participant clicked on an icon called “Credibility” on a computer’s desktop and read the blogs/stories. The last half of the survey was completed after the Web site was closed.

Survey Measures

The first 12 open-ended questions evaluated the participant’s use of media. Participants were asked how many days per week and how many hours per week they used the newspaper, Internet news sites (not including blogs), blogs, radio, television, and magazines. The next set of questions measured the participant’s familiarity with each medium, using a scale of 1 to 5 (this measure was not used to assess hypotheses but was used in a follow-up analysis). Dependency was measured by asking participants to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how much they depend on each medium for information. Participants also
were asked to rate the credibility (believability) of each medium using a scale of 1 to 5. This measure, which appeared on the pretest, assessed perception of media types in general and was not in response to experimental stimuli.

After reading all of the stories/blog entries, the participant rated the credibility of the news medium they viewed — the study’s dependent variable — using Gaziano’s News Credibility Scale (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). The semantic differential scale asked participants to rate thirteen aspects of news medium that they viewed from 1 to 5: fairness, bias, telling the whole story, accuracy, invading privacy, watching after the reader’s interests, concern for community well-being, separation of fact and opinion, trust, concern for the public interest, factual, well-trained journalists.

Participants also responded to demographic questions and were asked how strongly they identified with their political preference and how interested they were in politics in general using a 5-point scale from “weakly” to “strongly.”

**RESULTS**

Several survey items were combined to develop overall scores for the variables of interest. The main dependent variable, credibility, was calculated by summing the participants’ scores across the News Credibility Scale \((alpha = .83)\). The participant’s use of the medium was calculated by multiplying the number of hours spent using the medium viewed for the experiment by the days per week spent with the medium. The participant’s political interest was calculated by summing the participants’ responses to an item that asked how strongly they identified with their political preference and a question that asked how interested they were in politics in general \((alpha = .72)\). Perception of overall media credibility was calculated by summing participant responses to a series of questions that asked them to state how believable they find several individual media (newspaper, Internet, blogs, radio, television, and magazines). Again, these questions were asked prior to showing participants the websites.

Hypothesis 1A predicted that the frequency of the medium use would have a positive relationship to the perceived credibility of the medium. Hypothesis 1B predicted that a participant’s dependency on a medium would be related to the perceived credibility of the medium. The relationships were tested using linear regressions controlling for the participant’s dependency on the medium viewed (when use was the key predictor), frequency of use (when dependency was the key predictor), strength of the participant’s political interest, and the participant’s overall assessment of the media’s credibility (as these variables have proved predictive in previous studies). Neither hypothesis was supported. There was a statistically significant relationship between the perceived credibility of media
overall and the total credibility on the citizen’s blog stimuli, however (beta = .41, \( p = .01 \)) (See Table 1).

The research question asked if exposure to a medium that was connected to a media institution would affect stimulus credibility. The relationships were tested with an ANOVA, and the relationship was found to be insignificant among the three formats. As a follow-up test, credibility scores of the two blogging formats — the journalist blog and the citizen blog — were combined and compared to the credibility of the news sites. A t-test was conducted, and the relationship was statistically significant, \( t(138) = -2.04, p=.044 \). The mean credibility score for the blogs was 35.5 and the mean credibility score of the news site was 32.9. The mean score of the journalist blog (35.7) was slightly higher than the mean score of the citizen’s blog (35.4).

Hypothesis 2 suggested that politically involved participants would find the online media more credible than the less politically involved, as past studies have suggested this relationship. However, the hypothesis was not supported.
DISCUSSION

The difference between blog credibility and online news credibility scores was striking in this study. This finding supports research by Johnson and Kay (2004), which found that the Internet was perceived as being more credible than more traditional media. The present study suggests audiences are even more willing to accept the believability of the newest media formats. These results contradict findings from Kiousis (2001), which found that people were skeptical of online sources.

Results provide some support for the idea that participants are more trusting of news sources that are less affiliated with an institution. As discussed earlier, Newhagen and Nass (1989) suggested participants tend to trust television journalists more than newspaper journalists because they see television journalists as individuals, whereas newspaper journalists seem to be part of the institutional collective. Audiences may also view bloggers as more personal than staff journalists. Though the editor’s blog derived from an institution, the blogging form may have been a stronger cue for readers than the institutional news home-page format they clicked through to reach the blog.

Though participants rated the blog stimuli with a higher credibility score than the more traditional Internet news site, the participants presented different views during the pretest phase. Before viewing the stimuli, participants were asked to rate the credibility of several types of news media on a scale of 1 to 5, blogs were considered the least credible. The most credible medium was the newspaper (mean = 4.5). The other means were: television (4.4), magazines (4.2), radio (4.0), Internet news (3.7), news blogs by journalists (2.65) and news blogs by non-journalists (1.7). These results differ slightly from Flanagan & Metzger (2000), who found that the Internet was almost as credible as other news sources. The results, however, are similar to what Kiousis (2001) found. When thinking about media in an abstract and general way, participants reported being skeptical of Internet sources. Once they were actually exposed to the sources, however, they were slightly more trusting of them.

The participants’ inexperience with blogs might explain why participants found them less credible before they viewed the experimental stimuli. Participants rated their familiarity with the Internet and television the highest with a mean of 4.8. Their familiarity with blogs, however, was the lowest of the media (2.9). Perhaps the participant’s familiarity with the Internet was substantial enough that once they viewed this type of Internet source, they were quick to accept it. Because these participants were college students, they may be somewhat more accustomed to the Internet than older audiences (though this difference by age is diminishing). As mentioned, results might have been different if the study had included older participants, and the study may have yielded stronger relationships if more participants
were included.

One interpretation of this finding is that readers are less trusting of corporations. To combat that issue, news organizations need to place need to develop a more personal relationship with their readers. Reporters need to be viewed as specific people rather than representatives of an large organization. Perhaps one way that journalists and news organizations can do this is by relying on social networking such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus. In the meantime, small entrepreneurial news organizations may have a natural credibility advantage over the established media simply because of their natural separation from large institutions. In short, if credibility is required for news media survival, the new journalism paradigm may revolve around personal relationships between audiences and organizations.

This study did not support some of the findings from other studies, such as Westley and Severin (1964) and Kiousis (2001), which suggested that media use was related to credibility. This study also failed to support findings from several studies, including Yang and Patwardhan’s (2004) data, which indicated that dependency was related to credibility. Nonetheless, findings raise some interesting questions about news credibility. Are younger audiences more likely to trust blogs, even without experience with the medium? Are participants unreliable at gauging credibility without looking directly at a news source? It also raises questions regarding the relationship between audiences and media institutions. Future research should explore why consumers question the credibility of media institutions and what organizations can do to increase their credibility in the eyes of their audience.

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THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON ARAB MEDIA EXPANSION AND CULTURE

MORRIS KALLINY

The introduction, expansion and legalization of satellite TV in the Arab World in the last ten years has changed Arab media forever. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Arab media was limited to a handful of state owned media outlets in the form of few newspapers, radio stations and TV channels in the majority of the Arab world. Mass media has played a significant role in forming, shaping and influencing our views including cultural views and ideas so understanding the state of the mass media in the Arab world could help us understand its future impact on the Arab culture (Andersen & DiDomenico 1992). Fandy (2007, p. 123) argued that “When studying communication and technology in the Arab world, most scholars, have focused on the technology and ignored the Arab world, its histories, cultures, and societies, and human dimensions. This paper deals with the media changes in the Arab world and the confusion it has brought with it relating to cultural values. The paper provides a brief review of the media historical context in Arab region and how technology has played a significant role in changing the media landscape which has had a profound impact on the Arab culture.

Keywords: technology, Arab media, Arab world, Muslim world, satellite, mass communication

The introduction, expansion and legalization of satellite TV in the Arab World in the last ten years has changed Arab media forever. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Arab media were limited to a handful of state owned media outlets in the form of few newspapers, radio stations and TV channels in the majority of the Arab world. While understanding the

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Arab culture is important due to its impact on the rest of the Muslim world, the importance and interest in understanding this culture has significantly increased after the attacks of September 11 on the world trade towers in New York in 2001. Mass media has played a significant role in forming, shaping and influencing our views including cultural views and ideas (Andersen & DiDomenico 1992) so understanding the state of the mass media in the Arab world could help us understand its future impact on the Arab culture. Fandy (2007, p. 123) argued that “When studying communication and technology in the Arab world, most scholars, have focused on the technology and ignored the Arab world, its histories, cultures, and societies, and human dimensions. Few studies have tried to address the habits of those who are participating or their interaction with new forms of media”. In response to this, this paper deals with the media changes in the Arab world and the confusion it has brought with it relating to cultural values. The paper provides a brief review of the media historical context in Arab region and how technology has played a significant role in changing the media landscape which has had a profound impact on the Arab culture.

The Arab region has gone through profound changes in 2011 due to what is currently being referred to as the “Arab spring”. The recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria and other Arab countries point out to the role of media and technology in the region and how these new media and technology have been used in the uprising. We touch on this toward the end of the paper to bring the latest events to the attention of the reader and explain the significant role media played in making these uprisings possible by providing the means through which communication could be carried out.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF ARAB MEDIA**

The landscape of Arab media has changed significantly in the recent years and in order to understand the state of Arab media today, we provide a quick review of the major historical eras and events that shaped the landscape of Arab media in the past.

The independent Arab written press did not appear until the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly in Egypt followed by Syria and Iraq a few years later. It was not until 1908 that the legal and political restrictions on the founding of newspapers were lifted allowing an independent press to develop in Egypt, Syria and Iraq. This move has lead to the development of 144 newspapers and reviews just in Egypt. This move has contributed significantly to the growth and development of free press in the Arab region. As a result the Arab press grew and became more sophisticated in the first half of the 19th century (Andersen 1992). Therefore, this move has marked a significant era in the Arab world press.

The call for Arab countries’ independence from foreign rule and control marked a new era for the Arab press. As the Arab countries began to fight for their independence from
foreign control and colonialism toward the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Arab press became one of the main tools used in fighting for national independence which subjected the Arab press to a brutal treatment by the colonial authorities leading to suspension or ban of various newspapers. This move reduced the number of free and independent press to a much smaller number compared to previous years. This was a major setback for the Arab press and was a significant step backward for press freedom and expansion.

Some of the Arab states such as Egypt managed to get their independence in the early 1950s. While one might expect that this move was in favor of the Arab press by having it no longer subject to foreign rule, this independence brought disaster to the Arab press. The independence of the Arab states led to the end of the multiparty political system and the independent press in the majority of the Arab region. This move has given a fatal blow to the free Arab press that would last a long time. Among the things that were nationalized by the new independent Arab governments was the press such as in Egypt. Journalists often were subject to censorship and legislation which repressed independent criticism in the name of protecting the public order. Violators of such orders were severely punished. These steps have lead to the entire region suffering from lack of press freedom by the 1960 and throughout the 1980 with the exception of Lebanon (Essoulami 2006, Kraidy and Khalil, 2009).

The result of these actions was the significant reduction of Arab media to a handful of state owned and controlled newspapers, radio stations and television stations. No wonder Reporters Without Borders’ Report for 2010 has placed the majority of the Arab countries at the bottom (Syria 173, Sudan 172, Yemen 170, Tunisia 164, Libya 160, and Saudi Arabia 157) regarding freedom of the press (http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2010,1034.html). Therefore, over the years, the media’s role in the Arab world has been confined to reinforcing the existing cultural values and keeping traditions and the status quo. The tight government control over Arab media has eliminated any mass media forum that could be used to challenge old ideas and communicate new ones (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009). This caused a sever stagnation in Arab media and limited its impact by not allowing it to grow, expand or experience the freedom it needed to move forward.

\textbf{Cultural Values}

Rokeach (1973) argued that the value system includes the set of beliefs, attitudes and activities to which a culture or subculture subscribes and is reinforced by rewards and punishments for those who follow or deviate from these guidelines. One of the most powerful ways to understand people in different cultures is to understand their values and value systems (Durgee, O’Connor & Veryzer, 1996). At the personal level, values determine
virtually all types of behaviors, from simple purchasing to religious ideologies (Pollay 1983). Several researchers argued that values are predictors or antecedents of behavior (Conner & Becker 2003; England 1967; England & Lee 1974), and aid in the understanding of culture (Feather 1975; Rokeach 1968, 1973). Conner & Becker (2003) argued that values influence attitudes which in turn influence behavior. Thus, behavior is determined by values and understanding values can aid in understanding and possibly predicting behavior.

Although values exist in every society and some similarities might be found amongst various societies, significant differences exist as well. For example, Hofstede (1980) argued that the U.S is a society that values individualism while Saudi Arabia is a society that values collectivism. These priorities contributed to the creation of cultural differences among societies that set them apart from each other and make each society’s culture unique. These cultural values become the drivers and influencers on behavior. Cultural values allow us to classify nations into a meaningful classification that can assist us in understanding the cultural uniqueness of each nation.

McCarty and Hattwick (1992) argued that culture impacts every aspect of a society including the thinking and acting of every member of a group. Srikandath (1991) referred to cultural values as the governing ideas and guiding principles for thought and action in a given society. Therefore, cultural values are important variables in various areas of research and can provide a great deal of assistance in understanding why people behave the way they do. While cultural values should not be generalized to every member of a society, it is believed that certain cultural values are common amongst the majority of a nations’ population (Wilson 1996). For example, Wilson (1996, p. 69) provides the following summary regarding the Arab culture that he believes is common to most citizens of this region:

Everyone loves children; that age automatically confers wisdom; that men and women have vastly different personalities and characteristics; that a person’s dignity, honor, and reputation are of primary importance and must be protected at all costs; that one must always behave in a way that will create a good impression on others; that loyalty to one’s family takes precedence over personal needs; that piety is one of the most admirable traits in a person; and that there should be no separation between “church and state” — religion should pervade all aspects of life.

One of the most important facts about the Arab culture is the role and impact of Islam in shaping it. The language, social structure, and economic philosophy are fully grounded in the Islamic religion and Islam is considered a complete way of life (Kavoossi 2000; Lawrence 1998). As one observes the Arab region, one quickly discovers that there is a fine line between what is religious and what is cultural. Shari’a (Islamic Law) is viewed as a
comprehensive code governing all areas of a Muslim’s life such as duties, morals and behavior, individually, and collectively including commerce (Lugmani, Yavas and Quraeshi 1987). The Shari’a describes the values a Muslim is expected to uphold, such as truth, justice, individual freedom, honesty, social obligations, collective responsibility, the roles of men and women and the role of buying and selling. Thus, the Shari’a prescribes all that one should do and therefore, the cultural value system of the Arabs is strongly derived from and guided by the Islamic religious beliefs (Anastos, Bedos & Seaman 1980). This is a very important aspect of the Arab culture that is often ignored or misunderstood which often leads to significant misunderstanding between the West and the Middle East. As will be discussed later in this paper, the role of Islam on the Arab culture needs to be understood so a distinction between Arab cultural values that are founded on Islam and those that are founded on tradition can be made to aid in assessing which ones are likely to change.

Most Arabs are Muslims who are influenced by the Koran in conducting their daily activities (Ali 1996; Hofstede 1994; Kabasakal & Bodur 2002)), and religious beliefs and values are a constant reminder of what is considered acceptable and not acceptable in the region. Thus, one of the characteristics that distinguish between the followers of Islam and the followers of other religions is that religion influences every aspect of a Muslim’s life. This is not to say that some followers of other faith may not have the same way of life but to say that this probably more prevalent in Islam. A survey in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which includes: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, revealed that most respondents were united in their belief that Islam structures the daily lives of people and that Gulf society and identity are woven with Islam (Rice & Al-Mossawi 2002). Egyptians considered religion to be the most important value after health (Rice & Al-Mossawi 2000). These religious beliefs have had an enormous impact on the cultural values of the Arab world and as a result had a significant impact on the behavior of an Arab. For example, a strong religious belief in Islam is that everything is subject to the well of Allah (God) and life activities will either take place or not depending on whether these activities are in line with Allah’s will. This religious belief’s impact has been so powerful that it has been woven to the daily language of all Arabs. For example, an Arab will often use the term “In Sha’ Allah,” which translates into “if God wills” whenever they are committing themselves to an event whether it is a dinner invitation, a meeting or anything else.

**THE TRADITIONAL NATURE OF THE CULTURE**

According to Cheng and Schweitzer (1996), traditional society is static with little specialization, a low level of urbanization, and low literacy. Traditional society is depicted
as having an authoritarian political system, whereas modern society is characterized by wide participation on the part of citizens to form a democracy. Moreover, traditional society is bound by the cultural values established by old customs and conventions, while modern society is culturally dynamic and oriented to change and innovate.

The Arab society matches much of what the above definition describes so Arab society is very traditional in many respects. For centuries, Bedouin tribes have been known for their gracious hospitality to lost desert travelers. This tradition has been passed from one generation to the next and we see Arabs today maintaining this tradition by displaying generosity and offering hospitality (England & Lee 1980) to others. Arabs place a high value on honor and are willing to go to great lengths to avoid losing face (Ali 1996). As stated by Prophet Mohammad, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should be hospitable with his or her guests.” The Institute for the Secularization of Islamic Society reported that a number of Arab young women have been killed by their families in Denmark to protect the honor of the family (Chesler 2009). This illustrates how tradition in the Arab society may take precedence over secular law, family ties and even reason and logic. One of the main traditions in the Arab society is confirmation to rules and regulations set forth by society and often by the state. For example, women are required by law in Saudi Arabia to be veiled in all public areas. This law is strictly enforced by society through the religious police along the other members of society. The mass media in the Arab world has been closely controlled by the various states to ensure that traditions are kept and values are not deviated from particularly those that are religious in nature.

The religious foundations for some parts of the Arab culture have contributed significantly to its traditional nature and kept those traditions for centuries. While cultural change is not easy to come by in most societies, this is particularly true in the Arab society because various traditions, values and beliefs are founded on the Islamic religion and Islamic interpretation which makes some of these cultural values untouchable.

**A NEW ERA IN ARAB MEDIA AND CULTURE**

The described above state of Arab media started to change when the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa provided a grant of 150 million U.S. dollars to establish Al-Jazeera television satellite network channel which started broadcasting in late 1996. Al-Jazeera started a new revolution in the Arab world by providing a new form of reporting. Fandy (2007, p. 1) stated that “Both governments and ordinary people in Washington and London and all over the world consider Al-Jazeera to be synonymous with the broader Arab media. The channel’s willingness and boldness to broadcast dissenting views, including call-in shows, created controversies throughout the Arab region and fascinated millions. The
nature of Al-Jazeera programs diverging from the well known traditional way of reporting and entertaining in the Arab world caused loud cries across the region where Saudi Arabia responded by recalling its ambassador from Qatar where the station is located in 2002 over content viewed as damaging to the kingdom, Jordan recalled its ambassador in 2002 in response to perceived insults against the Hashemite ruling family and Egypt recalled its ambassador in 2007 to protest anti-Egyptian government coverage (Fandy, 2007). Therefore, the birth of Al-Jazeera marked a milestone in the media history of the Arab World (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009; Lavine, Sweeney & Wagner 1999).

The introduction of Al-Jazeera accompanied latter by the introduction, legalization and wide spread of free to air satellite television networks in the Arab region marked a new era for Arab media. This step transformed Arab media landscape from few state owned and run newspapers, radio stations and TV channels to a large number of independent media outlets. It is estimated that there are currently more than 400 Arab television channels (Essoulami, 2006) reaching the region in addition to hundreds of newspapers and radio stations. Realizing that information is free flowing through satellite networks, many Arab states also allowed the introduction of many radio stations and newspapers. This move resulted in hundreds of independent and privately owned newspapers, radio stations and TV channels covering wide range of issues ranging from national and international news to topics previously considered taboo in the Arab region such as sex and homosexuality (Kraidy and Khalil, 2009). One has to keep in mind that what also gave this media its strength is its ability to penetrate the Arab world without being subjected to the brutality and strict guidelines set by the state. The majority of these free to air networks broadcast from abroad and this provided them with tremendous amount of freedom. Saker (2007) stated that “The power of the people was hailed at the time as having a great impact on democratization. Satellite television was regarded as a facilitator for this phenomenon to spread across the Arab world.” Technology and technological advances have made this possible. Private ownership of these stations has played a significant role in its coverage, execution and style of presentation. And while there is no doubt that media in the Arab world enjoys some freedoms that were unthinkable before satellite networks. Fandy (2007) and Kraidy and Khalil (2009) argue that even private media in the Arab world are not necessarily independent or professional because often the means to support these media outlets can be easily impacted by those in power. Therefore, one has to be cautious to interpret these new freedoms as parallel to the freedom media enjoys in other parts of the world such as the United States.

The tremendous success and fast spread of television channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya served as an indication that the region was hungry for this new wave of independent and free media. The success of Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya prompted the introduction of many independent television channels that appealed to various segments of
the market such as news, entertainment, sports, children, etc. These changes not only acted
as a catalyst for the increase of Arab media outlets number but also helped with the size of
some of the outlets making some of them very large. For example, The National reported
that Sheikh Mohammed, Vice President of the UAE, has issued a resolution taking off
another part of Arab Media Group (AMG) and transferring it over to its Dubai government-
backed media cousin, Dubai Media Incorporated. According to The National, the move
transforms DMI into one of the biggest media houses in the region, as it already included
Al-Bayan newspaper, Dubai TV, Sama Dubai TV, Dubai One TV, Dubai Sports Channel
and Dubai Racing Channel (Wikipedia). This media expansion and growth makes the impact
of the Arab media significant and far reaching. For example, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya
broadcast in various languages not only reaching the Arab world and the Arabic speaking
population but many others. In fact, it is now common for U.S. based news programs to use
portions of reports created by Al-Jazeera to cover areas that may not be as well covered by
the U.S. media. Therefore, Arab media is not only becoming more sophisticated but also
very ambitious by launching programs in Arabic, English, Farsi and Urdu.

CONFUSION

While Arab media has transformed itself to something unprecedented given how it
started and the obstacles it had to overcome, one should be cautious to assume that all
obstacles have been eliminated. For example, governments in the Arab world still find ways
to control media coverage either through laws and regulations or through influencing those
that own media outlets or by posing a real threat to the lives of those who go too far in
challenging the traditional way of the region (Fandy, 2007). For example, the Egyptian law
contains very weak guarantees of freedom of expression where this is clearly stated in article
48 of the Egyptian constitution that states:

Freedom of the press and of printing, publishing and the information media is
guaranteed. Administrative censorship, cautioning, suspension or prohibition of the
publication of newspapers is not permissible. By way of exception, during a state of
emergency or a time of war a limited censorship may be imposed on the newspapers,
publications, and the information media in matters related to public safety or in the interests
of national security, as provided by law. While the first part of this article sound very
positive and protective of free speech, the later part of the article totally highjacks this idea
of free speech via the emergency law which has been in existence in Egypt for the past fifty
years. While the recent revolution in Egypt (January 25, 2011) has brought several
amendments (in March of 2011) to the Egyptian constitution, the emergency law in the
country is still in effect. This enactment of the emergency law is not limited to Egypt but is
prevalent in many other Arab countries. One also must be cautious to recognize the difference in how the role of media is viewed in each country in the Arab world. For example, media freedom in Lebanon seems to reflect the level of democracy in the country while media freedom in other Arab states may not enjoy the same level of freedom reflecting the political status in each country. This we believe has led to confusion as to how this new freedom is interpreted, used and practiced. This has also led to confusion as to how these new media trends, programs and freedom should be interpreted in the light of the Arab cultural values. As one looks closer at Arab media, it becomes clear that there seems to be confusion as to how this freedom is viewed by the various stakeholders in the Arab society and this confusion is creating a great tension in the Arab society.

