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MEDIA EDUCATOR

Issue 1, August 2011

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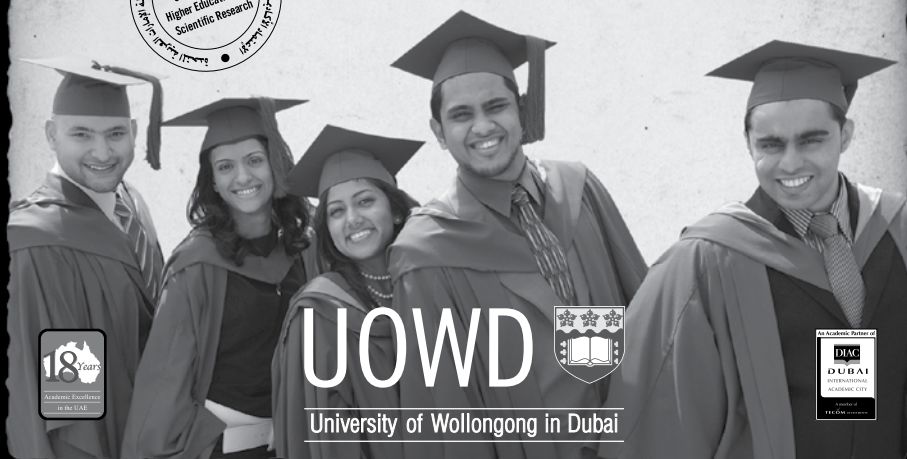
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Middle East Media Educator

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Middle East Media Educator (MEME) is a refereed journal published annually at the University of Wollongong in Dubai. It was inspired by and takes as its model Asia Pacific Media Educator (APME) which has been published at the University of Wollongong in Australia since 1996, founded and still edited by Eric Loo. Like APME, MEME "aims to bridge the gap between media educators and practitioners."

MEME is the first such journal in the Middle East, and it will strive to encourage dialogue between industry and academe in a region where informed analysis of the media isn't widespread. Educators struggle to find textbooks and case studies that are relevant to the unique situation in the Middle East region because most teaching resources are developed in other parts of the world.

Research articles and commentaries about the state of the media, media professions, media education, and other topics relevant to the region are welcome. Until study of the media, media professions, and media contexts in the Middle East becomes far more widespread, MEME will tend to be eclectic in its editorial policy. We welcome articles for Issue 2 in August 2012 and will consider abstracts and article proposals for that issue by the end of December 2011.

As we prepare to publish the first issue of MEME, details of subscriptions and online access are not yet available. Please check the University of Wollongong in Dubai website (www.uowdubai.ac.ae) from September 2011 for information on subscriptions or to download articles. For information, contact: alma.kadragic@uowdubai.ac.ae.

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Introduction

Although I have been living and working in the UAE since 2005, until last September, I had never thought of starting a journal about Middle East media. That changed during a visit to the University of Wollongong in Australia shortly after I joined the University of Wollongong in Dubai as Academic Program Developer. The mission was to meet the key people concerned with journalism, media, public relations, and communications at Wollongong because I was charged with creating a graduate program in media and communications in Dubai that followed the Wollongong model. All of that happened more or less as expected. What I hadn't expected was to meet Dr. Eric Loo who showed me several issues of Asia Pacific Media Educator, the journal he founded in 1996 and has been editing ever since.

My first question to Eric was, is there anything like this in the Middle East? I was fairly sure there wasn't because during my first four years in the UAE teaching journalism and public relations, I had been looking for teaching materials that related to the region. When Eric confirmed that there was no equivalent journal in the Middle East, I recognized an opportunity. The President and other senior managers at the University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD) supported the idea, and we set to work, we meaning first of all Eric who was involved from the beginning and agreed to join the editorial advisory board. He has done much more than that, contributing his own article to this first issue, giving the article on Hafez' poetry which was initially submitted to Asia Pacific Media Educator (APME), and answering the many questions that arose as the process of announcing Middle East Media Educator, calling for submissions, selecting the editorial advisory board, and evaluating the articles continued.

As first in the region, Middle East Media Educator (MEME) has the opportunity to be the platform for dialogue between media practitioners and the academics who are teaching future media practitioners as well as providing theoretical background and wider contexts for existing practitioners. It is crucial for academics to maintain contacts with industry in any area but especially in media and communications and especially in a region which is changing socially, economically, and politically as a result of history and globalization.

With any startup, the beginning is something of an experiment: the expectation is that problems will be identified and resolved while producing MEME continues. In this first issue, we were limited by time. Because of my background covering daily news for a major television network, I set tight deadlines, not all of which were observed, but which kept us on track. A commitment to introduce MEME and some of its contributors in a panel discussion at the annual convention of the Association for Journalism and Mass Communication in St. Louis in August guaranteed the publication date would be met.

In an emerging market like the UAE and indeed the Gulf and the wider Middle East, the pace of everything is furious. Academics tasked with making up for years of education ill suited to a knowledge economy and given heavy teaching loads have difficulty producing research. The push for more research has begun and in several countries including the UAE is supported by the government. On the ground, however, there hasn't yet been much study of the media from an academic perspective. As some of the pieces in MEME testify, media and media professions are undergoing development and change. The result is that this launch issue of MEME contains fewer pieces of academic research than might have been expected. This will change, but for now, we felt it was important to define the media market in order to stimulate the dialogue.

Defining the Media Market

This issue is organized in four sections with three major ones of roughly equal length. These sections may be continued in the 2012 issue of MEME. Some may not. Perhaps the organization

will change entirely because we - like the media and academic researchers - are feeling our way. In **Section I, The Role of Media in the Arab Spring**, two pieces look at political reform and media in Tunisia and Egypt. Rasha Owais, a former Egyptian journalist now living in the UAE and working for the public relations section of agency TBWA Raad, spoke to journalists in each country for their take on the role of the media and the freedom of new and old media. Dr. Serajul Bhuiyan, Chair, Department of Communication and Dramatic Arts, Auburn University, Montgomery, Alabama, takes an academic's view from the US to analyze the role of media in Egypt. Bhuiyan is a member of MEME's editorial advisory board.

Magda Abu-Fadil, journalist, blogger, and journalism trainer in Arabic, French, and English, living and working in Beirut, considers the state media law in New Draft Media Laws for Lebanon Limping through Parliament. She too is a member of MEME's advisory board.

Dr. Brian Bowe and Jennifer Hoewe in *Clash of Coverage: An Analysis of the Cultural Framing of U.S. Newspaper Reporting on the 2011 Protests in Bahrain* examine how three leading American newspapers - New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post - reported on the events. Their article shows Americans and others outside of the Middle East how preconceptions influence how unfamiliar events are covered. It shows those in the Middle East how events there may be perceived in the rest of the world. Dr. Bowe teaches at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan, while Ms. Hoewe is a doctoral student at the Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pennsylvania.

In **Section II, Developing Professional Communicators in the UAE**, Sana Bagersh discusses *Changing Roles in the UAE Media: Instructor, Journalist, Marketer*. She has been and still is all of those which is typical of the UAE and emerging markets where niches tend not to exist, and people and companies try to fill gaps and attack opportunities. Ms. Bagersh is a member of the editorial advisory board and was instrumental in organizing the publication of MEME.

From Hollywood to Abu Dhabi: Goodbye Team, Hello Me is the story of media professional Sonya Edelman who had to change her way of working when she followed her husband to the UAE. A former reality television producer, Ms. Edelman is a renaissance woman now engaged in other media areas.

Rebecca Hill has been a prime mover in the development of professionalism in the field of public relations in the UAE and the Gulf as the founding executive director of the Middle East PR Association (MEPRA). The organization existed before she came on board, but was much less influential. MEPRA decided to get serious in 2009, Ms. Hill was hired, and her piece *Public Relations and Corporate Communications in the UAE* charts the changes.

Phil Ryan heads the digital team at public relations agency Four Communications. Based in London, he is involved with Middle East clients and has developed a new platform for media releases that he describes in *Digital Tools of the Trade: The Social Media Fourum*.

Dr. Tina Leshner who teaches at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey, spent two teaching years in the UAE at Zayed University. Four years ago she arrived with a Fulbright grant to interview and write about the life experiences of Emirati women. The interviews went well, but when it came to writing, she decided against doing it as nonfiction. Instead she wrote a novel as she explains in *Writing The Abaya Chronicles*. Dr. Leshner is a member of the editorial advisory board.

Maitha Al Mehairbi was one of Dr. Leshner's students in Abu Dhabi. Today, she works at twofour54, the Abu Dhabi media zone. When Ms. Al Mehairbi heard about the novel, she volunteered to write *Review: The Abaya Chronicles. An Abaya-Clad Perspective*. Dr. Leshner will know the result only when she reads MEME.

In **Section III Education and Media** the first two articles offer two very different methods for enhancing student learning at various levels. Dr. Swapna Koshy who teaches business communication at the University of Wollongong in Dubai found that essay writing can be taught to many students at once in *Group Work Teaches Freshmen to Communicate*.

Peyman Pejman who was a senior planner with the US State Department in Washington D.C. describes university students performing at an advanced level, investigating the aftermath of the assassination of Daniel Pearl in *Using the Pearl Project to Develop Investigative Reporters*. Thanks to Barbara Feinman Todd of Georgetown University in Washington D.C. MEME was given permission to publish *The Pearl Project. Key Findings* which demonstrates what the students could - and also couldn't do.

Dr. Eric Loo who teaches journalism at the University of Wollongong in Australia contributed *Reporting Religion beyond the Conflict Frame* in addition to providing the inspiration and support for the creation and publication of MEME before and after he joined the editorial advisory board. Within and outside of secular societies, reporting about religion is a problem. He outlines some of the reasons and suggests solutions.

A Communicative Analysis of Hafez's Saba Wind is by Dr. Ali Asghar Kia who conducts research and teaches and graduate student Mr. Saeed Saghe'i at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran. This is an especially significant paper for readers from outside of Iran or Persian culture who are unfamiliar with the poetry of Hafez, arguably one of the world's greatest poets.

Finally, in **Section IV, Conference Reports**, I write about two conferences that took place in the UAE in June 2011. *The Role of Media in Arab Society* was a one-day event at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi. *Begin the Dialogue: Science, Culture and Modernity* was a three-day conference at the American University of Sharjah from June 21-23 although the report concerns only the closing media session. Both pieces first appeared in my monthly media column in *Tempo* magazine and are included here by permission of the publisher BrandMoxie.

Alma Kadragic

Dubai
July 2011

Arab Media during the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia: Time for Change

By Rasha Owais | rasha.owais@tbwaraad.com

“Change” and “Purification” are two key words you often hear nowadays among Egyptian and Tunisian journalists. For them, the revolution has not ended... it has just begun.

Much as the Egyptian and the Tunisian people were eagerly waiting to overcome their fear of the police state, the journalists of both countries are now waiting for another seminal moment in the history of their profession. It is time to free the media from ex-regime allies.

Tunisian media demonstrations succeeded in changing editorial teams on national television and newspapers while the ongoing Egyptian demonstrations are calling for the election of a new board for their association and to bring new blood to the stagnant national media.

“It is a seminal moment in the history of our profession. Our media will only be purified and changed when ex-regime allies leave,” said Wael Abul Saoud of Akhbar Alyoum newspaper, during a demonstration opposite the Egyptian Cabinet’s headquarters in Cairo, calling for the firing of the editors-in-chief appointed by the former regime.

Wael’s words were echoed by Ammar Ben Aziz, a Tunisian blogger and journalist at Al Arabiya TV. “Yes, change and purification are happening now. The Tunisian media has changed a lot, but is still changing and we will continue changing it further,” said Ammar.

Wael and Ammar both remember incidents when ex-regime allies at the Egyptian and Tunisian national television stations would not criticize the performance of the pro-Mubarak Prime Minister or air reports on the corruption cases of former Tunisian President Bin Ali and his close circle.

“Two weeks after the revolution, Tunisian National TV was still influenced by the ex-regime allies. They refused to air corruption stories of Bin Ali and his allies,” said Ammar.

“We thought censorship was over, but it surfaced once again, after a television program criticizing the performance of Ahmed Shafiq, the former pro-Mubarak Interim Prime Minister, was denied a repeat airing on National TV,” said Wael.

In Egypt, the authorities “officially” backed-off, but the intelligence services remained active under the radar. It was not difficult for Egyptian people and media professionals to recognize the ex-Mubarak media advocates who suddenly became revolution supporters.

Days after Mubarak resigned, the national newspaper, Al Ahram, published an unprecedented editorial in which it unreservedly apologized to the Egyptian people “for all its bias to the corrupt regime.” It also took “pride in the pure blood that was shed to defeat the forces of backwardness and oppression,” and sought “the forgiveness of the families of the martyrs” who died during the Egyptian revolution.

Everyone was quite amazed. Egyptian national newspapers, TV editors and directors had always idolized Mubarak, to the extent that they claimed, “Egypt was born on his birthday.” Now, should the Egyptian people believe that they had become “revolutionists” defending the young people involved in the uprising whom they had accused of being agents only a few days earlier!

On the internet, video clips of a famous Egyptian talk show dated prior to the fall of the Mubarak regime are available as well as footage of the same program after the revolution. The difference in the presenters' attitude, before and after, is a source of great entertainment for Egyptians.

"The national Egyptian TV, newspapers and private satellite channels owned by businessmen lost their credibility. The change of the presenters' attitudes is ridiculous and shows us that we can't trust them. Editors-in-chief must leave. Mubarak's regime survived because of the state intelligence and those editors," stressed Wael.

Unlike the Tunisian people who have a higher level of literacy, explained Wael, Egypt has more than 40 percent illiterate citizens who neither read newspapers nor access the internet. Television is their main source of information, and the ex-regime journalists will certainly brainwash them, at a time when Egypt is readying itself for elections.

But despite the ongoing "War of Purification," Wael and Ammar acknowledge that there have been changes after both revolutions. Tunisians, for example, saw Al Jazeera TV's reporters on the streets for the first time since they were banned by Bin Ali years ago. Editorial teams at the Tunisian National Television Stations and newspapers were elected, and news on trials of Bin Ali's closest circle was printed.

In Egypt, the writing style of articles has become more daring "if not ruder." Opposition leaders appeared on national TV, and talk shows brought down the Interim Prime Minister. "After Ganoushi became the interim Prime Minister, the media refused to take orders from anyone and decided to elect its own editorial teams to manage the national stations and newspapers. We now watch interviews with formerly-exiled opposition leaders on screen and read about the trials of Bin Ali's close circle in newspapers," said Ammar.

The live talk show *Baladna Belmasri* [Our Country] on the channel ON TV owned by Nagub Sawiris made history when it brought down the Interim Government's Prime Minister, Ahmed Shafiq, after a heated discussion with the famous Egyptian novelist, Alaa Alaswani, who said straight to Shafiq that he would be joining demonstrators on Friday at Tahrir Square to kick him out of power. Shafiq lost his temper to the extent that the presenters began cooling down both speakers in an attempt to bring the show back on track. The next day Shafiq was forced to resign.

In another incident, some Egyptian satellite television channels and websites re-aired a bitter argument between a well-known Egyptian TV anchor and the former Egyptian Minister of Information, Anas Al Fiqqi, which highlighted the extent to which the media had begun playing a more independent role.

These examples of change reflect the attitudes of the majority of Egyptian media professionals, who know very well that freedom of expression is not given but has to be fought for. "The change will not come about smoothly, and it certainly won't be rapid, or without obstacles. It is not easy to convince everyone to adopt a new liberal, independent way of thinking overnight, after many decades of practicing a policy of censorship, authoritarianism and corruption," explained Wael.

Ammar agreed and said: "The changes are not yet up to the revolutionists' aspirations, but let us admit that watching opposition leaders was an impossibility on national TV earlier. Privately-owned TV stations now express themselves freely, to the extent that the profession's code of ethics is in danger. The privately-owned Hanibaal TV has lost track of professional ethics and now plays the role of a judge and condemns people right, left, and center."

In Tunisia, continued Ammar, "the two newspapers of the ex-ruling party, the Arabic *Al Horreya* and the French *Le Renouveau*, are now pro-revolution. The Arabic *Al Sahafa* newspaper now has

a new editor in chief, Ziad Al Hani, who reports corruption stories of Bin Ali and his allies. These stories are well known to the Tunisians, but they never dared to publish them."

"A year prior the revolution, the Al Sabah newspaper, which was earlier owned by Bin Ali's son-in-law, Sakr Al Materi, has opened doors for all political thinkers, leftists and Islamists, and allowed readers to interact with it. It is also ethically responsible, as it does not publish any story without documentation," Ammar added.

But what about further changes? What will the Tunisian and Egyptian media look like in the future? Wael and Ammar both agreed that newspapers will continue to be daring, if not fiercer in headlines and stories. They will keep focusing on topics that interest the peoples of both countries: politics, economy, security, democracy and readying the societies for political life.

"We are living in the wake of the revolution. All media outlets, be it newspapers, television, or social media, are saying whatever they like, and criticizing whomever they please. It can be overwhelming sometimes," said Ammar.

"After any revolution, it is very natural for newspapers to turn foul and adopt a rude writing style. When things settle down, the Egyptian media will be fiercer and critical, but respectful," commented Wael. To this, Adel Al Sanhoury of the Egyptian website Alyoum Al Sabe'e added: "The Egyptian media is definitely putting its records on track. The writing style is now more balanced than the early days of the revolution. In our website, we took a clear decision not to write anything unethical against colleagues in the media regardless of the employer."

Adel also expects the Egyptian national newspapers will become fierce competitors of their private counterparts. "The national newspaper, Al Akhbar, appointed Yasser Rizk as editor-in-chief and ever since then, they have expressed themselves freely to the extent that their circulation rose from 80-90,000 to 300,000 copies daily. This is a clear indication of the coming competition," Adel pointed out.

The coming period will demonstrate an acute change that will lead to the re-structuring of national newspapers and television, and perhaps the private ones too. This in the end is in the best interest of readers and viewers. "National newspapers were originally financed by the taxes the Egyptian people paid to the government. Basically, they were launched by the people and to the people, but they never expressed the views of the Egyptians. Now, everyone is studying new structures of ownership and the government, for example, might be allowed a 40% ownership of one newspaper and one TV station, while the rest of the ownership will be offered to the public and journalists employed at those newspapers, in an Initial Public Offering," said Adel.

But what about Facebook and Twitter? Wael, Ammar, and Adel say they know that the internet is now a strong weapon. "Facebook is magic. It is the best source of information, and people depend on it because they no longer trust the Egyptian national media," said Wael.

"Tunisia now has 1,800,000 Facebook and Twitter users, a figure that is higher than the number of German subscribers. Tunisians now interact more on Facebook; the opposition and the earlier silent majority are now on the Net. I will give you a small example, within a few days I had 300 friends, and now I have 700," declared Ammar.

He also hopes Facebook is used "responsibly" as it had lately turned out to be a source of rumours. "All the creators, including myself, of the Tunisian revolution pages, decided to launch a joint page titled the Union of Revolution Page with the purpose of publishing credible stories. We have genuine stories and named administrators, and we do not publish anonymous stories," said Ammar.

According to the latest statistics, more than 56 million Arabs are regular cybernauts, and the number is rapidly increasing. Despite efforts by most Arab regimes to censor and control the internet, tech-savvy youths who represent up to 50 % of the region's population are able to outwit their elderly rulers whose average age is over 70.

Recently, Abdul Bari Atwan, editor-in-chief of the London-based Al Quds newspaper, said that the region's growing middle-class, many of whom have studied abroad and speak European languages, understands the benefits and mechanisms of democracy, and this is heavily reflected in their Facebook, Twitter, and blogs postings. It is mostly this class, together with workers' unions, that has been organizing and driving the current uprisings; they can be expected to be crucial to the nation-building process that will ensue.

Atwan stressed that Arab media professionals can't underestimate the role played by the internet in informing and galvanizing Arabs; the unprecedented freedom of information available in cyberspace has helped fuel and channel resentment. WikiLeaks recently detailed the nouveau-riche excesses of the Tunisian regime while impoverished and oppressed Libyan cybersurfers discovered that their national wealth was being squandered abroad by Gaddafi's sons who allegedly paid pop stars millions of dollars to perform at private parties.

Social networking via the internet has helped protesters organize and gather support with unprecedented rapidity. Slim Amamou who became known as the Tunis Blogger told reporters that the brisk toppling of Bin Ali was due to text messaging and the Internet: "Information was immediately available," he said, "people could instantly synchronize their actions."

Wael Ghoneim, the Egyptian who lives and works in Dubai and his colleagues, were also instrumental in breaking the Egyptian January 25th revolution, through their page Kolena Khalid Saeed [We are all Khaled Saeed], the 28-year-old Alexandrian man who was tortured to death by two police officers. The page, now in Arabic and English, has 1,045,712 members in its Arabic version and 104,781 members in its English version.

Atwan pointed out that more than 8.3% of Facebook users are in the Middle East and North Africa. Egypt alone has 1,820,000 on Facebook and, together with Twitter, it is the source of most real-time news from Libya at the moment. Many of the initial aid campaigns to the Libyan people were organized through Facebook Events and Pages.

Social networking sites also convey the kind of human element sought in professional journalism. One particularly striking posting on Facebook by an Egyptian youth at the height of the struggle read: "To DIE for something ... is better than ... to LIVE for nothing ... R.I.P. all Egyptians dead in this Revolution."

In these days of uprisings and political change throughout the Arab world, signs of the next media revolution are obvious. There is a new drive and hunger for truth and freedom, which seems to be infectious. In reality, it is the new independent mostly internet-based media that is transforming the region.

The role of keeping the public informed and holding the powers-that-be accountable is gradually shifting to individuals and distributed networks and groups that are increasingly able to reshape the news agenda, said Atwan. Al Jazeera, he added, compelled a revision of the peace negotiations when it, along with the Guardian, released the largest-ever trove of confidential documents related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "With these non-traditional approaches entering the fray of journalism, the practices and rules of investigative journalism are perhaps ripe for a rethink," he said.

In light of recent groundbreaking reporting, how should investigative journalism be conducted in the future, given the new tools and capabilities that technology affords ordinary individuals?

There has been pressure on governments in other Arab countries to loosen press restrictions. Journalists working for state television and newspapers demonstrated in Jordan recently, an act unthinkable before this year. Yemen has announced a new, more liberal media law, although critics say it's a smokescreen behind which the authorities will continue to repress freedom of expression.

Restrictions on the press remain very firmly in place in Morocco, but King Mohammed VI has announced plans to hold a referendum on constitutional changes, Atwan said. Aboubakr Jamaï, a Moroccan journalist who founded *Le Journal* back in the 1990s, said this is precisely what the opposition has been calling for. "If you're a journalist and you wanted to cover the protests on 20 February, or if you want to cover the protest called for 20 March, you have to be on the right Facebook sites. Don't waste your time elsewhere," he added.

Even hard-line countries like Syria and Saudi Arabia are not immune to the spirit of the times. In Syria, the ban on Facebook has been lifted. Social media is making inroads in Saudi Arabia as well. Diverging from the trend toward more openness, the government in Iraq has reacted to weekly Friday protests by cracking down on the press, said Atwan.

Libya remains the current flashpoint. The satellite TV stations Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya are serving a familiar role there as the only source of non-state news for much of the country. Idris Ibn Tayeb, a well-known Libyan writer and long-term critic of the Gaddafi regime, said that things are changing in the eastern part of the country.

Speaking from his home in Benghazi, Ibn Tayeb said journalists there have been publishing short newspapers with news of the fighting and announcements. Voice of Free Libya radio is now broadcasting on medium wave transmissions from Benghazi, which reach far into the west of the country, and a TV station in Benghazi has just launched on satellite.

But when the fighting stops, Libya will have a lot of catching-up to do, according to Ibn Tayeb. There is very little to build on in terms of institutions, including the media. "During 42 years of Gaddafi, we've been struggling with nothing."

Thanks to satellite channels, Libyans were able to follow the talk-show *Baladna Belmasry* which led to the resignation of Egyptian Interim Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq. While Shafiq's resignation happened after he appeared on the traditional medium of television, his resignation demonstrated just how far new media has penetrated the Arab world. The Egyptian Supreme Military Council governing Egypt announced Shafiq's resignation on its Facebook page.

Shafiq himself had a page on Facebook and the current Egyptian Interim Prime Minister, Dr. Essam Sharaf, created the official Egyptian Cabinet's Page on Facebook as well. In fact, the power of the net is forcing the Egyptian government to study the possibility of allowing Egyptians abroad to vote electronically in the upcoming elections.

The outcomes of the Tunisian and Egyptian popular revolutions, along with the Libyan revolution, concern all Arab media professionals. Despite the positive and encouraging achievements, so far Arab media professionals have failed to produce a single truly independent Arab media outlet. Perhaps lessons drawn from the Egyptian media experience will be useful for countries suffering similar situations.

If Arab media organizations break the tradition of blindly supporting whoever is in power, then they may be able to sustain the repercussions when their countries are hit by change. Those who steadfastly defended the Egyptian regime before it was overthrown have either changed or ended up on trial for corruption. The task for Arab journalists and media professionals is to start considering how to create truly independent media outlets.

Social Media and Its Effectiveness in the Political Reform Movement in Egypt

By Serajul I. Bhuiyan | sibhuiyan@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article examines the role of social media in political and social revolution in Egypt. It reveals how social media enhanced and ignited people's desire for democracy and socio-economic advancement stalled by the long term authoritarian government. The main focus is on the importance of social media as a platform for discussion of ideas, experiences, and knowledge exchange: The big social media networks like Facebook and Twitter and individual blogs have emerged as powerful channels that allowed people in Egypt to bypass government censorship, spread the words of political reform, and break the barrier of fear. They mobilized millions of citizens to participate in political action and emerged as authoring agents and organizational power structures. The paper includes information about the demographics, education, and young age of the population of Egypt contributing to the political uprisings.

Introduction

As countries around the world discover the influence of social media, citizens have begun to use its power to better their lives; one such country, Egypt, has created a new standard for social reform through social media and networking. Egypt possesses a long and rich history, a cohesive kingdom from around 3200 B.C. Over thousands of years, various nations ruled Egypt; in 1952, it finally gained independence from outside rulers, ousting the British-backed monarchy. Since then Egypt has been a republic, and until the revolution of 2011, was ruled by President Hosni Mubarak who had attempted to reform Egypt's slow economy by decentralizing it; however, that didn't work, and Egypt's citizens remain poor, 20 percent living below poverty level. The country ranks 21st in the world for Internet users, with just over 20 million users in 2009 out of a population of 83 million or roughly one quarter (The World Factbook, 2011). This is surprising if one considers the Internet a vital instrument in the Egyptian revolt.

Social media and networking have come to define a new generation of communication and have created a platform that possesses limitless abilities to connect, share, and explore our world. Social media is not a new idea, however; people have used technology for decades now to communicate, mobilize voters for political participation and, "while it has only recently become part of mainstream culture and the business world, people have been using digital media for networking, socializing and information gathering – almost exactly like now – for over 30 years" (Borders, 2009).

Social media is content created and shared by individuals on the web using available websites which allow members of the site to create and display their photos, thoughts, and videos. Social media allows people to share content with a select group or with everyone. Social media is a way for communicating with one or more people at the same time. Using these sites allows people to communicate in real-time and thereby is effective in developing democracy because social media sites give people a voice to express their opinions about government, television, political leaders, and any other issues of concern. Sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube allow power to be shifted to people. They create two-way communication between individuals or small groups and the general public.

Causes of Egypt's Revolution

During Egypt's modern period from the revolution of 1952 to the present, there have been struggles at the top of government, but only recently has the popular outcry for social reform become visible. In 1981, Egypt's leader Anwar Sadat was assassinated, bringing President Mubarak into power (Recent history of Egypt, 2009). Mubarak ruled with an autocratic style, and continued to enforce the Emergency Law 30 years after Sadat's assassination. The Emergency Law "allows police to arrest people without charge, detain prisoners indefinitely, limit freedom of expression and assembly, and maintain a special security court" (Egypt New – Revolution, 2011).

Although the law supposedly applied mainly to drug trafficking and terrorism, it was abused so greatly that the government's promise to use it sparingly proved meaningless, angering Egypt's population. In 2010, people's grievances grew exponentially as multiple problems with security, terrorism, and the economy worsened. On January 25, 2011, Egyptians took to the streets in Cairo, Alexandria, and some other places in the so called Day of Revolt, concentrating their grievances on legal and political matters. Rather than a typical small protest, the Day of Revolt exploded into a monumental moment in Egypt's history because of social media. Social media did not cause Egypt's revolution; however, it accelerated the movement. Viral videos, such as Asmaa Mahfouz's, and the suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia created a surge of emotion in Egyptians, persuading them to protest.

Egyptian protestors used Facebook and Twitter to get people out on the streets within the country and YouTube to let the world know what was happening. By using tools that the regime underestimated, activists were able to spread hope, not only to Egyptians, but also worldwide, encouraging other repressed populations to attempt something similar in their countries. Because of the protests, President Mubarak stepped down and turned his power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces; however, at the time of publication, protests continue in an effort to speed the process of what many Egyptians see as extinguishing the last remnants of the old regime. Without social media allowing Egyptians to communicate with the outside world, the government would have been able to quickly suppress the protests.

The people of Egypt were influenced by the earlier revolution in Tunisia where thousands of people protested unemployment, government corruption, and poverty by taking over the streets. The Tunisian revolution and its success in eliminating the long time leader caught the attention of Egyptians facing similar issues. Egyptians wanted change in their country and the elimination of President Mubarak who had been in power for 30 years. Social media sites helped spark and organize the first protest on January 25, 2011 which 85,000 people had pledged on Facebook to attend. When the government used force, the situation gained international attention on Twitter and YouTube. We must remember, however, that without the perseverance of the Egyptian people, the revolution would have never happened, leaving the question: To what extent does social media affect revolution in Egypt?

The economic and social situation is dire. On April 22, 2011, the US dollar is equivalent to approximately six Egyptian pounds (EGP). Wages are approximately 35 EGP per month for most people, and 289 EGP for government employees and sector workers, meaning 6 USD and 48 USD respectively. Fatah El-Gebali is quoted (Mcgrath, 2010) as saying, "There is a big problem in reaching a consensus on the issue. The trade unions want to set the minimum wage around 1,200 Egyptian pounds (200 USD) per month, while business associations want a maximum of 400 Egyptian Pounds (67 USD)." The fairest minimum wage, based on a 25 percent per capita of GNP, appears to be around 733 EGP (122 USD). At that rate, economist Samir Radawan states, "the share of those who would receive the minimum wage is not significant enough to have a dent on inflation." Current minimum wages have not increased since 1984 although inflation has.

According to statistics from the CIA (2011): the unemployment rate was 9.4 percent in 2009 and 9.7 percent in 2010; population below poverty level was 20 percent; inflation was 11.9 percent in 2009 and 12.8 percent in 2010; in 2010 the budget showed revenue of 46 billion and 64 billion expenditures; the debt rose from 29.66 billion to 30.61 billion in the year from 2009 - 2010; and in 2010 imports were nearly double exports. The literacy rate is quite low according to the CIA with around 83 percent male and 59.4 percent female literacy rates in 2005; in 2008 3.8 percent of the nation's gross profit went toward education. The mean age of citizens is 24 years of age; therefore, the majority of the citizens are likely to be aware of the media around them and thus likely to be knowledgeable about the impact of the economic situation on their future.

Role of Social Media in the Revolution

Philip Howard (2011) quoted an activist in Cairo as saying, "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world." This statement sums up the use of social media in the protest. Newsweek.com offers a collection of videos that are posted chronologically:

<http://www.newsweek.com/2011/01/28/youtube-captures-scenes-from-egypt-protests.html>.

Newsweek calls it the Facebook Revolt; in fact, it could also be called the Twitter Revolution, the first of its kind. However, not everyone agrees with the Facebook Revolution concept. Malcom Gladwell believes that the influence of social media is limited, and the revolutions would have happened anyway: "I mean, in cases where there are no tools of communication, people still get together. So I don't see that as being... in looking at history, I don't see the absence of efficient tools of communication as being a limiting factor on the ability of people to socially organize" (Ingram, 2011).

Gladwell is correct that the revolution would have happened without social media because revolutions happened in the past when the internet didn't exist; however, the revolution probably would not have happened as soon, and probably would not have sparked as quickly as it did. People were able to coordinate protests and bring out larger numbers because of Facebook and Twitter, and they were able to show what actually was happening, and counter government attempts to play down the situation because of YouTube. Social media also shaped the way the world viewed the protests. For instance, an Egyptian blogger stated, "I urge you to use the words 'revolt' and 'uprising' and 'revolution' and not 'chaos' and not 'unrest.' We are talking about a historic moment." Shortly after CNN changed a headline from "CHAOS IN EGYPT" to "UPRISING IN EGYPT" (Boyd, 2011).

Obviously, the Egyptian government that was being overthrown agreed that social media was significant because it tried to block the key sites. This is confirmed by a tweet from twitterglobalpr: "We can confirm that Twitter was blocked in Egypt around 8am [January 25th]. It is impacting both Twitter.com and applications. We believe that the open exchange of info and views benefits societies and helps [governments] better connect [with] their people" (Ungeleider, 2011).

Also confirmed were blocking of Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and mobile phones. Ungeleider reports that people in Tahrir Square were unlocking their WiFi signals to allow for mobile phones to get around the blocks; proxy servers were also used which change the URL to hide which site is being surfed. There are too many proxies to block them all.

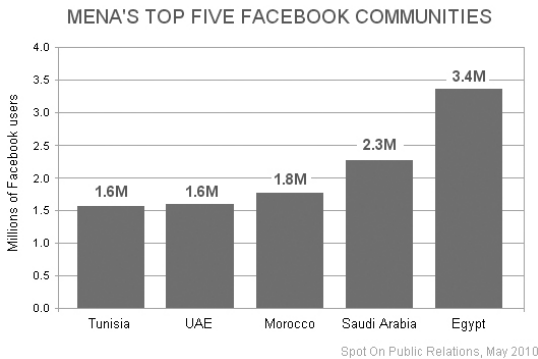
Social Media on the rise in Egypt

Social media allowed Egyptians living under dictatorship to communicate with the world. Egyptians used Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to send millions of internet links, news, articles,

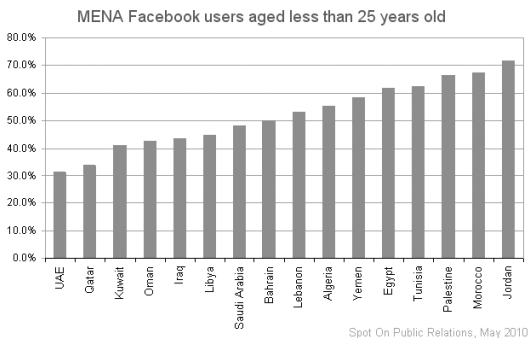
videos, and free campaigns to people all over the world. The internet allowed people living in a state that controlled traditional media to complain about conditions. News quickly spread because Twitter allowed Egyptians to upload information in as it happened and write comments about their government. This helped to gain national attention because Egyptians wanted change for their country. Social media allowed the free speech that wasn't allowed by the government.

Facebook in Egypt

Facebook helped to get the messages out to the world about the devastation that was occurring in Egypt through photos and videos. An Egyptian named Khaled Said was killed after he posted a video of police officers engaging in illegal activity. The photos of the dead man on Facebook were so gruesome that they angered Egyptians tired of brutality, immoral arrest, and crooked government. Shortly after, Wael Ghonim created a Facebook page titled "We Are All Khaled Said." That Facebook page gained 500,000 members. This led to Ghonim's being captured, blindfolded, and detained for 10 days. Ghonim who later became the symbol of Egypt's pro-democracy tweeted "Freedom is a blessing that deserves fighting for." This motivated thousands of Egyptians who agreed to keep protesting. As the protests continued, more people in Egypt turned to Facebook to see videos, pictures, make comments, and discuss the political revolution for democracy, freedom of speech, and socio-economic change.



Out of the five Middle Eastern countries Egypt has the most Facebook users at 3.4 million people. According to indexmundi.com, one in five Egyptians is between the ages of 15-24 which represented the majority of those who protested on the street. (www.indexmundi.com).



About 62 percent of Egyptian Facebook users were under 25 in 2010 before the revolution took place. Charts courtesy of SpotOn Public Relations.

YouTube and Egypt

Videos on YouTube showed thousands of people marching, fighting, and running from tear gas. It was a battle for justice that was captured on YouTube for the world to see. Protestors were shot, hit with rocks, run over by vans, and killed by police officers. YouTube was the social medium that captured the action of the 18-day Revolution. People chanted, “Don’t leave until [Mubarak] leaves,” and held sit-ins. The videos gave international exposure to the violence. YouTube also allowed subscribers to comment on the videos. One subscriber stated, “I’m Egyptian, I’m 20 years old and I saw no hope, no future, no justice, nothing...God bless everyone who sacrificed their lives for us to lead a better life...” This is just one example of how a single thought that expresses a person’s feelings can be read around the world. YouTube established a democracy where everyone is able to express an opinion through the internet.

The Government Tries to Fight Back

With the uproar of the social media, more people began expressing themselves in a society where it was uncommon. To retaliate, the government decided to shut down all social media sites to prevent interaction with other nations. On January 29, 2011, Twitter and other social media sites were blocked. The government must have thought that this move would stop the protests. However, the Egyptian Revolution was a key interest on social media sites that captured the attention of a lot of people. Egypt remained a trending topic on Twitter even while the site was blocked in Egypt.

Habib Haddad helps Egyptians Regain Their Voice

When the government disabled social media sites, Habib Haddad created an alternative to help spread the message. He teamed with Google and Twitter and found at least 1,000 translators who translated Arabic tweets into French, German, and English. This gave people in other countries a way to continue to communicate with Egyptians and to stay informed about what was happening. The application was called Speak2Tweet, and it allowed people to leave voice messages that were posted to Twitter. On February 11, 2011, known as Farewell Friday, Hosni Mubarak stepped down after 30 years. Eighteen days after the protests began in Tahrir Square and elsewhere, Egyptians finally shouted victory. They had joined together to defeat the government with the help of social media.

Conclusion

The new revolution in social media has exploded into an effective tool of communication, not only to connect socially, but also to ignite political reform and social action. Perhaps social media was not absolutely critical to the uprising in Egypt; however, it made protest possible sooner, and helped it develop in a way that would have been impossible without social media. Looking at the impact of Facebook here in America, I see that people ask for a Facebook profile instead of a telephone number; they chat online instead of talking on the phone; emailing has started to decline compared to increasing use of social media and blogging. Around the world social media has opened new possibilities for communication and social change.

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New Draft Media Laws for Lebanon Limping through Parliament

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Lebanon's media laws are archaic and desperately need updating, but ensuring they reflect realities today requires a gargantuan effort by various stakeholders who've been at odds and often scuttle serious initiatives to move forward. Legislators, academics, journalists, civil society activists, and others have been attempting to catapult laws on the books into the 21st century, so far to no avail, but that could change.

The only serious attempt to craft wording in tune with realities on the ground has come from Member of Parliament (MP) Ghassan Moukheiber, working with an NGO called Maharat (Arabic for skills), but even his draft law needs work and doesn't fully meet the country's requirements.

"I think the chances of getting through such a revolutionary bill could be real, if it is well supported by the community of journalists of Lebanon. I think such a bill would require a serious campaign of lobbying members of the parliamentary media committee, and I think this is a big challenge for the media community in Lebanon to stand up for their rights," he told me.

Unfortunately, he didn't expect that to happen easily. Journalists themselves drew very little attention to the bill, he lamented. "They need to push for their rights and they need to push for a better profession," Moukheiber insisted.

He feared that if no lobbying campaign were forthcoming, intractable, diehard opponents to substantive change would prevail and win the day, given their aversion to, and concern about, the modifications he and his colleagues were proposing.

The bill he put forth is being mulled over by Parliament's Media and Communications Committee that groups members from most of the country's political groups.

At press time, the committee had discussed 22 of 130 clauses in a draft bill submitted by MP Robert Ghanem, who heads a committee charged with modernizing the country's laws against Moukheiber's version that pared down the original 109 on the books to 75.

A draft bill by Lebanon's Press Federation was sidelined. The federation's version wasn't much of an improvement over Ghanem's or Moukheiber's.

Moukheiber believes his bill is open to lobbying and influencing.

Ghanem had rammed an additional 21 clauses to the original law that focused primarily on updating penalties and fines, rather than substantive issues like freedoms, new definitions of journalism, or online media. His rationale for the draft indicates how clueless he is about the direction the media have been taking in recent years. "We've adjusted the fines in this law, given the need to keep up with inflation and to ensure that such fines are deterrents commensurate with the gravity of crimes and their reflection on society," he wrote.

Another point he made was the importance of not attacking or questioning the Lebanese judiciary, and the need to reinforce penalties against those who slander judges.

A third Orwellian point in Ghanem's rationale is the addition of "some crimes, and information

related to them that bar publication, as per French laws, such as abortion, a minor's suicide, rape, etc."

Lebanon's print media law consisting of 109 clauses dates back to September 14, 1962 and is laughable. Its six chapters cover the following issues: definitions of publications, printing presses, licenses for Lebanese publications, foreign publications, definitions of various print media-related crimes, controls over publications' funds, sales, as well as Lebanon's two press unions, the Higher Press Council, and the press' disciplinary council.

Lebanese laws in general draw heavily on the Napoleonic code and Ottoman-era edicts – a throwback to colonial times and foreign rule. While France and modern-day Turkey that emerged from the Ottoman Empire have updated their laws, the Lebanese have yet to keep pace with the 21st Century, and are limping along.

A brief paragraph in Ghanem's draft law on "electronic publishing" stipulates that to keep up with advances in information technology and distance publishing through the Internet, a special chapter focused on organizing electronic publishing and related crimes was introduced to the legislation. One might think the parliamentarian wanted only to clamp down on websites, blogs, and social media, if he fully grasped what they were.

Lebanese American University assistant professor of journalism Yasmine Dabbous said even Moukheiber's draft legislation, submitted to parliament's Media and Communications Committee for review and discussion on February 24, 2011, did not take digital media into consideration. "Although the law includes a section about 'electronic and digital media,' it seems to treat the latter as if they have the characteristics of traditional media in many ways," she said. Dabbous added that the proposed law's wording ignored the fact that the Internet crosses borders and that anyone publishing in Nebraska could still be read/browsed in Lebanon.

A separate 185-clause draft law to regulate Lebanon's IT sector sent journalists, bloggers, and activists through the roof with rage, as it would have stifled them.
(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/magda-abufadil/journos-press-freedom-act_b_616998.html)

Article 92 says anyone providing online services must apply for a license.

Article 82 of the draft would allow for warrantless search and seizure of financial, managerial, and electronic files, including hard drives, computers, etc., and Article 70 establishes the Electronic Signature and Services Authority as a new regulatory and licensing body with almost unchecked powers.

It was almost enough to call for open revolt. Legislators and government officials tasked with clamping down on money laundering and illegal online activities had dumped all manner of online-related issues into a blender and pushed a button. They were obviously badly briefed and oblivious to the indigestible outcome. So the bloggers, activists, and others embarked on a lobbying campaign to have the draft law rewritten to better meet their needs.

Dabbous, meanwhile, criticized penalties for media law violations, noting that some of the so-called offenses on the books were vague and could be used as excuses to penalize Lebanese media. She cited "content that endangers national security," or "content that breaches moral standards," as examples that were relative matters that could be stretched, or limited, based on political or personal biases.

Lebanon's original press law was passed when print meant newspapers and magazines, while the broadcast version underwent several permutations for radio and television and hasn't been seriously updated since 1994.

Leading Lebanese newspapers have, for the most part, been family affairs, with a plethora of new publications hitting newsstands during the country's 1975-1990 civil war, and reflecting the political and sectarian inclinations of their respective owners.

Subsequent domestic, regional, and international conflicts have also been mirrored in these publications, as well as in broadcast media that were established by different wartime militias and political parties. Militias such as the Christian Phalangists and Lebanese Forces and the Muslim Shiite Amal and Hezbollah groups set up their own print, broadcast and later online media and have been mainstreamed since the civil war. These groups have representatives in parliament and their members have served in various post-war ministerial cabinet posts.

"So far the most influencing parties have been the existing order of journalists and newspaper owners [Press Federation and Journalists Union] that have the added value of being invited to the discussion, and, therefore, they are influencing because they are present in the meetings," Moukheiber said.

Although the committee chairman and caretaker Information Minister Tarek Mitri seemed sympathetic to the cause, a committee staffer, speaking on condition of anonymity, told me MPs on the panel may not be open to drastic change and that deliberations may drag out for months given the political paralysis in the country and a seemingly endless constitutional/government crisis.

Mitri had also been working on a comprehensive media law that would include print, broadcast and online outlets, but took too long to reach the drafting stage and was stopped when the government he served resigned in January 2011.

As for the two unions concerned with the profession, a sizeable number of journalists heap nothing but contempt on them for being archaic. Mohammad Baalbaki, an octogenarian who has presided over the Press Federation for decades and represents publishers and owners of newspapers, is averse to modernization.

Melhem Karam, the Journalists Union (JU) president of 44 years, died in May 2010 (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/magda-abufadil/tug-of-war-over-lebanese_b_748349.html) and his organization has since been rudderless and leaderless, with different factions vying for the top post.

Both men had been noted for obstructing reforms and changes in their organizations. The two bodies are exclusionary and have barred many qualified journalists from their membership. The two unions exist to provide leadership along sectarian lines – Baalbaki is a Muslim and the late Karam was a Christian.

"The problem with the Journalists Union is that they consider themselves an 'order' but they're not in the true sense of the word," Moukheiber opined. In French the JU refers to itself as the "Ordre des Redacteurs de la Presse Libanaise [Order of Editors of the Lebanese Press]," a misnomer by any stretch of the imagination.

Asked what chances his draft bill had of passing, given the country's highly politicized and sectarian media environment, Moukheiber said his version of the new law called for simple transparency and disclosure. "We are introducing these two concepts as a major deviation from the principle of licensing," he explained. "We simply want the reader or the viewer/citizen to know who controls the media financially and politically and [for] the recipient to decide upon the value that he or she wants to give to the information he/she reads."

Liberalizing ownership of media outlets and introducing stringent rules of transparency and disclosure will be a tall order. The process of owning and starting a newspaper, for example, is complex and goes against all press freedom norms.

Article 27 of the existing law, and with which MP Ghanem agrees, stipulates that publishing anything in print is prohibited without first obtaining the requisite license from the Minister of Information, and, after having consulted with the Press Federation.

On ownership of newspapers, Yasmine Dabbous said if the current law were applied rigorously, few media would remain in operation. So a change in the ownership structure allowing anybody to publish a newspaper and not to be bound by licenses would be a welcome change.

In December 2010, the JU called for a board meeting to discuss new bylaws and other matters. The rules were to be voted on ahead of submission for approval by the Minister of Information, which is required by Lebanese law.

The JU was founded in 1942, and established as a recognizable entity in accordance with the print media law of 1962. Under its first founding clause, the JU is considered an independent syndicate that enjoys internal administrative and financial independence. The clause stated the JU oversees its members' rights and defends them, and that its bylaws recognize the print media laws.

The JU's members are editors of all print media published in Lebanon who are registered with the union but who may not be owners of publications like members of the Press Federation. However, the late JU president Karam wore both hats. He was an editor and publisher/owner of several newspapers and magazines in Arabic, French and English -- much to the chagrin of Lebanese journalists and in clear violation of the rules.

The union is the only representative of print media journalists and claims to be the only spokesman for them. But in reality it's not.

Clause 5 defines a journalist as:

- Every journalist registered with the union who regularly pays his fees, abides by laws and regulations regarding the media.
- Whoever is a full-time journalist and is not a member of another union.

Retired journalists registered with the union enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as non-retirees.

According to the bylaws, a journalist eligible for membership should be: Of Lebanese nationality for over 10 years, and at least 21 years old; who fully enjoys civil and political rights; is not indicted for any offense or crime; is a holder of a BA in journalism or media studies from a recognized university that is accredited by Lebanon's Ministry of Higher Education, or holder of a BA in another major, provided he/she undergoes journalistic training for a year; and can obtain a statement from his/her publication attesting to his/her registration with the National Social Security Fund.

That's the first set of obstacles.

So, journalism graduates who were excluded from membership in the union and who still ended up in media jobs established the Lebanon Press Club in Beirut (<http://www.press-club.org>) in a bid to bolster their careers, to invigorate the field, and to organize related activities, their

website claims. But the club's activities haven't really made a lasting impact and the website is thin at best, so marketing itself as an alternative to the JU has been underwhelming.

The union, for its part, proclaims that a journalist's rights and responsibilities include abiding by principles of honor, honesty, and truthfulness, and that a journalist should perform professionally, abide by the union's decisions and recommendations, defend his/her colleagues, and respect them.

Fair enough, and according to Article 8 of the bylaws, the JU pledges to defend its members and stand by them against any attacks. Application of the last point has sometimes been selective over the years.

On another matter, the JU board can create a three-member disciplinary committee to review offenses and mete out acceptable decisions. Offenses submitted to the committee include: a complaint by a member against another member claiming personal insult or damage to his/her work; an indictment or prosecution for a crime, requiring suspension or ouster from the union; and slandering the union president, its board, or its members.

An interesting twist is reference to unruly meetings: According to Article 19, the JU president may call on Lebanese internal security forces [the police] to impose order at general meetings.

On financial matters, Article 55 stipulates the JU does not accept donations from countries, companies, or individuals until they're submitted to, and are approved by, the union's board, and that condition-laden donations are not accepted.

But, it adds, the JU can accept donations or gifts related to JU-related projects. Critics say that's open to interpretation, and sources within the union who spoke on background said it left the door wide open for corruption and kickbacks.

"The media are a reference and a responsibility; they're a public trust and a right, they're not anyone's private property," veteran talk show host Tanios Deaibes told journalism students in January 2011, adding that Lebanon needed new print and broadcast media laws to protect professional journalists. He should know. Deaibes has long complained about slipping print and broadcast journalistic standards and has sought to overhaul the country's antiquated media laws.