We believe the confusion stems from the various roles and interactions between the various stakeholders in the Arab society. These stakeholders include religious groups and leaders who are entrusted with keeping the values of the Arab world and particularly the religious ones intact, the governments that walk a fine line between granting freedom and protecting their interests and the average person who is still struggling to understand the fast and vast changes taking place in the Arab society. We believe this has led to a great confusion amongst the various groups as to how this freedom should be interpreted but also how it should be used. The new media trends in the Arab world have provided one of the greatest challenges to the Arab society where traditions are questioned, challenged and sometimes ignored. For example, Dream TV stations, owned by Egyptian businessman Ahmad Behgat aired shows that openly discussed issues of divorce, masturbation and its effects on marital relationships. The host of the show was later terminated. Inhabitants of the Arab society are now exposed to programs and ideas that were virtually nonexistent 15 years ago. Arabs are now confronted with a new wave of ideas that challenge the core of their values and are having to deal with this on a daily basis. This has caused the various stakeholders to react differently to these media freedom, programs and new ideas. In the next section we provide examples of these reactions to illustrate how each group is responding differently as a result of the lack of common views on this new wave of ideas. These examples are provided to illustrate the various behaviors and frustration that this wave of new media outlets have contributed to creating in a society that has been kept isolated and traditional for centuries.

EXAMPLES OF CONFUSION, FRUSTRATION AND MISINTERPRETATION

The BBC News reported in 2005 of a young man who was arrested in Saudi Arabia due to his interaction with females in public. According to the report, the young man who has recently won a reality TV show “was mobbed by male and female fans wanting to kiss
The young man was featured on a program run by the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) satellite network (For a detailed account of reality TV in the region see Kraidy, 2010). Before the wide spread of satellite TV channels, such programs were virtually nonexistent (Frenton 2009). In this example we see these Saudi nationals were fully aware that interactions between males and females in public are prohibited by law. Not only have these young men and women ignored that, but went so far as displaying affection in public when they tried to kiss the winner, and that is considered a great offense in Saudi Arabia. It seems that the popularity of the program and the views shared on the program have given these Saudi nationals the impression that it was OK for them to take part in the action.

On July 28, 2009 Al-Arabiya news reported that a journalist from Sudan was sentenced to be jailed and to receive 40 lashes for wearing pants in public while working. The Sudanese authority viewed her dress as inappropriate and in contradiction with the country’s requirement for modest dress (BBC News 2009). The journalist argued that it was her right to choose what is appropriate for her to dress. Again, the Arab world is confronted with this idea of free choice which may or may not be in line with the traditional society of the Arab region. The government; however, viewed her behavior as unacceptable and decided to punish her for it. Here we see a clear example of conflict between individuals who view dress to be a matter of personal choice and authority that views dress in public to be a public matter that must be subject to public scrutiny.

On October 4, 2009 the Saudi national TV reported that the Saudi King has excused one of the top region’s religious leaders in Saudi Arabia from his duties as a response to his comments regarding King Abdulla’s new university where males and females will be allowed to study side by side (BBC News 2009). One has to wonder at this unprecedented move by the Saudi government to establish the first educational institution in the country where males and females are allowed to mix. For centuries the religious establishment supported by the government has forbade the sexes of mixing in public claiming that the basis for such teachings came from Islam. While this is a very progressive step for the kingdom, challenging authority and speaking against its actions was not allowed. Making his views public on a satellite network, the religious leader’s comments could not be ignored. Again, we see this media outlet playing a major role in allowing people to speak up their mind and speak it publically. This, however, often comes with a cost.

On October 7, 2009 CNN reported that a Saudi court on Wednesday sentenced a man who caused uproar by bragging about his sex life on television to five years in prison and 1,000 lashes, according to Ministry of Information officials. Mazen Abdul Jawad, a 32-year-old airline employee and divorced father of four, spoke openly about his sexual escapades, his love of sex and losing his virginity at age 14. He made the comments in an interview on a Lebanese satellite network (Al-Arabiya News 2009). Sex is one of the taboos in the Arab
world. It is a topic that is discussed behind closed doors with close and trusted friends. Sex outside marriage is usually not talked about in the Arab region because it can lead to severe punishments if those engaged in it are identified. It is common in the Arab world to hear of honor killing particular ones that are directed to females who have engaged in premarital sex. Therefore, having an interview of this nature was truly a great deviation from the traditional Arab society that for years have kept these topics out of the public realm.

On October 24, 2009, BBC reported of a female journalist in Saudi Arabia that has been sentenced to 60 lashes over a TV show in which a Saudi man described his extramarital sex life. The program, made by Lebanese satellite network LBC, caused a huge scandal in conservative Saudi Arabia when it was shown several months ago. The journalist is one of two female LBC employees who have been arrested (Al Sherbini, 2009). We should keep in mind that this program was produced and broadcasted from a location outside Saudi Arabia. However, because the employee taking part in the program was a Saudi national, the kingdom felt that it had the right to hold that journalist accountable for actions taken outside Saudi Arabia. The journalist argued that she was just doing her job and she was discussing an important matter in the Arab society. However, the religious and governmental authorities viewed the journalist’s behavior as indecent and that she should be punished for it.

Finally, on November 6, 2009, Gulf News reported that the Egyptian police had detained five bloggers from a protest group for painting slogans against a potential hereditary handover of power in Egypt. The five, including two students at Cairo University, were arrested for painting graffiti reading “No to hereditary succession” on the walls of buildings in central Cairo (Tom Gara 2009). In this example we see a group of young men engaged in what they believed to be free expression. They felt it was OK to express their views on a political matter. However, their behavior was viewed as unacceptable because it challenged authority which is not acceptable in the Arab traditional society. In the Arab society, authority is feared and it hardly ever challenged due to the dangerous consequences that accompany such behaviors.

These are only few examples to illustrate the point. Despite the dramatic developments that have occurred, major challenges remain. No wonder Reporters Without Borders’ Report for 2010 has placed the majority of the Arab countries at the bottom (Syria 173, Sudan 172, Yemen 170, Tunisia 164, Libya 160, and Saudi Arabia 157) regarding freedom of the press (http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2010,1034.html). Fandy (2007) stated that one of the biggest challenges to media development in the Arab world is the level of professionalism and journalists training. This was later echoed by a study of 600 journalists in the Arab region published in April of 2009 where it was found that 71% saw “professionalism” — followed by “government control” as the most significant challenges to journalism in the region (Al-Arabiya News 2009). This may seem to contradict the ideas
presented before about media freedom and expansion; however, that is not the case. One has to keep in mind that Arab media has expanded significantly in terms of number of media outlets so there is no question about that. The media freedom has also increased significantly but compared to the free democratic nations, the Arab world still lags far behind.

It appears that citizens in the Arab world interpret this new media freedom as the ability to say and do as one pleases. Fanday (2007, p. 128) cautious against this referring to shows broadcasted on Al-Jazeera by stating that, “To be able to see a debate that is similar to the American show Crossfire does not mean that freedom of speech in the Arab world is fully realized, any more than to see voting and ballot boxes means that democracy has taken hold.” However, this does not set well with the authoritarian nature of the Arab regimes. While the Arab governments state publically that they want freedom and democracy for their nations, this freedom and democracy seems conditional on the basis that citizens will use it within the implied guidelines of the traditional Arab society and that by default imposes significant restrictions on the media freedom.

To deal with these issues, the Arab ministers of information were prompted to adopt a charter calling for regulation of satellite television broadcasting. According to Amin (2008), this charter was adopted after an extensive public debate by all Arab countries except Qatar. Qatar has not rejected the charter but requested additional time to review the document (Press Freedom Report 2009). An article in the charter has generated a great deal of debate and some condemnation from a number of international media watchdog organizations, which have expressed concern that the states’ control over satellite broadcasters operating in their countries could be used to suppress independent and critical media voices.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

While there is no question that Arab media is expanding, growing and becoming more sophisticated, it still has a long way to maturity. Take for example the lack of accountability and responsibility for what is being reported and presented to the public. Media accountability defined as the process by which media organizations may be expected or obliged to render an account of their activities to their constituents (Pintak and Ginges 2009). This lack of accountability became apparent when the Iraqi reporter took liberty in throwing his shoes at President Bush during a press conference which he was allowed to attend because of his profession (BBC 2008). The reporter claimed that he was exercising his freedom of expression. Throwing a shoe at someone in the Arab society is considered one of the most humiliating actions for the shoe receiving individual. The Arab traditions obligate its members to refrain from such humiliating behaviors particularly when it comes
to authority figures. Some people commenting on the story on Al-Arabiya website stated that such an action during Saddam Hussein’s regime may have resulted in the execution of the journalist.

While this was an action of one person under special circumstances, it is often reported on the news that lawsuits are being filed against reporters and their organizations for reporting wrong or misleading news in the Arab world. The latest of these was the report broadcasted by Amr Adib on his television show Al-Qahera Al-Youm where Adib criticized the Egyptian national soccer team players for bringing prostitutes to their hotel rooms in South Africa after their game with Italy. When the team threatened to file a lawsuit against him for making false accusations, he made an official apology (Hussein 2008). The New York Times reported on October 7, 2009 that the weekly independent newspaper, Al Balagh Al Gadid in Egypt, has been banned after reporting that three prominent Egyptian actors were caught in a prostitution network for homosexuals. The Egyptian Higher Council for Journalism said it decided to ban the newspaper after considering the reports forwarded to the general prosecutor by the actors, who stressed that Al Balagh Al Gadid was aiming to damage their reputations. The actors sued the newspaper and won the case on the ground that the newspaper had no evidence for what was published.

Reuters reported on February 2, 2010, that the United Arab Emirates court fined Al-Arabiya an amount equivalent to $27,230 for shelving Saudi prince interview. The Dubai based channel failed to adhere to a media code of ethics and damaged the social status of Prince Saif Al-Islam bin Saud when it advertised the interview even but never broadcast the interview. Al-Arabiya flew the prince to Dubai, recorded the interview and advertised that the interview would soon be broadcasted but that never happened for unidentified reasons. The prince sued the station and won the case (Reuters 2010).

This is becoming a major issue in the Arab world where news is often published but it is either later found to be untrue or not supported. Fandy (2007) reported several cases where TV and radio news stations take news items from other sources such as Al-Jazeera and report them as their own without checking their validity or credibility of information. This is causing major frustration for the Arabs who are so bombarded by a large amount of information that they have to sift through and decide which one to trust. This is also creating an issue for the Arab states’ legal systems that have to deal with these issues that may have not come before the courts before. For example, on February 10, 2010, Al-Arabiya reported that a Dubai court had for the very first time ever to deal with a case relating to insult on Facebook. A case brought to this court where an individual accused another of posting pictures of him and including unacceptable comments about him on Facebook. The court ruled in favor of the plaintiff asking the defendant to pay 3000 Dirham.
The Arab world has recently witnessed one of the most talked about uprisings in history where discontent among millions of Arabs across the region has resulted in revolutions and loss of life. These revolutions so far have brought down the regime of Egypt’s 30 year rule of Mubarak and 23 year rule of Ben Ali of Tunisia. Social media and particularly Facebook have played a significant role in aiding these revolutions by providing a venue where organizers of protests were able to communicate with their supporters and the outside world (http://socialtuts.com/how-social-media-mobilized-the-arab-revolution/).

For example the well known Egyptian Facebook page named We are all Khaled Said which can be found at: http://www.facebook.com/elshaheeed.co.uk is believed to have played a significant role in the Egyptian revolution by proving and emphasizing news that was not being emphasized in the main stream Egyptian media. This particular page provided locals with four things: First, access to what was happening on the Egyptian streets in terms of police brutality and mistreatments of the people which millions can identify with; second, it provided victims of those acts a way of reporting and sharing their experience and pain with others in the country and abroad. Third, this webpage provided people with uncensored footage and video clips coming directly from either victims or witnesses of the horrific acts taking place in the country. Because these news items were coming from regular people, they were viewed as more credible. This appealed to the confused society of Egypt who did not know who or what to believe. Finally, this page provided unlimited space to what or how much could be shared. There we thousands and thousands of posts on this page a day attracting a large number of people and documents to be shared. Therefore, social media and particularly Facebook has played a very significant role in aiding the Egyptian revolution.

These revolutions are likely to bring additional significant changes to media landscape in the Arab world. For example, Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces which is currently governing and running the county after the resignation of Mubarak has promised that it will ensure that Egypt transition into a democratic state (New York Times, 2011). While these revolutions are likely to hold a very positive promise for the region, the interaction between media and cultural values will likely prove to be a long road ahead. For example, while it is very noticeably how Al-Ahram Newspaper (the oldest news paper in Egypt) has significantly changed how to report news now compared to the Mubarak era significant challenges still exist. For example, we talked above about the lack of professionalism among reporters in the Arab world and while the new revolutions are likely to provide them with additional freedom to reporting the news, this will not address the problem of professionalism among reporters. This is likely to take time as the media market becomes more competitive and independent from the influence of the state.
While it is hard to assess the impact of the uprisings and revolutions in the Arab world, it is clear that the idea of confusion and frustration discussed above is likely not only to continue but may even increase. For example, the Committee to Protect Journalists stated on April 13, 2011 that a new requirement by the Egyptian military that local print media obtain approval for all mentions of the armed forces before publication is the single worst setback for press freedom in Egypt since the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in February (http://www.cpj.org/2011/04/substantial-setback-for-press-freedom-in-egypt.php). The next few months and maybe years will shape and direct these confusions where rules will become clearer as to how the media should interact with the state and the public. While these revolutions hold a promise for more freedom and democracy for the Arab region, we still see countries that are totally closed to the outside media such as Syria where an uprising is taking place while this paper is being written. Only time will tell whether dreams of democracy in the Arab world would come true.

CONCLUSION

We believe Arab media has made a significant and noticeable progress in the last 15 years. This progress is likely to continue for the future which will allow this media to grow and expand even more. As the Arab mass media become more sophisticated, its stakeholders such as governments, religious groups and citizens will have to figure out the rules of the game and define the rules by which each group has to play by. The availability of media with its new programs and trends is creating a significant confusion for the Arab society. Members of this society are now exposed and have access to things that were formidable in the past. In the very least, this is likely to cause people in the Arab society to question their cultural values and wonder if these traditions fit the modern life that millions are dreaming of and looking for. For example, Saudi Arabia has forbidden the mix of sexes in public places for decades. Males and females attend different schools, gather in segregated areas and are not allowed to be seen together in public unless they are related. In 2009, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia opened the very first educational institution (King Abdullah University) in the kingdom where males and females can attend school side by side. This, however, has not come without cost. There has been a great debate not only in Saudi Arabia but across the Arab world as to whether this move is in line with Islamic teachings. While some support the move, many others question whether this will be the break of the Saudi traditional society that will lead to many other challenges to the traditional culture of Saudi Arabia such as dating, premarital sex, etc. One can’t help but wonder about the role of the media in bringing this very progressive step to Saudi Arabia. The mix of the sexes in Saudi Arabia should not be viewed just as allowing males and females to study side by side for the
issue is much deeper than that. There is a host of other issues that the Saudi society will have to deal with that will be brought to the surface by this move. For example, dating and one’s ability to choose his/her future husband or wife. The family currently plays a major role in that choice where the parents usually make the initial choice for their child. Moreover, the kingdom has, according to Islamic teachings, forbade males and females to be in a secluded area by themselves such as a room, an office or any type of any excluded area. How will this be handled in this new sitting where males and females are studying side by side and having to interact with each other and their faculty members who might be of the opposite sex? Therefore, there is a host of issues that will accompany this progressive move and these are sensitive and deep issue for the society of Saudi Arabia.

While the mass media has created confusion in the Arab society, it has also played a significant role in impacting the culture. Arab media is venturing into territories that were marked off limit previously and it is asking and dealing with questions that were not allowed to be dealt with in public in any form or shape previously. The impact of the mass media on cultural change is well documented (Andersen & DiDomenico 1992); therefore, as Arab media expands and gains more freedom, it will have a great opportunity in brining significant change to the Arab culture. While cultural change is not easy to come by, we believe the spread of this mass media brought by the technological advances is likely to speed up this process of cultural change and make it a reality. One has to be cautious in distinguishing between the cultural aspects and religious aspects of the Arab culture. While even the religious aspects are also changing as we stated in the University of Kind Abdulla’s example, change in this area is likely to be much slower compared to other areas of the Arab culture. The religious aspects of the Arab culture are likely to see the slowest change and strongest resistance and this has contributed significantly to the current tension in the Arab society. The Arab society does not tolerate those who question or doubt the validity of their religious beliefs so one can imagine the tension these new ideas is creating in society. This is also likely to widen the gap between the young and the older members of this society as both are likely to respond to these new ideas different with the young possibly being more tolerant and comfortable with dealing with the hard questions. While only time will tell, there is no doubt that the mass media is having a significant impact on the Arab culture and technology is assisting a great deal in the significance, magnitude and wide spread of this impact.

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The Impact of Technology on Arab Media Expansion and Culture

Morris Kalliny


AN IMMIGRANT, NOT A WORKER: 
DEPICTION OF THE 2006 ‘DAY WITHOUT AN IMMIGRANT’ PROTESTS IN PRINTED MEDIA OF THE UNITED STATES

Teal Rothschild

News media, pro-immigrant organizations, and anti-immigrant organizations writing about the Day Without an Immigrant (DWI) Protests within the year of the 2006 protests are analyzed in order to understand narratives on labor activism of documented and undocumented immigrants in the United States. DWI protests marked an anticipated ‘turning point’ in collective action among immigrant workers in the United States. Content analysis was employed to ascertain the portrayal of the protesters by a variety of print media sources. Both univariate and multivariate procedures utilized find that charged rhetoric of racialized anti-immigrant sentiment is present in most sources regardless of the ‘political leaning’ of the press, reaffirming the status of ‘other’ to both documented and undocumented migrants in the United States in the present day. Protesters ultimately were not seen as workers, but solely as immigrants. The findings illustrate the continued marginalization and racialization of more recent immigrant workers in the United States.

Keywords: immigrant, racialization, anti-immigrant sentiment, press, worker

Starting in the 1970s, the United States experienced a sharp rise in official and public sentiment in favor of boundary enforcement and immigration restriction in the United States.

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Operation Gatekeeper had its roots in the 1970s, cemented in the 1990s, and the leaders of INS were more likely to have military type backgrounds, rather than government backgrounds. Gatekeeper was not only a boundary-enforcement strategy, but a crystallization of a variety of temporal, social and spatial trends. According to Nevins, (2002) “The manner in which American society talks and writes about unauthorized immigration has changed significantly over the last several decades, entailing a growing emphasis on the legality of migrants. Through the 1930s, the categories employed to describe unauthorized immigrants were such that they differentiated largely between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ or ‘ineligible’ immigrants. The contemporary emphasis on ‘illegals’ is of a relatively recent origin” (p. 95-96). Ironically, given past recruitment of Mexican workers, as illustrated above, a period of hostility, largely directed towards undocumented Mexican immigrants, emerged in the early 2000s and it reached its apogee with the filing of HR 4437 by Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) on December 6, 2005. On December 16th it passes the House of Representatives with a vote of 239 to 182, and the bill moved to the Senate. The bill died in the U.S. Senate by failing to reach the floor before the 109th Congress ended. The proposed legislation called for the construction of new border security fences along portions of the 2,000 mile United States-Mexico border, and if successful, HR4437 would have made living in the United States a felony for undocumented migrants.

POLITICS OF MIGRATION

Due to increases in globalization and the move in the United States from a domestic service economy, to a global transnational service economy, work itself and the movement of people has radically shifted. As an example, thousands of immigrant laborers get jobs on the curb at more than two hundred day-labor sites across Los Angeles every morning. This massive reorganization and re-conceptualization of immigration and work has led to a new set of issues in the United States that go beyond ‘the work’ and the ‘work place’: renewed racialization of immigrants, increase of anti-immigrant sentiment, and changing conceptions of nationality, home, family, and work. (Bacon, 2008). According to Driscoll, (1999):

The United States has always had a schizophrenic approach to immigration based on ‘race’ and ‘economic need’; we celebrate European immigration, while degrading that by people of color from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Yet, even toward those we denigrate, this varies across time by intensity. Sometimes, immigration, and especially illegal immigration, is tolerated, encouraged, or ignored, and sometimes it is met with considerable hostility. A pertinent historical example is the case of Mexican migration to the United States. The first bracero (day laborer) programs in the
1940s were guest worker programs that would permit migration of Mexicans into the United States under contracts, in order to relieve needing sectors in the United States. Mexican workers were intentionally sought after through mass media such as newspaper, radio, and through word of mouth. (p. 22).

**THE DAY WITHOUT AN IMMIGRANT (DWI)**

This work addresses: how were the protesters portrayed during Day Without an Immigrant protests?, how does political leaning/bias shape the portrayal of these protesters?, and finally, how do these findings shed light on current immigrant sentiment and racialization of Latinos in the United States? The response to HR 4437 by many immigrants and their supporters began almost immediately. Activists were starting to organize to create immigration reform for immigrant workers and their families. On February 14, 2006, one of the first protests erupted in Philadelphia with a walkout from restaurant workers. Fewer than 2000 people attended the protest, but it gained national attention (Ouellette, 2008). A few weeks later, more protests emerged in Chicago, urged on by local DJ’s on Spanish language radio stations. (Ouellette, 2008) On March 10, 100,000 people gathered in Chicago’s downtown city center (Ouellette 2008). In Los Angeles in February, many met to form a coalition in response to the anti-immigrant legislation. Soon afterwards, grassroots groups and members of clergy started to organize. They contacted the SEIU, whose membership of janitors and security guards include large numbers of newer immigrants. Some think that this brought credibility to protests. Email, phone, word of mouth, coverage in ethnic and mainstream news, and Spanish-language radio djs — got the word out. Leaders said that they had developed coalitions that would set aside differences among immigrant groups for what they regarded as an important galvanizing issue. The events started to have a snowball effect.

By Mid-march there was a more solidified mobilization among documented and undocumented immigrants and their supporters for rights of all immigrant workers. Specific coalitions were materializing and drawing connections with one another. On March 25, 2006 an estimated 500,000 people protested in Los Angeles, with hundreds and thousands of protesters in other cities in the United States. This morphed into the March 25 Coalition. The March 25, 2006 protests were noted for their peaceful nature. Groups such as the Latino Movement USA, Hermidad Mexicana Nacional, and the Coalition for Human Immigration Rights responded quickly (Ouellette, 2008). They were soon joined by regional and national organizations, advocating both work stoppages and consumer boycotts. On April 27th, the California State Senate approved a measure to endorse a statewide economic and educational boycott. Students were encouraged to stay in school.

The initial response of the boycott and strike provoked controversy as soon as it was
proposed. The L.A. major, Antonio Villaraigosa, (the first Mexican American mayor since the 19th century) called for children to attend school. He also urged protesters to carry American flags, and not flags of their home countries. This all laid the groundwork for the Day Without an Immigrant protests in May of 2006. President Bush urged immigrants not to boycott, and asked them to protest after work and on the weekend. Due to the centrality of California in the protests, Schwarzenegger said a boycott would ‘hurt everyone’. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offered Mass as an alternative to boycotting, and suggested that churches toll their bells in memory of immigrants who died trying to come to the U.S. The AFL-CIO also endorsed protests, saying that the HR 4437 “isn’t the answer” to immigration issues.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform condemned the rallies. (Oullette 2008). Chung-Wha Hong, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition was a prominent supporter and activist in this movement. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) took a cautious stand of discouraging truancy from school, and encouraging participants to get pre-approval from work. Many anti-war, left-wing, socialist and communist groups endorsed the boycott. The Act Now to Stop War and End Racism Coalition provided signs and mobilized supporters to attend demonstrations. The ACLU took no official stance.