Equally antiquated are the legislators drafting the new media laws. Being media savvy, computer literate, tech-oriented, and present online is not their forte. Moukheiber is in the minority of those who work diligently, market themselves, and who are concerned with having media laws in tune with realities on the ground (<http://www.ghassanmoukheiber.com/default.aspx?mLang=E>). Although he's held countless meetings with various stakeholders, he realizes the task ahead is gargantuan.

Broadcast journalists, for example, don't have unions to represent them, and their media are subject to regulation by the National Audiovisual Media Council – an ineffectual body of members half selected and half appointed along sectarian lines. Yet a council member drafted a new broadcast media law aimed at hemming in illegal satellite TV stations disseminating news and other programs from Lebanon, Lebanese daily Assafir reported.

The most brazen violation of existing laws, according to the draft law, is how some satellite stations circumvent licensing and regulatory procedures to air their programs from Lebanese territory by claiming to be representatives of foreign-based organizations. These channels use facilities and equipment to uplink to satellites to broadcast after having obtained permission to

do so fraudulently since Lebanon-based outlets have to secure licenses first.

It becomes messier when ownership crosses borders, or when Lebanese owners hold stakes in multinational media operations. But it's also convoluted domestically. "Given the sectarian fault lines, radio and TV stations were allocated licenses according to the different religious and/or political groups," said Najat Charafeddine, an anchor and presenter at Future TV, owned by the Hariri family. "Since 2005, the media have been sharply divided, so everyone's priorities got lost in the fray," Charafeddine said, adding that each TV station became very sensitive to what was being broadcast and how that might adversely affect its standing.

Finally, the debate in Lebanon not only focuses on whether there should be one law or several pieces of legislation to deal with print, broadcast, and online outlets, but also on the definition of what constitutes journalism and who journalists are. Given the traditional inside-the-box mindset, it's no surprise editors, publishers, owners, and those controlling broadcast media who benefit from the status quo don't want to change the landscape.

Perhaps equally pressing is the need for access to information law, which journalists had not worked hard enough to demand before Moukheiber and the Maharat Foundation (<http://www.maharatfoundation.org>) began to promote it with the help of the Lebanese Transparency Association, the American Bar Association, and other organizations. Their efforts resulted in an Arabic-language publication entitled Access to Information: A Multi-Sector Directory for Lebanon.

A section in the booklet says the media would benefit from such legislation, as it would contribute to the dissemination of more accurate and objective information and reinforce the media's credibility. It underlined the importance of the media's serving as a watchdog of political events and the equally important task of doing so accurately. Finally, it underscored the impact of timely dissemination of information on the decision-making process.

In recent years Lebanese media have suffered from what detractors consider slipping standards, lack of professionalism, and shoddy ethics. The highly politicized environment, sectarian differences, economic setbacks, accumulated corruption, as well as domestic and regional instability have been factored into the mix.

A major overhaul of all laws affected the media is an urgent necessity.

Magda Abu-Fadil co-authored an article on Lebanese Media Laws for Internews and the Stanhope Centre for Communications Policy Research. A PDF version on Lebanon is available at <http://www.internews.org/regions/mena/amr/default.shtm>.

Clash of Coverage: Cultural Framing in U.S. Newspaper Reporting on the 2011 Protests in Bahrain

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Abstract

Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations paradigm was established after the Cold War to explain an emerging new world order and was utilized in the cultural framing hypothesis' explanation of U.S. news coverage of conflicts. Through content analysis of three major U.S. newspapers' coverage of the 2011 protests in Bahrain, this study uses the cultural framing hypothesis to determine if a clash of civilizations shaped news stories. The results largely support the hypothesis and Huntington's paradigm.

Reading news stories and seeing images from the Middle East in early 2011, it is hard not to draw comparisons to Eastern Europe circa 1989. As repressive regimes in the Arab World - Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, Saudi Arabia - faced unprecedented public protests, it seemed natural to compare those ongoing events to previously repressed people dancing atop the Berlin Wall and the ousting of longtime despots like Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu. Making the comparison more theoretically compelling, the demise of the Cold War paradigm which stated that the world was separated by military conflict between wealthy nations and poorer nations brought a new paradigm in the form of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. Controversially, Huntington argued that the future would be characterized by conflict not between nations but between civilizations.

While his thesis has been widely rejected in academic circles, it retains a great deal of currency in news media analyses — a finding confirmed by Bantimaroudis and Kampanellou's work (2009) which resulted in the cultural framing hypothesis: Media promote Huntington's clash of civilizations in their reporting on conflict situations.

As citizens in the Middle East protested in the face of repression and lack of economic opportunity, the question arises whether these people are being covered by the news media in a manner congruent with Huntington's paradigm as seen through the cultural framing hypothesis: News coverage of the protests in the Arab World may be illustrating Huntington's clash in civilizations - Western thought versus non-Western thought. The rising conflict in Bahrain offers a useful case study.

Background on Bahrain

The small archipelago nation of Bahrain gained its independence from Britain in 1971. The nation remains under the control of the al-Khalifa monarchy which first came to power after defeating the Persians in 1783 (CIA, 2011). The current monarch, King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, has ruled since 1999.

While the governing elite is Sunni, between 400,000 and 500,000 of Bahrain's population is Shiite, which represents between 65 and 75 percent of Bahrain's native population. This statistic makes Bahrain one of only four countries in the world with majority Shia population (Pew, 2009). Minority rule underlies some of the current protests, with Freedom House (2010a) reporting that "fear of growing Shiite political power has increased tensions between the Shiites and the ruling Sunni minority over the last few years, sparking periodic government crackdowns."

The Bahraini government has introduced periodic economic and political reforms since King Hamad's ascension to the throne in an attempt to improve relations with the Shia. However, tensions increased in 2009 after the arrests of leaders of the Shiite political party Haq. The

government also ordered the blocking of some websites and closed a newspaper (Freedom House, 2010a). Shia political parties participated in legislative elections in 2010, and one of them, Al Wifaq, won the largest number of seats (CIA, 2011). Arrests of human rights activists, bloggers, members of the political opposition, and religious minorities accompanied those elections.

While Bahrain is one of the most affluent Arab nations, a 2010 survey showed 45 percent of the youth population believed it was a bad time to find a job, and 33 percent believed that the largest barrier to finding employment was that good jobs are only given to people with connections (Silatech, 2010). According to another survey in 2010, 41 percent of Bahraini adults reported occasions the previous year when they were unable to afford adequate housing for themselves or their families (Gallup, 2010). In response, the government announced \$1 billion for housing.

Nevertheless, much of the Shia population began protesting in early 2011 against the inadequacy of the monarchy's contributions to its people. Demonstrations began on February 14. Four days later, five people were killed by police in a raid on protestors at Bahrain's Pearl Roundabout. Currently, Freedom House ranks Bahrain as "Not Free" on its Freedom of the Press and Freedom in the World indexes (2010b, 2010c).

Clash of Civilizations and the Cultural Framing Hypothesis

Introduced in a 1993 Foreign Affairs article, Huntington's clash of civilizations paradigm continues to be used as a framework to describe post Cold War global conflict. In that article, Huntington (1993a) posited that religion, history, language, and tradition differentiate civilizations from one another, creating deep divisions of increasing importance after the Cold War. He suggested that "the fault lines of civilizations are the battle lines of the future." Thus, the United States should respond to conflicts by forging alliances with similar cultures and working to spread its values to other cultures. With so-called "alien civilizations," Huntington wrote that the West "must be accommodating if possible, but confrontational if necessary."

This paradigm was developed shortly after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War. It gained currency among policymakers and the news media, Seib (2004) noted, because those forces were unsure of the future context of the world order. Such an adversarial arrangement of "us" vs. "them" established itself in public discourse because that mentality was "tidy and easy to understand" (p. 72). As Ibrahim (2010) suggested, the Cold War, like the Islamic world after September 11, 2001, was portrayed in media coverage as a menace to the American way of life. Ibrahim claimed also that the Cold War was an important example of journalists' adopting government-led policies without establishing an objective platform from which to examine them (p. 112).

Huntington's paradigm, however, had many critics. He responded by more definitively describing his world view: "Faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for. And that is why the clash of civilizations is replacing the Cold War as the central phenomenon of global politics..." (1993b). Huntington acknowledged that his concept provided a simplified picture of reality, but faced with the end of the Cold War world view, he claimed there was a definite need for an updated model to establish order and understand the changes in politics worldwide (1993b).

As Bantimaroudis and Kampanellou (2009) noted, the clash of civilizations is sometimes used to interpret global conflicts to the exclusion of other explanations. While Huntington's idea has been roundly criticized academically (Said, 2001) and his thesis has been rejected by empirical research (Fox, 2001; 2002; Imai, 2006), it remains a frequently used framework by

the mainstream media for interpreting global conflict (Bantimaroudis & Kampanellou, 2009). As Abrahamian (2003) pointed out, paradigms are not necessarily analogous to conventional wisdom. However, he noted that Huntington's paradigm became attractive for news media coverage because of its usability in the analysis of international relations without discussing politics, particularly concerning Palestine and Arab nationalism in general (p. 529).

Research by Bantimaroudis and Kampanellou (2009) examined the usefulness of Huntington's clash of civilizations paradigm in analyzing media texts. They identified cultural micro-frames resulting from Huntington's work, examined their use within newspapers over a 27-year period, and found the news media utilized the ideology promoted in Huntington's theory. These findings are consistent with the cultural framing hypothesis that the news media uphold the clash of civilizations model.

While the Bahrain protests presented an internal struggle between members of the same Islamic civilization as defined by Huntington, the question remains whether U.S. news media re-contextualized it within the clash of civilizations framework, again proving the cultural framing hypothesis.

Framing Global Conflict

When scholars refer to Huntington's clash of civilizations as a "media cliché" (Bantimaroudis and Kampanellou, 2009, p. 186) or "journalistic shorthand" (Seib, 2004, p. 76), they examine how that worldview is used as a framing device in media coverage. This study seeks to identify which frames were used when reporting on the conflict in Bahrain to determine whether they support the cultural framing hypothesis. Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2001, p. 11) identified frames as organizing structures that are socially valid and enduring. Frames help individuals create a structured environment to better understand the world. Organizing the world into civilizations that are able to clash with one another is one way to structure or frame human experience in journalistic texts.

The most popular conceptual definition of framing (Weaver, 2007) is the one posited by Entman (1993) which states that the framing process involves selecting aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text to provide a problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, or solution (p. 52). Entman described how framing occurred using the Cold War paradigm: "The Cold War frame highlighted certain foreign events — say, civil wars — as problems, identified their source (communist rebels), offered moral judgments (atheistic aggression) and commended particular solutions (U.S. support for the other side)" (p. 52).

In an analysis of politically motivated protest, framing can influence public opinion. Examining the effects of frames presented by the news media, de Vreese (2004) concluded that the media can shape public opinion by using frames emphasizing specific facts or values within a news story. Pan and Kosicki (2001) also found that reporters can be subjective in their interpretation of news events, which may influence audience perceptions.

This study looks at how three prominent newspapers covered the Bahrain conflicts in early 2011. Content analysis provides the structure upon which the cultural framing hypothesis derived from Huntington's clash of civilizations can be further proved or disproved.

Research Questions

The length and placement of news stories about Bahrain are important in determining their importance in the publication.

RQ1: What were the lengths and dispersions of the articles about Bahrain?

Use of sources helps establish the fairness of each news story. Both sides (protesters and government supporters) should be found in a news story. This is especially important in determining the transfer of Huntington's theory to present-day news coverage of a non United States conflict. The protesters are rallying for more freedoms, some of which resemble freedoms available in the US. Thus, the protesters represent the more-Westernized source in this context. The Bahraini government, on the other hand, represents the non-Westernized source. Ascertaining the number of words allotted to each side shows how much each side was represented.

RQ2: How were sources used in the coverage of Bahrain? Was a particular side of the case (protesters or individuals supporting the government) dominant?

Frames within each story help establish the picture of Bahrain, its citizens, and its government reported to the public.

RQ3: What frames were used in the coverage of Bahrain?

Methodology

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to analyze the news media coverage of Bahrain in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post. These newspapers were selected based on their reach to a large number of news consumers as well as their influence on the national and international news agenda (Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 12). According to BurrellsLuce (2010), a company that tracks newspaper circulation figures, they represent four of the five most circulated daily U.S. newspapers: New York Times – 951,063; Los Angeles Times – 616,606; Washington Post – 578,482.

The time period examined was from January 1, 2011 - the year in which protests began - through March 10, 2011. Articles were located through searches in Lexis-Nexis for "Bahrain" in headlines and leads of the stories. This study includes a census of all news stories about the conflict in Bahrain published in print editions and on websites (excluding duplicate stories). Opinion pieces were eliminated from the search results.

The authors addressed the first research question by coding each article for the following variables: name of newspaper, article headline, date, word count, and placement within the newspaper (provided by Lexis-Nexis).

Use of sources, the second research question, was analyzed by identifying which sides were represented in each article (protesters or government supporters). For example, sources categorized for the protesters were people described as or using words against the Bahraini government. Sources categorized as government supporters were representatives of the Bahraini government and those who showed public support for the government. The number of words quoted or paraphrased from these sources was counted.

The third research question was addressed by examining the frames in each news story identified during the coding process. Frames included slightly against the government of Bahrain, strongly against the government of Bahrain, strongly for the government of Bahrain, slightly against the United States' involvement in Bahrain, and slightly in favor of the United States' involvement in Bahrain.

Results

The search produced a total of 34 news stories published in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post with Bahrain in the headline or lead from January 1 - March 10, 2011. The New York Times published 15 stories, 44.1 percent of the total. The Los Angeles Times published seven stories (20.6 percent), and the Washington Post published 12 (35.3 percent). The majority of stories were 500 - 1,500 words long (88.2 percent).

Table 1. Dispersion and Length of Stories

| | New York Times | Pct. ¹ | L.A. Times | Pct. | Wash. Post | Pct. | Total | Pct. |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Total Number of Stories | 15 | 44.1% | 7 | 20.6% | 12 | 35.3% | 34 | 100.0% |
| Length² | | | | | | | | |
| 1-500 | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 14.3% | 1 | 8.3% | 2 | 5.9% |
| 501-1,000 | 6 | 40.0% | 4 | 57.1% | 8 | 66.7% | 18 | 52.9% |
| 1,001-1,500 | 8 | 53.3% | 1 | 14.3% | 3 | 25.0% | 12 | 35.3% |
| 1,501+ | 1 | 6.7% | 1 | 14.3% | 0 | 0.0% | 2 | 5.9% |

¹ Percentages were calculated based on the total numbers of stories from each respective newspaper.

² Length values represent the number of words in each story.

Out of 34 stories, 27 (79.4 percent) represented at least one side of the Bahrain conflict (protesters or government supporters). In the 27 stories, 14 (51.9 percent) represented both sides of the conflict.

Twenty-three stories (67.6 percent) included words quoted or paraphrased from protesters, and 18 stories (52.9 percent) included words quoted or paraphrased from government supporters. In the New York Times, 11 stories (73.3 percent) used sources representing the protesters, and 10 stories (66.7 percent) used sources representing government supporters. The Los Angeles Times published four stories (57.1 percent) that devoted space to the protesters and three stories (42.9 percent) that gave space to government supporters. The Washington Post quoted or paraphrased a source for the protesters in eight stories (66.7 percent) and pro government sources in five stories (41.7 percent).

Table 2. Stories Representing Sides of Bahrain Conflict

| | New York Times | Pct. ¹ | L.A. Times | Pct. | Wash. Post | Pct. | Total | Pct. |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sources² | | | | | | | | |
| Protesters | 11 | 73.3% | 4 | 57.1% | 8 | 66.7% | 23 | 67.6% |
| Govt. Supporters | 10 | 66.7% | 3 | 42.9% | 5 | 41.7% | 18 | 52.9% |

¹ Percentages were calculated based on the total number of stories from each respective newspaper.

² One story may contain both sources.

A total of 3,042 words was used to quote or paraphrase sources representing protesters and government supporters. Words from protesters totaled 1,953 (64.2 percent), and words from government supporters totaled 1,089 (35.8 percent). The New York Times devoted 1,068 words (54.9 percent) to the protesters and 879 words (45.1 percent) to those in favor of the government. The Los Angeles Times devoted 353 words (80.4 percent) to the protesters and 86 words (19.6 percent) to government supporters. The Washington Post gave 532 quoted or paraphrased words (81.1 percent) to the protesters and 124 words (18.9 percent) for the pro government voices.

Table 3. Words Given Sides of Bahrain Conflict

| | New York Times | Pct. ¹ | L.A. Times | Pct. | Wash. Post | Pct. | Total | Pct. |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sources | | | | | | | | |
| Protesters | 1,068 | 54.9% | 353 | 80.4% | 532 | 81.1% | 1,953 | 64.2% |
| Govt. Supporters | 879 | 45.1% | 86 | 19.6% | 124 | 18.9% | 1,089 | 35.8% |

¹ Percentages were calculated based on the number of words given both sides in each respective newspaper.

The frames identified included slightly against the government of Bahrain, strongly against the government of Bahrain, strongly in favor of the government of Bahrain, slightly against the United States’ involvement in Bahrain, and slightly in favor of the United States’ involvement in Bahrain. Eight stories (23.5 percent) used a frame slightly against the government in Bahrain. Five stories (14.7 percent) were framed strongly against the Bahrain government. Thus, 13 stories (38.2 percent) were framed against the government. One story (2.9 percent) was framed strongly in favor of the Bahrain government.

Six stories (17.6 percent) were framed slightly against the United States’ involvement in the conflict in Bahrain. Two stories (5.9 percent) were framed slightly in favor of the United States’ involvement in Bahrain.

The New York Times published four stories (26.7 percent) using a frame slightly against the Bahraini government, and four (26.7 percent) using a frame strongly against the Bahraini government. One story (6.7 percent) used a frame strongly in favor of the government. Two stories (13.3 percent) used a frame slightly against the United States’ involvement in Bahrain, and one story (6.7 percent) slightly in favor. The Los Angeles Times used three frames, the fewest of those identified. One story (14.3 percent) used a frame slightly against the government, one (14.3 percent) used a frame strongly against the government, and one (14.3 percent) used a frame slightly against the United States’ involvement in the conflict in Bahrain. Three stories (25.0 percent) in the Washington Post used a frame slightly against the Bahraini government. Three other stories (25.0 percent) used a frame slightly against the United States’ involvement in Bahrain, and one (8.3 percent) used a frame slightly in favor of United States’ involvement in the Bahrain conflict.

Table 4. Frames Identified

| | New York Times | Pct. ¹ | L.A. Times | Pct. | Wash. Post | Pct. | Total | Pct. |
|---|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Frames² | | | | | | | | |
| Slightly against Bahrain government | 4 | 26.7% | 1 | 14.3% | 3 | 25.0% | 8 | 23.5% |
| Strongly against Bahrain government | 4 | 26.7% | 1 | 14.3% | 0 | 0.0% | 5 | 14.7% |
| Strongly in favor of Bahrain government | 1 | 6.7% | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 2.9% |
| Slightly against U.S.’s involvement | 2 | 13.3% | 1 | 14.3% | 3 | 25.0% | 6 | 17.6% |
| Slightly in favor of U.S.’s involvement | 1 | 6.7% | 0 | 0.0% | 1 | 8.3% | 2 | 5.9% |

¹ Percentages were calculated based on the total number of stories from each respective newspaper.

² Stories may have more than one frame or no frames.

Discussion and Conclusions

Over a 69-day period, the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post published 34 news stories with Bahrain in the headline or lead. Each story addressed the ongoing conflict. To answer the first research question, the vast majority of these stories were printed in the front “A” sections, and most were from 500 - 1,500 words.

Addressing the second research question, use of sources was analyzed. More stories used protesters as sources (67.6 percent) than individuals supporting the government (52.9 percent). In fact, five more stories (out of 34 total) were published that used protesters as sources. This suggests a lack of fairness in news coverage of the conflict in Bahrain.

A closer examination of source use made this imbalance more apparent. An analysis of the words quoted or paraphrased by both sides of the conflict revealed substantially more words - almost 900 - allotted to protesters. This pattern of bias toward the protesters was shared by all three publications. The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post published more stories that used protesters as sources than government supporters. The numbers of words from these sources was more aligned with bias toward the protesters in the Los Angeles Times and Washington Post. Both used protesters as sources more than 80 percent of the time.

The third research question sought to identify frames used to shape these stories. Five frames were identified: slightly against the government of Bahrain, strongly against the government of Bahrain, strongly in favor of the government of Bahrain, slightly against the United States' involvement in Bahrain, and slightly in favor of the United States' involvement in Bahrain. Each frame was used at least once in the 34 news stories.

The two frames against the Bahraini government appeared in 38.2 percent of news stories about the conflict. Only one story was published using the frame in favor of the Bahrain government. Most startlingly, more than half of the stories in the New York Times were framed against the government. This is another indicator of these publications' bias toward the protesters.

Two more frames emerged in the analysis. Eight stories used a frame biased either toward or against the United States. Six were slightly against the United States, and two were slightly in favor. Each newspaper published at least one such story, and each published more stories with a frame against the United States than stories with a frame in favor of it.

The qualitative nature of this study was beneficial in identifying other patterns in news coverage of the conflict in Bahrain. The New York Times ended seven of its 15 stories with paragraphs that favored the protesters, usually quotations that tended to evoke sympathy from the reader. For example, a story on the front page of the New York Times on February 20, 2011, entitled "Protesters take Bahrain square as forces leave," ended with a quotation from a protester: "This is Bahrain; people are willing to be killed. The government can't control this, and they know it. Today, the people are happy." This type of ending tends to sway readers' opinions in favor of the protesters and their goals.

The analysis also found that 10 of 12 stories in the Washington Post about the conflict in Bahrain were focused on the United States' involvement. This was not the case in the New York Times and Los Angeles Times. Such evidence points to a Westernized perspective in the Washington Post's coverage of the conflict.

The findings relating to the theoretical scope of this study are largely congruent with the cultural framing hypothesis. The three newspapers framed their coverage in favor of the protesters who were lobbying for freedoms familiar to those in the United States. Moreover, the Washington Post in particular drew attention to the United States' involvement in Bahrain in more than 83 percent of its news stories. Two possible causes:

1) Journalists or editors attempting to localize an international story and/or 2) Journalists or editors allowing a Westernized perspective to frame news stories. In the second case, news consumers may have inadvertently received biased information about the conflicts in Bahrain, potentially shaping their opinions and public opinion about the situation (Altheide, 1991;

Blumler & Gurevitch, 1982; Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott, 1982; Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; Wanta & Hu, 1993).

More simply, the cultural framing hypothesis was supported by the sources used, the number of words allotted sources, and most of the frames utilized. However, the cultural framing hypothesis was partially disproved by some of the frames in these news stories. Eight of the 34 stories addressed the United States' involvement in the Bahraini conflicts, but six were framed slightly against the United States. This result is inconsistent with a pro-Western perspective, but this finding could be interpreted in two ways: 1) Focus on the United States illustrates ethnocentricity and, thus, cultural bias or 2) Since some of the focus on the United States is negative, the stories lacked cultural bias toward the United States.

Therefore, the study's results indicate a continued clash between the non-Western world and the U.S. - at least in U.S. news media's coverage. The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post's reporting on the conflict in Bahrain provides evidence of cultural conflict in the coverage of world political events.

Limitations and Future Research

Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2001) identified limitations of both qualitative and quantitative framing studies. Since this study was based on qualitative analysis, future researchers should consider the framing of the Bahrain protests - alone or with the other protest movements in the Middle East - in a quantitative fashion to look for broader trends in the coverage.

Moreover, future research should include analysis of television and radio news media to see if the patterns found in this study of print media are common across news media. These studies could be qualitative or quantitative to provide more data on U.S. news media coverage of the conflicts in Bahrain.

Scholars should analyze news coverage of ongoing conflicts in the Arab World in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Such analyses would provide world context for the cultural framing hypothesis - as it relates to Huntington's clash of civilizations - to be further proved or disproved.

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Changing Roles in the UAE Media World: Instructor, Journalist, Marketer

By Sana Bagersh | bagersh@brandmoxie.com

Teaching Strategic Planning

When I was invited to teach a fourth year class at Zayed University in March 2008, I accepted with some trepidation as I am CEO of a small but busy advertising agency and supervisor of a healthcare events company. The three hour per week course was called COM 401: Strategic Planning in PR/Advertising.

The class included about 30 students, a number that had grown after an instructor departed and left a vacuum for several semesters. Although the class was called Strategic Planning in PR and Advertising, the textbook I was given was Project Planning, Scheduling & Control by James P. Lewis, a book that I thought more suited to a Project Management Professional course. As a long term practitioner of both PR and advertising, I couldn't reconcile the objectives of the course and the content of the book. I told the dean of communications that I would teach the course provided I could develop the coursework so it was more in tune with the kind of strategic planning associated with marketing. I promised I would show the presentations and accompanying handouts and assignments prior to the start of the class. Thus, I developed 12 weeks of course material and began teaching.

The class was made up of Emirati girls, most in their senior year. I noted an interesting correlation that is perhaps typical of all classrooms: the closer to the front of the class, the more serious about learning. Those in the first two rows were far more involved than the girls in the back who appeared to have other more pressing interests. Having studied in the US, I was accustomed to serious backbreaking assignments in some of my fourth year classes, and I was determined not to indulge my students with any relaxation of workload or grading.

My mission was to expose them to the world of advertising and PR in the UAE, with local case studies, along with challenges and deadlines that are typical of the industry everywhere. I took materials from my company BrandMoxie and presented cases that the agency had encountered over the years working with government organizations and private entities. I immersed the students in real-life campaign planning that involved creating and implementing communication strategies. I gave the girls assignments where they had to analyze the four (or five) P's of marketing, analyze planning factors and branding, and align campaign output with strategic communications as well as mission and vision. I had them put together marketing communications plans, using PR, advertising, and other channels. We looked at how diverse sectors (government, FMCG, real estate, retail, education, etc.) were translating their business goals into communication strategies. We went through real life scenarios and dissected campaigns that had been implemented or were running at that time, focusing on planning strategies.

As a novice university instructor I got carried away and gave the students so many in-class projects and homework that I began to hear complaints relayed through other teachers (mostly from my back row students). I realized that I could have given them a lighter workload - especially as I became bogged down by the mountains of homework that had to be corrected - but I remained steadfast in giving the girls a chance to learn practical hands-on stuff that reflected the deadline driven pressures typical in most agencies. I thought this would help toughen them up for real employment.

The majority of Emirati communications students end up working for the government as these jobs are more secure and higher paying. In most workplace scenarios these students are now probably helping to execute small internal and external communication projects in-house while bigger campaigns are outsourced to advertising and marketing agencies. Since teaching at Zayed University, I have met several of my students in various government departments and a few private companies. The feedback - and all are gracious in their hindsight assessment - is that the class I taught was difficult at the time but has helped them in practical terms in their new jobs.

Most satisfying over the last few years has been my interaction with young people that I had taught or who had attended some of my presentations over the years at conferences or at other universities. I have come across many who are now capable professionals with the demeanor, confidence, and readiness to make a difference to the companies and organizations where they work.

They are well equipped with vital business skills such as organizing and running meetings, developing strategies, executing briefs, dealing with suppliers, negotiating and working with other teams in their organizations. The one frustration that I detected in some of these young capable professionals is their feeling that they work for managers who are less experienced or capable than they are. Many supervisors seem to lack confidence, vision, or focus which translates into a reluctance to empower subordinates. I think that a capable cadre of Emiratis is taking its place in the communications areas of government departments and that they will soon have greater impact, leading to more sweeping institutional improvements, as they rise into more senior positions.

Introducing Community Reporting

I always tell young people trying to make career choices that the two professions I believe are excellent launching pads for any professional life are journalism and sales because of the skills, confidence, discipline, and toughness that they instill.

I hold a bachelor of communications from the University of Tennessee with a focus on broadcasting. When I came to the UAE in 1985, the job that I stumbled into - fortunately for me - was as reporter for the newly re-launched Gulf News daily English language newspaper. At that time, I was the only Arab female reporter who focused on general stories - social, political, economic, cultural, and so on. Although I was assigned the police and the Federal National Council beats early on, I wrote about everything else as well. The other female Arab reporters in the city - I knew them all - wrote exclusively on women-centric or cultural issues such as the Women's Union or the Cultural Foundation.

My stories covered a broad range of topics from housing shortages to educational challenges, healthcare concerns, and politics. I had the privilege to meet the founder and former President of the UAE HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and opportunities to interact with Prince Charles and Princess Diana, Kofi Annan, Nelson Mandela, Wilfred Thesiger, Yasser Arafat, Muammar Gaddafi, Kurt Waldheim, Jacques Chirac, and a host of other world figures.

As Abu Dhabi bureau chief in the late 1990s, I championed the introduction of more Emiratis into journalism. Journalism as a career was not perceived favorably because of the long hours and the low pay. To young Emirati women I promoted journalism as an excellent foundational career because of the breadth of the topics and issues to which a reporter is exposed. I always recommend journalism as a start up career because it teaches valuable skills such as researching, interviewing, writing and having the confidence to meet people that can be applied to many other professions.

A British reporter on my staff told me about a community reporting program that he had seen implemented at a newspaper in the UK. I loved the idea, presented it to the editor, and introduced it to Abu Dhabi. It was a wonderful initiative, and we were able to attract about a dozen reporters, all expatriates, who joined the writing and interviewing orientation classes and who soon became a network of neighborhood reporters. In 1997 Gulf News became the first newspaper in the country (possibly in the region) to launch a community reporting program, well before community journalism became popular on the Internet. Around that time I welcomed our first Emirati reporter, a young girl interning from one of the universities. She came to work the first day, uncertain and wearing stiletto heels. In a few days she settled in with the other reporters and was out hunting for news and filing her own stories. She was funny, outgoing, and curious, and had a great attitude. I wonder about her to this day and hope that she has had the opportunity and support to pursue the career of her choice.

Even though I now manage a marketing firm, I am a fervent supporter of journalism and journalists. I believe that every nation has the responsibility and moral obligation to develop and nurture its journalists. They should be reporters who think, question, and present the news and issues to the public fairly and without bias. I believe the UAE can, if it chooses, be a model in this region for quality journalism and freedom of the press.

Founding BrandMoxie and Tamakkan

In the seven years that I have been CEO of BrandMoxie advertising and marketing agency, I have tried to integrate knowledge sharing as a guiding principle. BrandMoxie continually welcomes interns from universities in the UAE; most are from the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), Zayed University, The American University of Sharjah, and the Institute of Management of Technology. Occasionally we also get students from overseas institutions. In 2009 BrandMoxie was awarded HCT's Tamayyuz award for supporting the colleges' internship program.

Most of our interns are Emiratis, usually female, and almost always graphic designers. The majority of the graduates seem drawn to the creative aspects of advertising, less to client servicing, and not at all to the strategic planning side of the business. In my discussions with the interns, I find they envision working in the communications departments of government organizations. Very few think about working in an advertising agency, and that appears to be less related to the long hours and limited pay associated with agency employment. Rather it seems to be about the family's expectations that the graduate take up what are perceived to be higher prestige and more stable positions in government or what are known as semi-government companies where the government owns the controlling shares.

I have come across some young Emiratis who were exceptionally creative and ambitious and predicting that they would soon be running their own ad agencies. My advice to these young people has always been to urge them to learn more about the business side of things before setting up their own ventures. A creative shop faces far greater competition in this industry where agencies provide the full scope of services including strategic and media planning. Through my experience with SMEs in the UAE, I always counsel young and not so young people to work for someone else for a few years, even at little or no pay to develop the necessary knowledge and experience to run their own business.

Tamakkan, an organization I set up in 2009 to promote entrepreneurship and innovation, has provided me with a unique opportunity to learn about the challenges and issues faced by entrepreneurs in the UAE. I established it to support business owners or business wannabees who are seeking insight and knowledge from experts and peers. Tamakkan could be a broad knowledge transfer platform whereby experts, consultants, and academics could give back to the community.

Free monthly seminars, organized at the prestigious Al Mamoura Auditorium in Abu Dhabi, give existing and future entrepreneurs the opportunity to learn from presentations as well as to network with business owners and potential investors. They attract a broad audience of expatriates and Emiratis. Although securing financing can be a challenge for some entrepreneurs, perhaps a greater problem in the UAE has been lack of knowledge to ensure their fledgling project is established on solid ground.

Some young entrepreneurs are already serial entrepreneurs who have tried before, failed, and are moving on to their next business. It seemed to me that the rate of failure has been higher than benchmarked in the US and Europe. This reaffirmed my belief that more knowledge of best practices in marketing, sales, and customer service could significantly raise the rate of new business survival. I became determined that Tamakkan would contribute to bridging the entrepreneurship knowledge gap in the UAE.

Tamakkan was intended to be a non-profit, but I learned quickly after asking for support from government organizations and companies that financial support was not going to be easy to secure because of bureaucracy in some of these entities and the legal complications of contributing to a non-profit organization. After covering expenses for Tamakkan from BrandMoxie's revenue for 18 months, I decided at the beginning of 2011 to register Tamakkan as an organization capable of generating its own income. I am now trying to create a roster of short courses to help entrepreneurs in specific business areas while enabling Tamakkan to sustain itself long term.

From Hollywood to Abu Dhabi: Goodbye Team, Hello Me

By Sonya Edelman | sedelman2@yahoo.com

I'm a television producer. Or I should say I used to be a television producer. I've produced many shows including "Rachael Ray's Tasty Travels," "Design on a Dime Chicago," "That's Clever," "Designed to Sell," and "Uncommon Threads." Those are all lifestyle shows that entrance viewers and then make them ask themselves the question, "Wait, was I just watching that for AN HOUR?" I worked mainly for the Food Network and HGTV (Home and Garden Television) in Los Angeles and Chicago for almost eight years...and then I married an archaeologist, and we moved to Abu Dhabi.

Is that crazy? Yes, of course, but the idea of adventure was thrilling and, although the television production market in Los Angeles is one of the largest in the world, I imagined production work couldn't be that hard to find even in the Middle East. I mean, everyone around the world watches TV so producing television should, in theory, be a completely transferable skill, right?

Well, not exactly.

We arrived in Abu Dhabi with three suitcases and dropped them in our completely unfurnished apartment. No refrigerator, no stove, no bed. We quickly figured out how to acquire these things, but my career, well, that took a little more time.

At the time I arrived in the Gulf, most production positions were film- or commercial-based and the majority required Arabic language skills. After months of checking online job boards daily, and coming up with nothing, I realized I was going to have to rethink my trajectory.

I examined my skill set and thought about how I could apply it in a different context. I had written scripts and had several seasons of experience shooting B camera and supplemental footage for broadcast. I had a functional knowledge of Final Cut editing software and most importantly, I had an HD camera. Why couldn't I do it all: be a producer, shooter, writer, editor in one? And, actually, I could, and I did. But the transition wasn't seamless.

Having worked for years supervising large groups of people -- a technical crew, actors and non-actors, designers, assistants - my shift to "one man band" was both liberating and petrifying. If I botched a shot, I couldn't blame it on the cameraman; if the edit wasn't right, I was the one who stayed up into the wee hours until it was. But the gratifying side was that when things went right, I had no one to thank but myself.

My gear is simple and reliable. I shoot with a Canon HV40 which is a small high-end consumer HD camera that shoots a nice 24p. I use a wide angle lens adaptor and have a few mic options: wired, wireless and onboard shotgun. I love how small my kit is. I can run and gun very easily.

I've created content for the International Herald Tribune, a Random House publication, and various web commercials for local businesses. I shot the Abu Dhabi episode of a Web series called "Bridge the Gap" which aims to motivate youth to be more socially conscious, and I even created a pair of artsy poetry music videos for a local client. So my work really runs the gamut. See some examples at <http://www.vimeo.com/sedelman2/videos>

When I meet with clients, I first ask how they plan to use the footage. Is it intended for broadcast? Internet? Mobile device? A live event? Then I ask questions that will help me get a sense of what the video needs to communicate and what the client's vision is. I sometimes ask

for examples of other videos, commercials, TV shows, films they've seen and liked. Using examples is a helpful jumping-off point when dealing with a client who might not have the technical vocabulary to talk about visual content.

How I go about shooting depends on the material that I have to produce. Sit down interviews? A controlled environment? Or do I throw a shotgun mic on my camera to get sound bites from people on the street? These are all elements that affect how I approach each project.

Once I've finished shooting, my least favorite part of the process begins. Thankfully, I've found a good strategy for the monotonous task of logging footage. I take rough notes on content with the corresponding time code, but if there's a sound bite I think I might use, I transcribe it completely. Then, as necessary, I write voice over either during or after the rough cut, and record it using a great little microphone I got at B&H in New York for \$15 (surprisingly, it does as well as my \$600 Sennheiser). I use the audio program Audacity or my Mac's built-in camera to record directly into iMovie. When my rough cut begins to take shape, I lay down the voice over and music and fine tune from there.

Shooting in the UAE has been challenging, especially when engaging with the public. People here tend to be modest, and many of the mores make it tricky to get man-on-the-street interviews and B-roll of people in public, especially women. Another consideration is that you need a permit from the National Media Council when you go on the street or any public place. When you pull a shooting permit in Abu Dhabi, you agree "not to shoot any scenes projecting disrespect to the social perspectives, values and culture of the UAE." I am constantly working around these restrictions on content and navigating cultural differences.

There are, however, huge upsides to working in this region. The market here is fluid, and people are willing to grant opportunities to those who seem as if they can get the job done even if they lack extensive experience. I doubt I would have been able to make this career shift as easily in the US and certainly not in LA, where what seems like a small shift (from reality to scripted TV or in my case multimedia) can mean having to start again at the bottom of the ladder. For those of us who pulled ourselves out of the drudgery of being PA's, going back to that isn't the most appealing option.

I love video as a creative medium and will continue to work with clients from a variety of industries. The kind of work I do suits online content beautifully and because I handle all aspects of pre-production, production, and post-production, I can keep costs very affordable.

To anyone thinking about production work in the Middle East, my advice is to go for it! The job market isn't saturated with competition which translates to plenty of opportunity. Think outside the box and capitalize on opportunities you might not be able to take advantage of in a market like Los Angeles or New York. If you're willing to improvise a little, opportunities in the Middle East abound.

Public Relations and Corporate Communications in the UAE

By Rebecca Hill | rebecca@rebeccahill.info

When I first moved to the UAE in 2006, I was most impressed when my husband started to talk about the number of PROs or public relations officers in his company. It was indeed a welcome surprise given my assumptions about public relations being relatively undeveloped. However, we soon learned that instead of being at the front edge of communications, these PROs, usually from the sub-continent and remarkably efficient at getting work visas and labor cards, were far from being part of the organization's stakeholder outreach - a tidy lesson that illustrated the challenges of terminology being used for different purposes but also a stark illustration of how public relations was (and in some cases still is) perceived in the Middle East.

A Market Overview

Communications practice in the UAE and the region runs the gamut from PRO visa assistance to highly sophisticated outreach aligned with an organization's corporate goals, and everything in between. Government agencies drive much of the PR work, but the growing private sector, education, NGOs, and a general influx of people have now meant that more and more open communications is being demanded and provided. The UAE, in particular Dubai, is one of the region's main hubs for PR and has a sizeable community, in-house, freelance, and agency. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia also have a developing capacity as do Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt. Within the UAE, Dubai has provided much of the consultancy manpower to Abu Dhabi although this is changing with more agencies setting up shop in the capital as well as corporate teams resourcing up.

The growth in public relations can be measured by the number of PR agencies operating in the region. While the first PR agency (part of an international network) was set up more than 25 years ago, the major growth has been in the last 10 years (see table below). Market value is more difficult to gauge with estimates ranging from US\$ 500mn – 1bn, depending on what is included in the count: retainers, media monitoring fees, event management, print production, and so on.

PR Agencies in the Middle East 2006-2010 - From MediaSource data 2010

| County | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | Growth |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| Bahrain | 10 | 11 | 15 | 15 | 18 | 80% |
| Egypt | 9 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 22% |
| Iran | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | -60% |
| Iraq | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | -100% |
| Jordan | 7 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 43% |
| Kuwait | 8 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 25% |
| Lebanon | 10 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 9 | -10% |
| Oman | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 67% |
| Palestine | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 50% |
| Qatar | 8 | 9 | 12 | 15 | 15 | 88% |
| Saudi Arabia | 18 | 17 | 24 | 28 | 22 | 22% |
| Syria | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 200% |
| UAE | 58 | 74 | 87 | 96 | 122 | 110% |
| Yemen | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | -100% |
| Total | 141 | 165 | 200 | 218 | 230 | 63% |

Unfortunately, there isn't much reliable data. There is no centralized directory of PR practitioners or even a distinct category for licensing a PR agency unless it is set up in a free trade zone. Membership of professional associations like the Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) chapter of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) runs to the low hundreds – even though there must be at least 2-3000 people who carry out some form of PR in their professional role. Non profit trade associations are relatively new phenomena, although their value is slowly being recognized. Traditionally, PR spend had been subsumed into advertising budgets either by advertising agencies tacking on PR as part of their integrated services or where a media outlet has promised “free PR” if advertising is purchased. Although the situation is improving, there is still a correlation between coverage and advertising in particular with specialist magazines that rely on ad revenue to survive. Paying for coverage whether it's actual cash or incentives is as evident here as it is in the rest of the world although a number of media houses have clear policies on gift giving which helps set a standard.

Communications challenges

Defining PR: Like the rest of the world this region has struggled to come up with a standard approach to communications whether it's public relations, marketing communications, communications management, and so on. PR education varies from college to college and from academic to academic with textbooks usually sourced out of the US that have almost zero relevance in terms of the case studies cited.

MEPRA uses the definition of PR from the Institute for Public Relations – the sustained and continuous dialogue with one's publics. The version usually practised is limited to media relations with a local twist – usually there will be one media relations expert in every agency whose key role is to manage the press relationships, meaning only one conduit for information to the media.

Regular surveys by MediaSource and InsightMiddleEast (2007, 2009) point to the ineffectiveness of this approach as it precludes an understanding of the media by general practitioners who tend to have a poor news sense, scatter gun distribution, and an inability to present the media's side to the client.

The Stockholm Accords (<http://www.stockholmaccords.org/accords-text>) - a framework for describing the role of today's communicator including governance, management, sustainability, internal communications, external communications and the management of the two – rarely evoke recognition among practitioners who are just starting to grapple with stakeholder management and employee engagement.

PR education and continual professional development: With an increase in the number of courses being offered by institutions, students have greater choice for their university degree. However, key for them is choosing something that bodes well for future jobs – and within the PR community most agency employers are not looking for a PR degree but the right attributes to start at the bottom of the ladder. Internships are increasing, most of them unpaid.

For practitioners seeking to continue their professional development, few options exist beyond some locally provided public courses which are usually priced above what an individual would be able to pay, and courses and diplomas offered overseas by such as bodies as the British Chartered Institute of Public Relations, International Association of Business Communicators, etc. MEPRA has made tentative steps in this area by putting on workshops and boot camps delivered by senior members. While these are priced at a fraction of the cost of the other courses, attendance has been relatively low even though agency employers say they want to train staff. The most cited reason is lack of time.

Institutional development is a long road: practitioners generally hold local academe in low esteem – although plenty of opportunities for greater collaboration abound. MEPRA held a practitioner – educator conference in January 2011 (“The Middle East’s first PR Conference” supported by Zayed University), as the starting point in fostering greater dialogue between the two groups. Student chapters are not yet a feature of university life, but MEPRA championed the first PR student day in November 2010 with a second scheduled for 2011. An intra university competition is scheduled for the next academic year, and a number of initiatives are underway to benchmark university courses.

Employment: The economic and development growth of the UAE and the GCC region, especially during the boom years, generated a huge influx of workers, both blue and white collar. During the last ten years, as shown by the number of agencies, employment in public relations was something of a catch-all – with a wide range of nationalities, skills, expectations and experience – all vying for positions in PR. For those that went in house, many ended up being adjuncts of advertising departments, sending out press releases or managing events that fed into the bubble. Inexperienced but market savvy staff moved every one or two years, jacking up their salaries each time with no reference checks.

Managers trying to hold on to staff, paying reasonable rather than inflated salaries and servicing clients with professionals who had some idea about what they were talking faced many challenges. But it was often the case that buyers didn’t know what they were buying, and the service providers had little incentive to play it straight often adding “bells and whistles” when they weren’t needed. A lack of respect developed between in-house and agency PR personnel, creating a “them” and “us” syndrome. MEPRA was originally founded in 2001 by PR agencies operating in the UAE, and it was only in 2009 when the Association moved to an individual based model that in-house practitioners were accepted on equal terms.

If the MiddleEast Insight surveys weren’t enough proof of how unprofessional some media relations activities were, the MEPRA survey conducted for its symposium Bridging the Communications Gap in 2009 also highlighted the lack of understanding between clients and agencies as well as a general lack of communications alignment with corporate strategy assuming there was one.

Complicating the employment picture is the Emiratization program where Emiratis are rightly given priority for positions, usually in the public sector. This policy is undermined by Emirati salaries, which are up to 3-4 times what an expatriate would earn for the same position, creating an unsustainable trend for local employment, and few Emiratis entering the private sector where salaries are generally lower.

Lack of credibility: A survey conducted with YouGov (April 2009) put trust and credibility of business and government below that of friends and family and the media – a trend not dissimilar to other global findings but a wake-up call for governments and corporations that they were not being taken seriously or believed.

This had a knock on effect for PR practitioners who were (and still are) rarely seen in a positive light and only for fluffy stories with little substance. The nadir came in September 2009 with the announcement of the Dubai World restructuring, which was seen as a huge PR failure, causing significant market turmoil globally. After weeks of reassuring statements from the Dubai government as to its financial health, a restructuring announcement was made late on a Thursday before a long weekend, with no one available to provide additional information. It was not the practice for journalists to have private numbers of key government figures.

That this action was taken with an experienced agency on retainer didn’t help PR’s reputation

although it's generally assumed that even if appropriate advice had been given, it was not accepted - a serious lack of judgement that has had some useful benefits.

There is light: "Never waste a good crisis" is a popular quote for politicians, and the same goes for public communications. The 2009 restructuring debacle was a useful lesson for any organization - not only those with domestic and international stakeholders - as it showed that an absence of communications was not only detrimental to an organization's reputation but costly too as banks increased lending costs for Dubai's projects and all but withdrew credit. It also highlighted how one size does not fit all as local stakeholders had different expectations and needs than expatriate and international audiences, with different consequences. It also demonstrated the need to build trust and respect with all stakeholders to act as a buffer in a time of crisis. Many expatriate residents would have been willing to stand up for Dubai if there had been a steady source of credible communications in the previous years. Having put in many years of hard work and investment, they were not ready to see the Emirate go up in smoke because of a lack in information.

The crisis clearly demonstrated the need for strong and clear leadership by someone who embraced the concept of transparency and openness and respected the people's right to know, especially on issues that had a direct impact on decision making. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, has by and large retained respect for the continuation of the Dubai vision and his calm authority. Although there is still room for improvement Dubai in 2011 is generally seen to be the most open and proactive of the seven Emirates comprising the UAE. As Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed has put in place a strong collaborative network of federal ministries where communications has been a core driver in sharing information and benchmarking performance.

In 2010 MEPRA conducted its second survey that tested whether communications had improved since the global financial crisis (Are we communicating effectively – MEPRA). Not surprisingly the majority of respondents felt communications had become more important and improved the effectiveness of government, business, and the media. However, compared to 2009 data a significant shift in the credibility and trust of information sources was evident with business improving and government falling. More people now trusted their employer than government, a reversal in roles with a definite uptick for business as a credible source of information. Government communications at both the federal and local level were deemed ineffective by more than 30% of the respondents.

There was also a drop in how friends and family were trusted as sources, although they remained the most trusted with media second, a repeat of 2009. Multinational businesses were deemed the best communicators (37%) followed by international media (35%). Local and regional government (8.2%), local media (6.9%), and business (3.1%) were graded significantly lower.

When gauging the nature of communications, the UAE is generally seen as slow, reactive, unclear, biased, limited, and unreliable although respectful. Over 78% felt that international media scrutiny had a positive impact on communications in terms of responsiveness, transparency, professionalism, and credibility. And in making a purchase decision, 70% of respondents said that a business' reputation was important.

In gauging senior management sentiment (government and business), there was a paradox: while the overwhelming view was that communications is important, it was still not widely endorsed in UAE organizations. When reviewing the previous 12 months, under half (47.7%) agreed that communications recommendations were important in the decision making and planning process while just over a third (39%) said communications had positively impacted

the public image of their company and among their employees. A similar level agreed that a communications plan had positively impacted their organization's effectiveness.

But the lasting impression was negative as a large majority felt that accuracy and transparency of communications had not improved; neither had the frequency or quality of communications, and few had seen an increase in communications budgets. Going forward the story was more positive with 78% of senior managers saying that communications budgets would either be increased or at least stay the same and fewer than 5% said there would be cuts.

Celebrating excellence

In spite of the challenging environment, some excellent work is being done. The MEPRA Awards, now into their third year, have peer reviewed dozens of campaigns for creativity, effectiveness, and results. In 2010 more than eight campaigns were from government agencies which demonstrated an appetite for in depth research, evaluation, and measurement. A summary of the 2010 submissions shows the following:

- 86 best practice submissions (61 in 2009)
- Nine team and individual nominations - Agency and Young Professional Communicator of the Year (compared to 12 individual nominations in 2009)
- 18 agencies submitted entries representing 59 companies, NGOs, and governments (compared with 16 and 44 in 2009).
- 13 agencies are MEPRA registered (compared with 11 in 2009)
- 11 in-house (corporate) teams submitted campaigns (compared with seven in 2009)
- Sectors of industry represented included automotive, banking, confectionary, consumer, environment, events, fashion, hospitality, industrial, professional services, publishing, sports, and tourism.
- Countries represented included Bahrain, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE.