*The Great American Boycott: Day Without an Immigrant: El Gran Paro Estadounidense* was a one day boycott of United States schools and businesses by documented and undocumented immigrant activists of mostly Latin American origin that took place on May 1, 2006. It was a one day strike, and intended social movement, but has morphed rather into collective action in fits and starts. This date was consciously chosen to coincide with May Day, International Workers Day observed as a national holiday in almost all countries except the United States; May Day globally celebrates workers and their struggles for a better world. The Day without an Immigrant (DWI) name is a reference to the 2004 political satire film: A Day without a Mexican. It is estimated that over 1 million people participated in the demonstrations. There were people in 39 of the 50 states that participated in DWI-related activities. High rates of absenteeism were reported in the LA School District. There were reported plant closings of Perdue Chicken and Tyson Foods, as well as other prominent companies. Across the United States, thousands of immigrants and their supporters attended protests and demonstrations — many wearing white to signify peace. Many also waved United States flags.

Some groups organized counter-demonstrations in various cities to coincide with the day’s events. Some encouraged people to buy United States only goods. Southern California talk radio hosts John and Ken called for “The Great American Spend-a-Lot” Membership in the Minutemen Project increased due in part to the backlash from the protests. On May 3, the Minutemen embarked on a caravan across America in an effort to bring attention to
the need for border enforcement. Minutemen hosted rallies across the country starting 5/3 in L.A. They also started to construct a six-foot high barbed wire fence along the border in Arizona. Minuteman founder, Jim Gilchrist “It’s intimidation when a million people march down main streets in our major cities under the Mexican flag. This will backfire”. The You Don’t Speak For Us coalition was formed in response to the boycott, composed of Latinos who did not like protesters claiming they were speaking for all Latinos. According to Chavez, “Although U.S. flags could also be seen among the student protesters, there was an immediate and visceral response to the Mexican flags on radio talk shows and later among television pundits…” (p. 156).

**IMMIGRANT SENTIMENT**

Current psychological perspectives on sentiment include Pettigrew, Wagner, and Christ, (2007) who collectively question whether or not the predictors of anti-immigration attitudes are consistent across countries, or not, and argue they are similar. They also argue that anti-immigration attitudes also correlate with political conservatism and alienation, economic deprivation, and especially with authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and perceived collective threat. Despite the differences in histories of each country, there is a shared sentiment. They argued that shared sentiment is due to: the fact that the process of immigration invokes comparable cultural, political, and economic threats to the receiving nation. Secondly, anti-immigration sentiment correlates highly with inter-group prejudice, which is remarkably similar across nations. This is most helpful in unpacking the importance and/or lack of importance of actual source when deconstructing how the DWI protesters are portrayed. Sociologist Immanuel Ness enlarges the concept of sentiment to try to explain the development of social norms and social facts. The sentiment of people of the United States about immigration and immigrants more specifically, shapes the scholarship on attitudes towards immigrants in the present day. The May 2006 New York Times/CBS News Poll shows that 53% of Americans responded that “illegal immigrants mostly take the jobs Americans don’t want.” Research by George Borjas of Economics and Social Policy at Harvard, (2001) shows that the average United States resident’s wealth is increased by less than 1% by illegal immigration. Although undocumented workers are seen as a threat to ‘American’s wallets’, despite this perception, the scholarship illustrates that most people in the United States would not see any wage increases if undocumented workers disappeared. Opposition to immigration that becomes politically important is triggered by the presence of an immigrant community in conjunction with economic recession. It is aggravated by the degree to which the migrant community challenges the pre-eminence of the native community (Money 1997).
Anti-immigrant sentiment is highest when unemployment is highest, and vice-versa. Immigrant workers do not directly replace native workers. Instead the employers undermine established wage and working standards through industrial restructuring. This can take the form of union busting, relocation, outsourcing, the establishment of subsidiaries, or through the entrance of new capital and the creation of new firms (Ness, 2005). Immigrant social networks established through ascriptive ties derived from heritage and through labor market niches provide the basis for worker militancy by solidifying and intensifying solidarities at the workplace (Ness 2005). The attention to ‘facts’ here are helpful in alluding to the power of ‘myth’ in the construction of the immigrant as ‘the other’ — stealer of jobs. Much of the framing of newer immigrants, and the protesters in DWI more specifically that carry nativist tones originate from nativist movements vehemently opposed to accepting newer immigrants into the United States. Presently, the Minutemen are the most well-known and cohesive of the nativist groups. The Minutemen utilized media attention to help frame the distinction between ‘citizens’ and ‘aliens’ to shape public discourse on immigration and to push the U.S. House of Representatives to pass immigration reform proposals. (Chavez 2008).

**Methodology**

The conceptual content analysis focused on N= 159 articles with any mention of the DWI protests, found in 66 separate publications chosen for their mass readership and immediate coverage of the event. All sources were ‘mainstream’ in that they each are viewed as ‘legitimate’ press sources that distribute their journalism to a national audience. The selected articles are categorized into broad types: news sources, pro-immigrant articles, anti-immigrant articles, and labor articles. Institutes and Organizations that possessed a mission relevant to immigration and/or labor were also included. Appendix 1 lists the publication name, type of publication, and the number of articles retrieved from each publication. The media sources varied intentionally to ascertain whether or not the ‘position’ of the source shaped the portrayal of the documented and undocumented immigrant activists involved in the DWI protests.

The coding scheme was designed to capture both frequency of occurrence and thematic content related to DWI. The content issues include relevant data concerning the protests and perception of workers. This includes support for DWI, conservative sentiment, liberal sentiment, and viewing the protesters as workers. Appendix 2 lists the complete 23 content issues in the larger study. Appendix 3 includes the complete thematic concepts. These thematic concepts are standard concepts used when trying to detect tone, meaning, and relationships between concepts. Twelve of the 23 content issues and 2 (Ideal Type and Ought) of the 6 thematic concepts were tested here to determine how political leaning,
perceived immigration status of protesters, and perception of the impact of the protests shaped each other. Attention to these variables and their relationship to one another sheds light on how the press is in fact presenting the protesters of DWI.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Pearson Correlation Coefficients were calculated in order to assess the relation between each of the twelve independent variables included for analysis in the current study (Figure 1). In order to further evaluate the significance of the variables on Support DWI separate ANOVA’s were calculated. Significant main effects were found for Morality F(22 ,70) = 9.83, p < 0.000, Conservative IM F(53 ,123) = 13.62, p < 0.00, Liberal IM F(36,99) = 11.37, p < 0.00, Welfare F(6 ,56) = 3.20 , p < 0.05, and DWI Workers F( 28,44) = 19.93, p <0.000. There were no significant differences for Ought F(2 ,151) = 0.46 , p = 0.76, Ideal Value F(2.251) = 0.30, p = 0.88, Legal F(1 ,101) = 0.21 , p = 0.93, Outsource Global F(2, 114) = 0.70 , p = 0.60, Explicit Local F( 3.66) = 1.69, p = 0.16, and Explicit National F( 1,37) =0.61 , p = 0.66.

A linear regression analysis was conducted with Support DWI as the criterion variable. The significant variables from the univariate analysis were entered into the model.
The overall model was significant ($R^2 = 0.43$, $F(38,50) = 18.74$, $p < 0.000$). Support DWI was significantly associated with Morality, Conservative IM, Liberal IM, and DWI Workers (Figure 2). Welfare DWI which was significant in the univariate analysis was not a significant independent predictor of Support DWI.

The categories that showed correlations in relation to levels of support for DWI and its protesters include both the conceptual and thematic variables. The categories that showed significance are: support of DWI, conservative rhetoric on immigration, liberal rhetoric on immigration, morality, welfare (referring to welfare of ‘Americans’ due to protest), outsourcing relevant to DWI, protesters viewed as workers, and explicit national relevant for DWI.

**DISCUSSION**

**Political Leaning of Press**

This work sheds light on how anti-immigration sentiment is measured in the media. The independent predictors of DWI support illustrate the associations that are ‘fed to the public’ regarding immigration, across a variety of press publications. The political leaning of the press shows the expected correlation of support or disdain for the protests. The liberal press is more likely to present support of the protests, while more conservative press is more likely to show disdain for the protests. An interesting shared finding across the political spectrum of the press is the propensity to describe the protesters in terms that do not include ‘worker’. However, the content included in the Press category in contrast to the Institute category did differ significantly. The Institute category was more explicit in their pro or anti-immigrant stance, while the newspapers, regardless of political orientation, were more
An Immigrant, Not a Worker

Teal Rothschild

 implicit in their pro or anti-immigrant stance.

A protest that could objectively be described as a day ‘bread and butter’ strike, is instead viewed as a political protest involving ‘immigrants’ and ‘illegals’. The protesters are represented as agitators, disrupters, and aliens — not as legitimate workers. Despite the right-wing pundits assertion that ‘the left’ is ‘soft’ on immigrants, evidence here suggests that the mainstream press in America does not portray these protesters as ‘workers’ foremost. The media framing of the protest and protesters is generally consistent across all sources as an immigrant issue, not as a labor issue. These findings provide quantitative data supporting that political leaning of press source does not have an affect on what language is used to describe the immigrant protesters.

It was salient that there was a of lack presence of “labor” or “organized labor” in relation to DWI support. This provides more data for understanding how it is today that organized labor has not been successful, for a myriad of reasons, to organize collectively with immigrant workers.

**Racialization of Immigrant Workers**

The framing of the protesters as ‘immigrants’ rather than workers facilitates dehumanizing rhetoric, providing social distance between the act of contributing to the local and global economy as a worker and fostering the ideology of the invasion of ‘illegals’. The discursive turn is found in ‘illegal’ — the stripping of subject-hood and the claiming on an object or a concept for an entire group of people entering the United States in search of work. The virulent depiction of the protesters as ‘the other’ signifies that the organizations are not on opposite sides of the continuum as is expected, and that the dominant ideology of immigrant as ‘the other’ is so widespread, that it is a legitimate entity, and not a fringe belief, as has been previously understood.

Future research needs to ask how anti-immigrant sentiment shows up in the press, not if. conservative and liberal rhetoric are important to examine as part of the same process, if on different sides of the continuum. As evidence in this research, all politicized language is shaping anti-immigrant sentiment. More work is needed on how individuals and groups are affected by perceptions by immigrant activism across the social science disciplines. In terms of the representation of DWI protesters as workers, the lack of personhood across a wide spectrum of media publications is a defining factor is support of present links between dehumanization and discrimination. Finally, continued attention to how structural change shapes individual and group identity construction is needed. Future articles from this data set will explicitly examine the absence of organized labor in the DWI protests, ownership of activism among the activists, and identity construction of activists in the press.
REFERENCES


## Appendix 1: The Publications Coded in the study

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### Appendix 2: Complete List of Content Issues

- Support for DWI*
- Liberal Rhetoric on Immigration*
- Public Welfare DWI*
- Explicit: National Issues*
- Outsourcing/Global*
- Explicit: National Issues*
- Thematic Issue: Ought*
- Patriotism DWI
- #1 Labor and New Immigrants
- Threat to Americans
- Labor should support new immigrant protests
- Skilled vs. Unskilled workers

*Each of these variables are tested in the current study.

Conservative Rhetoric on Immigration*
- Morality and Immigrant Protesters*
- Legal vs. Illegal Workers*
- DWI actors as workers*
- Explicit: Local Issues*
- Thematic Issue: Ideal*
- Historical Reference to Labor
- Fear in DWI
- Decline of labor relevant to DWI
- Support of Organized Labor
- DWI as Historical Moment
- Historical Reference to Immigration
Appendix 3: Thematic Content Analysis Rubric

ACTION/NORM: normative patterns of social behavior

GUIDE: social/emotional actions

OUGHT: moral imperative*

CONTROL: words about limiting action

WORK: task or activity oriented

IDEAL VALUE: culturally defined virtues, goals, and values*
IMPACT OF VOYEURISM ON INDIAN CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Puja Khatri and Yukti Ahuja

Voyeurism is a growing trend in India and the audiences have welcomed the sensational twist in their media habits. The term has no blatant presence; it is weaved with the reality show concept in India. The issue under study is if voyeurism is hitting at the cultural fabric and then slowly eroding it. Questions that the following work deliberates upon are — have Indians developed a taste for voyeurism? How the day to day incidents of our personal lives become object of attention for others that they sit back and laugh at someone’s misery with popcorn and cola in their hands? Is it harmless entertainment or has some implications for the society? Does it signal a disturbing trend? By making us keen observers and also making us responsible for choosing the winners on the show, are we compromising on social control? These are a few arguments that the study attempts to resolve. Research has been carried out with a self constructed questionnaire and the data has been analyzed with the help of spss tools. Some major findings of the research are that the more reality programming children watch, the more they will exhibit digressed behavior as per the Indian societal values and norms, the more definite the impact of reality shows on Indian societal values and norms, the more will be the viewing unease and the greater the depiction of cheap thrills in reality shows, the greater will be the intensity of cultural change.

Keywords: voyeurism, Indian media, reality television, society
Voyeurism in clinical psychology has been defined as the sexual interest in or spying on people and watching their intimate behaviors, which includes all the activities which are private in nature. The sexual undertones associated with the term have been derived from the century old literature which discusses this as a guilt observation. The factor of guilt emerges because the subject of observation is unaware of being followed secretly by someone else. Fundamentally, voyeurism (from the French *voyeur*, “one who looks”) can take several forms, but its principal characteristic is that the voyeur does not normally relate directly with the subject of their interest, who is often unaware of being observed. The voyeur may observe the subject from a distance, or may use peep-holes, hidden cameras, secret mirrors. When done openly it may or may not be appreciated, depending on the other person(s) being exhibitionistic. Non-consensual voyeurism is an invasion of privacy.

The voyeurism that this study deals with is away from the psychiatric domain, which defines voyeurism as a psychopathological condition characterized by becoming sexually aroused from the covert observation of others while they have sex, or are nude (Freund, Watson & Rienzo, 1988). Rather than emphasizing sexual deviance, recent accounts of contemporary culture conceptualize voyeurism as a common (and not solely sexual) pleasure derived from access to private details (Metzl, 2004). For this research work, voyeurism has been used in its more popular sense where the term has close linkages with the reality television. The pervasiveness of the reality shows on all popular channels has made the Indian audiences succumb to the taste of voyeurism. Media trends come and go, just as the last decade brought us the advent of the teen melodrama, this one that is quickly wrapping up has ushered in the era of reality television. While the term “reality” is a misnomer when it comes to this genre of media, it is easily identifiable by the television audience. The spectrum of shows includes personality contests, talent hunts, peeping cameras, adventure competitions and many more. Some shows allow individuals to become voyeurs, to watch in horror from the comfort of their living rooms as the sordid or disturbing details of people’s lives are aired on the small screen. Other reality shows provide the pleasure of watching people daring acts (Khatron Ke Khiladi), spending lives in jungles (Is Jungle Se Mujhe Bachao), haunted destinations (The Chair) while some others promising expose of personal relationships (emotional atyachaar), public display of love and affection (Splitsvilla) where as others could be dramatic experiences of people put in strange situations, may be a couple with a child (not their own) to baby sit for the real life parents of the kid (Pati Patni Aur Woh). The shows promise to provide all the thrills with no visible

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For the reference of international readers, these shows are the Indian versions of the popular international reality shows.
damage done to the psyche of the audiences. Some of these shows have reached such high popularity statistics that they are being produced every season because the viewers eagerly await their screening. Shows like Big Boss and Swayamwar have had multiple seasons and the TAM data approves of their escalating TRPs. Though most of them are concepts emulated from the foreign shows, the ingredients of Indian masala makes them a delight for the Indian viewers.

Reality TV or VTV (Voyeur TV) is an example of media voyeurism or mediatized observation, it shares some qualities with Candid Camera, which first aired on national television in 1948. Candid Camera is considered to be the forerunner of “reality slapstick” shows, such as America’s Funniest Home Videos, which eventually familiarized audiences with the exhibition of domestic video recordings in a mass media TV context. It was the first in making people comfortable with private images on public screens and familiarizing them with images of actions by others who were unaware of being filmed.

The deliverables of the experience were such that viewers became conscious of themselves that it could happen to them as well. Such a state of mind and the intrusion of the camera into everyday life possibly made people more conscious of their actions in public settings and thus encouraging them to respond to others as if their actions were being taped. Perhaps the show was the first TV show to incorporate self-scrutiny or self-surveillance into the stage-like everyday life. The original intention with Candid Camera was to show comparisons of human behavior in real life and in drama and to give the audience some food for thought about their own “real me.” This was based on the premises that self-image is two-dimensional, consisting of what one feels about himself on the inside and what he sees of himself on the outside. Mike Dann, then Vice President of CBS network programming, said there was a “tremendous impetus to combine the real world and the entertainment world.” Almost three decades later, reality TV hit the airwaves with The Real World along with many shows based not on humorous gags, as was Candid Camera, but on vérité voyeurism. In January 1973, PBS aired the first reality TV show to feature “real” people and their everyday “reality”: An American Family, a show centering on the Loud family of Santa Barbara, California. It documented the lives of the family members for one year — unscripted, unrehearsed.

The reference to western shows has been made because they have been the harbingers of this genre and most of the reality shows running on Indian television are a concept replication of their western counterparts with a slight difference in the contextual setups. In fact it has been seen lately that reality shows are meant to cater to the voyeuristic appetite of the Indian viewers.
The Changing Dynamics of Indian Society

Thirty years ago, the question, Does television shape culture or merely reflect it? Was of considerable interest to many scholars and social critics because they were trying to identify the connecting links however, the question has largely disappeared, as television has gradually become our culture. A culture which is fast turning into a vast arena for show business. According to television producers around the world, the ‘best’ and most profitable genre of television, for business, is what they call ‘reality TV’. In fact it is so good in terms of income revenue, producers admit, that it is extremely hard for a television station to commission ideas which lie outside of the reality TV spectrum. It is obvious, to audience world wide, that the genre has become a trend that is influencing all other areas of popular entertainment. The fact that it involves “real people”, plucked from obscurity and turned into stars.

Though the genre has been successful in making inroads into the Indian culture. It can not be ignored that producers have innovated a formula for dirt cheap, easy-to-create content that’s surely less predictable and more addictive than soap operas. “Reality” shows require extremely little writing, acting or technical production and yet have been able to replace the humdrum of popular television shows. This explicitly proves one point that people like high voltage drama in a staged “real life” situation in a novel location. What is debatable here is the term “Watching” which allows the audiences to live vicariously, unconsciously comparing themselves to others and providing a positive affirmation that “thank god its not me”. The addiction to this genre is spreading at an amazing pace. Why? Because watching the psychological journey of extreme emotion is hypnotic in nature and more so when you know that you are sitting snuggled in the comforts of our homes.

“Reality TV”-style social media presence can be a fast and very effective way to build large audiences, simply because the space is not only of viewers’ interest but also the TV producers along with social media producers and marketers who have learnt to capitalize on the “reality drama” and for all it is a profitable venture because the cost is being borne by someone else who is ready to publicize his personal life. As much as we want to be able to witness every excruciating moment of the contestant’s lives, we can only do so at the expense of their privacy. We seem to find the thought of watching other people irresistible, even if they are not particularly interesting. Another motivating factor for this kind of indulgence is to invade the celebrities’ lives. Perhaps the lure of watching ‘celebrities’ on these shows is to be able to witness the rich and famous in more normal settings, to enable us to see what they do during the day, do they have similar routines like us? And at the end what we wish to prove is that they are just regular people like the rest of us.

The concept has given birth to the study of many branches of psychology which have
close linkages with the motivations to watch voyeuristic television. For instance, Schadenfreude is pleasure derived from the misfortunes of others, whether it is a mental injury or a physical injury. While watching the shows the giggle and shot of exhilaration we get when things turn for the worst for reality television stars is the moment of experience. When they get caught lying, we smile. When they’re embarrassed, we’re warm. When they get eliminated from the show, we’re delighted. We can call it awful, cruel, or disgusting, but admit it. Reality shows hence have the gratification appeal quite parallel to the experience of voyeurism.

In a sense, television has created a universe of what some have called “hyper-reality”: the reality of television seems to be more real to viewers than real reality. This intertwines with another feature of the television society: the appearance of what some have labelled the “simulacra”: copies without originals. Because the electronic images seen on the television screen look real, the mind is captive to them — unless viewers constantly remind themselves that they are not real, which spoils the viewing experience. In this world people sit transfixed by what is essentially an electronic box, at the cost of living in the reality around them, face to face with other people. In short, television fosters a consumerist society and creates a society of people detached from their own real world.

The irony of consumption is that it is rarely overtly forced, and is almost always ostensibly voluntary, so it is dangerous to imply a one-way cause-and-effect relationship between voyeuristic television and society.

This genre of television programming has made waves in the western world because of the cultural adaptability. They see on television what is close to their real lives. However, copy pasting a concept to another society which has a different cultural background calls for significant analysis.

**Literature Review**

Several studies suggest that television viewers themselves perceive reality programs to be both exhibitionistic and voyeuristic (Hill, 2005), and acknowledge that they are drawn to this voyeuristic component of reality programs (Johnson-Woods, 2002). Other studies focusing on the psychological appeal of reality television provide basis for positive association between the tendency to use media for voyeuristic purposes and the consumption of reality programs with the help of preliminary empirical evidence (Nabi, Biely, Morgan & Stitt; 2003; Nabi, Stitt, Halford & Finnerty, 2006; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007). Reality television is a catchall phrase alluding to many different formats (Brenton & Cohen, 2003; Dovey, 2000). Accordingly, partly because of electronic media, curious peeking into the private lives of others has become a defining characteristic of contemporary society.
Impact of Voyeurism on Indian Cultural Environment

Puja Khatri and Yukti Ahuja


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Despite growing interest in non-pathological voyeurism, there is very little research exploring its psychological dimensions (Rye & Meaney, 2007). In contrast to the covert nature of pathological voyeurism, “normal” voyeurism is satisfied through more acceptable and consensual forms such as films, gossip news and/or webcams (Koskela, 2004; Ytreberg, 2002). The appeal of voyeurism is the pleasure derived from learning about what is typically forbidden or private (Calvert, 2004; Metzl, 2004).

Extant research suggests that genre labels may provide meaningful signals for viewers, influencing their preferences for specific television programs (Hall, 2007; Webster & Wakshlag, 1983). Considered from this perspective, reality programs promise (and partly deliver) the “thrill of seeing something intimate and doing so remotely and without accountability” (Deery, 2004, p. 6). The panoptic mode of observation within which there is an informational asymmetry between the audience member and the program participant, who can’t gaze back at the viewer. This panoptic mode and the perceived distance between the viewer and the target allow the viewer to enjoy the private and the stolen (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

Long before reality television, starting in the 1900s, contemporary society witnessed the birth of the cinematic gaze through which viewers enjoy this panoptic mode of looking (Denzin, 1995). However, reality programs differ from cinema and other forms of content due to the aura of realism and spontaneity they invoke (Calvert, 2004; Ruddock, 2008). It has been shown that some people who are more likely to be curious about others will either engage in social comparison (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999), or regulate their own conduct (self-monitoring) by observing others (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Social comparison researchers suggest that the ultimate goal of social comparison is self-evaluation (White & Lehman, 2005). Similarly, high self-monitors have been found to be sensitive to the behavioral cues of other people primarily for the purposes of self-adjustment and validation (Snyder, 1974).