The MEPRA Awards have become the region's de facto PR recognition program, providing a credible platform for practitioners to submit their best work. And assuming similar growth for the 2011 Awards, the overall winner in the region is the PR profession.

Digital Tools of the Trade: The Social Media Fourum

By Phil Ryan | Four Communications

As one of the world's fastest-growing regional economies, and one which is making enormous investments in its telecommunications infrastructure, the Middle East's vast potential as the next hotspot of online growth is well recognised. With marketers around the world increasingly keen to make use of social media it is perhaps surprising that the Middle East (and specifically the GCC) has yet to see some of the innovations, and there is a less active social media scene than international spectators might normally expect.

The Middle East's social media ecosystem is certainly growing. To take only the social network with the most readily available data, Facebook, we see recent estimates of month-on-month growth of anything up to 48 per cent for countries in the GCC and North Africa (Inside Facebook, 2011). Whatever the real picture is behind this perceived trend, it is notable that according to some sources Qatar and the UAE now have a higher nominal Facebook penetration than countries like the United Kingdom and New Zealand (www.socialbakers.com, 2011).

Despite this, marketers in the region are, by their own admission, lagging behind other developed and emerging markets in using social media to fulfill real business objectives. In their recent analysis of this issue, Econsultancy concluded "A lack of understanding about online marketing is holding back a significant proportion of companies, as is the general shortage of case studies that are specific to the Middle East" (<http://econsultancy.com>, 2011).

A number of theories can help explain why the region has been relatively slower to react: cultural and linguistic differences amongst audiences, a lack of training and expertise, or simply a reduced need to adopt new techniques due to a less competitive marketing landscape.

Whatever the case, 2011 marks a change in the wind of social media adoption among marketers in the Middle East. The same report goes on, for example, to suggest that 58 per cent of companies are increasing their digital marketing budget in 2011. Adoption of new platforms – with 340 million smart phone users predicted in the MENA region by 2020 (Mazen Nahawi, 2011) - will no doubt drive this trend faster perhaps than many observers expect.

Obstacles

Part of the challenge for marketers looking to play a part in this trend is identifying which of the accepted global best practices is suitable for implementation in the region. As with any new trend, a tendency to identify and replicate the success of prominent international case studies could prove too tempting a technique for the region's marketers.

But replicating successful campaigns for a different audience is at best an unreliable technique. Where cultural specificities and language barriers do not limit success, a campaign that works once on the basis of its innovation and novelty is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Instead, the most successful marketers will approach the problem by building solid foundations to overcome two specific obstacles: a lack of compelling content for immediate use and a requirement to prove success and demonstrate value to internal stakeholders.

Case Study: The Social Media Fourum

This approach is best demonstrated via a case study which shows how a mixture of traditional techniques and technological innovation can be used to provide a foundation for social media

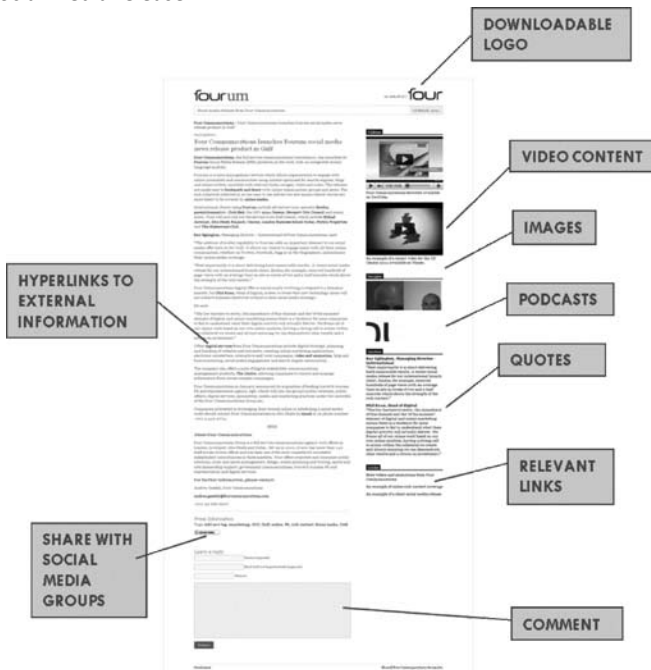
activity. Four Communications, an independent communications agency with Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Oman operations, created its Fourum, a platform for publishing and distributing social media releases, for English and Arabic audiences.

Social media releases (SMRs) are press releases that have been optimised for online distribution and sit on a statically linkable platform so they are easily accessible via direct link and search. A format broadly following the structure of a traditional press release is marked-up to include hyperlinks to external content that give the information in the release a wider context (i.e. the company website or spokesperson's biography) and any rich content, such as video, podcasts and images, is available to view and download alongside the copy (see Figure 1).

With Four's solution, a maximum of six images, six video clips (which are fed through via a video platform such as YouTube) and six podcasts are available, meaning that the journalists can pick and choose the elements that best support the story they want to tell. A comments box, sharing options and tagging mean that the press release is accessible outside of the typically closed-media audience and allows for two-way engagement, increasing brand amplification and interaction. Comments go through an approval process ensuring that no comments will be published without permission.

The platform's dual-language capability makes it unusual if not unique in the region. But it is crucial in a region where native social media users increasingly post and comment in both languages. Ray Eglington, Managing Director – International comments on this trend: "successful communication is much easier when you are speaking the right language. The inclusion of an Arabic capability within Fourum means our clients are able to interact on equal terms with an audience now used to switching between English and Arabic across online communities from Twitter and Facebook to the wider world of blogs and collaborative encyclopedias."

Figure 1: Social media release



Such a platform is based around the concept that giving journalists and bloggers easier, direct access to the content they want in a usable format (whether that is a technical video format or simply text in their mother tongue) thus increases the chances of engagement and media-pick up. Because it provides an easily-accessible online hub of all the collateral associated with a press release (including the release itself), this saves the lengthy back-and-forth between PRs and journalists for content and can be found and shared by people that might not be on an original distribution list, such as bloggers and influencers.

Online journalism is an immediate medium and so a product that saves time and provides all content in one link means that deadlines are not missed and coverage can be achieved, with relationships still successfully intact.

Passenger Shipping Association

While results from Middle Eastern campaigns are not yet available as this article goes to print, the potential for the social media releases paradigm is clear. One case study in tourism - an industry favored in particular by Gulf markets – demonstrates this potential.

The Passenger Shipping Association (PSA) represents the cruising industry with 42 member cruise lines. In May 2010 the Passenger Shipping Association held the annual cruise review event in which they released the latest figures from the cruise industry illustrated by a video (created by Four’s in-house digital team) and looked ahead to upcoming developments in the sector. To PR the event and industry insight, the PSA team at Four Communications issued a figures-based social media release to media alongside rich video and image content using Fourum.

The social media release went live and the link was issued to media on the 18th May 2010 and immediately saw a peak of 118 visits, which was followed by 96 visits on the 19th and 51 visits on the 20th (Figure 2); a total of 265 visits over three days and 243 video views.

Indeed, direct traffic from journalist click-throughs accounted for 89.67% of all visits, with a further 6.67% from referring sources and 3.68% from search engines (Figure 3), demonstrating that the social media release is an attractive package for journalists to receive and captured their interest. The average time spent viewing the release was 1.14 minutes and the bounce rate was low, at 36% meaning journalists read and absorbed content.

Figure 2: Traffic source May 16 – 22, 2010

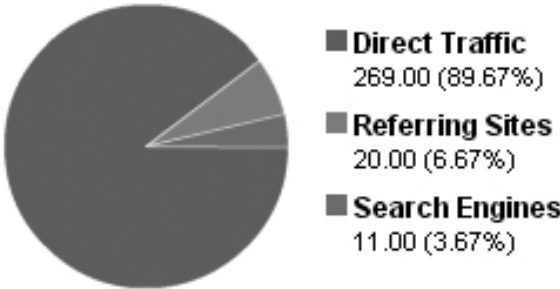
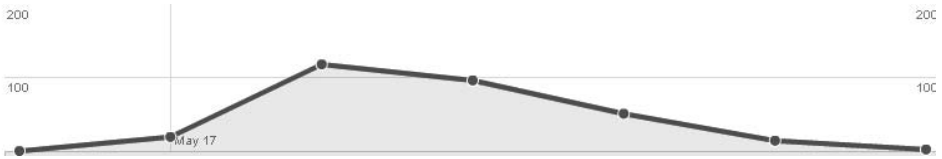


Figure 3: Visits May 16 - 22, 2010

As Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate, Fourum has achieved results in terms of increasing the number of journalists who are accessing client stories and content, but this, of course, must translate into coverage in order for the PR sector to prove the product's value to clients.

The cruise review release achieved 13 pieces of national and regional coverage. As Eglington states, "most importantly it is about delivering hard measurable results. A recent social media release for our international launch client, Exodus, for example, received hundreds of page views with an average time on site in excess of two and a half minutes which shows the strength of the rich content."

The Business Context

If this case study demonstrates the potential for the development of robust social media platforms in the Middle East, it also emphasizes above all else the requirement to fulfill business and media objectives. To do this, social media releases have two additional requirements: that they fit within a wider strategy encompassing online and offline elements, and that they relate to persistent monitoring and strong ROI objectives.

Integrated Strategy

A joined-up strategy is key. All online elements should permeate offline activity and vice versa and should integrate seamlessly as an entire campaign. For example, an offline launch event should be hyped on owned social channels beforehand with live blogging, tweeting and checking-in at the event and photos, videos and summaries posted up on social accounts afterwards, alongside coverage in offline and online media which is then shared through social media and social bookmarking.

In terms of a wider social strategy that social media releases form a part of, it is important to keep a number of elements in mind, including content, social media management and engagement, buzz monitoring, online PR and blogger relations, SEO, online marketing and online and social advertising.

Social strategy should follow a focused, tailored approach to ensure that the brand can engage with its audience in relevant places and foster a loyal community which will convert to brand-ambassadorship. The strength of social media is allowing brands two-way engagement directly with their audience, which, of course, requires procedures in place to deal with any queries or issues that arise in an effective and timely manner. Brand horror stories of miscommunication or poor management replicate themselves online and with such transparency and immediacy, it is vital that any approach is considered and backed by experienced professionals and common sense.

Management and moderation of owned communities is a time-intensive process but there are numerous paid for and free tools, such as Hootsuite and Tweetdeck, to help manage the process. Similarly, providing quality, engaging, relevant content to accompany PR opportunities and as a sticky, engaging asset on a website, microsite or application is extremely important in online strategy.

Of course, a brand might have actionable insights, a strong methodology, robust tools, a loyal, engaged community on social channels and a plethora of high-quality content alongside social media releases, but there is still an important need to match this with conversations with media, either over the phone, email or a coffee. Human relationships are integral to PR, it's just that now we have more ways to create and sustain them.

Reporting and ROI

Social media activity is often an investment, but its low cost means it traditionally delivers results relatively soon after implementation. A social media campaign should enhance what a brand already has and, where possible, have a call-to-action that allows it to deliver tangible ROI. Four, for example, uses a mix of automated buzz monitoring tools and manual analysis to assess the impact of social media, largely across the twin metrics of "impact" (percentage of relevant audience directly or indirectly influenced by activity) and "engagement" (extent to which these audiences are influenced).

The automated tool analyzes online conversation for any search term (or multiple search terms) with a database going back to 2007. It is invaluable to produce buzz monitoring reports to assess the current online landscape for a client or industry ahead of campaigns, to evaluate campaigns by comparing buzz before and after activity, for competitor analysis, for ongoing reputation management and, of course, for any crisis communications.

Manual analysis then takes over to extract actionable insights: trends, areas of specific interest, keywords, search performance, platform performance, sentiment, who the key influencers are talking about a brand, with whom they share information, the spread of discussion across different online media outlets e.g. microblogs, forums, blogs, the countries and languages discussing your search term(s) and the "passion" of posts.

Low barriers to entry, the immediacy of social media and the 'of the moment' element of digital and online marketing means there is a tendency for some companies to fail to understand what their digital activity will actually deliver. By framing online work around existing analysis, a strong call to action within created collateral and a focus on demonstrating clear results and a return on investment, marketers can create a compelling internal case and a high quality strategy at the same time.

Where next?

The Middle East has no lack of commentators calling for their vision of the region's future. But our analysis is that, if the region is to develop its own identity, it must have the confidence to adopt or creative native language services which fulfill a genuine business or consumer need within the region itself.

Marketers and media can help build this structure by developing services with the needs of the region in mind, and resisting the urge to assume identical patterns of use will develop here as in social media's more mature markets. Part of this is to modify or create robust tools and techniques with MENA-specific features, building on the foundations of existing global work while still remaining flexible to the demands of the region.

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Writing the Abaya Chronicles

by Tina Leshner | leshertina@gmail.com

Introduction

For women of the United Arab Emirates, life has translated to extraordinary change. Just a generation away from a difficult desert existence, today's Emirati women represent the embodiment of oil-rich living, as wealth has afforded most of them with lifestyles marked by advanced educations, fancy cars, professional jobs, domestic help, and increasing leadership roles in the country. As noted in a UAE federal report, "women have always been the backbone of family life and the social structure of the UAE and they continue to remain an integral part of maintaining the nation's Islamic heritage and national culture" (UAE Ministry of State, 2008).

For close to a year - 2006-07 - my task as a Fulbright Scholar centered on interviewing Emirati women about how their lives had changed in a region that went from abject poverty to extraordinary wealth in less than a half-century. Interviewees proved to be candid in their remarks, thus generating much interesting information about the way women have moved forward in an Islamic society. But some remained clear in their mandate that their names and photos not be published.

As a trained newspaperwoman, I wanted to bring the story of modernity to the fore, but was limited by such restrictions. Giving lectures became my vehicle to inform American audiences about Emirati women. Writing a non-fiction book based on the interviews was impossible without permission of the interviewees.

Then an idea emerged---why not write a novel with characters that encompass some of the information about the lives of these women? Actually, it was a suggestion brought from some of my former Emirati students on a visit to New York 18 months after I had completed the Fulbright stint that included teaching at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi, federal capital of the United Arab Emirates. Asked why I had failed to write a book about the women I interviewed, I reminded them that it would be impossible to secure permission from many interviewees, including the mothers of some of them. Journalists, I noted, want to be specific. By writing a nonfiction book with anonymous interviewees, I would be in violation of the tenets I teach as a writing coach to my students (Leshner, 1988). So the ZU students suggested a novel, and I began to write a fictionalized account about women in the UAE.

History

Today, most women, including those in the senior-age set in Abu Dhabi, reside in well-appointed villas surrounded by walls. They employ drivers, nannies, maids, and others who take on just about every task that an ordinary housewife would handle. Their lives are in direct contrast to the way they grew up in a desert community.

Abu Dhabi town in the 1950s featured scores of *barasti*, huts made of palm fronds, along the Arabian Gulf, or what Americans call the Persian Gulf. People lived in these dwellings without electricity or plumbing. Heat was oppressive, and health care less than minimal. Susan Hillyard who lived with her spouse, an oil company representative, in Abu Dhabi from 1954 to 1958, found herself the one to whom the women would come for small medically-related matters (Hillyard, 2002). She was the lone Western woman in Abu Dhabi at the time. The town was part of the Abu Dhabi Emirate, an independent territory ruled by the Al Nahayan family, and one of a number of emirates that dotted the area and together were British protectorates known as the Trucial States.

In 1960, when American doctors came to provide the initial medical services in Al Ain, another town in the Abu Dhabi Emirate, the infant mortality rate was 50 percent. The maternal death rate also was high, with nearly one in three young mothers not surviving difficult childbirths. Girls were married at young ages, some at 12 or 13. The bride had little if any say in the decision, despite her right to refuse a match (Soffan, 1980).

While struggling in such an environment, women also took on roles that today are perceived as leadership. In a 2008 address, Minister of State Reem Al Hashimi alluded to UAE history and noted that when the men went pearl diving for months at a time, “the women had to manage the day-to-day activities of family life” (Khaleej Times, 2008).

Then came the discovery of oil by a French-British consortium, with the first shipments leaving the Abu Dhabi Emirate in 1962. With Sheik Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayan taking over the Ruler’s reins from his brother a few years later, things changed rapidly in Abu Dhabi. Sheik Zayed shared the oil revenues and provided monies for families to build homes and start businesses; he ordered that buildings be constructed and bridges erected.

In 1971, when the British ended their association with the Trucial States, Sheik Zayed and the rulers of other emirates formed a new country - the United Arab Emirates. The Constitution called women equal to men, and free education for all was among the rights cited in the document (Sheik Mohammed website). Sheik Zayed remained a strong supporter of women’s rights. Sheikha Fatima, one of his wives, founded the General Women’s Association and became active in the push for women’s rights. Today, as his widow, she is dubbed the “Mother of the Nation.”

As the years passed, with Sheik Zayed serving as UAE president (elected by fellow rulers of the individual emirates) the UAE flourished - and so did opportunities for women. When the first university was opened in Al Ain in 1977, with separate campuses for males and females, many young women from throughout the Emirates took advantage of the schooling. Women also started businesses, purchased and drove their own cars, and became active in government work or non-profit organizations.

In 1998, Zayed University was opened with non-residential campuses in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and one basic objective: to educate national women to be leaders of their country. The American model was evident in the curriculum with many professors coming from the United States and instruction in English, touted as the new business language of the country. ZU secured American accreditation within a decade.

The country’s growth proved dramatic as millions flocked to the new oil-rich areas. Dubai, 90 miles north of Abu Dhabi, with a self-styled seven star hotel and gold markets, became known as the New York of the Middle East, yet Abu Dhabi gained the title of richest city in the world (Fortune, 2007). Today, the capital city is preparing to become the world’s cultural tourism center, with the Louvre and the Guggenheim and other museums under construction on Saadiyat Island right off Abu Dhabi City. In just a few decades, modernity has brought scores of older Emirati women from the crude conditions of poverty-ridden desert life to the pinnacle of 21st century luxury.

American in Abu Dhabi

My ties to the UAE commenced in early 2001 when I arrived in Abu Dhabi as a visiting faculty member at Zayed University, having been invited by the then-dean of the College of Communication and Media Sciences (CCMS) to spend a semester sabbatical teaching. The university was in its sixth semester of operation, having opened in 1998 with just a first-year class, so there were no fourth-year students during my tenure. In a sense, this new educational

institution was operating much like a high school. Students had to stay on campus all day, five days a week, even when they did not have classes. Cell phones were popular, but not allowed; when one went off at an opening assembly with an important sheik in attendance, the owner of the phone was expelled.

Many students, especially those who had attended government high schools where instruction was in Arabic, struggled with the English language, while others, including sheikhas from the Al Nahayan ruling family, had been educated in private schools and with tutors, and were quite proficient in English. A number of my students were engaged and preparing to marry after they secured their degrees. Marriages, for the most part, were arranged by parents, and, unless her fiancé was a cousin, a bride-to-be would not meet him until the wedding day. By their mothers' standards, these girls would be "older" brides. Every ZU student I taught had a mother who was married as a teenager, some even as young as 12.

Though women could drive in the UAE, few ZU students had cars or licenses in 2001. The girls from wealthy, Abu Dhabi-based families arrived in fancy cars with drivers; often their nannies carried the mandatory laptop computers to the school doors for their charges, but nannies weren't allowed inside.

The UAE students were inquisitive, bright, and often quite shy in the new collegiate environment. They wore abayas, the traditional all-black robes that covered their dresses and skirts, and shaylas, long rectangular scarves that they wound around their heads. Many girls covered their entire hair, while others revealed the top-half of their heads. A few students did not wear shaylas at all, and they were considered a bit radical.

As the lone woman teaching in CCMS on the Abu Dhabi campus - and this surprised me immensely as I assumed that the university would seek out female role models - I became a sounding board for the girls; they asked questions repeatedly about my life and family, and related stories about their family lives to me.

Family constituted the basis of their social lives. The students spent little time with each other outside of school, and most had never stayed at friends' homes. What intrigued me most about the young women were their relationships with their grandmothers, probably because the latter were my age - or younger.

In Emirati tradition, if a woman were widowed, she usually moved in with the family of her oldest son. The tradition continued in modern families; thus, many students had paternal grandmothers residing at their homes. The students made it clear that the relationship between their mothers, usually in their 30s, and their grandmothers was not always the best. The grandmothers considered their daughters-in-law lazy and unproductive. After all, these women were waited on by nannies, cooks, maids, drivers, etc. Even today, grandmothers are vexed about the lifestyles of young Emiratis, or as one stated in a recently published book, "the generation that has lost its way and the will to do anything other than show off fancy cars and clothes" (Bristol-Rhys, 2010). My association with adult Emirati women was limited. Zayed University had few of them in its employ in 2001 as the school depended on expatriates for faculty and professional positions. What I knew about Emirati women came through dialogue with the students.

During my tenure that semester at ZU, I penned monthly email newsletters to friends and colleagues in the United States, and regaled them with tales of my experiences in the UAE. Selected sections of those communiqués were published by my university, and thus a wider audience read how I loved the challenge of teaching media-related courses in a country where a newspaper license can be suspended if the publication incites people against the government, or

offends Islamic beliefs. I also noted how I expected to face “culture shock” after returning home, when I no longer would be residing in a fully serviced apartment and enjoying the amenities of a beachfront upscale Middle East city (WP Newsletter, Fall 2001).

Over the next few years, I maintained a fascination with the UAE and the progress being made by its women. Every day I would read online the two English –language newspapers in the UAE--the Khaleej Times and The Gulf News---and print out stories about Emirati women who owned their own businesses or held unusual jobs or moved into the sports world or assumed leadership posts. I yearned to be able to return to the Emirates and conduct interviews on the changes in the lives of Emirati women, including older ones who had truly experienced the move from poverty to wealth. When I was named a 2006-07 Fulbright Scholar to the UAE, I got the chance to return.

Back to Abu Dhabi

With a lecturing/research joint award, I sought affiliation with an Emirati university and got that opportunity when Zayed University invited me to return and teach half-time while pursuing my Fulbright project of interviewing Emirati women about the changes in their lives. So, five years after completing my first stint at ZU, I returned in August 2006 - and immediately saw changes. No longer were students required to be on campus all day, but only when they were scheduled for classes - as in the American model they were emulating. Students carried cell phones - some had two. The abayas no longer were all black, but often featured various kinds of colorful trim. Quite a few students wore nothing on their heads, and a few scrapped the abaya and shayla altogether in favor of jeans and T-shirts. Many of the girls drove to school, and those who arrived in chauffeured cars - the sheikhas and others from the wealthiest families, for example - longed to get licenses, too.

English language skills had increased dramatically, perhaps because students took more English classes prior to college and thus were better prepared. And the shyness in 2001 had given way to outgoing personalities. With a plethora of technology available to them, the students were well-versed in international affairs and understood the power - and the liabilities - of the media.

During the intervening five years, the professional staff of ZU had moved from a mostly expatriate group to one with many Emiratis. (The faculty remained mostly expatriate as Emiratis lacked the requisite academic credentials for English language universities). These UAE citizens - staffers and students - proved invaluable to me as they recommended interviewees and often made arrangements for me to meet with women they knew.

Slowly I built up a cadre of Emirati women who agreed to interviews, and learned about the way life was changing for all of them. Unlike in the past when girls were married as young teens, the number of unmarried women has increased dramatically. Unmarried, educated, professional females represent the fastest-growing sector of women ranks in the country. Interviewees in this category explained that they did not want to marry less educated men - and women in the UAE make up the majority of college students. The number of available bridegrooms is dwindling in other ways: while women are expected to marry only Emiratis, men can marry foreign women.

Since the brunt of paying for weddings falls to the man and his family, males are choosing foreign brides who don't require the elaborate weddings that please Emirati families' sense of position. The number of men with multiple wives is declining as it is simply too expensive to provide for them. The unmarried professional women seemed happy for the most part, as they are ascending within the ranks of their jobs and becoming increasingly independent. My interviewees stretched from young women helping to support their families after their uneducated spouses lost their jobs to members of the ruling family. I interviewed bankers,

scholars, the highest-ranking woman in the UAE Army, the nation's top woman golfer, the heads of ministry departments, businesswomen, and officials of universities.

In many cases to my surprise, these women had ties to the United States; some owned homes in America and others had been educated there. In addition, I interviewed several American women who married Emiratis, converted to Islam, and took up life a half-world away. All provided rich information about their lives and how they viewed the changes for women in the UAE. They talked about their professional jobs, their travel, their education, and their love of family and country. Their candor was mixed with the desire of many to remain anonymous.

ZU students offered to assist with interviews especially those that had to be conducted in Arabic and brought back rich data from older women who recalled the desert days. Many of these "seniors" yearned for the socializing that existed in the past, before people spent lives in villas built behind walls.

With a wealth of information from many interviews, I returned to the United States with the realization that I would not be able to write a nonfiction work but could educate others about Emirati women through lectures. People appeared almost mesmerized as they learned about a different culture and saw photos comparing the Emirates in the 1950s to its skyscraper skylines today. I retained my ties with ZU through a year of online teaching.