Media scholar Jon Dovey argues that the yearning for subjectivity, for the personal, for the intimate is the “only remaining response to a chaotic, senseless, out of control world in which the kind of objectivity demanded by grand narratives is no longer possible.” In a similar vein, Georg Simmel argues that the experience of social reality in the modern world is that of retreat, indifference, or nervousness, exacerbated by complex social relations and sensory bombardment. We experience the modern public sphere as one that holds no comfort; so our communicative acts depend upon the performance of more and more open, individual, “authentic” versions of the self. The personal becomes the political, and communications media provide the terrain for the struggle for public visibility. In Dovey’s words, in a world in which objectivity no longer reigns supreme, we’re left with the “politics of the self to keep us ideologically warm.”

With time new representations in media are sought, and new genres explode, such as trauma TV, chat shows, docu-soaps, video diaries, televised tragedies. The new theater
which showcases personal lives just like a spectacle has become a part of everyone’s lives. The voyeuristic and exhibitionist culture is a strange yet potent mix of authenticity and contrivance, pleasure and repulsion. The paradox of voyeurism is contained in the coexistence of revulsion (“Thank God that’s not me!” and “That’s so gross!”) and attraction (“I can’t help watching it!”). In a Bakhtinian sense, reality TV is borne out of our hatred, fear, affection, and desire for the “low”. The grotesque, the debased, the carnivalesque provide a transgressive excitement. Yet these images of the abnormal and the dangerous become symbolically central and transfix audiences.

Reiss (2000a) put forth a comprehensive theory of human motivation, variously called sensitivity theory or the theory of 16 basic desires. The theory borrows heavily from the philosophical ideas of Aristotle (trans. 1953), the theory is applied to understanding reality television. In an effort to identify basic desires, Reiss and Havercamp (1998) asked thousands of people to rate the importance of hundreds of possible life goals. Mathematical factor analyses of these ratings showed that the participants’ responses expressed 16 factors or root meanings. Both exploratory factor analysis (Reiss & Havercamp, 1998) and three confirmatory factor analyses (Havercamp & Reiss, in press; Reiss & Havercamp, 1998) showed the 16-factor solution to basic motivation. The theory suggests that individuals prefer to watch those shows that arouse the joys most important to them. People who are strongly motivated to socialize, for example, should be especially interested in shows that portray groups, fun, or friendship. Those strongly motivated by vengeance should be especially interested in television programs with aggressive content.

The results of a number of studies support the hypothesis that motivational personality traits are linked to viewer preferences (Bryant & Zillmann, 2002). Researchers have shown, for example, that aggressive children are attracted to aggressive television programs (Freedman, 1984), sex-oriented people are attracted to programs with sexual themes (Greenberg & Woods, 1999; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999), religious people watch religious programs (Hoover, 1988), and curious people like to watch the news (Perse, 1992). Inconsistent results have been reported, however, on the question of whether or not viewing gratifies or satiates motives. Aggressive children who view films with aggressive content, for example, sometimes imitate the aggression, rather than show satiation (e.g., Bandura & Walters, 1965; Kenny, 1952).

India’s cultural heritage has its base in Indian values like equality, non violence, respect for elders, for the tools of their trade and family bondage. In spite of the diversity in the Indian continent, these values have been cherished for centuries. In India the family is the most important institution that has survived through the ages. India is a collectivist society that emphasizes family integrity, family loyalty, and family unity. Collectivism is the opposite of individualism; it stands for harmony, interdependence and concern for others. More specifically, collectivism is reflected in greater readiness to cooperate with
family members and extended kin on decisions affecting most aspects of life, including career choice, mate selection, and marriage.

For majority of Indians honesty and integrity come high on the priority list. Respect for all human beings is a very Indian value and it stems from time immemorial. While schools do impart moral education, in the early years it is the parents who have the greater influence on children. Imparting these moral values is part and parcel of the Indian Parenting. Apart from all this, showing compassion, having consideration for others, learning to empathize are priced possessions of Indians. Acquiring a sense of responsibility, accountability and learning to behave as per the expectations of the elders is instilled in him when the child is young.

For this reason adolescence and young adulthood are particularly challenging in the lives of Indian youths. In one way, they desire emancipation and liberation from family but residing in the matrix of the extended family makes it difficult for them to assert themselves and exhibit any independence in thought, action, or behavior. Social changes are gradually occurring but there are norms that most of the individuals in the society abide with. In the traditional Indian family, communication between parents and children tends to be one sided. Children are expected to listen, respect, and obey their parents.

**OBJECTIVE**

When reality TV took off abroad a decade ago, many thought that India would never be a part of the reality boom. But things did not unfold that way. To the voyeuristic delight of its huge television-watching audiences, India’s entertainment channels are showing a range of localized Western reality shows. Indian audiences too have embraced global television trends. While some argue in favour of a ban on shows that may ‘corrupt’ the righteous minds of Indians, there are others who strongly vote in favor of giving viewers the right to choose.

One of the most powerful transmitters of these messages is of course the television; programs of which can be seen around the world to serve many purposes. In most contemporary societies, television is a highly influential medium of popular culture and plays an important role in the social construction of reality (Morgan, 1990). “The two main foreign-owned music television channels operating in India, News Corporation’s Channel [V] and Viacom’s MTV, have followed a market strategy of aggressive “Indianization.” This has taken the form of programs featuring Indian film songs and music videos…” (Juluri, 2002)

Although it may hold true that television which is geared towards youth may support Indian entertainment, these channels directly model the American versions of them;
therefore, enforcing a global Americanized culture upon middle-class Indian youth.

Families were once able to enjoy programs without any discrepancy among parents and children, but with the new media that has transgressed into the Indian market, people can feel a little discomfort. The new trends in television broadcasting can have several influences worth deliberating. Reality Television today gives an access to the personal lives of many, which sometimes give the thrill of watching, sometimes sadistic pleasure and many a times a confidence that we are better off than others. But what impact does this have on the mindset of the people is worth exploring. The aim of this research is directed on the same path, to study the perception of Indian society towards shows voyeuristic television. A few variables under study are impact on the children, reliability of the content, cultural erosion etc. In light of the above discussion, the following hypotheses were considered:

Television has a major impact on children. Since they are toddlers children have a strong preference for cartoons and other programs that have large amounts of violence. As they grow, children are more likely to be sensitive to the television content; they are especially likely to show increased aggression from watching violent television if they believe the violence reflects real life, if they identify with a violent hero, or if they engage in aggressive fantasies.

Television content especially related to reality shows has powerful emotions, inapt language, private moments and much more which is obtrusive for the growing children especially in the background of Indian values that they are imparted with. With the desire for watching things that they are advised not to, leads to a lot of confusion and complexity in their thought process which later shows up in their behavior. Hence the hypotheses:

\[ H_1: \text{The more reality programming children watch, the more they will exhibit digressed behavior as per the Indian societal values and norms} \]

It can not be denied that the content in most reality shows is generated by peeping into others’ lives whether informed or uninformed. Reality programming is founded on the very belief that nothing sells and catches the eye like a bizarre show which challenges human morals with temptation. But the real question is whether the Indian audience is mature enough to handle indianised versions of foreign concepts. In the Indian context, where the entire family sits together to watch television, if such programs will lead to any cultural disturbances, is worth finding out. Therfore,

\[ H_2: \text{The greater the depiction of cheap thrills in reality shows, the greater will be the intensity of cultural change} \]
Reality television broke the monotony to create interesting scripts and out-of-the-box ideas that made them stand out from the run-of-the-mill shows. Although most of the drama-lovers are still glued to their idiot boxes at prime time, reality shows are hogging the limelight.

Besides giving the audience the thrill and excitement of live un-edited action, reality television allows the audience to be a part of the show which makes them even more real. Most of the reality producers make claims that the content is absolutely real and candid without any tampering. For instance Mr Siddharth Basu, CMD, BIG Synergy talked about Sach ka Saamna (Indian version of Moment of Truth) as a powerful and engaging show that can explore people’s relationship with truth (Praise the almighty, 2011). Mr Keertan Adyanthaya, GM and EVP of Star Plus, opines about the same show that is a salute to the bravery and courage of the participants who face the truth paving the way for more people to be honest and look at new beginnings (The Times of India, 14 July 2009) which leads to the hypothesis:

H$_{3}$: Reality shows do not fabricate content for profit/business objective

Social learning is a process that uses the context of a social group and the resulting group dynamics to teach social, emotional, and practical competencies. For instance the reality contests bring about in a viewer, vicarious identification with the protagonist contestant, the fame the hype and the celebrity status. Reality TV shows appeal to a viewer’s desire to blend fact with fantasy, which leads to a more sensational and engaging experience. However, the bitter side of it generally escapes the eyes of a naïve television viewer who tends to forget the cultural backdrop that he belongs to.

H$_{4}$: The more definite the impact of reality shows on Indian societal values and norms, the more will be the viewing unease

**Research Methodology**

To explore the potential impact of voyeuristic television in India, we conducted research in the metropolitan city of Delhi NCR. The universe for the study comprises prime time (8-11 pm) TV viewing audience of Delhi NCR. The technique of Multi-stage sampling was adopted where in the researchers selected 100 households as per their convenience in the first stage. Out of the 100 households the researchers short listed the respondents who were 18 years and above of age and had seen been viewers of reality shows. They qualified only if they were exposed to at least five episodes of two or more than two reality shows. Questionnaires were administered to 110 respondents out of which 106 completed
questionnaires were considered for the study \((N = 106\) respondents). There were 62 males and 44 females with maximum number of respondents falling between the age group of 18 and 35. These were further divided into the categories of students, working professionals, business man, housewives and senior citizens. The questionnaire was self constructed and non-disguised. It had 30 items divided into two parts; Part A comprised demographic details and Part B had questionnaires related to the perception of respondents regarding voyeuristic content in reality shows. The responses were mapped on Likert five-point agreement scale. The questionnaire has been validated by experts in the field.

According to Nunnally (1978, p.245), the instruments used in basic research have reliability of about 0.70 or better, in our case the reliability statistics Cronbach \(\alpha\) has a score of 0.779. To test the validity, the questionnaire was subjected to review by experts in the field of media, entertainment and academics. Also secondary sources of collecting the data have been used which include various websites, journals and magazines.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation shows a significant positive relationship between children watching reality shows and the exhibition of digressed behavior as per the Indian societal values and norms \((.685; p<.01)\). On further probe it was identified that parents are apprehensive about their child’s growth which is largely dependent on medium like television these days. Philosopher Stanley Cavell (1979) observed, “Voyeurism is a retracted edge of fantasy; its requirement of privacy shows its perversity. Television (TV) can be entertaining and educational, and can open up new worlds for kids, giving a chance to travel the globe, learn about different cultures, and gain exposure to ideas viewers may never encounter in their own community. Shows with a pro social message can have a positive effect on kids’ behavior; programs with positive role models can influence viewers to make positive lifestyle changes. However, the reverse can also be true: Kids are likely to learn things from TV that parents don’t want them to learn. TV can affect kids’ health, behavior and family life in negative ways which ultimately puts the society in bad light. After all the children are a part of this society and society is nothing but a group of individuals. If these children who are going to represent the society have been influenced by the reality based programming where they see the ugly part of life much before the age of experiencing the same it can cause great damage to their cognitive behavior.

When children see their favorite characters smoking, drinking, and involved in horrendous situations and other risky behaviors in the shows, it takes a toll on their minds because they understand that children will imbibe such behavior (table 1). Hence the hypothesis is accepted.
The depiction of cheap thrills in reality shows and intensity of cultural change are also strongly related (r=.595; p<.01). This implies that the depiction of cheap thrills offered by the reality shows has a positive and significant correlation with the cultural change with respect to the Indian society. People looking for the sordid or scandalous, peeping into other people’s lives, watching with breath held to see each new fight, or affair, or ugly comment - is voyeurism and this entices many viewers. What is wrong with peeping through someone’s window? Sometimes, as in all forms of voyeurism, the act of observing no longer provides enough stimulation. Hence, the producers experiment with and introduce different forms of drama to tempt their audience. The hidden desire among Indians to sneak peek into someone’s lives has been accentuated because of such exposure. And they themselves find a way to heighten what they are addicted to and there begins the cultural distortion. With reality shows, the sometimes blurred line between fantasy and reality become even blurrier and the “show” may start affecting the response to normal life experiences. For those who crave this type of titillation for their senses — there will always be someone who finds a method to feed the need until there is no longer a need to cater to. With shows like Emotional Atyachaar, Big Boss, Splitsvilla and many more, the desires of scores of audiences can be quenched. India has been hailed for its rich culture but the influence is definitely impacting the cultural heritage. The openness of the western culture, the exhibition of emotions have never been a part of our society but most of the reality shows today are cashing in on the changing psychographics of India. Most of the respondents admit that like before they can no more watch the television with family because a lot of content

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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<td>4. Support for DWI</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.44***</td>
<td>-0.53***</td>
<td>0.49***</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
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<td>5. Morality</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.42***</td>
<td>-0.49***</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.47***</td>
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<td>6. Conservative Sentiment</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.50***</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<td>7. Liberal Sentiment</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<td>8. Legal/Illegal</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.35***</td>
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<td>9. Welfare DWI</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<td>10. Outsourced Global</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
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<td>11. Explicit: Local</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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Note:
* p < .05
** p < .01; *** p < .001
does not qualify for family viewing. Hence the data support the hypothesis.

The relationship between fabricated content and profit/business objective of reality shows is also strong ($r=620; p<.01$). Television these days is not simply about seeing new and different things. It is primarily about selling the content on air. Fair reasoning for the same could be that the money involved in producing these shows is much less than the daily soap operas, hence the lure for money can put the authenticity, credibility everything at stake and might sometimes prompt the usage of fabricated content. Television programming evolved hand-in-hand with consumerism, first in its birthplace in America in the mid-20th century, but increasingly everywhere else in the world too. Respondents do believe that television has been successful in spreading voyeurism, a more insidious form of consumerism; in the way it reveals what used to be private aspects of human life to public view. Television has normalized consumerism and voyeurism, and in turn these cultural preferences, encouraged by television, exert an influence over the medium, so that there is a relationship of reciprocity between television and society. With TRP ratings closely followed by the sellers in the markets they know which commodity sells. In the critics opinion the content of these shows is purely TRP oriented. There have been lots of controversies where the reality behind the reality shows has been put under scrutiny and that is because the consumer can not be fooled. Therefore the two variables are found to be correlated. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

The relationship between the impact of reality shows on Indian societal values and viewing unease is also strong ($r=.697; p<.01$). “… graduate students of classical dance and mainly Telugu Channel [V] viewers say that they have frequently experienced discomfort (and so have their parents) because of the growing trend of obscenity in Telugu film songs (including nudity, suggestive body movements, and “double-meaning” lyrics)” (Juluri 2002). This reflects a lot of discomfort among the younger generation towards the boldness and frivolity of Indian media. Indian value system thrives on respect for elders and familial ties. Therefore whether it is watching such shows together or participating in one of them both are equally challenging to confront. The humiliation can be because of viewing, participating or even feeling vicariously

These shows might create an uncalled for “awkwardness” which the respondents said that they are not used to. According to the Indian tradition, family secrets, should be buried in the darkest recesses of one’s emotional selves because Indians are a little conservative about such discussions in the open. (table 4). Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

**CONCLUSION**

Socially, one of the greatest influences on India is the consequence of westernization.
India has made tremendous progress as a result of globalization on the economic front; however there have been certain developments which have impacted the Indian value system. As an outcome of the study undertaken, it appears that Indian’s have tried to ape the western culture to such a degree where they do not realize that they are constantly consuming high priced merchandise but what they do realize is that there is a definite effect of the same on the cultural front. The Indian economy is motivated by the capital gain from multinationals, work force diversity, changing work pattern but there is a stark realization among the people that there is undoubtedly an invasive impact on their culture. The growing popularity of reality television in all parts of India is therefore making way for a homogenized Indian culture whose cultural identity is becoming ever so fragile.

Though, the electronic form of voyeurism is only a new form of the centuries old passion for peeping into other’s domain. What is worth deliberating here is that the television voyeurism is too overt and has the potential to backlash the Indian value system which has been the strength of the Indian society. One question that the study has clearly answered is that people do feel the threat to their moral values and gradual cultural erosion which means that there are many resilient viewers who take the reality drama in distaste. They could be fathers, grand mothers, elder brothers, may be anybody in the family asking the young ones to stop watching shows that have the elements of reality as discussed in the study. But then who decides among all the reality series running currently on the television which ones are worth watching and which ones are not? Discovery channel also gives us a peep into the lives of animals, is that also a form of voyeurism? The media channels doing sting operations and broadcasting them live on their channels can also be called voyeurism? Since we get the voyeuristic pleasure from all these. Hence the onus is entirely on the viewers to demarcate what they wish to watch and what not, because as long as the TRPs of such shows will be high, the message will be loud and clear. The key insight is that despite the research’s findings that people do believe that these shows impede India’s cultural progress yet they are captivated by them.

From the academic perspective this study gives us an insight to the swift changing television viewing habits of the Indian society and their possible impact on the value system. This research may be beneficial to the media to understand the cultural sentiments of the viewers and work on newer genres of television programmes. The producers as well as the viewers, both the parties need to be self critical of what they think is appropriate and should learn to work within this acceptable framework. The challenges associated with private life invasion are many and so are the repercussions. There has to be enough preparation about the content that we wish to explore and the content that needs to be ignored and hence deploy self control.
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NEWSPAPER REPORTAGE OF PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO AND VICE-PRESIDENT ATIKU ABUBAKAR POLITICO-PERSONAL CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

MUYIWA POPoola

Politico-personal conflict has been a recurrent problem of Nigerian politics since First Republic. Up to the early 1980s, several political conflicts with attendant violence and loss of lives and properties, which were rooted in politico-personal relationships, occurred in the country. The politico-personal conflict between former president Olusegun Obasanjo and the former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar was one of these conflicts. In this conflict and the crises that accompanied it, the mass media played important role as disseminators and conveyors of reports, images and analyses about political activities. This study focused on how selected newspapers reported the politico-personal conflict between Obasanjo and Atiku, and how these reporting styles contributed to conflict escalation and violence. All the sampled newspapers tended to ignore the ethics of professional reporting and social responsibility by allowing ownership influence and political consideration to colour their presentation and reportage of the conflict. Media need to develop the ability of being mediators in political conflicts and pay careful attention to their gate-keeping, agenda-setting and status-conferral roles in the political reporting process.

Keywords: political conflict, Nigerian politics, mass media, newspapers

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According to Popoola (2011:3), the observed role of the media in conflict situation appears non-detachable from Lasswell’s (1948:14) framework of *surveillance of the environment* as one of the functions prescribed for, and expected of journalists and other key players in mass communication business. As amplified by Lasswell, the said surveillance entails policing and alerting members of a community to dangers and opportunities in the environment. In the context of surveillance of the environment and conflict reporting by the mass media therefore, if conflict is truly “a fight, a struggle, a disagreement between or among people with different ideas or beliefs, to be in opposition or disagreement over a matter or issue,” as Gambo (2002:107) conceptualizes, then it appears a matter of expedience and necessity for the media to alert the society about the conflict, not just because of the need to mention the conflict and the parties to it, but more importantly the implications and consequences which such conflict may have for the peace of the environment. However, a meticulous review of scholarly works and research findings with respect to accuracy of reporting of conflict by the mass media shows that it may be fallacious sometimes to say that the media always handle conflict reporting with fairness, accuracy and justice, at least as expected of a socially responsible media. Frankly, if the allegations of distortion of contents and biased reporting as well as inaccuracy in reporting, put up against the media appear not to have been substantiated considerably in other conflict situations, there are seemingly scholarship evidences on the allegations as far as political conflict reporting by the mass media is concerned.

Gardner (2001:26) laments that since political leaders and warring factions are well aware of the power of the media, the tendency to manipulate the media to further their political agenda often manifest in conflict situations. Tehranian (1996:2) seems fortifying this indictment of the media by lamenting that:

> In pursuit of the sensational, the scoop has come to define news. Peace, like war, is celebrated in the interest of profit and short term political gain. Politicians have come to recognize how essential mass mediated celebrations are to their own ambitions to power. As a result, peace tends to be short lived, temporary and tense.

Analysing this stance, Owens-Ibie (2002:33) avers that the fallout of this seeming engineering of content and manipulation of public space in the struggle for power through the instrumentality of the mass media is that ‘truth becomes a casualty’. As Tehranian (1996:3) elaborates, there no longer is any serious attempt to provide an in-depth diagnosis of contexts. The focus of the media is on “the episodic and fragmentary accounts of the most dramatic moments, largely leaving out the preceding causes and antecedent consequences.” Giving evidence on this, Isola (2002:3), comments that media perceptions of conflict
situations are most often wrong, resulting in negative influence on their contents. He laments that the media sometimes inadvertently report conflicts in ways that, conflicts, rather than being prevented are escalated. Adducing likely reasons for this questionable conflict reporting by the media, Isola, mentions the constraints of time and distance, as factors which appear militating against the possibility of thorough investigation and analysis of conflict theatres, before reporting such conflicts by the media. On the same frequency of thought, Gardner (2001:26) observes that in most cases, reporters are dispatched to cover a conflict without adequate time to study and understand the underlying history or context of the conflict at stake.

Consequently, seizing this undue advantage therefore by politicians, as Shaw (1996:47) depicts, in most of the violent political conflicts around the world, what the media report and interpret to the public about conflict situations are often coloured, packaged and dictated by politicians and elite groups according to their prejudices, beliefs and stereotypes, all in order to suit their interest. The result of all these, as Giner-Sorolla and Chalken (1994:165-180) write, is the reporting of only the horrific and dramatic incidents of atrocities of the conflict, with no explanation of the background histories and complexities of the conflict, thereby giving a one-sided or distorted view of events, which leads to conflict escalation. Giner-Sorolla and his associate attribute this ugly phenomenon to lack of neutrality and objectivity by the media, with attendant consequences of exposing the public to biased coverage of conflicting events, which may influence their (the public’s) attitudes and feelings and thereby structure their behaviours in particular directions in certain conflicts. Scholarly questions that are best answered by empirically based research therefore are to be asked on what the relationship between the mass media and conflict reporting should be. Much earlier than now, Owens-Ibie had asked a few thought-provoking questions concerning how those responsible for public communication and education should respond to potential and actual conflict and the role journalists should play in covering conflict. He asks:

Should such professionals merely report, comment on and interpret it (conflict); or should they be actors in the resolution — or, more importantly, the prevention of conflict? In a mass mediated world, what are the moral and social responsibilities of journalists involved in reporting conflict situations?

A critical analysis of these questions and answers which they require, is apparently pointing to what constitutes socially responsible media, as advanced by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956: 24) in their blueprint of the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press. Consequently, this study is devoted to evaluating newspaper reportage of politico-personal conflict between a former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and his vice Atiku
Abubakar. Germaine to a scholarly articulation of the problem of this study is a conceptualization of politico-personal conflicts.