Then, when the idea for a novel arose from my ex-students, I successfully applied for a semester sabbatical from my university post, and took on a novel assignment, literally. While Emiratis have written books about the UAE's history and its people, novels based on characters in the Emirates are non-existent.

Penning The Chronicles

My objective from the outset was to write a nonfiction work that incorporated much of what I had learned and experienced during my stints in Abu Dhabi where most of the interviews were conducted. Basically, I wanted to create interesting composite characters who represented the new UAE but also to include some who had been raised in the formerly poor region before it became officially a country.

Friends and colleagues suggested I start my project at a writing colony where the entire emphasis is on spending days at a laptop and creating a great amount of copy in a short time. Thus I traveled to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, for a two-week stay at the Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow, the flagship program of the Communication Arts Institute. There, ensconced in a private two-room suite, I wrote from dawn to late night, with breaks to take advantage of the historic town and its spa facilities, and to dine with the other writers-in-residence. My output was extensive, and a bit surprising to some other writers focusing on poetry and short stories. Yet, like others, they were curious about the United Arab Emirates, my personal experiences there, and the way of life for nationals and others in an oil-rich country.

The process for producing a novel from my personal perspective mirrors that for writing as a journalist. One needs to collect information, as I had done in the UAE, then order the material, develop the story, and edit it. To contrast the time periods from pre-oil days to the present, I centered the work on a 60-year-old woman, Farah, who years before had divorced her wealthy spouse after he took a second younger wife. She resides with a single professional daughter who enjoys playing golf even in groups with males. They live across the street from one of Farah's sons who is married to an American he met while studying at the University of Pennsylvania. Farah's granddaughters attend a university where they are taught public speaking by an American professor who becomes friendly with the family.

Farah, independent and wealthy through varied business ventures, is encouraged by her granddaughters to become more active physically, so she and her childhood friend, Amna, become regulars at an Abu Dhabi women's gym where they befriend an American ex-journalist whose life is clouded by a mystery. To emphasize the growing number of businesswomen in the UAE, I had one of Farah's Emirati-American granddaughters join her close friends in setting up a cake-making operation with the help of a pair of Philadelphia bakery owners who acted as consultants.

Much as I did from Abu Dhabi, the professor-character sends lengthy email newsletters detailing interesting happenings in her own life, from attending a university graduation that could be termed "over the top," to celebrating a golf championship won by Farah's daughter. Of course, I thought it was important to create characters who represent the ruling family, so several sheikhas have significant roles in the novel.

Emiratis make up a maximum of 20 percent of the population in their own country, with millions of expatriates working there. Many Filipino women, for example, work in nail salons and beauty parlors, and live together in cramped apartments. A few of them became characters too, and their relationship with demanding Emirati clients and each other is another focal point of the tale.

The American connection is evident throughout, and the story winds up with a number of characters, including sheikhas, visiting Ground Zero in Manhattan. Two of the reported 9-11 hijackers came from the northern Emirates, but I wanted readers to know that the Emiratis were devastated by that terror attack and retain close ties to the U.S. government. After thinking a long time about the title, I settled on *The Abaya Chronicles* as the national dress remains a cultural part of the UAE.

Into Print

Completing a novel is only the first step to getting the work published. From the outset, I had decided against seeking an agent who would, according to other writers, spend a year or so trying to find a small publishing company to take on the work of a first novelist. Many authors report that their publishers have been weak in marketing. But I already had some experience in the self-publishing world, having written a book in 2006 about 12 women, all born in 1943 and all residents of Westfield, the New Jersey town where I live. *Club '43* (Lesher, 2006) was published through authorhouse and put on the market during my Fulbright year. Frankly, I did little to promote it although it probably ranks as a "top-seller" in Westfield since residents wanted to read about people they know.

My objective was to publish *The Abaya Chronicles* as quickly as possible, so that I could return to my professorial post after my sabbatical with a finished product in hand. So with my husband, I established Haverford Publishing, an LLC under New Jersey state law, and contracted with IUniverse to have the book printed/published. This allowed the book to be available for sale on all major websites, including amazon.com, and to be available as an e-book or as a selection for portable reading devices. Thus, *The Abaya Chronicles* would be available to anyone - even in the Middle East.

The cover was designed by Linnea Rhodes, an artist-friend, who had read the manuscript and asked if she might do the cover. The kickoff for the book with an author's talk was at the Westfield Memorial Library, where a standing-room-only crowd heard the story of my treks to Abu Dhabi and my path to publication. I had purchased books at cut prices and sold many copies that night.

Recognizing that I was not going to hit the New York Times book review list or any other major one, I geared marketing to the local area, as well as to a wide audience of e-mail contacts. As expected, in a country where books can be banned, Emirati bookstores have been reluctant to feature a work that has Emiratis marrying Irish Catholics and references to topics like 9-11. I know that Emiratis have read the book as some have sent me photos of themselves holding it. Their comments have been guarded as they deal with a work of fiction that questions some of their rigid structures.

Early on, I received a call and was interviewed by The National, today one of the two major English-language papers in the UAE. I even sent photos to the reporter. The article was never published as I suspect the editors were reluctant to promote a novel that might not gain the support of the sheikhas, some of whom have read the book but not commented on it. An interview on Dubai Nightline radio did win some support, even from the Fulbright program that promoted a podcast of it on its Twitter site.

Today I am again on the local lecture circuit to book clubs and civic organizations that want to hear about the UAE and its women. To these audiences, I say that I wrote what I term "an educational novel," as its purpose was to create characters of women in a country far away in the Gulf. Many attendees at these talks later email to say they enjoyed reading about another culture and about the women who wear abayas.

Would I have fared better had I utilized my journalistic background to write a nonfiction book about the women? Perhaps but it would have taken much longer. In a sense, it was my education and work in the newspaper field that allowed me to conduct in-depth interviews and thus secure information needed to write about interesting women in a far away nation. Moreover, I now have the experience to describe to my graduate students how to combine the tenets of professional writing with the creativity of fiction.

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Review. The Abaya Chronicles: An Abaya-Clad Perspective

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As the final assignment in our journalism course at Zayed University, our professor, Tina Leshner, asked us, her “banaat” [Arabic for girls] as she often called us, to interview an Emirati woman at least a generation older. Briskly, I threw together a 4-page report about my oldest sister. Of course, knowing Professor Leshner was a Fulbright scholar who made no secret of her intentions of researching the lives of Emirati women, I was naturally suspicious and gave my sister an alias. The result: “Great work, Maitha. That lady you interviewed, Deema Abdalla... it’s one of the best I’ve read so far.”

To hear a couple of years later that she had published a book was no surprise. My first instinct was let’s read the book and see if “Deema Abdulla” is in it. She wasn’t. In fact, “Deema’s” story was thinned down so much, there was hardly a trace of her. It was rather part of a collection of many accounts put together to form one or two of the story’s characters.

An Inside Joke

The Abaya Chronicles is the story of a college professor, Teresa Wilson, who teaches at the fictional Women’s University, or WU, in the United Arab Emirates, both obviously based on Leshner and her teaching experience at Zayed University or ZU. It also follows the lives of Wilsons’s Emirati students, three generations of their families, a Filipina nail specialist, and an American ex-columnist who lost a daughter in 9/11. The book is best described as a fictional docudrama based on Leshner’s memories and observations while she worked at an all-girls school in Abu Dhabi.

It is her attempt - as she mentions in her introduction - at fiction mainly to avoid the legal issues that might be faced with writing non-fictional accounts of the women she observed. Filled with inside jokes that don’t necessarily alienate foreign readers, the book uses most aliases that are easily discoverable. They might be particularly familiar to those of us from Zayed University, who I suspect would let out a few giggles here and there and a guaranteed “OMG, that’s totally us!” from the private schools we attended to the social categories we automatically got thrown into our first year of college. Although the book did not make a direct and blinding reference to any specific real person, where she drew the inspiration from was clear; as I read the book, I could see images and faces of many people I knew she encountered.

The opening chapter didn’t do the story justice, but I quickly found myself dropping my preconceived prejudice. As the story slowly unfolded, it grew on me. The characters conjoined, became human, with interesting storylines. At many points, however, the dialogue seemed unnatural and lecture-like, perhaps to make events understandable to readers unfamiliar with the UAE. Maybe this could have been done more delicately, although, at most times, I liked Leshner’s direct, blunt, and raw style. She was able to draw inspiration from real-life stories into as many characters as she could possibly fit into the book - believably and tastefully - enough to portray a well-rounded image of many aspects of UAE society.

Although the book’s intent as Leshner explains in the introduction is to bridge understanding between Americans and the UAE, I find the book in many ways an autobiography, a candid look into the lives of UAE women, but in Leshner’s version, everyone loves golf, all Americans are from New Jersey, and any Catholics in the story are pointed out. With all the driving and putting, I contemplated opening this review with “If you’re a golf fan, this book’s for you.” To be fair, I can

state that the Emirati golfer player character is strongly influenced by the real-life account from Eida, an Emirati female golfer whom Leshar once invited to speak to us in class. Many other influences are evident, some more strongly than others, but mostly Leshar's personal experience overwhelms them all.

Reality Check

The believable story slowly began at a point to morph into Leshar's fantasy of having high-ranking, socially and politically elite Emirati women, freely and acceptably able to choose non-Arab spouses. Both main characters of the storyline have foreign mothers and Emirati fathers, and seem to live blissfully with both sides of the family magically getting along. Another far-fetched delusion is having a sheikha fall in love with a British-Muslim with intentions to marry - with her brother's blessings. Another is an Emirati woman who marries an Irishman and soon-to-be-for-her-sake-Muslim convert, with her family's full support. Leshar seems to believe that if a man is a Muslim, where's the problem?

As much as Zayed University provided inside knowledge otherwise inaccessible to Leshar, the total of 18 months she spent here was enough to merely scratch the surface. "If sheikhas marry for love, others will follow," according to one character Leshar crafted in the book. Wrong again. A sheikha's status is highly regarded by others not as something to pursue, but as something to idolize, which is very much the case with royal families anywhere in the world.

The concept of how women bring honor or shame to the family is barely if at all mentioned. This obliviousness I concluded from Leshar's first chapter where she writes in a conversation between two grandmothers about a male relative: "He'd sell his wife for a piece of gold," something a Bedouin would consider borderline blasphemous. For a man to trade his honor for monetary value would mean he'd be stripped of all "manhood." The same thing applies to women marrying foreigners especially among tribal elite, a reality that currently cannot be escaped.

All is Fair

Overall, Leshar did Emirati women more justice than I initially expected, showing the range of mentalities, from the more westernized to the conservative. What is also refreshing is her unembellished portrayal of characters, avoiding overdramatizing cultural boundaries as many writers do when writing about the region, a cheap stunt that they hope will secure them a best seller. Leshar lays it bare: Nothing horrible happens to women who defy cultural norms; no "honor killing," no beating, no disowning. Rather side glances from relatives at best and harsh words at worst.

Although Leshar did not have the advantage like some foreigners of living in this country for long enough to understand and dissect the local culture, she managed to capture what they could not: The spirit of a young Emirati woman. With this fun and lighthearted read, Leshar has progressed far beyond her earliest perceptions of the Emirates, as she documented in 2001 during her first visit to the UAE. (I came across her online journals while Googling her name a few years back.) In a 2001 entry excerpt, she says: "[The girls] are truly sheltered... kind and modest [but] in many ways, they are immature."

Whether her perspective of us matured, or we matured instead, the fact is, Dr Leshar, immature or not, one of your "banaat" is now writing a book review.

Group Work Teaches Freshmen to Communicate

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Abstract

Group assignments have been used in university education for decades. However, their effectiveness in teaching communication skills to a class of freshmen from diverse educational cultures was a point of concern. This paper studies the effect of a group project on the learning habits and outcomes of freshmen students. Group assignments should be devised to promote collaborative learning and should not make the work easier. Especially with young students the instructor has to actively monitor groups' progress and ensure that work is divided equally to maximize learning for every group member.

Introduction

Two of the greatest challenges for educators in the undergraduate classroom today are the increasingly large classes and the heterogeneity of the students. This affects all aspects of teaching and learning and assessments in particular. More and more educators are using group assignments to assess students in large classes. In general, group work has been proven to have many benefits for students as it replicates the work place, develops communication and survival skills, encourages cross-cultural understanding and relationships, and so on. However, group work must be prescribed judiciously based on the maturity, skill level, and educational and cultural background of students. This study attempts to determine the feasibility of using group work to assess freshmen in a communication skills project.

The rise in student numbers has led to many revisions of course content and modes of assessment. The course initially planned for 20 students is now taught to more than 400 some semesters. Obviously, individual assignments had to be replaced with group projects as numbers grew. Diverse educational and cultural backgrounds of the students created apprehension for the instructor. The study addresses the following:

- 1) How ready are freshmen students for group assignments?
- 2) Can group work be successful for major assignments if students do not have prior training and experience?
- 3) Would students from different educational cultures have different levels of difficulty with group work?
- 4) Would group work be successful in a multicultural milieu with a majority of third culture students?
- 5) Will group assignments encourage freeloaders?

Literature Review

Studies and analyses most relevant to the five areas of concern stated above were examined. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991) reviewed more than 600 studies conducted during the past 90 years "comparing the effectiveness of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic efforts" and conclude that "more is known about the efficacy of cooperative learning than about lecturing, departmentalization, the use of instructional technology, or almost any other aspect of education. The more one works in cooperative learning groups, the more that person learns, the

better he understands what he is learning, the easier it is to remember what he learns, and the better he feels about himself, the class, and his classmates.” In *Tools for Teaching* Barbara Gross Davis (1993) remarks that the best way for students to learn is by being actively involved in the process.

It is necessary to understand the limitations imposed by previous educational systems and cultural patterns on the student population before subjecting them to any novel study pattern. Because freshmen are highly impressionable and they need to develop healthy study patterns, instructors should encourage good learning practices. Volet and Kee (1993) found that initial differences in the approach to learning between local Australian students and newly arrived Singaporean students disappeared by the end of their first semester of study in Australia. The initial year is thus crucial.

Though more than 100 nationalities are represented, the majority of the students are Asians and Arabs. Asian students are perceived as belonging to an education culture that does not encourage free thinking or communal learning. They are classified as passive rote learners. However, studies by leading authors like John Biggs (2000) have successfully challenged the stereotyping of Asian students. Gerstman and Rex (2001) realistically evaluating the status quo comment that “research on student populations to determine whether a particular culture has a predisposition to an approach to learning has provided mixed results.”

Although students from the Indian sub-continent and the far East are stereotyped as rote learners who lack critical thinking skills, John Biggs explodes this myth in his book *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2000). He points out that Confucian heritage cultures like those of China, Korea, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong “are typically lower on surface and higher on deep than those of Western students” (p.126). He explains that there is a need to distinguish between rote and repetitive learning. Repetition is to aid understanding “to ensure correct recall and here it works alongside meaning not against it” (p.127). This applies to Indian students too as the Sanskrit tradition has its roots in repetition. Memorization is the first step towards understanding in most oral traditions. Since the majority of the students studied are Asians, understanding the stereotyping is important.

Feasibility of group work in multicultural systems is considered next. Freshmen are used to working with homogenous groups in their schools and may find it discomforting to work with students from other cultures. However, one of the main reasons for promoting group work is to develop the cultural sensitivity needed in the work place. But students cannot pick it up simply by being in a multicultural environment. Summers and Volet (2008) note that “despite the increasingly multicultural nature of university campuses, the most typical pattern is one of minimal interaction between students of different cultures” (p.357). It is necessary then to find strategies that will enable students to perform in heterogeneous groups.

More than half of the freshmen in the context studied come from Indian and Iranian educational systems that do not practice progressive western learning strategies like collaborative learning. Practitioners and theoreticians agree that it is essential to educate new students about the need for group work before they begin it. As Robertson (1990) observes, “If cooperative work is to be successful, cooperative group skills must be taught, modelled and discussed” (p.126). This helps to bring on an equal platform students with different exposures to group work. Induction into group work also helps build the right attitude and develop much needed motivation.

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education (2007) in the resource called *Assessing learning in Australian Universities* provides five practical assessment guides, including one on assessing group work. Instructors are advised that “If students are informed about the basics, they are more likely to understand the rationale for group work in their subject. As a result, they will

also be more likely to enter their groups with the attitudes, expectations and motivation necessary to engage at a high performance level.”

Grading group work has always been a contentious issue. Often a hard worker bears the load of the whole group, and free loaders riding on others’ shoulders receive better grades than they deserve. When new students do not see a fair system of grading, it can affect their learning process. Heathfield (2000) in his article “Group-based Assessment: An Evaluation of the Use of Assessed Tasks as a Method of Fostering Higher Quality Learning” writes “the anecdotal history from students was that of high stress levels whenever assessed group work was encountered and unfair grades as a result of this process” (p.133). Many educators alleviate this problem by including an individual marking component or peer assessment of individual contributions. Students are sometimes asked to submit summaries which throw light on their contribution.

Research Context

The research was conducted at the University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD), a “western” university in the Middle East, after the rise in the number of freshmen necessitated the inclusion of group assignments in a study skills course. However, I was apprehensive about the students’ readiness for group work. The course was supposed to teach the academic skills needed to handle university level work, and the focus was on research and essay writing. The individual essay assignment was changed to a group essay, and a group presentation was introduced. To facilitate work distribution, I provided guidelines for the division of work among group members. Each student completed an allocated task that contributed to the final group product.

The assignment required students to choose a topic from those listed, research collaboratively, write an outline, and produce an essay of 2000 words as well as make a presentation to the group. Students were allowed to select their topics and the members of their group to give them a feeling of freedom and autonomy which it was hoped would motivate them and make them more responsible. Ultimately, the assignment would help students achieve desirable Graduate Attributes such as “informed,” “responsible,” “independent learner,” with “effective communication skills.”

First, students worked on an ice breaker that involved the whole class. An informal introduction to group work was given stressing the importance of getting to know their classmates as they would have to work together on group projects in many courses. Students received the course outline and learned that they had to complete group assignments. Informal cooperative groups worked on ungraded assignments throughout the course to make them team ready. The group project was divided into stages, and every week the students tackled the next stage.

After another orientation to cooperative learning, students were asked to form groups and choose a topic for the argumentative essay. Then they wrote a thesis statement and a brief outline. After outlines were corrected and suggestions made by the instructor, students had to submit completed outlines with in-text citations the following week. This was developed into a draft essay submitted for correction the next week. One week later, students prepared PowerPoint slides from the outlines for presentations. Only around 20 percent of the groups followed this pattern successfully.

Research Method

Qualitative data: A focus group interview with 8 students was conducted, and the responses were recorded and transcribed. Only one student had not worked in a group before. They were from diverse nationalities and skill levels as is reflected in their responses.

What do you think about group work?

Student A - Horrible - you can't be independent ... others would like to give their own opinion, you will have to agree with them ... you can't just do it on your own. If someone is inefficient, it brings the group down.

Student B - But that is not how a company works. When you get out of college unfortunately you have to work with a group...

Student A - I don't think you should become dependent on others ...

Student B - It is not becoming dependent, it is learning to work with a group, learning to compromise...

Student D - I have written many essays on my own so why do we need group now?

Student A, a highly motivated student, and student B who had worked in groups before and was currently in a "bad" group dominated the conversation. Both seemed to consider group work a necessary evil.

Do you prefer to work with friends?

Student A - No, they are my dear friends. I don't want to spoil my relationship with them.

Student C - Yes. It is easier to speak in my language.

Student A - Most of the people who prefer people who speak in their language are not good in English...

Student B - We will get ideas from other nationalities. They will look at the topic in a different way.

How do you feel about working with difficult people?

Student A - You have to be with a difficult person at least once so you will learn

Student B - You have to handle such people in future

Student C - If they don't learn, teach them the hard way, exclude them

Student A - Co-ordinate with them; they just have to follow what we tell them

It is clear that students had different perceptions of group work depending on their academic skill levels.

Quantitative data: Three questionnaires were given to 60 students enrolled in the course to evaluate their responses to group work. The first questionnaire was prior to the commencement of work on the group project to evaluate student perceptions and attitudes to group work in general and to determine if they were ready for collaborative work. The second came after the first stage of the group project – the outline draft submission - to monitor changes in perceptions. The third was after the group presentation, the last stage of the group project. The questions were all closed; students indicated their views anonymously according to a five point Likert scale.

Data Analysis Questionnaire 1

Table 1 – Analysis of Questionnaire 1

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. I have worked on group assignments before. | | Yes – 73% | No- 27% |
| 2. I enjoy working on group assignments. | | Yes – 90% | No- 10% |
| 3. I have anxieties about working in groups for the essay and oral presentation. | Strongly agree/ Agree 38% | Neutral 46% | Disagree/ Strongly disagree 15% |
| 4. I am anxious about being part of the "wrong" group. | 46% | 23% | 31% |
| 5. I would prefer to choose my group members myself. | 57% | 30% | 10% |
| 6. I would prefer the teacher to choose my group for me. | 14% | 33% | 49% |
| 7. I would prefer my group members to speak the same first language as I do | 24% | 26% | 50% |
| 8. I would prefer my group members to belong to the same nationality as me | 14% | 35% | 51% |
| 9. I would prefer to work with students smarter than I am. | 39% | 46% | 13% |
| 10. I prefer to be the smartest person in my group. | 13% | 46% | 39% |
| 11. A group will function well only if it has a leader. | 63% | 23% | 11% |
| 12. A group will function well only if it meets regularly. | 83% | 10% | 4% |
| 13. Learning to work in a group is important. | 87% | 7% | 2% |
| 14. Working in a group will help me score better grades than if I worked alone. | 63% | 23% | 14% |
| 15. The teacher should monitor groups' activities. | 60% | 27% | 11% |

Although I expected the students to be unfamiliar with group work, 73 percent had worked on group assignments in school, and 90 percent of them had enjoyed it. It was reassuring that students were not totally new to collaborative work. However, 38 percent had anxieties about group work. One cause of the anxiety was the fear of being in the “wrong” group as 46 percent of students indicated. Linked to this, 57 percent said they prefer to choose their group themselves compared to 14 percent who want the teacher to do it.

Again, I expected most students would want to form groups with peers who spoke the same first language; however, only 26 percent said that and only 14 percent wanted to work with peers from the same nationality. These results were contrary to the norms discussed in the literature. Students did not care about forming groups with students who spoke the same first language or belonged to the same nationality. What was more important was that they were with “friends.” I observed that students congregated with friends in class or tended to make friends with those who sat near them. They sat in the same place throughout the course.

This could be because most students at UOWD are so called Third Culture Kids, not international students thrust into a new culture at university. The term Third Culture Kids or TCKs or 3CKs was coined by sociologist Ruth Hill Useem in the 1960s and refers to someone who as a child spent a significant period of time in one or more culture(s) other than his or her own. Such young people create a third culture that blends features of their birth culture and the culture in which they are raised. As most students in the study were children of expatriates residing in the Middle East,

growing up in a culture alien to their own and heavily influenced by the culture of their peers, they were open to working with students regardless of first language and nationality. Most students spoke English - usually as a second, third, or more language - and so language was not a barrier.

The majority of the students seemed to understand the benefits of group work; 63 percent agreed that a group would function well only if it had a leader; 83 percent believed a group will function well only if it meets regularly; 87 percent believed that learning to work in a group is important; and 60 percent agreed the instructor should monitor the groups' activities. So students had positive expectations about group work. In fact, 63 percent believed that working in a group would help them score better grades than if they worked alone.

This proved to be a self fulfilling prophecy as there was a significant increase in average grades after group work was introduced, as well as a decrease in the number of students who did not submit their work. It was not clear if this showed positive group dynamics or other forces referred to by Heathfield (1990). Heathfield remarks, "we had two primary concerns about the grading of assessed group work. Firstly, that weaker students were being carried by their group and receiving grades far beyond their individual capacity. Secondly, more capable students were responsible for 'working' the group and producing the assessment item and this extra burden was not reflected in their grades" (p.137). Group work can have a negative effect on capable students. It is also important to consider if this scenario replicates the kind of work place where you cannot expect to be "carried" by colleagues.

Data Analysis Questionnaire 2

Table 2 – Analysis of Questionnaire 2

| | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------|---|
| 1.I will be able to write an outline on my own. | | Yes 73% | No 27% |
| 2.We met as a group outside class to work on the outline. | | 76% | 24.5% |
| 3. We decided how to divide the work in tutorial. | | 83% | 17% |
| 4. The work was divided equally. | | 85% | 15% |
| 5. Working with my group was easy. | Strongly agree/ Agree 66% | Neutral 31% | Disagree/ Strongly disagree 2% |
| 6. I could have worked better in another group. | 11% | 46% | 42% |
| 7.The teacher should have selected group members. | 18% | 26% | 55% |
| 8.It is good to be in a group with friends | 51% | 41% | 8% |
| 9.Group work makes students more responsible. | 72% | 20% | 8% |
| 10. It would have been easier to work on the outline on my own | 33% | 34% | 33% |

The second questionnaire was distributed when the outline draft had been submitted. Only 15 percent of the groups had submitted at least partially completed outlines, but 73 percent said they could write an outline on their own. That can be explained as the general student tendency to believe they know what is expected of them before they have done the work. However, 76 percent said they met outside class to work on the outline, but only 66 percent agreed that it was easy to work with their group, and 11 percent believed they could have worked better in another group.