**POLITICO-PERSONAL CONFLICTS**

As conceptualized and explained in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Seventh Edition, the term ‘polito’ means ‘politics relating to something’ or ‘something grossly rooted in politics’. Politico is exemplified further in the Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, as “noun and adjective combining form, denoting politics or political; as in politico-economics, politico-industrial, among others”. Within this morphological framework therefore, and based on how every scholarly work such as this, is expected to be an original contribution to knowledge, by bringing about, new concepts, ideas and provocative submissions, the term ‘polito-personal’ is hereby conceptualized and coined in this study to mean interactions, associations and relationships between or among individuals, based on political interest and motives. Consequently, politico-personal conflicts appear as accounting for one of the main political conflicts in Nigeria when one considers how some individual politicians (often rich and influential) who had sponsored and possibly bank rolled candidates or contributed immensely to the electoral victory of candidates, engage in crises with their candidates as soon as such candidates win elections, because they (the benefactors) perhaps want to dictate governance to their beneficiaries. This trend, substantiates what Joseph (1996: 36) branded as *prebendalism* on one hand, and what scholars, political commentators and observers often describe as *godfatherism* on the other hand. These phenomena seem to have resulted in several violent political conflicts across Nigeria which stagnate Nigeria’s political development. Joseph used the term *prebendalism* to describe the sense of entitlement that many people in Nigeria feel they have to the revenues of the Nigerian state. Perhaps drawing his insight from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* that conceptualizes a *prebend* as the “right of a member of chapter to his share in the revenues of a cathedral”, Joseph describes and explains state offices as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups. Joseph laments:

Democratic politics and prebendal politics are two sides of the same coin in Nigeria; each can be turned over to reveal the other… The system of prebendal politics enables divergent groups and constituencies to seek to accommodate their interests… The system is often wasteful, unproductive… It contributes to the increasing affluence of the relative few, paltry gains for a large number and misery for the great majority of people. Since it is a self-justifying system which grants legitimacy to a pattern of persistent conflict, and since its modus operandi is to publicize ethnic, religious and linguistic differences, it serves to
make the Nigerian polity a simmering cauldron of irresolvable tension over which lid must regularly be clamped and just as regularly removed.

Prebendalism seems much prevalent in the political fabric of Nigeria. Apparently, this phenomenon is so stubbornly ingrained within the societies of Nigeria that little has been done to address it. Consequently, the extent of prebendalism’s stranglehold on the Nigeria’s political life is such that it prevents the nation from being able to practice democracy perfectly. Since the creation of the first Republic, because there have been a number of personality-induced political conflicts, which arose from prebendalism, and seem to have thwarted Nigeria’s economic and political development. Obviously, a concomitant and direct consequence of prebendalism is political godfatherism which seems to have led to incidences of some politico-personal conflicts in Nigeria. The rate at which godfatherism in Nigerian politics appears growing has necessitated an empirical investigation of the phenomenon, as being reported by the Nigerian press. The influence wielded by individuals identified and recognized as political godfathers seems total and daunting. According to Okoye (2007:1), the godfatherism phenomenon in the electoral process results from the commoditization of state power and the struggle to acquire it by the dominant political class. Using Nigeria as a reference, Okoye comments that the non-recognition of independent electoral candidates has made political parties a rare commodity to be bargained for by political aspirants. In his words, “those of them that are desperate to capture political offices they crave for, are often amenable to the conditionalities of those who possess the wherewithal to enable them achieve their political aspirations.” In his commentary on political godfatherism, Ibrahim (2007:25), in Popoola(2011:81) describes the phenomenon as politics of sponsorship to political positions, control of political power, political patronage and the ultimate control of state treasury, personnel and resources. He exposes the characters of political godfathers by identifying them as men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins in same elections. Ishiekwene (2004:3), in Popoola(2011:82), captures political godfatherism in Nigeria and declares, inter alia, that:

... Godfathers have in the most brazen manner hijacked the political machinery at all levels. It means then that what is called election in Nigeria is nothing but the expression of the narrowly defined will of a few dishonest individuals who feel that they have the power to manipulate the entire electoral process in favour of their anointed godsons.

Also, another form of politico-personal conflict is ‘clash of interest’ between or among individuals who may even belong to the same political caucus. It is a saying in the political realm that, “in politics, there is no permanent friendship nor enemity, the only permanent thing is interest.” This implies that at any time, that there is harmony of interests,
there are bound to be peace, unity and tranquility. However, when interests collide, as inevitable in politics, what follows is conflict that may take several dimensions. In democratic Nigeria have been instances of politico-personal conflicts arising from the aforementioned factors, which appear plaguing the country’s democracy when one considers the prominence of the parties involved in such conflicts, and the apparently sensitive positions occupied by such conflicting parties in government. Consequently, it is this brand of political conflict between the immediate former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and his Vice, Atiku Abubakar that this study seeks to examine how some newspapers in Nigeria reported.

**STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The power of the media in normal times, not to talk of situations of conflicts, has given rise to different perceptions of the mass media, especially in a developing society like Nigeria with disparate and competing interests. Media coverage of conflicts has, no doubt, drawn a spate of criticisms from various sections of the Nigerian polity. Elaborating on this, Pate (2002:141) remarks that over the years in Nigeria, there have been reported cases of unethical and professional misconducts among practising journalists and this unhealthy development which is not only peculiar to newspapers calls for serious attention. He laments that it is most disheartening today, that most of the so-called journalists are not practicing journalism of conscience but yellow journalism, which has been decried as “unethical and irresponsible brand of journalism given to hoaxes, altered paragraphs, screaming headlines, scoops, fraud and endless promotion of self”. Pate states further that the press is known for “writing incomplete stories that do not cover sources, options and resolutions. Instead, they concentrate on conflict behaviour: ‘who is doing what to whom with what effect’”. Buttressing this point, Lee, Chan, and So (2004), in Isola(2008:51) posit that, journalists have been criticized for their tendency to merely juxtapose two competing claims without making any effort to look for the truth behind the claims. It is on this backdrop that this study is geared towards ascertaining the extent to which selected newspapers’ reported politico-personal conflict between former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and his deputy, Atiku Abubakar. It is worth examining the reportage of the conflict because the media have the power to escalate conflicts with or without proposals for resolution and the way conflicts are reported sometimes, determines to a large extent how the audience will view and interpret the conflicts. If media contents promote conflict, what follows is public outcry which may result in violence and breakdown of law and order. Thus, democracy and national development will be truncated. For instance, when there is a conflict involving the president of a nation, or the governor of a state in Nigeria and another prominent individual
or personality, whose political formidability cannot be discountenanced, it is logical to see
the president or the governor operating with political, emotional and psychological
impediments and difficulties which may truncate development of the nation or state in
various spheres and ramifications.

Politico-personal conflicts seem strong and potent enough to ignite and bring about
other dimensions of political conflicts and even other types of conflict in Nigeria.
Historically, as Babarinsa (2003:71) writes, the tumultuous crises in the old Western region
of Nigeria had their antecedents in the catastrophic politico-personal conflict between
Awolowo and Akintola. This conflict resulted in loss of many lives of the residents of the
region as well as cataclysmic destruction of both public and private properties. Also,
Babarinsa chronicled the political conflicts that took place in the south western part
of Nigeria in the Second Republic. In his report, the personality-induced political conflicts
between governor Ajasin and his deputy, Omoboriowo in the old Ondo State of Nigeria, as
well as the conflict between governor Ige and his deputy, Afolabi, in the old Oyo State of
Nigeria led to calamitous and tragic death of many people and devastating ruin of properties
and belongings. Seemingly, the scars left by the political injuries inflicted by the conflicts,
still mar and plague political contestations in the contemporary South-West geo-political
zone of Nigeria. The political crises between the immediate former president of Nigeria
Olusegun Obasanjo and his Vice Atiku Abubakar, both of the then ruling People’s
Democratic Party (PDP) of Nigeria, was seemingly almost becoming an ethnic feud between
the Yoruba and Hausa ethnic people of Nigeria. Not only that, the face-off between the two
political actors aggravated to the extent that the Vice-President decamped to another party
called Action Congress (AC) which later became Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in June
2010. Atiku Abubakar contested on the platform of the party for the position of the President
of Nigeria in the 2007 general elections. He failed at the polls. Even though, Atiku later
returned to the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) in 2010 so as to contest for the same
position with the ticket of PDP in 2011 general elections, his decamping in the first instance
was not without attendant effects. Perhaps intimidated by the political formidability and
followership of Atiku Abubakar, the People’s Democratic Party leadership with a said
influence of the former president, was alleged of rigging and manipulating the 2007 general
elections in Nigeria in favour of the ruling PDP. This implies that, political conflicts,
consequent upon irregularities in 2007 general elections in Nigeria, were rooted in the
Obasanjo — Atiku crises. In the commentaries of political analysts that appear not yet
investigated empirically about the Obasanjo- Abubakar conflict, it is being posited that the
two political actors, have literarily and practically instituted themselves as shadow parties
in emerging political conflicts in Nigeria, so as to achieve their political goals and defend
their political interest, thereby destroying the country’s political order, in spite of the fact
that both of them have relinquished political power. There are studies that have confirmed
media influence on effects of various kinds on the audience. Also, the media have been associated with violent behaviors among the audience in various settings. However, there is still a wide gap in knowledge on actual role of the media in political conflict situations, especially where it concerns politico-personal conflicts in emerging democracies. This study is aimed at filling part of this wide gap by focusing on the coverage of selected newspapers in respect of the Obasanjo and Abubakar politico-personal conflict in Nigeria.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

With a view to finding solution to the problems of this research, the following questions were formulated:

1. To what extent did the selected newspapers carry Obasanjo and Abubakar politico-personal conflict escalation stories?
2. To what extent did the selected newspapers carry Obasanjo and Abubakar politico-personal conflict de-escalation stories?
3. In what proportions were journalistic genres used for reporting the conflict?
4. Did the coverage of the conflicts vary in extent, categories, prominence and depth of treatment?
5. How socially responsible was the reportage of the conflict by selected newspapers?

**PURPOSE, SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

Given the above background, this study is aimed at widening the frontiers of knowledge with regards to media and conflict reporting. The purpose of this study is to critically examine the reportage of the politico-personal conflict between Obasanjo and Atiku by selected Nigerian newspapers. The study also seeks to ascertain how editorial items and journalistic materials were used in reporting the conflict. The study will also make conclusion on any relationship between reportage of politico-personal conflict and tendencies for escalation or de-escalation of the conflict. The study will also determine the importance attached to the reports in the dailies and also to determine the story approaches in which the reportage of politico-personal conflicts appeared more often.

It is being anticipated that the findings of this study will contribute to the body of empirical investigation on media and political conflict generally, and newspaper and...
politico-personal conflict specifically. This study is imperative as it will produce a manual for journalists, media professionals, political commentators, political scientists, and peace and conflict scholars, among others, on how the press in Nigeria should report political conflict in socially-responsible manner.

There is no research work that is not without its peculiar limitations. The case to be studied is that of politico-personal conflict on the Nigerian political scene. This study is primarily meant to find how selected newspapers have reported President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar politico-personal conflict between 1999 and 2007 when the conflict took place in Nigeria. Five newspapers were selected for the study. These were Nigerian Tribune, Daily Champion, Punch, Guardian and Daily Trust newspapers. The Nigerian Tribune is the oldest surviving private newspaper in Nigeria. It was established in November, 1949 by Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a nationalist who hailed from Ogun State, in the South-West geo political zone of Nigeria. Daily Champion is a prominent Nigerian newspaper covering general news. It offers an insight into Nigerian politics and a host of other issues. This Newspaper was founded by Chief (Dr.) Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, who hails from Imo State in the South Eastern geo-political zone of the country. The newspaper specializes in special coverage of issues in the eastern part of the country. Daily Trust newspaper is a private national newspaper based in Abuja; the seat of power and the proprietor hails from Katsina State, in the North-West geo political zone of Nigeria. Guardian is also a private newspaper based in Lagos. It gives national coverage of events. Owned by Alex Ibru, an indigene of Delta State, in the Sout-South geo-political zone of the country. The Punch is a private national newspaper based in Lagos. The paper gives a national in-depth coverage of news, issues and events; across the nation. The newspaper was established by Late Chief Olu Aboderin, who hailed from Oyo State, in the South-West geo political zone of Nigeria. It has made significant impact on the political and cultural scenes in Nigeria. It has been rated the mostly widely read newspaper in Nigeria. As expected of every research that is devoid of bias and sampling error, there is a strong rationale behind the choice of the five newspapers. First, even though the conflict between each pair of the principal actors on the Nigerian political scene was an irrefutable instance of personal vendetta, it is logical that any conflict involving individuals at apex of leadership and governance, which is grossly rooted in political interest, would have implications for societal peace, harmony, integration and development at large. Hence, newspapers to be chosen in this respect have to be national in their spread and circulation. This serves as the basis for the choice of the newspapers, which are rated as national newspapers by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and Nigerian Press Council. Also, in selecting the newspapers, the geo-political zones of Nigeria to which President Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar belong, as well as the ownership identity of the proprietors of the newspapers were considered. This was done with a view to
establishing any relationship that may exist between ownership of the newspapers and the reportage of the conflict. Using ownership identity as a variable, the newspapers were also chosen so as to reflect representation of all the geo-political zones in Nigeria. Nigerian Tribune was chosen from the South West, Daily Champion from the South East, Guardian from the South South, and Daily Trust from the North West. Unfortunately, there was no newspaper that was being circulated nationally in the North-Central and North-East geo-political zones of Nigeria to warrant any selection. Meanwhile, Punch newspaper was selected not because of the identity of its proprietor but because of the ABC and NGE rating that it is the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Isola (2008:33), as cited in Popoola(2011:42), had searched the literature in respect of the role of the media in political conflicts in Nigeria. He discovered that the earliest studies within the continuum of media and political communication in Nigeria are those of Omu (1965; 1974; 1978; 1989 and 1996). In his first scholarly work entitled “Press and Politics in Nigeria, Omu, explores the role of newspaper as an organ of the press, in the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial politics in Nigeria. This work and subsequent ones provide valuable insights into the contributions of newspaper to the political development as well as into the political pitfalls of the Nigeria nation. This study draws immensely from those insights to present a fresh insight into understanding the role of the press in politico-personal conflicts in Nigeria. Also in his work entitled: House of War, Babarinsa (2003) chronicles the bitter power struggles that culminated in the various political conflicts that plagued Nigeria right from pre-independence to the first and second republics. Through careful and meticulous observation, Babarinsa was able to capture historically some of the intrigues, political back-stabbing and shameful conducts of the local media which led to the massive killings and destructions that appear grossly rooted in personality-induced political conflicts in some states in the South-Western part of Nigeria. As an empirical study, Akinsanya (1981) carried out a content analysis of selected newspapers in Nigeria to ascertain their reportage of the 1979 elections. He discovered that most of the selected newspapers, except a few with little or no political affiliation, did not exhibit neutrality in the coverage of the elections. Many of the newspapers, whose contents were analyzed, favoured one or the other of the existing political parties, a discovery that runs contrary to the principle and tenets of a socially responsible press. Also, Adebanwi (2002), had explored the role of the print media in contestations for political power and in carving distinct identities for the ethnic nationalities that constitute the Nigeria nation state. He examines how meanings are deployed and mobilized in the press to nourish and sustain
power relations among the ethnic nationalities and in deflecting power domination by the various dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. He concludes that any efforts directed at integrating Nigeria will be a myth until the smaller nations within the entity of the traditional states are ready to surrender some of their political identities towards building a cohesive Nigeria. Adebanwi’s approach confers importance on textual analysis, which is the supplementary research method adopted in this study. Textual analysis proves valuable in unearthing and ascribing meanings to the contents of newspapers selected for this study. Literature is also replete with other related works which are of immense benefit to this study. The works of Anifowose (1982); Faleti (2002); Popoola (2004); and Isola (2008), among others, also address the problem of this study in some respects. These works expose the various cycles of violence that have accompanied elections in Nigeria; examine the myths propagated in the media about the conduct of violence-free elections in the country; explore historical events that often emerge in the processes leading to election; and recommend ways by which the media could exhibit responsibility as the Fourth Estate of the Realm.

However, all these related works seem to have focused on elections, electoral violence and the role played by the media in the escalation and de-escalation of the violent acts that accompany elections in Nigeria. It appears that there had not been any remarkable and substantial works on the reportage of personality induced-political conflicts in Nigeria. Irrefutably, such conflicts appear strong enough as catalysts for other political conflicts and their attendant violent acts. Also, these works did not adequately employ content analysis method of mass communication research, considering the research approaches used by the researchers. Consequently, by focusing on the reportage of politico-personal conflicts in Nigeria, using both content and textual analyses as research methods, this study will be able to come up with useful recommendations on how such conflicts can be reported by the media with a view to achieving a peaceful political process.

**Obasanjo and Atiku Politico-Personal Conflict: Historical Antecedents**

The politico-personal conflict between former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and his Vice, Atiku Abubakar took place on the federal scene where both of them were serving the public. Vice-President Abubakar Atiku came to office through elections as the deputy to former President Olusegun Obasanjo who ruled Nigeria between 1999 and 2007. The President and his deputy, had and enjoyed good working relationship up to 2003. According to Nwagwu(2007:13), at his swearing in at the *Eagle Square* in 1999, Obasanjo had by his side, Atiku Abubakar, who, like his master, also took his oath as the Vice
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Both men functioned as one person, in one accord, for the first four years, but after the re-election in 2003, things suddenly fell apart between them. When Obasanjo came to power in 1999, the relationship between him and his deputy was warm. In fact, Atiku was co-President. He was placed in charge of the Privatization project; he also chaired the Economic Planning Committee. People, within and outside the presidency, were afraid to report Atiku to Obasanjo, because they would be asked to repeat any allegation before Atiku. So many people were embarrassed in this manner when they called the President to report the shady deals of his trusted co-President to him. When the Nigeria Airways was to be sold, and it was under priced, Dr. Kema Chikwe, Minister of Aviation then, refused to allow it, she was scolded by President Obasanjo, who warned that any of his Ministers who failed to comply with Atiku on the Privatization should quit. Though, Babangida, a former military president, was instrumental to Obasanjo’s election as President in 1999, Atiku also provided the political platform for Obasanjo. The People’s Democratic Movement (PDM), formed by the late Shehu Yar’Adua had the likes of Tony Anenih, late Chuba Okadigbo, Dapo Sarumi, Yomi Edu, and Dr. Borishade as members. Anenih, fondly referred to in PDM as leader was fingered as a double agent. He shared his loyalty with Atiku and Babangida. In the commentary of Oduyela (2005:11) on the conflict between Obasanjo and his deputy, he writes that what Atiku failed to realize was that, though Obasanjo gave him free hands to operate, it was a grand set-up. Obasanjo already knew that Atiku was obsessed with wealth acquisition. It was also felt that the free-hand given to Atiku by his boss was a design to set Atiku against the rest of the north. Atiku is from the North Eastern Nigeria and the politics of Nigeria had ever been dominated by the North West that sees itself as the natural ruler of Nigeria. As soon as Obasanjo came in, Atiku started firing salvo against the North and by extension, North West. This turned the rest of the North against Atiku. Prominent northerners, especially the former Heads of State among them, and other leaders of the North became uncomfortable with Atiku’s utterances. Atiku, apparently having fun then blamed the problem of Nigeria on the misrule of the north. This was seen by Babangida and others as a campaign preparation for Obasanjo’s succession and they were ready to do anything to truncate his ambition. While Atiku created enmity for himself in the Northwest, Umar Ghali Na’Abba rose to the position of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, becoming the second most powerful northerner in Obasanjo’s government. While Babangida and his allies liked it, Atiku was not comfortable with that. This is for simple reason that Na’Abba is from the North West and seen as a potential threat to his ambition come 2007. Na’Abba who came to the National Assembly as ‘nobody’ suddenly after succeeding the disgraced Salisu Buhari became a voice for the Northern opposition against Obasanjo. Atiku’s utterances also pitched Obasanjo against the rest of the North and Obasanjo was portrayed as someone biting the finger that fed him. But by 2001, Atiku’s PDM faced a serious political test, as
one of them, Chuba Okadigbo, the then Senate President, crossed Obasanjo’s path by attempting to impeach the president. Unfortunately, because PDM was headed by a tactless Atiku, Okadigbo lost the seat. That was a big blow to PDM but Atiku did not see the handwriting on the wall. Towards the end of 2001, Chief Tony Anenih, a People’s Democratic Party (PDP) stalwart initiated reconciliation between Obasanjo and Babangida. This was leaked to Atiku who did not like it and the relationship between Atiku and Anenih broke, causing another serious blow to PDM.

Oduyela (2005:13) documents further that the declaration of Obasanjo to run for second term was organized by Anenih. Atiku was not part of the plan and his picture was not in the programme pamphlet nor did it feature in the poster. Atiku was out of the country on that day. On the evening of that day after Obasanjo had declared to run for second term, he appeared on the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigerian (FRCN) Presidential chat where he told reporters that he has not chosen his running mate and will not do that until the party’s primaries. But few days later, late Tunji Oseni, Obasanjo’s Special Adviser on Media, issued a press release announcing Atiku as Obasanjo’s running mate for the 2003 Presidential election. Unfortunately for Atiku, he (Atiku) had wanted to declare for the 2003 Presidency and to pre-empt him Obasanjo quickly announced him as his running mate. However, it did not end there. As reported by Oduyela (2005:14), President Obasanjo got to know of Atiku’s amassing of wealth. In early 2001, he discovered that it was Atiku who bought a petroleum company known as AP, using Peter Okocha as front; just as he used Aliko Dangote as front to buy the Benue Cement Company. Obasanjo did not like it. Atiku also wanted to buy UNIPETROL but he was blocked. Atiku was also rumored to have funded the impeachment move against Obasanjo in 2002. The trust was dropping but Obasanjo maintained his cool because of the 2003 elections. To win the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) ticket in 2003, Obasanjo had to beg Atiku. He struck a deal with him, though unwritten, and unfortunately Atiku fell for it. As soon as he won the election, Atiku began to see a different Obasanjo, the real Olusegun. He denied Atiku the privilege to nominate Bugaje, his former Special Adviser. Atiku also lost all rights as co-president and demoted to tenant in the Villa. Obasanjo had to approve his Advisers and Assistants. Between 2003 and 2006, five Advisers and Assistants of Atiku were fired by Obasanjo. Chris Mammah was the first victim because of his alleged role in the 2002 impeachment attempt. The latest victim was Mr. Adinoyi-Ojo Onukaba, former Special Adviser on Media. Before 2003, Obasanjo needed not see anything before it got out of the Villa, but that was history. As the conflict was brewing up, nothing got out of the Villa without Obasanjo’s approval. Atiku was almost stripped of all his powers. He lost in the power game. The relationship between the president and his vice got sour and it eventually turned into rotten acrid odour that contaminated the land. In his interpretation, Nwangwu (2007: 18), notes that, Atiku, whose political machine was key to Obasanjo’s ride into power in 1999 and
2003, was the leading stalwart who foiled the various efforts by Obasanjo and his supporters to enact an unprecedented, unconstitutional third term for Obasanjo. Since then, the president had conceived one plot or the other to tarnish Atiku’s image and frustrate him from fulfilling his ambition to be the president of the country.

Perhaps, Atiku’s political sin in the estimation of the hawks of the presidency and the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) was that he deployed the power and influence of his office and the strategic responsibilities given to him by Obasanjo to his own political advantage. At that time, what was initially uttered in muted tones had become a common song in the marketplace, that is, the president was not disposed to handing over power to his deputy. Vice-President Atiku who had not hidden his interest to succeed his boss fell out of Obasanjo’s favour. The third term plot was also rearing its head at the time and Atiku seized the moment to alert the nation of Obasanjo’s alleged self-succession agenda. The president in turn accused Atiku of disloyalty and there commenced a game that kept the presidency divided. Obasanjo and Atiku accused each other of corruption and abuse of government power. Obasanjo was fingered by his deputy, Atiku, in a loss of $500m Oil Money. Vice President Atiku Abubakar alleged that over $150 million of the money realised during the 2002/2003 oil licensing bids could not be accounted for by the authorities of Nigeria’s government led by Obasanjo. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) closed in on Atiku, narrowing it down to the Petroleum Development Trust Fund (PDTF) where as chairman; he was alleged to have misappropriated funds. Atiku countered the report, claiming that his boss who knew how every kobo was spent was more corrupt than himself. Towards the tail end of the tenure of the Obasanjo and Atiku administration, the brawl became more pronounced, particularly with the defeat of the third term agenda.