In response to the question “I would prefer the teacher to choose my group for me” in the first questionnaire 14 percent agreed; this number rose to 18 percent in the second survey. 72 percent still believed that group work made students more responsible although 33 percent responded that it would have been easier to work on the outline on their own which raises concerns about the pressure that groups exerts on participants.

Data Analysis Questionnaire 3

Table 3 – Analysis of Questionnaire 3

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------|--|
| 1.I will be able to write an essay on my own. | Strongly agree/ Agree 63 | Neutral 28 | Disagree/ Strongly Disagree 4 |
| 2.Working in a group has helped me to learn better | 78 | 25 | 7 |
| 3.It would have been easier to work on my own | 17 | 39 | 44 |
| 4.We met as a group outside class to work on the presentation. | 69 | 15 | 16 |
| 5.The work was divided equally. | 62 | 23 | 13 |
| 6.It is important to learn to work in a group. | 86 | 11 | 2 |
| 7.My group members did not listen to me. | 6 | 26 | 67 |
| 8.I had the best ideas in my group. | 16 | 67 | 17 |
| 9.I look forward to working with the same group. | 50 | 32 | 17 |
| 10.I enjoyed working on the group assignment | 70 | 22 | 9 |

The third questionnaire was given to students after the project was completed. When asked if they would be able to write an essay on their own, 63 percent answered in the affirmative as opposed to 73 percent who responded that they would be able to write outlines on their own. Moreover, 78 percent believed that working in a group had helped them to learn better. Although 33 percent responded that it would have been easier to work on the outline on their own, only 17 percent had a similar response about the essay, probably since it was a longer and more complicated process.

The effectiveness of group work isn't entirely clear: 31 percent did not meet in their group outside class to work on the presentation, a 7 percent increase from the response on Questionnaire 2. Crisp et al. (2007) cite a similar situation in their study “Pros and cons of a group webpage design project in a freshman anatomy and physiology course.” Students were supposed to add their pages to those of the other group members, but one student said, “I never saw what my group members’ pages looked like.” This defeats the whole purpose of collaborative learning.

Only 13 percent complained about the unequal division of work in the group. And just 6 percent said that group members did not listen to them. There was overall unity, and positive group dynamics. In spite of this, only half look forward to working with the same group. Some 16 percent claimed they had the best ideas in their group, and 9 percent did not enjoy working on

the group assignment which suggests the problem was with the group, not the project. Though 90 percent of students had enjoyed working on group projects in high school, by the end of the first group project at university, that number fell to 70 percent.

Summers and Volet (2008) observed a similar trend in their study of freshmen: “the experiences students are having as they progress through their tertiary studies are not leading them to view mixed group work more favourably” (p.362). It is essential for students to have positive feelings about group work as it is inevitable in higher classes and in their career. Steps should be taken to alleviate the pressure on students that group work produces as it mars their learning experience.

The most positive outcome of the project was that unlike in previous semesters, no student failed in the assignments. It was not clear whether they were motivated or coerced by group members. Every student who failed the course had problems with the group, either not submitting work on time or doing no work, even though the instructor constantly advised groups to report slackers before the due date. Indeed, 15 percent of groups complained about under performing members.

Conclusion

The results of this study allayed most of my doubts about the feasibility of group work for freshmen students. However, it is vital to ensure that group projects encourage collaborative learning and not just division of work. Learning together, not collating individual work must be ensured. It could be done through supervised work in the classroom with the instructor continually monitoring groups’ progress and redressing grievances. Without that involvement, students tend to feel that they are learning from peers, not from the instructor.

Work should be divided equally and rationally so that all students learn all parts of the process. This will help to avoid burdening motivated students and exert pressure on freeloaders. To gauge their understanding, students could be asked to submit short individual pieces of work. The exam should contain questions pertaining to the group project to ensure active learning by all students.

The drawbacks were not with the group assessment method, but with the process which should be streamlined to ensure contribution from all group members. This would require completing part of the work in class and a better division of work among group members. Future research should examine whether the popularity of group work and the increase in grades was due to division of work or because students actually learned from and motivated each other.

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Using the Pearl Project to Develop Investigative Reporters

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After hooded terrorists ruthlessly beheaded The Wall Street Journal correspondent Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2002, there was only one thing on the mind of his Washington bureau colleague Asra Nomani: How to finish the story for which Pearl had paid with his life and how to find and bring his killers to justice.

Pearl had gone to Pakistan to follow up on a story that ran earlier in another U.S. daily, The Boston Globe, that claimed the facilitator of the “shoe bomber” Richard Reid was in Pakistan. British-born Reid is serving a life sentence without parole in a U.S. jail on terrorism charges after he tried to detonate explosives in his shoe to bring down a trans Atlantic flight.

But Nomani had a problem; you might say a mighty problem: She was going to do this as an independent project, not connected with the Journal. She needed money; she needed a home for the project; and, equally important, she needed help to carry out a gigantic investigation.

Georgetown University Provides a Solution

It took her years, but she found her savior in Barbara Feinman Todd, director of the journalism program, part of the English department, at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Using up-to-three-credits elective courses - in which both undergraduate and graduate level students could participate - Feinman Todd essentially gave Nomani a 32-member reporting team for two semesters in the fall of 2007 and spring 2008. Even though the classes were elective, those wishing to sign up had to write an essay explaining their interest and demonstrating their writing skills. “We had to have professional standards for the work they did because we always wanted to publish on a large scale,” said Feinman Todd.

She and Nomani said they realized that in the beginning their motives might have been different but as time passed their goals coalesced into one. “I would say, for Asra it was a personal project and for me [it was] establishing an academic process and a methodology for it. This was at a time that investigative reporting had come under fire because of all the “pink slips” and buyouts and by doing this we wanted to make a contribution to sustaining the practice of investigative journalism. I would say in time we shared the same goal,” said Feinman Todd. “We wanted to solve the case and also finish Danny’s work.”

Pearl Project Findings

The findings of the three-year Pearl Project investigation, *The Truth Left Behind: Inside the Kidnapping and Murder of Daniel Pearl*, are published separately in this issue and the full report can be found at http://treesaver.publicintegrity.org/Daniel_Pearl.

The Pearl Project raises important questions: Should journalism students get involved in high-profile investigative projects, or should they have more manageable goals? What should be the relationship between mainstream media - who ordinarily carry out such projects - and university projects run by (mostly) amateur students? Do such projects help gain respect for journalism programs? Do they help attract more students to journalism? Will those students actually have a future in today’s environment of dying newspapers and slashed operating budgets? Will such university projects encourage media to absolve themselves of what is rightly their responsibility? Would such projects even work in countries with much less press freedom, less interest by students in journalism (as opposed to other communication subjects such as public relations or

advertising), or less robust commitments to principles equivalent to the First Amendment rights in the United States?

There may not be clear answers to many of these questions. What is clear is that the Pearl Project shows that journalism education - and even student enthusiasm - is still alive and, despite the seeming downtrend in mainstream media, universities - at least some - are even increasing their attention to journalism.

PR for Journalism Programs

Kathy Temple, chair of the English Department at Georgetown University which oversees journalism courses, says the Pearl Project has advanced the stature of the journalism program within the university, one of the best known and most respected in the country. "I can say that the Pearl Project has boosted interest in journalism at Georgetown. We're currently working on an expansion of the program and will be proposing a minor to the administration in the next few months," she said in response to an email question.

Just as in the real world, where journalists copy from each other, journalism schools, too, look to each other for ideas. Steve Fox, sports and multimedia journalism director at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, said he modeled his student investigative courses - which began in January 2010 - after the class taught by Feinman Todd and Nomani. "When I was thinking about crafting my course, the Pearl Project came up in the Google search so I tracked down Barbara and Asra, and they were tremendously helpful and willing to share anything," said Fox.

He said the undergraduate students in his class - usually around 13 - are in their senior year and take the course as an elective because "by then they are far into it and are looking seriously at journalism as a career ... so the value of the class is that they get to apply skills that they learn in other classes." The final product in his classes usually is blogs or articles in local newspapers. Unlike Georgetown, Amherst has a full-fledged communication department with about 400 students enrolled.

Can Student Projects Save Investigative Journalism?

Others believe that while the growth of journalism schools and programs has been inevitable, the kind of investigative work they might produce in the future may be a far cry from the kind of report that the Georgetown classes produced. "The worst carnage to journalism [in recent times] has happened in the past 2-3 years [when] some 20,000 journalists lost their jobs ... [Meanwhile] Foundations have contributed some \$150 million-\$200 million to universities since 2005," says Charles Lewis, professor and executive director of the Investigative Reporting Workshop at the American University's School of Communication in Washington, D.C. "When there is money and [unemployed] people with distinguished backgrounds and a perceived need in the society - in this case, better journalism - it is no surprise that we have 14 university-based investigative journalism centers," he adds.

But money is a double-edged sword for universities and foundations. Lewis and others interviewed for this article cautioned that many universities have been and will be cautious about embarking on "sensitive" projects for which they could be sued for libel, or those involved targeted for retribution. While most universities carry libel insurance, that usually applies to scholarly publications and not investigative journalism.

Newspapers, too, might be cautious about carrying out certain investigations. In fact, there are suggestions that The Wall Street Journal itself shied away from doing its own version of the Pearl Project out of concern for the safety and security of its reporters worldwide, as well as for possible financial repercussions. I contacted Gerald Seib, currently the Washington bureau chief

of the Journal, by email and confirmed that Seib received the questions; however, he did not respond to questions about why the Journal did not carry out its own full-fledged reporting on the Pearl murder or why it did not partner with Georgetown University - financially or otherwise.

Problems on the Horizon

“Investigative journalism is a relatively new phenomenon, and I know universities have started hearing from their powerful and wealthy backers about the possible reverberations of doing [sensitive] investigative projects. I don’t think they are going to close down university investigative projects, but I think they will produce different types of products,” says Lewis. “I don’t think even Georgetown University would have or could have published the Pearl Project without outside help.”

Lewis is also the founder of the Center for Public Integrity, which, according to its web site, “is dedicated to producing original investigative journalism about significant public issues to make institutional power more transparent and accountable.” He made his comments for this article in his capacity as executive director of the investigative workshop at the American University.

Nomani believes journalism schools are vital to finishing many hard-hitting projects - like hers - that mainstream media cannot tackle any more. Without support from Georgetown University, she said, “It would [have been] impossible to find the kind of long term support [the project needed]. I was waiting for five years to find a ‘home’ for this kind of investigation and to have 32 incredible reporters ... with their sharp agile minds, I could not try to comprehend some of their detailed spreadsheet and schematic work.”

Agile minds they might have had, but good support they also received. While Nomani is an accomplished journalist, Feinman Todd brought a wealth of investigative reporting experience, having been a research assistant for one of Watergate-star Bob Woodward’s books and a ghostwriter, researcher, or editor on a number of other books, including those penned by Hillary Rodham Clinton and former U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey.

How the Students Did It

Feinman Todd and Nomani said they conducted the elective classes as virtual newsrooms, though there were occasional formal classes with guest speakers on topics such as basic reporting and writing, ethics in journalism, and following the Associated Press stylebook. The instructors divided the pupils into mixed groups of undergraduate and graduate students who volunteered for beats such as media issues, human rights, Pakistani intelligence services, Pakistani police, Pakistani judicial system, forensics, Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the U.S. Department of State. Students worked collaboratively, using a wiki system and an analytical software platform provided by Palantir Technologies.

All reporting was done from the United States - the students did not travel to Pakistan - and initially relied heavily on sources and knowledge that Nomani provided from her own reporting experience in Southeast Asia. As time went by, students either developed their own sources or continued interacting with the ones Nomani had recommended. By the end of the second semester, Nomani said, the students had created a spreadsheet of all suspects and players in the Pearl murder, mapped out the family and tribal connections, and established a detailed timeline for what happened when. “I would say about 80 percent of the reporting was done,” she added.

Feinman Todd said while she could have dedicated more students and semester hours to the project, “I kind of made the decision that we should move forward with finishing the investigation.” But that was not the end of the story for the Pearl Project, or the personal and

professional ambitions of Feinman Todd and Nomani. There were still holes in the story, and they still had to write the full report, but, again, they needed staff and money. Connections, persuasion, and salesmanship landed them \$362,000 from the Center for Public Integrity Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation and the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

Professionals Finished the Pearl Project

Once the classroom part of the project was completed, Feinman Todd and Nomani moved the project to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists at the Center for Public Integrity, continued interviewing sources in Pakistan and the United States, flew some sources from Pakistan to the United States, filed numerous Freedom of Information Action requests to force the U.S. government into releasing thousands of pages of documents, and hired professional editors to cut down the 70,000-word manuscript into a more manageable 30,000-word final project, which was officially released in January 2011.

So, what worked and what did not? “I think we learned how to conduct an investigation that was [geographically] far away and do it with a big team and members who had varying degrees of skills and experiences. We learned how to be organized and how to use technology to get organized,” said Feinman Todd. “In terms of what didn’t work, I think it was tough that we had students of all different experience levels in journalism. It was really a hodgepodge of different experiences. It was a challenge because everyone had to pull their weight, and some people were just learning while others were professionals.”

It was also challenging because, after all, this was a university project, not run by professional journalists whose primary job would have been to work on the project. “These were students. Some grad students who had families and work and then there were undergrads who were younger and did not have those obligations but had four other classes and college life that they wanted to live,” said Feinman Todd.

“It was trial and error to know how much we can expect of the students and how much was fair. We lived and breathed it but was it fair to expect that much of them? We ended up doing a lot of modulating how much to assign.”

The Pearl Project: KEY FINDINGS

The Daniel Pearl case is a window into several serious issues that have relevance today to U.S. foreign policy and America's war in Afghanistan: the emergence of a "Punjabi Taliban," made up of militants from the Pakistani province of Punjab; the role of Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, as a safe haven for militants; and the nexus between the Pakistani militancy and Al Qaeda. The case also offers important lessons related to problems with rule of law in Pakistan. Among the project's more specific findings:

- The kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl was a multifaceted, at times chaotic conspiracy. The Pearl Project has identified 27 men who played a part in the events surrounding the case. Members of at least three different militant groups took part in the crimes, including a team of kidnappers led by British-Pakistani Omar Sheikh and a team of killers led by Al Qaeda strategist Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who is known as KSM.
- KSM told FBI agents in Guantanamo that he personally slit Pearl's throat and severed his head to make certain he'd get the death penalty and to exploit the murder for propaganda. Some U.S. and Pakistani officials believe KSM may have been assisted by two of his nephews, Musaad Aruchi, whose whereabouts aren't publicly known, and Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, KSM's trusted aide, who is incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay.
- After 9/11, KSM designated his young nephew, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, to be the facilitator for "shoe bomber" Richard Reid. When he was kidnapped, Pearl was chasing a story that a cleric, Sheikh Mubarak Ali Shah Gilani, was the facilitator. He wasn't. Reid was an Al Qaeda operative.
- Doubts regarding KSM's confessions during "waterboarding" were eased when FBI agents and CIA officials used a technique called vein-matching to compare the hand of the killer in the murder video with a photo of Mohammed's hand.
- Nearly half of those implicated in Pearl's abduction-murder — at least 14 men with some alleged involvement — are thought to remain free. The list includes guards, drivers, and fixers tied to the conspiracy.
- In their haste to close the case, Pakistani authorities knowingly used perjured testimony to pin the actual act of murder on Omar Sheikh and his three coconspirators. While the four were involved in the kidnapping plan and certainly were culpable, they were not present when Pearl was murdered. Others, who were present and actually assisted in the brutal beheading, were not charged.
- The conspirators were inept, plagued by bungling plans, a failure to cover their tracks, and an inability to operate cameras and computer equipment. Even the videotape of Pearl's murder was staged — replayed because the cameraman failed to capture the original scene.
- Despite ample leads, U.S. and Pakistani investigators began the case chasing the wrong suspect, giving the killers time to slay Pearl and disappear. Pakistani authorities let a key informant, admitted guard Fazal Karim, go free and failed to follow other potential leads.
- Omar Sheikh, who orchestrated the kidnapping plot, had contemplated bargaining over ransom demands for Pearl's freedom, but that possibility quickly faded when it became known that Pearl was Jewish and when Al Qaeda operatives took charge of him.

- False and contradictory evidence presented in Pakistan’s kidnapping trial raises serious doubts the convictions of Sheikh and his three associates will stand up in currently pending appeals. Omar Sheikh’s defense attorney is also using KSM’s confession as grounds for his appeal.
- KSM told the FBI that he was pulled into the kidnapping by a high-level leader in Al Qaeda circles today, an Egyptian named Saif al-Adel, who told him to make the kidnapping an Al Qaeda operation.
- Pearl’s actual murderers will likely not stand trial for their crime. Federal officials decided in the summer of 2006 not to add the Pearl murder to charges against KSM in military tribunals because they concluded that would complicate plans to prosecute him and four alleged accomplices in the 9/11 attacks. KSM’s suspected accomplices aren’t expected to be charged, either. One nephew is being tried for the 9/11 attacks, and the whereabouts of the older nephew aren’t publicly known.

Part 1 — FINISHING DANNY’S WORK

by Asra Q. Nomani, Barbara Feinman Todd, Katie Balestra, and Kira Zalan

On the morning of May 17, 2002, Pakistani police investigator Fayyaz Khan ordered officers to dig inside a compound in the Gulzar-e-Hijri neighborhood, a poor area on Karachi’s outskirts. It was not a pleasant task. At the scene, Randall Bennett, the U.S. State Department’s regional security officer in Karachi, lit a cigarette to mask the stench of death.

This was the stomach-turning culmination of the search for kidnapped Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. He had been abducted nearly four months earlier on January 23 while trying to chase down possible Pakistani connections to “shoe bomber” Richard Reid, the British Muslim man who attempted to blow up an American Airlines jetliner over the Atlantic.

Gently, under the watchful eye of a colonel in Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, or ISI, police officers lifted their find. First: a skull four doctors on the scene said had been “decapitated,” the U.S. consul general, John Bauman, later wrote in a State Department cable. Then the upper torso, still wearing the light blue track suit that Pearl’s kidnappers had him wear. Pearl’s body, cut into about 12 pieces, was removed. This outcome, sadly, came as little surprise. A gruesome videotape had circulated earlier, drawing worldwide attention, showing Pearl’s beheading by a man whose face the camera never revealed.

Locating the remains, however, was a breakthrough. Pakistani police and U.S. officials for the first time had established a link to Pearl’s actual murderers. The man who led police to the site, a young militant named Fazal Karim, sat in jail across town. Picked up in connection with the bombing of the Sheraton Karachi Hotel on May 8, Karim told Pakistani police investigator Fayyaz Khan that he had been one of the guards holding Pearl. He said he witnessed the murder by three men whom he described variously as “Arabs” or as “Balochis,” a reference to natives of Pakistan’s restive Baluchistan province abutting Afghanistan and Iran. But it would be more than another year before the actual perpetrator would say that he was the unidentified man wielding the knife that killed Pearl.

That man was Al Qaeda operative Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a Balochi raised in Kuwait, who confessed to the Pearl murder after being apprehended by Pakistani and U.S. agents for his alleged role as the 9/11 mastermind.

The details of his confession to the CIA remain classified, but the Pearl Project has learned some details of what he told two FBI agents, Frank Pellegrino and John Mulligan, who interviewed him in Guantanamo Bay in 2007. “I wanted to make sure that I got the death penalty,” he said,

according to a source. The FBI agents were part of a “clean team,” tasked to get material that could be used in a criminal trial. In the interview, the Pearl Project has learned, KSM said he was pulled into the kidnapping by a high-level leader in Al Qaeda circles today, an Egyptian named Saif al-Adel.

U.S. officials have released a transcript of a hearing in which KSM admitted his role in the murder. His admission is corroborated by Pakistani police interrogation reports of at least two suspects involved in the kidnapping. One of them is Muhammad Rasheed, a driver from the northern Pakistani district of Swat, tied to the militants groups. He allegedly drove a taxi, ferrying Arab members of Al Qaeda around Karachi.

Today, KSM, as he is called by U.S. officials, is a high-value detainee at Guantanamo Bay awaiting trial for the 9/11 attacks. Neither he nor his accomplices, however, have been charged in Pearl’s death.

While the U.S. government has not passed judgment on KSM’s involvement in the Pearl case, it appears that Osama Bin Laden has done so. Morris Davis, former chief prosecutor for the Guantanamo Bay military commissions, told the Pearl Project, “One of the high value detainees [held at Guantanamo Bay] told interrogators that Osama bin Laden was angry that KSM had slaughtered Pearl so publicly and brutally, arguing that the murder brought unnecessary attention on the network.”

The failure to indict KSM appears due, in part, to the fact that he first confessed to U.S. officials in the midst of tactics known as “waterboarding,” according to sources close to the interrogation. The harsh techniques, which human rights activists describe as torture, would likely derail any prosecution in the United States.

Among the Pearl Project’s findings are that Pakistani and American authorities missed key opportunities to develop witnesses and forensic evidence that might earlier have led to KSM, his two alleged accomplices in the murder, and many others who allegedly had roles in the kidnapping. In all, the project identified 27 men who were involved in events surrounding Pearl’s kidnapping and murder. Fourteen of the men are free. While some of these men’s names have floated around with aliases, signified by the “@” sign in Pakistan police reports, the Pearl Project established their real identities, identifying home addresses and family members. In some cases, there are alternate spellings to their Arabic and Urdu names.

“Justice wasn’t served,” Pearl’s mother, Ruth Pearl, told the Pearl Project. The handling of Fazal Karim, the young militant who led police to Pearl’s grave, is emblematic of the shortcomings that plagued the investigation. While U.S. and Pakistani officials vowed to spare no effort in tracking down Pearl’s killers, and some did make enormous efforts, the difficulties in investigating and prosecuting the case present a cautionary tale about the obstacles to realizing justice for such crimes. In pointing police to the remains, Karim had a horrific story to tell which stretched from Pearl’s terrifying days in custody to the final moment of his life, when a video camera malfunction prompted his captors to re-enact the killing. Pakistani investigators passed on word of this informant to Bennett, the State Department’s security officer, but, U.S. officials say, they refused to let him interview their prisoner.

Karim’s emergence, it turns out, was a problem. By that time, police already had a prime suspect in jail named Ahmad Omar Saeed Sheikh, the radical who indeed orchestrated the kidnapping but was out of the picture — in fact, was in another city — at the time Pearl was beheaded. Karim’s account threw a wrench into the strategy Pakistani police and prosecutors had mapped out to convict Omar Sheikh and three co-defendants. Pakistani authorities, in a series of

decisions which American officials accepted, didn't bring charges against Karim and failed to follow up his leads to avoid drawing attention to his information and undermining the court case against Sheikh and his co-defendants.

By some accounts, the Pakistanis didn't want to jeopardize an already problematic case against Sheikh at a time when they were under pressure to show Washington that they were being tough on terrorism. In fact, Sheikh seemed like something of a poster boy for Pakistan to show off its law enforcement efforts, since he was already under indictment in the United States for a 1994 kidnapping of an American in India.

Had investigators pursued earlier clues such as Karim's, they might have discovered what the Pearl Project's student-reporters can now put on the record: four men tried and convicted of Pearl's murder in Pakistan were involved in the kidnapping but not in the killing. Those responsible for the murder have not yet faced justice.

Not only was Khalid Sheikh Mohammed the alleged killer, but his two chief accomplices may have been his own nephews, according to U.S. and Pakistani officials familiar with the case: Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, now a Guantanamo Bay detainee alleged to have sent money to the 9/11 hijackers at the behest of uncle KSM, and Musaad Aruchi, an alleged Al Qaeda operative whose whereabouts have been unknown since he was arrested in Karachi in a joint Pakistani-CIA raid in 2004.

Why is all this news after nine years? While much has been written and broadcast about the Pearl case, the passage of time has made it possible to fill in some of the gaps, to get access to information and people that previously was not possible, and to ensure a full accounting on Pearl's behalf.

And in addition to getting at the truth of what happened to one journalist, this investigation's findings serve as a primer for how this region's web of militancy activities has broad geopolitical significance. The Pearl case demonstrates the dangerous consequences of an extremist interpretation of Islam to Pakistan and the world. Nearly all of the men believed to be involved in the Pearl kidnapping and murder were members of sectarian militant organizations that had cropped up in Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s, influenced by Wahhabism, the dogmatic, fundamentalist brand of Islam prevalent in Saudi Arabia, and, similarly, Deobandism, an Indian-born school of thought that has taken root among militants and Islamists in Pakistan.

In a 2002 diplomatic cable, Sheldon Rapoport, acting U.S. consul general in Karachi, made a reference to these groups as fundamentalist, calling them "jihadi/fundamentalist organizations." Understanding the ideological underpinnings of people waging war against the United States is critical to deterrence.