The crisis between the president and his deputy escalated and heated up the Nigerian political scene to the extent that, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), in support of, and under an alleged influence of Obasanjo, who had arrogated a lot of power to himself in the party, suspended Atiku on the ground of engaging in anti-party activities. Atiku protested this in the court of law, but the presidency appeared to have destroyed his political fortune and goodwill in the PDP. As 2007 general elections drew closer and the contestations for political offices gathered momentum, Atiku decamped with his political structures to another political party- Action Congress (AC) which later became Action Congress of Nigeria to seek a ticket as the presidential flag bearer of the party in the 2007 presidential election. The PDP and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), under a shadow influence of the presidency filed a suit in the court of law to disrobe Atiku of his position as the Vice-President since he clinched that position under the auspices of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Luckily for Atiku, despite all pressure on the nation’s judiciary to remove him from office, the final ruling was in favour of Atiku. The presidency continued to truncate Atiku’s presidential ambition and the Vice-President apparently
weathered that storm and contested for the presidential position with Late Umar Musa Yar’Adua and General Muhammad Buhari who contested on the platforms of PDP and the All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP) respectively. Atiku failed at the polls and what followed was a spiral of silence in respect of his status and prowess in political machinations in Nigeria.

No sooner than the drumming and pulsation with respect to 2011 general elections began that Atiku’s hope of becoming the president of Nigeria was again rekindled. Perhaps, Atiku and his advisers felt that a PDP presidential ticket was the strongest and surest ticket of clinching the coveted position and also that he was seen to have had the political stature to meet the yearning of the Northern part of Nigeria in retrieving presidency from Southern Nigeria since the untimely death of Yar’Adua had led to domiciliation of presidential power in the South again. Hence, Atiku sought a waiver from the PDP to return to the party. According to Sode(2011:8), the Presidency, under the political shadow influence of Obasanjo thwarted Atiku Abubakar’s return mission by making sure no waiver was granted. Adamawa State Governor, Murtala Nyako, was alleged to have been instructed to truncate every move by Atiku to be re-enlisted as a member of the party as he might impede the chances of President Goodluck Jonathan’s emergence as the PDP flag-bearer in 2011 presidential election. Expectedly, individualistic forces led by the former President Olusegun Obasanjo and former military president, Ibrahim Babangida, mounted pressure on Nyako to block Atiku’s re-entry into the party. While Obasanjo fought for the emergence of Jonathan, Babangida equally tried to clear the path for his personal presidential ambition. Eventually, against all odds and in spite of road-blocks mounted by anti-Atiku forces, he was granted a waiver. At hurricane velocity, Atiku made a formal declaration of his presidential ambition. The waiver granted for Atiku’s return was never any hindrance to Obasanjo and President Goodluck Jonathan, Obasanjo’s political godson. Atiku’s failure in the presidential primaries was plotted and the plot translated to reality. Atiku Abubakar, as well as other contenders, lost hopelessly to President Goodluck. Both Obasanjo and Atiku still occupy political strongholds which they use continually to function as shadow parties to emerging political conflicts in Nigeria.

**MEDIA AGENDA-SETTING**

Wimmer and Dominick (2003:408) comment that the notion of Agenda-Setting by the media can be traced back to the works of Lippman (1922), who suggested that the media were responsible for the “pictures in our heads”. Forty years later, Cohen (1960), in McQuail (2005:81) articulated this idea when he argued that the media may not always be successful in telling people what to think, but are usually successful in telling them what to
think about. Mc Quail reinforces this notion by observing that “the mass media force attention to certain issues.....they are constantly presenting objects, suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about”. He submits that the agenda-setting function defines the relation between media and public thinking....and influence what people learn about their society. Severin and Tankard (1977), as cited in Daramola (2003: 60) attempted to explain the agenda-setting function of the media. They write inter alia:

In a sense, the newspaper is the prime mover in setting the territorial agenda. It has a great part in determining what most people will be talking about, what most people will think the facts are, and what people will regard as the way problems are to be dealt with.

Consequently, the mass media in Nigeria set agenda for national discourse and in performing a watch dog function, the Nigerian press also plays a significant role. The media agenda setting theory roles extend beyond news. Over time, life styles and values portrayed in the media can influence not just what people think about but what they do. Media attention lends legitimacy to events, individuals and issues that do not extend to things that go uncovered. This conferring of status occurs through the media’s role as agenda setters. On this, Mc Quail (2005:54) posit that audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters through the media, they also learn how much importance they should attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it.

In essence, to a large extent, the newspapers determine what issues are regarded as important in the society and the level of importance given to them. Even in conflict situations, they determine what would be reported and what the audience would know about the issues being reported. Thus, if these hypotheses are true of agenda-setting, it is obvious that media emphases (and more specifically newspaper emphases) can also be responsible for escalation and de escalation of politico-personal conflicts, consequent upon the coverage given to such conflicts by the newspapers. Put in another way, the agenda setting tenets and propositions create a context in which public opinions about Obasanjo and Abubakar politico-personal conflict as reported by newspapers, are created and crystallized. Thus, how positive or negative are these opinions, may be contributory to escalation and de escalation of the conflict.

**Methodology**

This study employed the use of two research methods: Content and Textual Analysis. The principal method was content analysis and this was used to answer the first four research questions. The supplementary method was textual analysis. This was used to address the last research question. Content analysis as a method of mass communication
research entails an examination of the manifest content of communication to discover the patterns existing therein”. Explaining this method, McQuail (2005:76) writes that it is a technique for the systematic, quantitative and objective description of media texts, that is useful for certain purposes of classifying output, looking for effect and making comparisons between media over time or between content and reality. The reason for adopting this research method is to analyze the manifest contents of the selected newspapers in respect of their reportage of the conflict. Textual analysis was adopted as supplementary research method to ascribe meaning to and interpret manifest contents of newspapers with a view to ascertaining the disposition of the newspapers to the conflict and more importantly to ascertain how socially responsible was the reportage of the conflict by the selected newspapers.

The population of this study consisted of all the editions of the selected newspapers published in Nigeria within the period of 1999 to 2007 when the conflict took place.

Thirty editions (issues) of each of the selected newspapers were chosen as part of the sample. Consequently, a total of 150 editions were analysed in the study. Actually, the latent, manifestation and escalation stages of the conflict were between 2002 and 2006, being a period of five years. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the editions of the newspapers that carried the conflict. The reason for using the purposive sampling technique was to meet the study objectives. Nworgu (1991:78) supports this method. He avers that, in purposive sampling, specific elements, which satisfy some predetermined criteria, are selected. Although the criteria to be used are usually a matter of the researcher’s judgment, he (the researcher) exercises this judgment in relation to what he thinks will constitute a representative sample with respect to the research purpose.

The code sheet, which is the major instrument for content analysis was used for coding and organising the research data, and content categories were devised. The content categories were developed in order to determine and analyse the reportage of the conflict by the selected newspapers. The two principal content categories devised were:

Conflict escalation stories - Attribution

(1) Conflict escalation stories
(A) Attribution
(i) Stories attributed to Atiku alone
(ii) Stories attributed Obasanjo alone
(B) Side-Taking Stories
(i) Support for Atiku against Obasanjo
(ii) Support for Obasanjo against Atiku

(2) De-escalation of the conflicts
(A) Balanced stories
(B) Resolution
Descriptive statistical methods were used to present the content analysis data, while discursive analysis method of dialectical hermeneutics was used to analyse and present the textual analysis data.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the reportage of President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar politico-personal conflict by selected newspapers. Specifically, it sought to determine the extent to which the newspapers carried escalation and de-escalation stories as far as the conflict was concerned. The study, further, probed the slanting of the stories by the newspapers, as well as the somewhat disposition of the newspapers to the conflict between the two parties. In order to provide answers to the research questions raised in the study, some of the data collected were computer analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) format while some others were
qualitatively analyzed using textual analysis. The findings are presented and discussed with a view to making inferences and drawing a conclusion.

**Research Question 1**

To what extent did the selected newspapers carry Obasanjo and Atiku politico-personal conflict escalation stories?

The above question examines the quantity of the reportage that had the tendencies for escalating the conflict. This is important considering the paradigm that the media are capable of escalating conflicts based on the way and manner in which they report such conflicts as well as the perspective from which they report.

The above table shows the total number of newspapers that were content analyzed and the specific issues for each selected newspaper. A total of 154 editorial items from 142 editions of the selected newspapers were content-analyzed. Distributing these issues, 34 of them were in *Tribune*; 27 in *Daily Champion*; 34 in *Daily Punch*, 30, *Daily Trust* and 29 in *Guardian*. The table also shows the distribution of stories published by the selected newspapers. Out of a total of Thirty-Four (34) stories published by the Nigerian Tribune newspaper, Eighty Five point Three per cent (85.3%) were considered capable of further escalating the conflict. Thus, the vast majority of news reports published by the Nigerian Tribune newspaper were escalatory in nature. In the case of Daily Champion, out of a total...
of Twenty-Seven (27) stories, Eighty One point Five percent (81.5%) were escalation stories. Similarly, Seventy point Six per cent (70.6%) of stories by the Daily Punch were escalation stories. In the case of the Guardian, Eighty Nine point Seven per cent (89.7%) of stories were either capable of escalating conflict or emphasized the escalation period of the conflict while the Daily Trust also escalated the crises (96.7%) with its reports. In all, escalatory stories accounted for Eighty Four point Four per cent (84.3%) of reports by the five newspapers. Thus, all the selected newspapers carried escalation stories in respect of the conflict. Specifically, these findings reveal that the Daily Trust had the highest percentage of escalation stories (96.7%), followed by the Guardian newspaper (89.7%), and Nigerian Tribune (85.3%). The Punch on the other hand had the lowest percentage of escalatory reports of the selected newspapers. These findings suggest that of all the selected newspapers, Daily Trust carried more escalation stories than other newspapers. Also, the Guardian newspaper carried escalation stories considerably.

Table 2 shows the conflict and how the selected newspapers carried escalation stories. The aim is to identify trends specific to certain newspapers by analyzing how they reported the conflicts in relation to the other papers. Of all the escalatory stories, Tribune and Daily Trust's stories accounted for 22.3%, while Punch, Daily Champion and Guardian escalatory stories accounted for 18.5%, 16.9% and 20% of all the escalatory stories. Interestingly, the reportage of the conflict by the selected newspapers shows that the percentage of escalatory stories amounted to 84.4%. Therefore, it is concluded in this study that the selected
newspapers specifically devoted an overwhelming percentage of their reportage of the conflict to editorial items that were escalatory by nature. Further enquiry was however done in this study to understand the specific ways in which the newspapers tended to escalate the conflict. One major way identified was the use of their reports to support one of the conflicting parties at the expense of the other, hence, raising sentiment for or against the other party and thereby intensifying the conflicts and stimulating further hateful comments and actions. Table 3 examines the stories published by the newspapers in a bid to ascertain the level of partisanship or siding with certain parties in the conflict and the proportion of such stories to those which appear more or less balanced or neutral.

Data gathered shows that in reporting the Obasanjo — Atiku conflict, all the selected newspapers showed much greater measure of support for Atiku over Obasanjo. Sixty-One point Eight per cent (61.8%) of Nigerian Tribune stories were deployed in support of Atiku while 20.6% were used to support Obasanjo, 62.9% of Daily Champion reports were also deployed in support of Atiku while 18.5% were in support of Obasanjo. On its part, the Daily Punch newspaper used 55.5% of its reports to support Atiku as against 23.5% for Obasanjo; 48.3% of stories by the Guardian were in support of Atiku while 27.6% supported...
Obasanjo. The difference in measure of support shown for conflicting parties in this case was most accentuated by the Daily Trust newspaper with 60.0% of its reports supporting Atiku and only 6.7% in support of Obasanjo. Consequently, all the selected newspapers were in far greater support of the “godson” over the supposed “godfather” in the conflict. This suggests that most Nigerian newspapers are not favourably disposed to the idea of political “godfathers” (prebends) controlling their “godsons” who occupy public office or at least are not in support of external (unofficial) influence on political office holders. Furthermore, the findings suggest that all the newspapers selected also used the vast majority of their reports to support Atiku over Obasanjo. Thus, owing to the fact that Seventy Seven point Three per cent (77.3%) of all stories were either in support of one of the conflicting parties or the other with only about 22.7% being balanced, it is being posited here that there is the need for more balanced, neutral and objective reporting of conflict and a drastic reduction in the degree of partisanship exhibited in the print media in Nigeria. To buttress this position, the research undertook a textual analysis of the reportage of the conflict which is escalatory in nature.

**DAILY CHAMPION NEWSPAPER**

Months before the feud between the former President and his Vice started, discourse in *Daily Champion* was laden with incitements, giving an early indication of the direction in which the conflict could head. In effect, the polity was heated up and warmed up for the conflict and the dimension it would take. Among the stories that set the pace for the conflict include the below:

**ATIKU: THE MAKING OF A HERO**

The convoluted political peristalsis that is unfolding day by day in Abuja concretely lends credence to Gaius Julius Caesar’s famed verse of war...And squared up in the ring is President Olusegun Obasanjo expectedly joined by a platoon of recruits mostly from the Board of Trustees (BoT) of the party, the National Assembly and a few governors who must demonstrate allegiance to the deity even when their reason for doing so is as bovine as it is insipid. The President is poised against....who else...his deputy, Vice President Atiku Abubakar. (*December 16, 2006, Page 11*)

This story gives a rhythmic account of what to be expected even when the conflict has not even manifested. Since the media were aware of early warning signals, they should have reported the issue in another way that would not prepare the battle ground for the conflict. This clearly shows irresponsibility and rather than serve as a mediator here for the intending conflict, *Daily Champion* set up the boxing ring for the conflict through reports like these.
OBJ, ATIKU IN FINAL SHOWDOWN

As Nigerians await the legal epic battle between President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, many are wondering when and how the long-drawn feud is going to end. It appears that the daggers have been drawn. No doubt, an imminent and decisive showdown between the duo is unavoidable.

(Front Pg., December 31, 2006)

This story obviously set the battle ground for the two conflicting parties but since the media were aware of the early warning signals of the conflict, they should have played down the issue not ameliorate it, taking cognizance of the agenda-setting function. To show its importance, the story was on the front page with a screaming headline and the picture of the two conflicting parties.

ATIKU RIDICULES NATION, MALIGNS OBJ - PRESIDENCY.

IT’S NOT TRUE — VP

The President yesterday accused Vice President Atiku Abubakar of waging a campaign of calumny aimed at discrediting the government and people of Nigeria before the international community. Vice-President Abubakar has, however swiftly denied ever writing a letter to the United States Government alleging that President Olusegun Obasanjo bribed members of the National Assembly.

(January 18, 2007, Front Page)

This story probably came on the heels of the atmosphere that have been set by previous stories suspecting that conflict may be brewing. However, the story featured the position of the two sides, it also featured the war of words between the two parties and capable of arousing violent sentiments between those in support of either parties. This is regarded in this study as unfortunate as the newspaper reported non-solution oriented reports and went on to concentrate more on the conflict which escalated the conflict. Though, conflict is an intrinsic news value in news reporting but for the sake of peace, the newspaper should have found another way of reporting this that would not have been presented in vehement outbursts of the conflicting sides.

OBJ, ATIKU AND WASHINGTON

Obasanjo and Atiku. The face-off between these two men continues to fester. Undoubtedly, the entertainment value of the tiff is very high.........This is because as at today, the two individuals, have really proved to be nothing more than two sides of the same coin.

(Back Page, Jan 22, 2007)
ATIKU: HERO OF DEMOCRACY?

Obasanjo made a big mistake; He took his Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar for granted. He was so sure that Atiku would support his scheme that he failed even to discuss it with him. Atiku got to know from other sources, and he was clear in his mind what he must do; Oppose the plan. And to do so openly, no matter the cost. Obasanjo then decided that his Vice President was an enemy, a disloyal person, who must be crushed at any cost.

(February 4, 2007, Page 3)

The above excerpts are from columns and they served to strengthen Atiku and slight Obasanjo in the conflict. This is clearly against the practice of journalism. The writers could have done better by interpreting the conflict into reconciliatory moves not being partisan or bias on the issue. This had the potential of aggravating the conflict by pitching the supporters of both parties against each other and promoting a culture of bitterness and enmity on the parts of the conflicting sides. The researcher believes that these columns out rightly supported Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and instead of playing the unbiased umpire in the issue, the paper threw its weight round the situation to determine who was right and who was wrong. This is clearly against the tenets of journalism.

OBJ VS. ATIKU…..AND THE WINNER IS…..

Obasanjo in defending arguments being canvassed by Atiku at the court, explained that the Vice-President violated sections 143, 144, and 146 of the 1999 constitution, and so, is no longer fit to be the nation’s number two man. Atiku in canvassing arguments against the move, equally told the court that his decamping from the PDP to the Action Congress (AC) has nothing to do with constitutional provisions for his removal from office, as the PDP is not known to the constitution.

(February 24, 2007, Page 10)

This story is like a boxing ring for the conflicting parties. This should not have been published though the story did not show any bias by featuring the two sides, though it has some conflict fuelling phenomena in it and this could have escalated the situation. The story systematically profiled the conflicting parties and provided an ambience for systematic abuses that could have further led to the escalation of the conflict.

ATIKU: MY LIFE IN DANGER

Vice President Atiku Abubakar yesterday raised fresh alarm of plot against his life, urging Nigerians to hold the Presidency responsible should anything happen to him...

(26 Feb 2007, frnt pg)
For a conflict which has already escalated beyond a point, such a statement which appears ordinarily but not harmless could easily be interpreted to mean that the end has come for Atiku and the president should be prosecuted in case anything bad happens to him. Meanwhile peace journalism should not be about pointing accusing fingers at each conflicting party. Consequent upon the raging conflict, this story clearly shows some bias for Atiku and is conflict inciting and pointing accusing fingers at the presidency. As earlier mentioned, the presentation of this story served to show Atiku’s grouse and it clearly found expression in this story.

HOW BRIBE MONEY ENTERED N/ASSEMBLY-ATIKU

Vice-President Atiku Abubakar yesterday gave insight into how bribe money entered the National Assembly. He alleged that President Olusegun Obasanjo used bribes to scuttle the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) choice of first Senate president, thereby destroying the unity and solidarity in the rank and file of the National Assembly. —

(March 23, 2007. Front Page.)

It is so obvious that this newspaper gave more coverage to Atiku Abubakar as against Obasanjo and one would have thought they would be repentant and desist from displaying blatant partisanship by making their stories more balanced in order to reduce the effect of the conflict on the polity but this seemed not to be the case even after they left power in 2007.

RUBBISH!
COUNT ME OUT OF ENERGY LOOT-ATIKU

Ahead of his planned disappearance, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, yesterday declared that he has no question to answer in the probe of how former President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration spent $16bn on power sector by the House of Representatives, committee on power and steel.

Atiku’s assertion came as a non-governmental, Coalition Against Corrupt Leaders (CACOL) also yesterday urged the House probe panel not to spare anybody including Chief Obasanjo, involved in the award of contracts in the National Integrated Power Project (NIPP) from testifying in the open.

(Front Page, March 24, 2008)

The conflicting parties left power in 2007 but this story was published some months after. Even after they left power, it was apparent that the conflict had finished but what was in the mind of the media than to escalate the situation. The headline of this story in respect of the conflict is not only negative but the headline is also sensational in nature. The
presentation of this story was further emphasized with its placement on the front page with the “rubbish” in 72 points taking most of the page. It is not only negative, but capable of creating an atmosphere which is not only tense but could arouse another bout of conflict on the part of the conflicting parties. Since the issue had at least gone down a little, the newspaper by reporting like this obviously did not let sleeping dogs lie. This study considers this to be unfortunate and irresponsible.

DAILY TRUST NEWSPAPER

OBASANJO, ATIKA RIFT WILL NOT END SOON, DPP CHIEFTAIN

The feud between President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar will not end soon, the Democratic People’s Party (DPP) presidential running mate said. Prof. Timothy Uzodenma told journalists in his office yesterday in Abuja that the feud was deep-rooted. He said President Obasanjo is ‘vengeful’ and Atiku is ‘recalcitrant’ (February 8, 2007, Page 13).

To further escalate the situation, why should the newspaper publish a story that does not de-escalate the issue? Instead of writing reports that feature how the conflicting parties can be brought to the negotiating table, and highlight issues that can advance the interest of the society on this issue which affects the nation, Daily Trust decided to publish a story which ordinarily may be harmless but must have gone a long way to escalate the issue by calling the conflicting parties names and forecasting that the conflict will not be resolved soonest.

ATIKU SHOULD BE CELEBRATED NOT VILIFIED

Remain within and fight within is a popular maxim for those that are conversant with power struggle. The people calling on Vice President Atiku Abubakar to resign his position as the number two man got it wrong completely. If Atiku had long resigned as his position as some of his detractors are clamouring for, Nigerians would not have had the opportunity of knowing the man Obasanjo in his true colours…..For a man who has risen against all odds and in most cases at his detriment and that of his family to fight for the entrenchment of democratic governance, Atiku deserves commendation, and not vilification. He is by all standards my own Man of democracy. (February 13, 2007, Page 15)

The writer of this story was too emotionally attached to the issue and journalism frowns at editorialisation. The writer did not feature any body’s opinion though to an extent, a considerable degree of freedom is allowed in writing opinions, it is however the position of the researcher that the writer did not do a good job in conveying his points to the
public. This is outrightly slighting the person and reputation of the unsupported conflicting side. This is definitely escalatory in nature. As a follow up to this story, the below was published and right from the headline, it showed some elements of bias.

I’M VINDICATED, SAYS ATIiku
The Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar yesterday said he has been “vindicated” by the ruling of the Appeal Court which he claims has cleared him of allegations that he misappropriated public funds in his care…….. the five judges decided unanimously that President Olusegun Obasanjo has no constitutional right to declare the vice-president’s seat vacant after Atiku decamped…..

(February 21, 2007. Front Pg.)

This story obviously was in support of Atiku. The highlighted aspect gives credence to this as there was obviously no attribution to whoever said what. This translates to the fact that the paper took it upon itself to take a position in the matter. This speaks of partisanship, praising and encouraging Atiku thereby fanning the embers of disunity between Obasanjo and Atiku bringing into the scene other opinions such as the below that were published by Daily Trust.

ATIKU AS A CLEVER DIVERSION!
The malevolent concentration of needless energy on crucifying Vice President Atiku Abubakar by President Obasanjo and his minions now appears to be a pretext designed to cover up the inadequacies of his administration. —

(Feb 21, 2007, pg 15)

ATIKU’S CHARMED LIFE
Atiku Abubakar, has a charmed life, yes he has……………….The court has ruled that he can keep the VP’s post in spite of Achilles’ heels, Olusegun Obasanjo alias Baba Iyabo spitting bile and swearing that as long as he is at Aso Rock, Atiku must vacate his seat..

(February 22, 2007, pg 14)

OBASANJO’S TRAGIC MISCALCULATION
With the way events have turned against Mr President in his ill-advised, self-declared war against Vice President Atiku Abubakar, it is certain that in his heart of hearts, President Obasanjo regrets his action.

(February 23, 2007 pg 15)
Though against the ethics of journalism, the fact that Atiku Abubakar is from the North does not give Daily Trust the creative license to be partisan in nature but one can obviously deduce from these opinionated articles that the paper gave much support to Atiku probably because he is from the north and Daily Trust is domiciled in the north. These write-ups served to put Atiku on a pedestal higher than Obasanjo by covertly or overtly condemning the actions of Obasanjo while giving full support to the other party. These could have further escalated the situation and may have generated replies from other quarters that are loyal to Obasanjo. This is against the dictum that expects the media to be an unbiased umpire in reporting conflicts of this nature. Obasanjo’s position finds expression in the story below:

**I’LL HAND OVER TO ATIKU, IF…..-OBASANJO**

President Olusegun has finally said he would hand over to whoever wins the forthcoming presidential election in April……..Asked if he would relinquish power to whoever wins including Vice President Atiku Abubakar, the President said: “Of course anybody who wins the election will be the one I will hand over to…”  

*(Feb 25, 2007, Front Page)*

Obviously, this is grossly irresponsible and the story aimed at opening another can of worms and further turns the back of each conflicting party to each other. The headline does not have anything to do with the lead and that is already at the peak just before the elections, the statement appears harmless, but could easily be interpreted to mean that the conflict is getting resolved when the otherwise is the case. The story was written perhaps, to heighten the situation. The effect of this report is better left unimagined. This is irresponsible and one would wonder what the newspaper was trying to achieve by publishing this and even putting it on the front page, perhaps to captivate people’s attention and get people to buy the paper but the effect may have had a lasting effect that could have aggravated the already bad situation. This is using the media for gruesome ends. The story is escalatory in nature.

**OBJ-ATIKU AND THE NAKED DANCE**

In the four years or so since the Obasanjo-Atiku marriage has been fouled, Obasanjo has hurled darts which in essence truly hits not only at Atiku, the object, but our dear country, Nigeria. Never in the history of any country known on earth has sovereignty suffered invective perforations as Nigeria has these past four years — *February 25, 2007, Page 13*  

In the midst of the confusion that followed the conflict, Daily Trust came out with this feature article in which it strongly criticized the conduct of the conflicting sides in the conflict especially Obasanjo who was at the receiving end of the condemnation from the
Newspaper Reportage of Politico-Personal Conflict in Nigeria

Muyiwa Popoola

writer for fouling the order of democracy. The intent of this was probably to stimulate a subliminal hatred for the conflicting parties and leave them to arrive at a decision or form a decision about the government and the continued strife between the conflicting sides.

SENATE C’TTEE: ATIKU DIVERTED $145M PTDF FUNDS
... SAYS OBASANJO BREACHED THE LAW
IT’S A HATCHET JOB--VP

Vice President Atiku Abubakar diverted $145 million Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) funds, a Senate investigation said yesterday. It also said President Olusegun Obasanjo “breached laws” governing the fund. The panel said Atiku should be “sanctioned” but that Obasanjo should be advised to adhere strictly to the provisions of the laws establishing the PTDF. In a swift reaction, Vice President Atiku Abubakar described the report as ‘a hatchet job’ —

*February 28, 2007, Front page*

Though balancing news reports by the two conflicting sides doesn’t speak of bias but featuring war of words between conflicting parties. This is not conflict sensitivity as the use of language conveys very strong conflict inciting statements and replies from each party. Instead of creating a platform for dialogue by facilitating problem-solving, this story emphasized the conflict aspects.

**OBASANJO WARNS ATIKU OVER UTTERANCES**

President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday, warned that the full weight of the law will be brought to bear on Vice-President Atiku Abubakar if he resorts to behaviors capable of jeopardizing the elections. President Obasanjo, who said his deputy is desperate for power, further, questioned why the number two citizen is busying himself looking for excuses to justify his ‘glaring’ monumental failure.

*April 13, 2007 Front pg.*

In the process of conveying other issues in the conflict, Daily Trust published this story at the peak of the conflict and served to further worsen the case rather than reduce the effect of the conflict that it has on the polity. Instead, such stories are put in the front page so that at least, they would be eye-catching. Taking advantage of their agenda-setting function, the story obviously would have created another issue to be discussed in the public sphere and in turn feature in write-ups, columns and even letters to the editors. The issue was overblown. This is unequivocally irresponsible and careless of the newspaper. Such reports culminated into stories like the one below:
OBASANJO SACKS ALL ATIKU’S AIDES — ORGN
The Presidency has sacked the Vice President’s remaining staff at Aso Rock, the Atiku Campaign Organisation claimed yesterday.***
April 25, 2007, pg 5

Perhaps as a result of the threat that has been overblown, the events that followed climaxed into the action of the President to sack his Vice’s aides and this report served to reinforce this but the intent of this reportage was to actually report a new trend in the conflict and to create an atmosphere of tension and helplessness and further heighten the already worse situation.

GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER
In an interview with Atiku Abubakar, just before he showed up at the convention of the Action Congress, Atiku Abubakar agreed to meet with The Guardian team at his residence.

“I HAD NEVER, ALL ALONG, BELIEVED IN THE CHARACTERISATION OF THE PRESIDENT AS UNFORGIVING, VINDICTIVE UNTIL NOW……..”

The relationship between you and President Obasanjo has gone really bad. When did you two begin to fall apart?

It started before and shortly after the nomination process in year 2003. I had never, all along believed in the characterization of the President as unforgiving, vindictive until now……. I believe that the real point of departure between the President and I was over the issue of constitutional amendment…..

Dec 24, 2006, Page 11

From the above report, the Vice-President was already brewing a conflict which clearly finds expression in the interview conducted and there were so many records of rousing and uncontrolled contents that were published. These were suspected to have amplified the conflict which turned into a trend of accusations and counter-accusations between the two parties like the below:

OBASANJO, ATIKU FILE COUNTER SUITS AT APPEAL COURT
President Olusegun and Vice President Atiku Abubakar yesterday took their battle of wits to the Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja. While the President filed an application seeking a judicial pronouncement that Abubakar has ceased to hold the office of Vice-President, his embattled deputy wants a declaration affirming the validity of his continued stay in power.

(December 28, 2006, Front page,)
2006: A YEAR OF POLITICAL MIX GRILL

As year 2006 winds to a close, Nigerians at home and in diaspora may like to know from their president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo whether he still “dey kampe”. …….by the end of the first quarter of the year, knife could slice through the tension created by the third term agitators even as the president at each turn dribbled the nation as to intentions……..Alleging that the third term agenda had been on the drawing board since 2002, Atiku had said that he came out to identify with the opposition to avoid the verdict of history. With him as the symbol of the struggle against “a return to fascism and dictatorship”

December 29, 2006, Page 26

WAR OF WORDS OVER OBASANJO, ATIKU FEUD

President Olusegun Obasanjo’s decision to declare the office of the Vice President vacant following Atiku Abubakar defection to the Action Congress (AC), where he was adopted as the party’s presidential candidate for the 2007 election is still raising dusts in the polity as leaders of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the AC continue to throw tantrums on the issue…………also in a chat with reporters in Ado-Ekiti, the Ekiti State capital, Osuntokun said the Vice-President had by his action declared his office vacant for another person to grab. He said the nation could not tolerate a disloyal Vice President whose actions and pronouncements have continued to paint the Presidency black…….. (December 29, 2006, Page 8)

PLOT TO IMPEACH OBASANJO THICKENS, SAYS REP

The row between President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice — President Atiku Abubakar has taken a different twist with the national assembly members holding secret meetings to update a list of alleged impeachable offences of the President…. the lawmaker alleged that since the collapse of the tenure elongation project, the Presidency had been looking for an avenue to declare a state of emergency in the country and throw away the national Assembly so as to elongate the life of his current administration by six months in the first instance…..(December 29, 2006, Page 4)

As the year was going to an end, so many features were published in the same edition of the newspaper like the above and they served to give an overview of all that had happened in the course of the conflict so far and also, preparing a ground for the epic battle between the two conflicting parties in the forthcoming 2007 elections at that time. These forecasts served to further escalate the situation and create panic and anxiety on what should be expected come 2007 elections. The major topic in the different pages of the newspaper was about the conflict thereby attributing undue importance to it, creating a forum for discourse on the issue. Even in the new year, the conflict did not abate especially when they were
getting closer to the election period. The newspaper gave coverage to different issues in the conflict and amongst the most dangerous venoms, the conflict spiraled to a point where Obasanjo and Atiku began revealing secrets that they share. In the heat of the conflict, Atiku through the newspaper, accused Obasanjo of hijacking so many ministries within government and it was published thus:

**ATIKU ACCUSES OBASANJO OF HIJACKING THREE MINISTRIES**

The exchange of brickbats between Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and the leadership of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) continued yesterday with Abubakar accusing President Olusegun Obasanjo of hijacking some juicy ministries for about seven and a half years and using some ministers as robots………..

“When you people elected us into office, he called me and said VP, I said Mr President. He said you know, I am going to be the President, I am going to be the petroleum minister, I am going to be the defense minister, I am going to be the foreign affairs minister.

I said ah, all these for you? He said yes, anybody I put there will be a robot………

(Emphasis mine)

*(March 7, 2007, Page 3)*

The following story published the next day likened the conflict between Obasanjo and Atiku to a play bit also sought to elicit opinions on whether they were just blowing issues out of proportion by going to the court to settle a matter which ordinarily should have not become public knowledge. While describing the situation, the newspaper instead of being a mediator, turned out to be an abusive opinion that could have whipped up unfavorable sentiments against the two parties.

**DO NOT DEMYSTIFY OBASANJO**

The recent ruling by the Abuja Appeal Court fills one with amazement! The Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar sought and was granted several reliefs (concessions), which are unheard of in the annals of this great nation. In fact, the imbroglio between Obasanjo and his ‘deputy’ appears to have attained the status of a Nollywood epic. But is it not so much mere hype? Is the battle between the two “presidents” not similar to that between a common “husband and wife”, a battle that should be amicably settled between the couple itself, without the intervention of the third parties? But Obasanjo and Atiku have now gone to a court of law to wash their dirty linen in public. Every marriage has its ‘ups and downs,” and Obasanjo and Atiku cannot be any different…

*(March 8, 2007, pg 6)*
SENATE’S PTDF PANEL QUITS IN PROTEST
-MEMBERS INDICT OBASANJO, ATIKU
NNAMANI SAYS NO CRISIS

Discomforting tension pervaded the senate yesterday as well as members of the seven-
man special review committee on the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF)
resigned, despite having concluded their assignment…..the mass resignation
notwithstanding, a member of the committee disclosed the kernel of its recommendations;
Sanctions on both President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

Obasanjo and Atiku have traded accusations over each other’s management of fund,
designated for the development of the nation’s petroleum technology, but which both leaders
say has been used to satisfy private needs.
(Front pg. March 21, 2007)

Still on the PTDF scandal, reportage on the conflict was also escalatory in nature with
accusation, vehement abusive words by the parties to each other and since they have been
summoned by the Senate to answer questions which ultimately made a downturn in their
relationship as the meeting was divide and the conflicting parties traded accusations over
each other’s management of funds.

PUNCH

Even before the conflict became public knowledge, The Punch was already preparing
a ground for the impending conflict with malicious contents thereby preparing the ground
for the battle of supremacy between the conflicting parties. Some examples of stories written
that could have escalated the situation are shown below:

OBASANJO HAS MADE ME REDUNDANT-ATIKU

Embattled Vice-President Atiku Abubakar on Friday said the lingering feud between
him and President Olusegun Obasanjo had rendered him redundant as the president no
longer gave him assignments…… “I am still the Vice-President. If he (president) gives me
any work, I do it. If he doesn’t, I keep quiet and stay at home and sleep because that is my
work. PDP is a lawless party…”

November 4, 2006, Page 9

In supporting Atiku, the newspaper’s intent perhaps was to elicit compassion for Atiku
but perhaps the major intent was to stir up sympathy and unfavorable sentiments against the
person of Obasanjo deliberately or covertly. As a follow up to this situation, The Punch
came out with the story below to explicitly show how bad the situation was and the direction
the conflict is likely to head.
HURDLES BEFORE ATIKU

At last, the die is cast, the battle line is drawn and the stage is set for an epic political battle between the President and Vice President, Atiku Abubakar. For the greater part of their presidency in more than seven years, they have lived like sworn enemies. The Vice-President seems the more bruised. For instance, the President has covertly succeeded in routing Atiku out of the Peoples Democratic Party that produced their joint ticket since 1999… Both leaders are now set for the political battle of their life. They are set to prove who enjoys the confidence of Nigerians. While the President will be relying on the power of incumbency to determine his successor, Atiku will be required to provide convincing explanations to the various controversies surrounding his office… — November 26, 2006, page 43.

Stories like the above, certainly served to reflect the intention of the newspaper not really of the conflicting parties but the way the article has been presented, lends voice to the perceived direction of the conflict with the deliberate use of conflict-inciting and descriptive language that probably can do enormous damage to negotiation by locking the conflicting parties into narrow mindsets while leaving the readers to take a decision on which conflicting party to support or cast aspersions on. The real battle which had started manifesting, found expression in the following story:

OBASANJO DENIES ATIKU USE OF PRESIDENTIAL JET

The row between President Olusegun Obasanjo and his deputy, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, took a new turn on Thursday as the president allegedly denied Abubakar the use of his official jet. ‘Obasanjo latest action has further exposed him as a man who has debased our democracy by his illegal conduct and autocratic style’……

— 22 December, 2006, Front page

Rather than move the parties towards peace, attention was shifted to the manifestation of the conflict. Punch was bent on emphasizing the differences between the parties in this political feud. The use of language was also faulty. It is another presentation capable of whipping up sentiments between the parties and the readership audience. The Punch became a fuelling ground for partisanship and gave more space and attention to Obasanjo as against the role it ought to have played in ameliorating the situation and has this role has been jettisoned, rather, the public were fed more destructive reports about the conflict and this further inflamed the existing conflict. More of the conflict escalatory stories are shown below:
ATIKU REMAINS SACKED — PRESIDENCY
The Presidency on Saturday reaffirmed his stand that Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was no longer the Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.


In a bid to convey the situation, perhaps, the newspaper was not aware of the fact that their presentation goes a long way in determining how each party will be perceived as the conflict generated intense discussion in the polity and in the political environment and even led to more reports that featured the destructive, irresponsible verbal exchanges from the President and his Vice like the ones below as the conflict reached the height when the Presidency declared the office of the Vice President vacant while his tenure was yet to expire.

ATIKU MUST GO, PRESIDENCY INSISTS
The Presidency has asked the court to stop Alhaji Atiku Abubakar from parading himself as vice-president.

(In a counter-claim in the same report),
Abubakar had requested the court to, among other things, stop the Presidency from declaring his office vacant........

------Jan 15, 2007, pg 6

ATIKU IS CORRUPT — OBASANJO
President Olusegun Obasanjo on Thursday said that his deputy, Alhaji Abubakar was corrupt. Obasanjo broke his silence on the disagreement with Abubakar at a session with editors from about 10 frontline media organizations from the United States at the State House in Abuja.

(Still in the same story, Obasanjo was quoted as saying) “The number-two man in the country, the Vice-President, is currently fighting the fight of his life because of corruption around and about him”----

Jan 26, 2007, pg 2.

The aftermath of the type of stories presented above capped into outright replies by the conflicting parties through the media, and in response to Obasanjo’s threat Atiku replied Obasanjo through the media and it was reported thus:
YOU CAN’T ARREST ME-ATIKU DARES OBASANJO
Vice-President Atiku Abubakar on Friday dared President Olusegun Obasanjo to order his arrest saying that the Peoples Democratic Party was afraid to face him at the polls. —  
24 February, 2007, Pg 8

PTDF: ATIKU FAULTS OBASANJO DENIAL
Vice-President Atiku Abubakar has described as unfortunate the denial by President Olusegun Obasanjo that he gave him, (the vice president) the approval to place $20m Petroleum Technology Development Fund investment in the Trans International Bank. A statement from the Atiku Campaign Organization on Tuesday quoted Abubakar as saying that the denial was another confirmation that in the President’s desperation to scandalize his deputy, he would abandon all official decorum. ——  
March 21, 2007, Front page

From the above reports, Atiku was trying to defend himself but in reporting this, The Punch newspaper failed to take cognizance of the statements attributed to conflicting sides which were orchestrated by the reporters. The influence of these inciting contents that were published were suspected to have increased and out blown the scope of the political conflict with more conflict-stirring stories like the below:

OUR EIGHT YEARS, A DISASTER-ATIKU
It was a strange declaration on Saturday at Onikan Stadium, Lagos Island when the Vice-President and the Action Congress presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, stated that the present administration, which he is a member was a disaster….. Justifying his ratings of the current government, Atiku said: “Obasanjo is an ex-convict, either rightly or wrongly, and wouldn’t have had the right to contest the election in 1999, but myself and other Nigerians met Abdulsalami Abubakar, a military man, and begged him to pardon him so that we could present him to Nigerians. The same man is now the one barring people from contesting election”. (Emphasis mine) —
April 8, 2007, page 12

Though Atiku was expressing his grievance, The Punch explicitly highlighted ridiculous statements and utterances by Atiku which could have been edited for the sake of peace and harmony over conflict and celebrating this utterance such as the above did not help to reduce the effect of the conflict rather, it upgraded the conflict from its mediocre level to the highest peak in view of the anxiety likely to have been generated among the public and by highlighting the kind of utterance above, the newspaper conferred undue attention and importance to a conflicting side against the order which no doubt, could have
definitely escalated the situation.

PTDF: SENATE CLEARS OBASANJO, INDICTS ATIKU
PRESIDENT HAS BEEN VINDICATED-OSUNTOKUN
-IT’S A SHAME, SAYS VP

The Senate on Thursday absolved President Olusegun Obasanjo from complicity in
the mismanagement of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund. It, however, said that
the approval of funds by Vice-President Atiku Abubakar was illegal---
In the same story, the Vice-President retorted:
But the VP said the Senate’s verdict was a “sad, shameful and dishonorable last act
of the legislative body” …

*May 11, 2007, Page 2*

In the above excerpt, both conflicting sides made veiled references to each other on
the controversial Petroleum Trust Development Fund and it was published featuring their
corrupt deals and the outcome of the Senate meeting was the above. They should have at
least quoted some authoritative sources if they had to report the issue not taking it upon
themselves to confer irrelevant and unneeded attention on the issue. There was no conflict
analysis or even efforts to reduce the intensity of the conflict. The controversy must have
aroused conflict because of the inciting and reckless statements attributed to the conflicting
sides.

NIGERIAN TRIBUNE

In the stand-off between the President and his Vice, the newspaper started a trend that
featured the reportage of conflict stories like the one below which were suspected to have
increased the scope of the violence. Such stories served to provide insight into the already
pervasive conflict situation and this found adequate expression in the contents of the
newspapers.

OBASANJO WITHDRAWS ATIKU’S AIDES, CARS

The stand-off between president Olusegun Obasanjo and his deputy, Alhaji Atiku
Abubakar assumed an irredeemable twist weekend, following the withdrawal of the security
aides of the vice president and his official privileges like his cars by the Federal Government
on the directive of the president.--------

*December 24, 2006, page 6*

Perhaps the most poisonous of the publications came on the heels of Atiku’s sack by
the Presidency whose stage had already been set by the story published the day before and
it found expression in the following story:

**OBJ SHOPS FOR ATIKU’S REPLACEMENT**

President Olusegun Obasanjo and the leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) are now at a final stage of selecting a new vice president----

*December 25, 2006, front page*

Obviously, this story was targeted at Atiku as the headline bespeaks conflict. The story did not have to do with Atiku directly as he was not referred to in the lead but perhaps, the story was orchestrated to further escalate the situation and generate sentiments from the public and create ill-feeling, helplessness on the part of Atiku as the President used his veto powers to forcefully push him out of office. In view of this, the newspaper published this opinion below to give insight into the fresh page in the conflict but in doing this, they became another nerve centre of destructive conflict language which found expression in the opinion below:

**UNDERSTANDING THE ATIKU SAGA**

The story is not entirely new, but fresh pages are being opened in what has become an eternally sore relationship between President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar. The presidential naked dance in the marketplace, which blew into the open in the second half of last year, had taken several dimensions that it can now be described as having reached the hilt. Atiku had flagged off the battle after, according to his aides, he has sucked in so much underhand pressure, pushing and shovings from the camp of President Obasanjo----

*30 Dec, 2006, pg 7.*

**OBASANJO IS A DICTATOR, ATIKU INSISTS**

The presidential candidate of the Action Congress (AC), Vice President Atiku Abubakar, has described President Olusegun Obasanjo as a dictator, saying he is the most powerful democratically elected president in the world.

*13 February, 2007, Inside page*

**OBASANJO HAS FAILED NIGERIANS-ATIKU**

The Vice-President and presidential candidate of the Action Congress, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, on Friday assessed the eight years of President Olusegun Obasanjo’s rule and came out with a damning verdict: Obasanjo has failed Nigerians in terms of his promises to provide electricity, roads, water and other social amenities and infrastructure------

*24 February, 2007. Pg 3*
OBJ IS SUFFERING FROM “DISENGAGEMENT TRAUMA”-ATIKU
--RECOMMENDS PSYCHIATRIC TEST FOR LEADERS

Vice President Atiku Abubakar has described as totally untrue and a symptom of disengagement trauma, claims by President Olusegun Obasanjo that he bribed legislators to impeach the president and that he had been engaged in speculations about death and the president. Reacting to what he described as president Obasanjo’s “bizarre and ludicrous allegations” against him on a national television programme on Sunday, Vice President Abubakar said Obasanjo was economical with the truth, adding that he (the president) had consistently distorted and twisted facts and events….

22 May, 2007, front page

As follow up to all the slighting stories published about him by his boss, Atiku retorted through Tribune with so many violence laden, destructive abuses to his boss which ordinarily should not have found space in the media. This further escalated the situation to the extent of Atiku recommending a psychiatric test for the number one person in the country. However, some retired Generals ganged up against Atiku on his political ambition in order not to outwit their colleague Obasanjo who is also a retired general. Their grouse found expression in this story:

HOW RETIRED GENERALS GANGED-UP AGAINST ATIKU

Strong indication has emerged that some retired army Generals ganged up to kill the political ambition of Vice- President Atiku Abubakar, as a way of showing him that he cannot rubbish their colleague, President Olusegun Obasanjo----

April8, 2007, inside page

However, the paper took it upon itself to explain what they have gathered and without any attribution while trying to cover up Obasanjo’s misdeeds. The researcher opines that this is grossly irresponsible. In furtherance of the conflict, the newspaper published an opinion article some months later after the court ruled in favor of Atiku on his defection to another party which found expression in the story below. The opinion sought to take sides with a party while slighting the other.

OBASANJO’S HYPOCRISY AND ATIKU ABUBAKAR’S VINDICATION

God is finally dealing with former President Obasanjo, exposing his hypocrisy and bogus patriotic credentials. Truly, the mill of God grinds slowly, which is why General Obasanjo’s skeletons are falling apart from the tightly guarded cupboard -----
Research Question 2

To what extent did the selected newspapers carry politico-personal conflict de-escalation stories?

The above question examines the extent to which the selected newspapers carried de-escalation stories.

Obviously, the newspaper which had the highest percentage of de-escalatory reports was the Daily Punch (45.0%), it was followed by the Daily Champion and Tribune with Twenty One per cent each (21%). Unfortunately, Daily Trust published very marginal and negligible de-escalatory stories. It is therefore concluded that all the selected newspapers carried less de-escalatory stories compared with the percentage of reportage of the escalatory ones. More importantly, it is being posited here that the margin observed between the percentages of reports that were escalatory and those that were de — escalatory was too
wide and consistent across all the newspapers. Thus, the results suggest that it is a trend in reporting by Nigerian newspapers to emphasize conflict over peace and harmony. These results suggest that generally, the selected newspapers tended not to de-escalate the conflicts; rather they escalated these conflicts through their reports. Such coverage pattern negates the principles of peace journalism in which the media is expected to play a mediatory role in conflicts and between conflicting parties rather than stirring up sentiment and publicizing hateful comments and arguments. It is opined in this study that the results are a clear indication of the need for peace journalism to be adopted as well as a call for newspapers in Nigeria to exhibit a greater measure of social responsibility in reporting conflict in general, and specifically politico-personal conflicts in Nigeria. To buttress this point, the researcher in this study did a textual analysis in which discursive analysis was used to analyse the excerpts of de-escalatory reports. Most of the stories published on the different conflicts in the selected newspapers were mainly escalatory as against solution oriented stories which would seek to de-emphasize the conflict and transform the conflict into reconciliatory stories and these accounts for the scarcity of de-escalatory stories. The following are excerpts from each of the newspapers which provided a few solutions to the conflicts thus reducing the intensity of the war of words between the conflicting parties.

**CHAMPION NEWSPAPER**

**ATIKU IS SAFE-OBJ**

President Olusegun Obasanjo has described the alleged threat to the life of Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, as a mere rumor, assuring that his life was not in danger because the Presidential Villa is well secured. — 21 November, 2006 Front Pg

This story was published in the heat of the conflict, it was de-escalatory in nature as it is devoid of outbursts by the conflicting party though it does not mediate between the conflicting parties.

**ANGELICAN BISHOPS: OBJ, ATIKU FEUD BAD FOR NATION’S IMAGE**

Anglican Bishops have called on President Olusegun Obasanjo and his vice, Atiku Abubakar, to exercise restraint and display maturity saying their feud has impacted negatively on the country’s image. — 15 January, 2007, Front Pg.

The first story de-emphasised the escalation of the conflict as violent laden words were absent as that Atiku was assured safety by the other party even though the conflict had reached the peak when Atiku made statements that had to do with holding the Presidency responsible for any threat to the life. The story served to reduce the intensity of the conflict.
The second story was also de-escalatory in nature as opinions from religious leaders were sought and this shrunk the scope of the conflict.

**DAILY TRUST NEWSPAPER**
**TMC URGES OBASANJO, ATIKU TO END FEUD**
The president of the Muslim Congress (TMC), Engineer AbdulGaniyy Sadiq Atitebi has urged President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar to call a truce in their ongoing face-off in the spirit of statesmanship.

*Feb 6, 2007 pg 9.*

This story also tried to find solution to the conflict by featuring the opinions of a respected personality in the society urging the parties to resolve the conflict.

**GUARDIAN**
**ENAHORO MAY WADE INTO PRESIDENT, DEPUTY FACE-OFF**
There were indications yesterday that elder statesman, Chief Anthony Enahoro, may intervene in the feud between President Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar… Enahoro, who heads PRONACO, has, therefore, resolved to make wide consultations on the role he would play in ending the feud at the national convention……

*(December 28, 2006 front pg.)*

This story was also de-escalatory in nature. It featured speculations that a respected statesman may wade into the conflict to dissolve it which basically sought to create an intervention in the raging conflict.

**PUNCH**
**KUTIGI HEADS S’COURT PANEL TO HEAR OBASANJO-ATIKU CASE ON THURSDAY**
The Supreme Court has constituted a seven-man panel to hear the case filed by Vice-President Atiku Abubakar seeking to stop President Olusegun Obasanjo from declaring his office vacant. The apex court will also hear the case on Thursday

*January 23, 2007, Page 3*

This does not feature any strife but sought to give a balanced hearing to the two parties in the conflict rather than fuelling it.
TABLE 5 DISTRIBUTION OF JOURNALISTIC GENRES FOR THE REPORTAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF STORY</th>
<th>HARD NEWS</th>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>EDITORIALS</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>OTHERS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESCALATION</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
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<td>DE-ESCALATION</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NIGERIAN TRIBUNE
WE’RE TOUCHED BY OBJ’S NEW CONCERN FOR ATIKU- TURAKI VANGUARD

The Turaki Vanguard said on Monday that it was touched by the show of compassion by President Olusegun Obasanjo to Vice-President Atiku Abubakar over the injury sustained by the vice president on Sunday. *March 13, 2007, Page*

On different occasions during the conflict, the papers published few de-escalation stories that featured the opinions of mediators in the conflict, though they were not much but they tended not to escalate the situation as many of them were urging and were trying to proffer solutions to the Atiku and Obasanjo conflict. This particular story did not intensify the conflict rather ut shows the opinion of a person lauding Obasanjo for his concern when Atiku sustained an injury in the midst of the enmity between them.

**Research Question 3**

In what proportions were journalistic genres used for reporting the conflict?

The question is directed towards examining how the various journalistic genres were used by the various newspapers for escalation and de-escalation stories on the conflict under study.

These results show that Fifty-Five point Four per cent (55.4%) of all hard news stories...
by the selected newspapers were escalatory by nature. Eighty Nine point Five per cent (89.5%) of all features also tended to escalate the conflict, while Fifty Five point Six per cent (55.6%) of the editorials were also escalatory. Furthermore, all stories classified as column/opinion (100%) were found to be escalatory, while Seventy Five per cent (75%) of other journalistic genres were escalatory in manner. In the use of the various journalistic genres for de-escalation, Twenty point Two per cent (20.2%) of all hard news stories were de-escalatory of the conflicts, Ten point Five per cent (10.5%) and Forty Four point Four per cent (44.4%) of features and editorials respectively were used to de-escalate the various conflicts. Furthermore, no story in the opinion/column genre was used to de-escalate the story. Twenty Five per cent (25%) of stories/reports classified in other journalistic genres were de-escalatory. Consequently, it is being opinionated here that these findings may be indications that greater levels of introduction of opinion and individual perspective may actually result in production of news reports which do escalate rather than de-escalate conflicts in society, especially those which occur in the political realm. This is based on the fact the two journalistic genres which are grossly opinionated in nature, i.e. features and opinions/columns, were found to be more escalatory of the conflict to a greater than any of the others. This observation may perhaps be explained by Owens — Ibie’s (2002) comment that conflict is hard to talk about without engaging the emotions of the discussant; this according to him, makes objective, balanced and resolution directed reporting a difficult task. On the other hand, the relatively high level of usage of editorials to de-escalate the various conflicts may be due to the fact that editorials, rather than reflecting individual opinion, mirror the perspective, opinion and position of a media organization on issues of national importance, hence the need ensure that to an extent, it is presented in a responsible and solution-oriented manner.

Research Question 4

Did the coverage of the conflicts vary in extent, categories, prominence and depth of treatment?

This multi-dimensional question delves into the nature of reporting on the conflicts by the various newspapers, by specifically examining attributes of the reports published by these papers. These attributes involve the length/depth of stories, placement (as a means of determining the prominence conferred upon an issue or a story), and the point size used for headlines that were cast for the stories. The question is directed to gaining a wholesome view of the reportage of the conflict by the various newspapers through multi-dimensional examination using a number of different but unique parameters.
DEPTH OF STORY

This refers to the length of a news story and this was measured in paragraphs. The depth is an important attribute and confers a certain degree of importance on an issue, considering that increased length often entails more extensive or in depth treatment of an issue or event unlike obtained in short stories where space may only permit inclusion of the very necessary details with no description, explanation or interpretation.

The above table shows the length/depth of stories published by the various newspapers; Folarin (1998:56) notes that this is also a method through which news media attach prominence to such issues and stories, thereby setting agenda for public discourse. The length is thus an important attribute by which the importance attached to a story as well as the depth of treatment can be ascertained as a short story may not be able to contain as many details as a much lengthier report. Data contained therein shows that news reports
ranging from 1 — 5 paragraphs in length accounted for Eleven point Seven per cent (11.7%) of stories published by the Nigerian Tribune newspaper, those between 6 and 10 paragraphs long and 11-15 paragraphs in length accounted for Eight point Eight per cent (8.8%) each of the newspaper’s stories. Furthermore, Twenty point Six per cent (20.6%) of the newspaper’s stories were 16 to 20 paragraphs in length while reports that were longer than 21 paragraphs accounted for Fifty per cent (50%) of its stories.

This entails that majority of stories published by the Nigerian Tribune newspapers were more than 21 paragraphs in length, this was followed with a significant number of stories falling between 6 and 10 in length. In the case of the Daily Champion, there were no stories ranging between 1 and 5 paragraphs of the newspaper’s reports, those ranging between 6 and 10 paragraphs in length accounted for Twenty Two point Two per cent (22.2%) of stories, while Eighteen point Five per cent (18.5%) of its stories were between 11 and 15 paragraphs in length. Furthermore, Twenty Five point Nine per cent (25.9%) of stories were between 16 and 20 paragraphs in length while reports longer than 21 paragraphs accounted for Thirty-Three point Three per cent (42.2%) of the stories by the Daily Champion. The situation was different for the Daily Punch newspaper as majority of its reports (26.5%) were above 21 paragraphs in length. This was followed by reports that were 16-20 paragraphs long (23.5%) while Twenty point Six per cent (20.6%) of stories by the newspaper were between 11 and 15 paragraphs and 6-10 paragraphs in length.

Stories within the category of 1 - 5 and 16 - 20 paragraphs accounted for Three point Three per cent (3.3%) and Thirteen point Three per cent (13.3%) of reports respectively by the Daily Trust newspaper. It thus appears that the Daily Trust newspaper had the bulk of its stories falling between 21+ paragraphs in length. A sizeable portion of its stories also fell between 11 and 15 paragraphs. Similarly, Thirty Four point Five per cent (34.5%) of stories by the Guardian newspaper were longer than 21 paragraphs, Twenty Seven point Six per cent (27.6%) between 11 and 15 paragraphs in length and while Ten point Three per cent of its stories were 16 to 20 paragraphs long. In this case also, the majority of stories published by the newspaper were more than 21 paragraphs in length with another fairly large portion of stories between 11 and 15 paragraphs long.

Specifically, Tribune newspaper had the largest percentage of stories longer than 20 paragraphs, followed by the Guardian and Daily Trust Newspapers. Thus, this study posits
that by depth of reports, the Tribune, Guardian and Daily Trust (in descending order) gave the conflict prominence more than the other newspapers. On the other hand, the Daily Punch had the largest percentage of stories between 1 and 10 paragraphs, thus they had the largest portion of relatively short news stories and hence, could be said to have given the conflicts less prominence than the other newspapers by way of depth of reports. In all, the greater portion of stories were longer than 20 paragraphs, accounting for Thirty Five point Seven per cent (35.7%) of all reports, stories in the categories of 6 to 10 and 11 to 15 paragraphs constituted Sixteen point Two per cent (16.2%) and Twenty point Eight per cent (20.8%) respectively while also, Sixteen point Two per cent (16.2%) Twenty point Eight per cent (20.8%) of all stories were between 16 and 20 paragraphs long.

**PLACEMENT/POSITION**

According to Folarin (1998:57), positioning is one of the methods through which the print media perform the agenda setting role, hence, the location of a story goes a long way in determining the measure of importance attached to it by the publisher, and inadvertently, by the audience as well. In terms of positioning, it is normally expected that majority of stories should be on the inside pages since the front and back pages provide very limited space and are only used to feature the most important and captivating news items. Similarly, the bulk of stories published by the five newspapers fell into the category of inside pages.

Table 7 shows that Thirty Seven point Nine (37.9%) of all stories by Nigerian Tribune newspaper were front page stories, Three point four per cent of all stories by the newspaper were placed on the back page while Forty Eight point Three per cent (48.3%) and Ten point Three per cent (10.3%) of its stories were placed on the inside and center - spread pages respectively. This means that slightly more than half of the stories published by the newspaper were inside pages, about one tenth of its stories were center spread stories while about one third of its reports were on the front page. Back page stories constituted only a marginal percentage of reports by the newspaper. In the case of Daily Champion, Thirty Six point Four per cent (36.4%) of stories were on the front page, No story was on the back page, Fifty per cent (50%) of stories were on the inside while Thirteen point Six per cent (13.6%) of its reports were situated on center spread pages. In this case, a sizeable portion of stories were located on the front pages, however, the bulk of stories were on the inside. Unlike the Nigerian Tribune, only a marginal percentage of stories by the Daily Champion were placed on the center spread. Eight point Three per cent (8.3%) of stories by the Daily Punch were on the front page, No stories on the back pages, Ninety One point Seven per cent (91.7%) of its stories were on the inside while none of its stories were situated on the center spread page. In this case, the vast majority of stories were on the inside pages while a relatively lower percentage of reports were on the front page. Similarly, Twenty Four point One per cent (21.1%) of stories by Daily Trust newspaper were on the front page, Six point Nine per
cent (6.9%) of its reports were on the back page, Seventy Nine point Three per cent (79.3%) of its stories were on inside pages. The newspaper also did not have any center spread stories. These results indicate that the newspaper had higher percentage of Inside page stories than Daily Punch but lower than the other newspapers sampled. The case was not different for the Guardian newspaper as more than half of its reports on the conflicts were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front Page</th>
<th>Back Page</th>
<th>Inside Page</th>
<th>Center Spread</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Punch</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>91.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.44%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guardian</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
inside page stories. Specifically, front page stories accounted for Thirty Eight point Five per cent (38.5%) of its reports; Seven point Seven per cent (7.7%) of its stories were placed on the back page. Fifty per cent (50%) of its stories were on inside pages while Three point Eight per cent (3.8%) were located on center spread pages. These findings reveal that by way of positioning on front pages, the Guardian and Tribune newspapers gave the conflicts the greatest measure of prominence of all the newspapers. Daily Trust also had the greatest percentage of back page stories along with the Guardian while Nigerian Tribune and Champion newspaper had the vast majority of center spread stories, hence, could also be said to have given prominence to the conflict because of the premium placed on the centre spread.

In all, front page stories accounted for Twenty Nine point Two per cent (29.2%) of reports by all three newspapers, back page stories (3.8%), stories on inside pages (61.5%) and center spread reports (5.4%). Thus front page stories constituted almost one third of all stories by the selected newspapers. Consequently, by way of general placement of stories, the newspapers gave prominence to the conflict along with those on the inside pages. This indicates that by way of placement, on the front and inside pages, the newspapers gave prominence to escalatory reports on the Obasanjo Atiku conflict.

**POINT SIZE**

Point size is also an important parameter by which to judge and ascertain the measure of importance attached to any given news report by a newspaper. It refers to the size of the lettering used in the headline of stories and is important, considering that greater size of font/lettering often means more attention being drawn to a story more than other with smaller font sizes, i.e. the bigger the lettering (especially of the headline) is, the easier and faster attention is drawn to such a story. Thus, stories which the media consider as being more important than others on the same page often have headlines with relatively larger lettering; this is done so as to draw the attention of the reader first to such stories. Most importantly, use of heavy/large lettering in headlines is one of the major strategies which the media use in setting agenda for public discourse through their reports.

Table 8 shows the font sizes of headlines used by the selected newspapers in reporting the conflicts as a measure of the importance they attached to the conflicts. The table shows that Fourteen point Seven per cent (14.7%) of headlines by the Nigerian Tribune were between 18 and 24 point, Forty Four point One per cent (44.1%) were between 36 and 48 point, Twenty Nine point Four per cent (29.4%) were between 54 and 60 point while Eleven point Eight per cent (11.8%) were larger than 72 points. This shows that the bulk of headlines used by the Nigerian Tribune newspaper were between 36 and 48 points in size. Furthermore, Eighteen point Five per cent (18.5%) of headlines by the Daily Champion were between 18 and 24 points, Forty Eight point One per cent (48.1%) were between 36
and 48 points. Fourteen point Eight per cent (14.8%) were between 54 and 60 points while Eighteen point Five per cent (18.5%) of headlines by the newspaper were larger than 72 points. Essentially then, the bulk of headlines by the newspaper were between 36 and 48 points in size. In the case of Daily Punch, only Five point Nine per cent (5.9%) of its headlines were larger than 72 points; Fifty per cent (50%) were between 36 and 48 points while Forty Four point One per cent (44.1%) were between 18 and 24 points. The newspaper did not use any headline with point size between 54 and 60. Thus, the greatest portion of its headlines had point size ranging between 18 and 48 points while those larger than 72 points constituted only a marginal percentage of headlines.

Majority of headlines by the Daily Trust newspaper were either between 18 — 24 points (60.0%) or 36 — 48 points (33.3%) in size. Those between 54 and 60 point and 72 points constituted only Three point Three per cent (3.3%) respectively. That of Guardian newspaper was most dissimilar as Eighty Six point Two per cent (86.2%) of its headlines were between 18 and 24 points while Thirteen point Eight per cent (13.8%) was between 36 and 48 points in size. In essence while only a marginal percentage of Daily Trust’s headlines were larger than 48 points, none of the headlines by the Guardian were greater than 48 point size. These results suggest that by way of point size of headlines used by the selected newspapers in reporting the conflict, the Nigerian Tribune gave the greatest

| TABLE 8 CROSSTABULATION OF POINT SIZES BY TYPE OF NEWSPAPER * |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|
| POINT SIZES       | 18-24 | 36-48 | 54-60 | 72+ |
| TRIBUNE           | 5 (14.7%) | 15 (44.1%) | 10 (29.4%) | 4 (11.8%) | 34 (100.0%) |
| DAILY CHAMPION    | 5 (18.5%) | 13 (48.1%) | 4 (14.8%) | 5 (18.5%) | 27 (100%) |
| DAILY PUNCH       | 15 (44.1%) | 17 (50) | 0 (.0%) | 2 (5.0%) | 34 (100%) |
| DAILY TRUST       | 18 (60.0%) | 10 (33.3%) | 1 (3.3%) | 1 (3.3%) | 30 (100%) |
| GUARDIAN          | 25 (86.2%) | 4 (13.8%) | 0 | 0 | 29 (100%) |
| Total             | 68 (44.2%) | 59 (38.3%) | 15 (9.8%) | 12 (7.8%) | 154 (100%) |
measure of prominence, followed by Daily Champion. On the other hand, the Guardian and Daily Trust had the highest percentages of headlines with point size between 18 and 24, hence could be said to have given the least measure of prominence to the conflicts. In all, the bulk of headlines (44.2%) used by the selected newspapers fell between 18 and 24 point, this was followed by those between 36 and 48 point size (38.3%); headlines between 54 to 60 points and larger than 72 points accounted for only a marginal percentage of headlines used by the papers.

**Research Question 5**

How socially responsible was the reportage of the conflict by selected newspapers?

While the social responsibility theory accepts the basic principle of press freedom, it however also sees the need for media to perform certain obligations to society, i.e. put public interest above personal interest, and should not short change the public in the disclosure of information. Nkwocha (2003:41) and Okoye (2007:21) posit that freedom without responsibility is dangerous. Moreover, they assert that bitter rivalry and partisanship of media owners and the quest for objectivity on the part of media professionals could create problems for the society. They add that the press in any country should be responsive to the wishes, yearnings and feelings of the public. Essentially then, social responsibility entails that the media must balance their tremendous power and capacity to mould public opinion with their commitment to societal interest through reporting on issues in a way that is beneficial to society rather than in a destructive manner. It also emphasizes the need for discretion on the part of the mass media especially in reporting issues which are delicate and sensitive, such as conflict. Such issues are capable of destabilizing/disintegrating or enhancing a more stable, integrated and cohesive society depending on the way in which such issues are handled. In reporting the Obasanjo and Abubakar politico-personal conflict, it is submitted in this study that the selected newspapers to a large extent did not exhibit sufficient social responsibility; specifically, many of the reports by the newspapers were escalatory, capable of inciting further conflict. The reportage was largely imbalanced and clearly partisan. Indisputably, an overwhelming percentage of the reportage of the conflict was escalatory. This does not align with the tenets of social responsibility as reporting in such a way, especially when it involves individuals who occupy sensitive political positions, is capable of destabilizing the society. More importantly, the bulk of escalatory stories were placed conspicuously on the front, back or center spread pages and given great measure of prominence compared to the de — escalation stories. It thus appears that the newspapers were engaged in glorifying the conflict and presentation of conflict themes in such a way as to promote conflict value in society rather than establishing the dangers of such conflict and highlighting peaceful alternatives. Furthermore, partisanship and expression of support
Muyiwa Popoola

Newspaper Reportage of Politico-Personal Conflict in Nigeria

for conflicting parties was observed in about eighty (80) percent of the reportage of the conflict by the selected newspapers. This shows that the selected newspapers took sides in the conflict, an act in which one of the conflicting parties is exalted at the expense of the other, and is liable to result in intensification of conflict. The fact that all column/opinion stories of the selected newspapers were escalatory of the conflict goes a long way in showing that the newspapers’ coverage ran foul of the expectations of socially responsible media. The textual analysis of the reportage shows that the selected newspapers tended to escalate the conflict by reporting verbatim, provocative statements and utterances and description of happenings which could have been left out in the interest of the conflicting parties and society at large. The way in which some of the statements and happenings were also published or represented seems to suggest that the newspapers took interest in presentation of the conflicts in unsuitable ways, using inappropriate language. This thought is in consonance with Isola’s (2010:85) observation that “the press has an enormous potential for peace building and for transforming conflict, but it often delights in encouraging and, sometimes, in inciting various forces in the society against one another for its inherent benefits.”

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study has investigated newspaper coverage of the politico-personal conflict between a former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar between 1999 and 2007. The study examined the reportage of the conflict quantitatively and also interpreted the manifest reportage of five selected newspapers, namely Daily Trust, Nigerian Tribune, Daily Champion, Guardian and the Punch. Specifically, the study examined the manner of coverage of the incident by the newspapers including the number, length of stories and dimension of reports published. Without doubt, several authorities and previous studies have established the general and the obvious role of the media in political conflicts. However, the searchlight of this study was to assess the extent to which newspapers reports tend to escalate and de-escalate politico-personal conflict in Nigeria, using the Obasanjo-Atiku feud as a case study. It was discovered that newspapers churned out more escalation stories than de-escalation stories in their reportage. Thus the newspapers through their reports determined the violent dimension the conflict took. Even the de-escalation stories were not deliberate efforts by the newspaper to broker peace between the conflicting parties but were by concerned individuals who felt there was a necessity to do so. Consequently, the newspapers did not report the conflict within the framework of the development media theory. The newspapers also displayed elements of bias, partisanship, violence laden, destructive and spiteful languages while taking sides with
the conflicting parties all which tended to escalate the conflict. Upon the conclusion of this research, the following recommendations are put forward:

That conflict reporting and peace journalism as a course should be instituted into the curriculum of students of journalism in all tertiary institutions in the country. This would no doubt furnish them with the necessary skills to report conflicts when they get into the industry. It is hoped that this will provide them with the expertise germane to demonstrating neutrality and a sense of balance in reporting such conflicts.

That reporters and correspondents working in media houses should undergo training and attend regular workshops on how to report conflict issues as this would enable them go about their day to day reporting by valuing peace as a news value over conflict. This can be done through making a deliberate editorial policy and house style that will guide against escalatory stories in prebendal political reporting.

That in politico — personal conflict reporting, the language used should be played down a lot as this will serve effectively to reduce the intensity of the conflicts and act as mediators in the conflict rather than being conflict fuelers but balancing the concepts of objectivity, fairness and balance with conflict analysis and conflict transformation thereby raising conflict to the plain of discussion with proposals for resolution.

That, when it is obvious that a conflict is brewing, the media should churn out early warning signals on the conflict and this can be emphasized by the surveillance function so as to detect early and take proactive measures by guiding against the intending conflict.

That, conflicting inciting advertorials and opinions should be filtered as the revenue generated through these should not stand in the way of peace and mediation which should be paramount in order to lead the society into development.

That a body which would see to researching on the reports on conflict from time be established so as to monitor the performance of the media in reporting conflicts. This it is hoped will allow for media houses to see if they are in tune with preventive conflict reporting that would not escalate any conflict situation.

That conflict resolution should be the paramount thing on the minds of editors, reporters, correspondents, columnists in reporting or writing about conflict. This will ultimately lead to peace building as building peace destructive or negative communication patterns need to be transformed or replaced by constructive or positive interaction patterns. This stresses the need to transform the disputing parties by empowering them to understand their own situation and needs, as well as encouraging them to recognize the situation and how it affects the country.
REFERENCES