A full investigation of the plot also offers a window into militancy in Pakistan — particularly the nexus of homegrown extremists, the Afghan Taliban, and Al Qaeda — that has grown to become an ever-larger threat to the stability of the nuclear-armed nation. The murder was the first known operation in which Pakistani militants collaborated with Al Qaeda. In the time since Pearl's death, the interaction has become more commonplace, and the situation has grown more volatile in Pakistan, threatening both stability in the region and the safety of Americans and others around the world.

Many of the men involved in the Pearl case hailed from the Punjab province that sits in the country's political, military, and cultural heartland, and they are a harbinger of a domestic and global threat that some Pakistani officials are just now reluctantly starting to acknowledge, "the Punjabi Taliban."

Since Pearl's murder, Pakistan has been dubbed "the most dangerous place in the world," Pakistani and U.S. intelligence officials have nabbed key Taliban and Al Qaeda figures in Karachi, Pakistan, and Pakistani militant groups have been tied to brutal assaults on civilians both in Pakistan and abroad, from the killing rampage in Mumbai in late 2008, to the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, Pakistan, in March 2009, to an attempted car bomb in New York's Times Square in May 2010. Last year, the Committee to Protect Journalists declared that Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world for journalists to work.

Further, this is an effort to highlight the need for follow-through and accountability when a journalist is murdered. The death of a reporter such as Pearl is a loss not only to his family and friends, but to the much, much wider circle of people who rely on such fair and inquisitive journalists to search out the truth and to help explain events far away. Governments may be eager to close the books on such cases, but a failure to energetically pursue the criminals may only raise the risks for other journalists facing similar perils.

Pearl was actively trying to report on and untangle the many threads of militancy activities in the region and spent his last hour of freedom in that pursuit, interviewing Jameel Yusuf, a Karachi businessman, about the effectiveness of judicial and police reforms the U.S. was attempting to put in place in Pakistan. Yusuf, then-chief of the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee, a group formed in 1989 after a wave of kidnappings hit Karachi, was involved trying to find Pearl. Reform continues to be badly needed, Yusuf told the Pearl Project. But he said, "Sadly, this has not been effectively and beneficially liaised by the U.S. government with their Pakistani counterpart." Thus, he said, for example, the Pearl case has seen ad hoc justice with suspected co-conspirators never prosecuted. "As regards the suspects never charged," he said, "I am sure they have been bumped off so as not to compromise the proceedings and judgments earlier given by the courts." Indeed, in a report released in December 2010, the U.S. State Department said that extrajudicial killings are a problem in Pakistan.

Pearl's story demonstrates the risks that journalists face in doing the vital work of reporting on terrorism, delving into a radical culture in which their crucial independent role provides little, if any, protection. It is now clear that Pearl, in trying to report on the dark world of terrorism, had the tragic misfortune of being lured into the hands of men who had already well established their credentials for ruthlessness, terror, and murder — men linked to kidnappings of Americans and others, the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1995 plot to blow up jetliners over the Pacific, the 9/11 attacks, and the attempted jetliner "shoe bombing," among other misdeeds. The young journalist wanted to shine a light on that world. With Danny gone, we are continuing his work through the Pearl Project.

Epilogue - WAKING SLEEPING DOGS

By Asra Q. Nomani, Barbara Feinman Todd, Katie Balestra, Kira Zalan, Jessica Rettig and Amanda Silverman

Though Daniel Pearl's remains have long been recovered and laid to rest on a hilltop in Los Angeles, many loose ends to this story persist. And there are many casualties in this sad story.

Omar Sheikh and his three associates were convicted in the summer of 2002 for Pearl's kidnapping and murder and sit in jail to this day; despite their conviction for Pearl's murder in Pakistani court, the evidence of their direct role remains unconvincing.

Attorneys for Sheikh and his three co-defendants have filed numerous appeals that have been postponed repeatedly, and people familiar with the case told the Pearl Project that Sheikh, at least, will be freed at some point.

Rai Bashir Ahmad, defense attorney for the four men, told the Pearl Project, “I believe the case will be reversed on appeal, as soon as the appeal shall be heard, because there is absolutely no concrete evidence against the accused.”

Al Qaeda mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who said he killed Pearl with his own hands, and one of his two nephews who may have assisted him are incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay; they await trial for their role in 9/11, but not for Pearl’s murder. The second nephew who may have been KSM’s other accomplice is thought to be in custody somewhere, but his whereabouts cannot be confirmed. Another suspect, Faisal Bhatti, an alleged logistical operator in Karachi, is in jail in Pakistan for other charges, but not the Pearl case.

Five other suspects have since died, violently or under suspicious circumstances. And 14 others allegedly involved in various ways with the plot are free.

Members of both Pakistani and U.S. government agencies involved in the case — investigators, diplomats, spies — have mostly moved on.

After initially allowing the Pearl Project to interview certain FBI agents, such as the legal attaché in Islamabad during the Pearl case, Chris Reimann, and the deputy legal attaché, Jennifer Keenan, the FBI declined to comment on the findings of the investigation. An FBI spokesman said, “We are going to hold off on discussing this until the military commissions are over.”

On December 17, 2008, the Pearl Project filed a Freedom of Information lawsuit after our requests had been met with denials, responses that no pertinent information could be found, or that we needed first to obtain privacy waivers from suspects such as “shoe bomber” Richard Reid.

As the Pearl Project neared publication in January 2011, the government produced thousands of pages of documents but much had been redacted and what wasn’t consisted of media reports. Meanwhile, despite the Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed by the Pearl Project, and the limited number of responsive documents that have been provided, the Obama administration continues to withhold thousands of documents that might shed significant light on this case.

Years after Pearl was killed, Karachi has turned into a safe haven for not only Pakistani militants but members of the Afghan Taliban. In February 2010, Pakistani intelligence officials touted the arrest of a Taliban leader, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, in Karachi.

Members of the Punjabi Taliban have been linked to numerous suicide bomb attacks against mosques, police stations, and bazaars within Pakistan, as well as to the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Pearl’s friends, family, and colleagues have found different ways of honoring him in their collective conviction to never forget, and to never leave the truth behind.

We are grateful to Barbara Feinman Todd, director of the journalism program in the English Department of Georgetown University, Washington D.C., for permission to print the Findings in Middle East Media Educator.

Reporting Religion beyond the Conflict Frame

By Eric Loo | eloo@uow.edu.au

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally. (Qur'an, 4:86)

Words have the power to both destroy and heal. When words are both true and kind, they can change our world. (Gautama Buddha)

It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens. (Baha'ullah)

Perhaps if journalists were more educated and experienced in the universal teachings of Christ, Muhammad, Siddharta, and Baha'ulah, we would see more enlightened coverage of religion-related issues from environmental conservation, world hunger, and poverty to sectarian conflicts, population displacement, and fair trade. Add to this utopian state of journalism the philosophies of Gandhi, Gibran, Plato, Confucius and Ibn Sina¹ - the media might be much richer in its coverage of ethno-religious affairs. Which is attainable – if journalists take time to reflect on alternative methods of reporting when, amid fast breaking news and competition to be first with the stories online, accuracy in content and context is occasionally compromised for immediacy. The unintended consequence is the homogenization of media coverage of world affairs, a tendency to report what everyone else is reporting. This reflective article shows examples of how the homogenization of religion-related issues occurs in today's journalism. It concludes with a few proactive journalism models to take reporting of religion beyond the dominant conflict frame.

First, an example of how realities are reduced to digestible story capsules in the news routine when journalists, isolated from incidents as they break, report their stories from talking only to the victims. On November 30, 2008, my nephew returned to Sydney after a harrowing escape from the terrorist attacks on the Oberoi and Taj Mahal hotels in Mumbai. He was one of the Australian trade delegates staying at the Oberoi. He managed to escape from the 15th floor via the emergency exit stairs when the so-called Deccan mujahideens invaded the lobby. More than 100 people were shot and killed – the majority local Indians. A minority were white Westerners.

Hearing his eyewitness accounts, and not being there, I wondered how I would have filed a fair, balanced, and accurate account beyond the routine Islamist-terrorist frame – which was the dominant news frame in the Indian and foreign media coverage. I had made short visits to parts of India in the past. I had seen Hindus and Muslims living among the poorest of the poor. I had visited the opulent Taj Mahal Hotel where the bejewelled local rich and foreign tourists dine and mingle, oblivious to child beggars on the streets, and where about a kilometer away the poor live in slums with no clean water or basic toilet facilities.

The gap between dire poverty and excessive opulence in India begs more questions when one reads the daily reactive reports about the youthful mujahideens, said to have been brainwashed by al-Qaeda teachings, who had attacked the symbols of decadent wealth. One of the mujahideens, who took part in the siege of the Oberoi, told the Indian media via telephone:

"Muslims in India should not be persecuted. We love this as our country, but when our mothers and sisters were being killed, where was everybody? ... Release all the mujahideens, and Muslims living in India should not be troubled."²

That said, few journalists tackled the stories in the mujahideens' statement nor looked into how Muslims in reality were or were not persecuted in India when other minorities – Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, other Muslims – have lived peacefully with the Hindu majority throughout the country's history. The picture emerging from the media texts was of entrenched religious and ethnic animosity between Hindus and Muslims in India – which, as far as I could see, was less evident at the grassroots.

After the smoke had cleared, the Indian and foreign media delved into the source of the mujahideens' financial support and training camps, the implications for the Indian economy and relations with Pakistan. Would a religion reporter, educated in comparative religious studies, experienced and immersed in the environment of the poor and disenfranchised in India and Pakistan, tell a different story and provide a clearer context into the plausible causes of the attacks? I believe so, based on my experience that journalists are essentially products of their cultural, social, political, and economic milieu. Like their audience, journalists naturally react to explosive events with religious, ethnic, and political underpinnings through filtered glasses. To understand the context, one would have to search for stories and commentaries across multiple media outlets that represent different political ideologies.

A second example, closer to my experience as a journalism educator in Australia, was the suicide bombing in 2002 in Kuta, Bali, in Indonesia, which killed more than 200 people, including 88 Australians. Media coverage understandably focused on the Australian victims. The Bali bombers were framed as "mad murderers" - the best known was Amrozi, the "smiling assassin."

The story in the Daily Telegraph read:

"AMROZI, the smiling assassin, was not so brave when faced with his own death. His elder brother Mukhlas was more defiant and praised God to the end. But when the time came, the three Bali bombers accepted their fate without struggle as they were shackled and taken from their cells to the execution ground."

Few stories provided Australians with deeper insights into the bombers' radicalized and deviant political interpretations of the Quran. Islam and Muslims were demonised in the coverage, and Abu Bakar Bashir, the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiah, was depicted as having inspired the Bali bombers.

A 2006 foreign policy telephone opinion survey of 1000 Australians conducted by the Lowy Institute based in Sydney noted that "international terrorism" (73 percent) and "Islamic fundamentalism" (68 percent) were considered vital threats to Australia's interests. The respondents perceived Indonesia as a "dangerous source of Islamic terrorism" and a military threat to Australia (Cook 2006: 2, 11 & 14).³

Mahony (2008) said the Australian media were central to creating these perceptions despite the fact that the majority of Indonesians were moderate and tolerant Muslims, that Jemaah Islamiah and Islamic law did not have widespread community support.

"Indonesia is now more often linked to Islam or referred to as Australia's 'Muslim neighbour,' rather than 'Asian neighbour,' as it was more commonly referred to before the 'War on Terror' ... Indonesian Islam and Indonesian values have generally remained constant but Australian public and media perceptions of them have changed. Indonesia is now framed in Islamic terms and largely in relation to terrorism."⁴

The violent Islamic fundamentalism frame was recently reinforced in the Australian public mind by the protests by Coptic Christians in Sydney on May 21, 2011. They had called on the Australian government to “bring strong diplomatic efforts to bear on the interim Egyptian government and the United Nations in support of persecuted religious minorities.” The chief of staff of the Australian Christian Lobby said in the report that they were concerned “a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood plans to run for the presidency in the September election ... [that] an Islamist leader in Cairo would be a setback for Copts and minorities in Egypt.”⁵

The picture that emerged from the frames and tone in the stories was: Coptic Christians are persecuted and attacked by belligerent Muslim extremists. What led to the clashes between Coptic Christians and Muslims in Cairo was not clearly explained. That there are different groups in Islam – just as there are different denominations in Christianity – was not reported, a phenomenon I attribute to the reactive nature of commercial journalism and the journalistic tendency to reduce complexities to digestible story capsules.

It doesn’t help either when incidents which involve a minority of the Muslims are read as representative of the wider Islamic community. On August 27, 2006 an Islamist political group, Hizb ut-Tahrir, distributed graphic pamphlets in Sydney and various Muslim-dominant suburbs calling for the destruction of Israel in a jihadist holy war. Politicians rightly condemned the protesters and called for Hizb ut-Tahrir to be outlawed, just as it has been outlawed in Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, parts of Central Asia, and the Middle East.⁶

Amid the number of public protests by Australian Muslims, the Australian Jewish News subsequently reported on February 16, 2007 that “Australia should cap its Muslim immigration.” The report quoted a Jewish academic, Raphael Israeli from Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who told the Sydney Morning Herald that “when the Muslim population gets to a critical mass (about 10 percent of the total population) you have problems. That is a general rule, so if it applies everywhere (for example, in France), it applies in Australia.”⁷

Conflict between Australians and their Muslim citizens often gives politicians fuel to gain traction among their constituents. In the weeks leading up to the New South Wales state election on March 24, 2007, the Christian Democratic Party leader, Fred Nile, a church minister and member of the New South Wales Parliament, called for a 10-year moratorium on immigration of Muslims, predominantly from Iraq and Afghanistan, into Australia pending a study of the socio-cultural, religious, and economic implications.⁸

The story was splashed across the mainstream papers, and aired on radio talk shows although Muslims, according to the 2006 census, account for only 1.7% of the total Australian population, of which 0.6% were born in Australia.⁹ This, even though parts of the Torah, Bible, and Quran all condone “holy war” and all describe the apocalyptic end of times prophecies in quite similar metaphors and figurative texts.

The Australian (March 12, 2007), a national daily owned by Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited, reported Nile as saying:

“There has been no serious study of the potential effects upon Australia of more than 300,000 Muslims who are already here. Australians deserve a breathing space so the situation can be carefully assessed before Islamic immigration can be allowed to resume ... [Meanwhile] Australia should extend a welcoming hand to many thousands of persecuted Christians who are presently displaced or at risk in the Middle East.”¹⁰

The CDP’s ideology of exclusion headlined in mainstream newspapers and aired on talkback radio. Public reactions were polarized. Stories of immigration with racial and religious underpinnings are by journalistic conventions framed by selective factualizing,¹¹ which is akin to tabloid sensationalism. Media coverage of the CDP’s press statement reflects traditional

journalistic routine where conflict and controversy more commonly frame the stories than context and informed exposition. Being professionalized to report about what is seen, what is knowable, verifiable, and provable, journalists are inclined to skim over issues of faith, which essentially deal in things unseen and unknowable.

I would also argue that a fairer and more accurate examination of mainstream media coverage of religion and faith issues would be in the context of how the stories are packaged over time as follow-ups to previous controversies. For instance about three weeks after the Fred Nile election win, the Sydney Morning Herald, one of the major daily broadsheets in Sydney owned by Fairfax Media Limited, published a feature "Islam in Australia: A diverse society finds a new voice" (April 28, 2007)¹² and, months later, a special issue *The Face of Islam* on Aug. 20, 2007.¹³

Dedicated newspaper series on institutionalized religions, as illustrated in the following example from Sydney Morning Herald, are becoming common practice in multicultural societies, especially during significant religious occasions such as Ramadan for Muslims, Easter for Christians, Diwali for Hindus, and Wesak for Buddhists.

The Face of Islam illustrate how religion, which impacts on people's lives, can be humanized and packaged in text and images that readers can relate to and which give its followers a space to talk about their faith and how it affects their daily lives.¹⁴

A recent example is a series of features in the News Review (SMH, April 22-24, 2011) titled 'Leap of Faith'¹⁵ that charts the changing spiritual landscape in Sydney. The section 'Religions and their followers find a safe haven'¹⁶ explains in an average of 400 words for each religious group the history of the Mandaean, the Mar Thoma, the Ahmadiyya, and the Buddhists. Albeit rare in the normal running of a daily newspaper, the religion feature series represent one of the positive changes in the Australian mainstream media portrayal of the country's cultural and religious diversity.

Dealing with ambivalence in reporting religion

Currently, religion remains at best a peripheral issue in mainstream media for unsurprising reasons – editors' lack of interest in religion, reporters' lack of knowledge, lack of diligence in finding out and learning more about the complex issues from politics to theology of the religion in question. Other suppositions point to hostility by secular media towards religion, and editors (and their journalists) being overly cautious about not offending particular religious denominations that could lead to sectarian conflicts. How do we tackle this dilemma?

Approaching faith-based issues and religion related stories beyond the conflict frame will involve journalists consciously redefining the fundamental elements of newsworthiness, re-assessing their knowledge base and understanding of interfaith issues, learning how to ask circular questions with religious sources unfamiliar with the media, and finally re-constructing the information and reactions gathered into a narrative with a clear goal in mind – which is to inform, contextualize, elucidate, and educate their audience. Religion reporting does not necessarily delve into believers' faith, theological teachings or doctrinal issues, which one could often read in newsletters published by churches, temples, madrasahs, mosques, and other religious institutions.

Religion reporting is more subtle than explicit when, in writing about an issue - for example, abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, capital punishment, the global financial crisis, corruption, feudalism, and political transformations in the Middle East¹⁷ - one defers to different theological or scriptural interpretations reflective of the community's dominant religious affiliation. The challenge for religion reporters in the mainstream media is to show the subtle influences of religious and spiritual values on these issues in more explicit terms as expressed by diverse community sources, particularly the believers.

Plausible approaches to reporting religion

Unless a more inclusive methodology for reporting religion is found, journalists will continue to employ the dominant frame of conflict, visceral sounds and images - in reporting on the fly without the luxury of time to step back and reflect on the many facets of events as they unfold, such as the persecution of Coptic Christians by Muslims in Egypt, tribal clashes in the Middle East, forced marriages of young Muslim girls in Yemen, disenfranchisement of women in Afghanistan, sexual segregation in Saudi Arabia, Arab-Israeli conflict, struggle for a Palestinian state, honor killings. As Mustafa Akyol, deputy editor of Turkish Daily News, in a talk in March 2011 at the TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference in the United States noted, are we confusing, nay focusing, too much on the diverse traditions of Islam and not enough on its core beliefs?¹⁸

Smock (2008) in a special report for the United States Institute of Peace, noted:

“While religion is an important factor in conflict, often marking identity differences, motivating conflict, and justifying violence, religion is not usually the sole or primary cause of conflict. The reality is that religion becomes intertwined with a range of causal factors - economic, political, and social - that define, propel, and sustain conflict. Certainly, religious disagreements must be addressed alongside these economic, political, and social sources to build lasting reconciliation.”¹⁹

Smock points to the imperatives of looking at religion as a positive force in peacemaking where its leaders “can mediate in conflict situations, serve as a communication link between opposing sides.” He cautions against “an almost universal propensity to oversimplify the role that religion plays in international affairs.”²⁰

Marshall et al. (2009) echo this point in a compilation of essays by journalists, editors, and social analysts commenting on the misunderstanding of religion in the media. CNN political analyst William Schneider was quoted as saying:

“On the national level, the press is one of the most secular institutions in American society. It just doesn’t get religion or any idea that flows from religious conviction. The press is not necessarily contemptuous of serious religion. It’s just uncomprehending.”²¹

Schneider’s comment draws heavily on how reporters for years, while maintaining the need for fairness and accuracy, have made avoidable mistakes in their stories about specific religions because they overlooked the context of what they were reporting, thereby affecting the story’s direction. While the essays were limited to case studies of misguided reporting of religion in the American media, they represent how journalists in the Middle East, parts of Asia and Australia, where religion issues inescapably stir public fervor, are equally prone to mistakes when they report through their preconceived notions of religion, beliefs, and spirituality.

This was evident in the Western and Arab media “mis-representation” of Pope Benedict XVI’s lecture on “faith, reason and the university” on September 12, 2006 at the University of Regensburg in Germany. The controversy was caused by what, in hindsight, was journalists’ taking out of context the Pope’s remark in his lecture: “Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”²²

Commenting on how easy it is to take things out of context and journalism’s “attraction to conflict and confrontation,” Abdallah Schleifer, national bureau chief of Al-Arabiya, said in a lecture in 2006 that the Western and Arab media had overlooked the fact that the Vatican since the days of John Paul II had consistently worked to strengthen interfaith dialogue between

Catholics and Muslims. He said Pope Benedict had previously met with Muslim communities in Cologne in 2005 when he called on Catholics and Muslims to seek new paths of reconciliation.²³

Schleifer explained that despite the Western media's "secularist bias," their coverage was often "balanced" by its professional routine of providing space for diverse reactions and analyses in its op-ed pages of controversial issues, such as Pope Benedict's misconstrued papal offensive against Islam. Which contrasts with the Arab media in which, according to Schleifer, demagogues dominate the pages that often reflect a "stark discontinuity between the events and the reportage," and where, when a confrontational line is drawn, facts and contexts are often overlooked.

"There has been little interest in most of the Arab press in gathering more facts to the story than one paragraph taken out of context, and no significant reference to the facts of Catholic-Muslim relations over the past few decades. It is also significant that the two immediate violent episodes centering around that one paragraph following the first press reports - the murder of a nun and the torching of Catholic churches - occurred in two of the three most lawless parts of the Muslim world: Somalia and the West Bank (the other, of course, now being Iraq). The most obvious and absurd point about the violence in the Muslim world in response to the Pope's quotation (and burning the Pope in effigy is metaphorical violence) is that all this violence is to protest against a Pope reportedly saying that Islam is violent."²⁴

Just as the Arab media are wont to react strongly to Western comments on Islam, as Schleifer implies, likewise, the risks of Western journalists' taking the other extreme are ever present – that is, the position of "extreme secularism" in reacting to religious fundamentalism and eschewing the influence of "religion" and faith on the daily lives of people. And, if there were any reports about religion, they were mostly confined to the Church's shortcomings.

Where to from here?

Just as a business reporter focuses on the financial dimensions of a story, and a celebrity-lifestyle reporter on entertainment and entertainers, a religion reporter essentially sieves for relevant religious and spiritual implications of issues. Overlooking this side of the human experience is to miss the core of many stories that emerge from the enduring human spirit to overcome life's adversities. Thus, the imperative for religion reporters to know how to ask questions – across different faith lines with respect and sensitivity - tailored to explain to the public why certain groups believe and act as they do without necessarily legitimizing their actions.

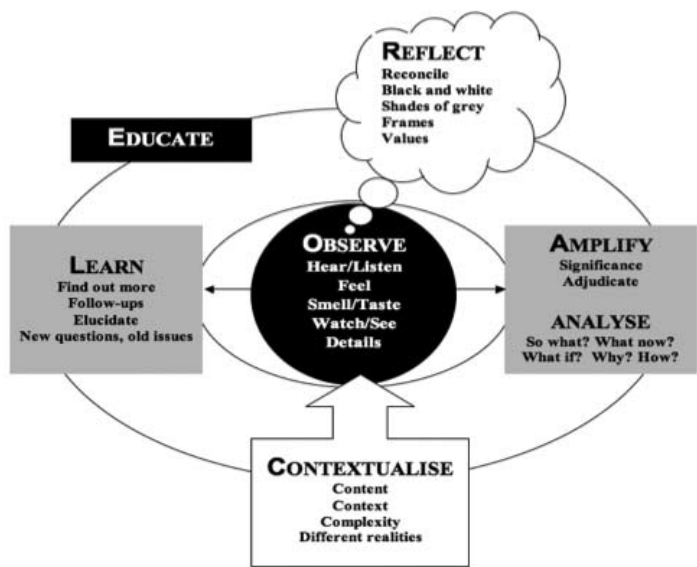
Here, I propose a few proactive reporting models on how to go about reporting about religion.²⁵ These models are generic and applicable across all types of reporting. The ABCDE of reporting illustrated below refers to: Accuracy (in context, content, facts, opinions, speculation); Balance (sources, fairness, diversity, stereotypes, sensitivities); Clarity (storyline, language, structure and underlying meaning); Depth (adding value to story, research, new insights to old issues); and Ethical principles (one's moral compass, common decency, empathy, and a sense of the public good).

This ABCDE model reminds journalists of the fundamental elements of good reporting where accuracy is seen in terms of getting it right in the content and context of issues, and the need to clearly separate facts from opinions or mere speculation. "Balance" and "clarity" refer to the tone and valence that come across in the reporter's choice of sources, story angle, and narrative structure. "Depth," often lacking in reactive journalism, refers to the imperative of vigorous research and conversations with multiple sources to gather "new" insights into old issues. For example, is there no other explanation about "terrorism" than an act of jihad by "suicide bombers" driven by deviant teachings of Islam, which for many Muslims essentially is a "religion of peace," but which according to right-wing Christian demagogues is a myth?



To improve the quality of religion reporting, journalists can be more proactive and anticipate the trends of, for instance, Islamization among migrants from the Middle East who have settled in the West. “Proactive” means “creating or controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than responding to it after it has happened.” By contrast, “reactive” means “acting in response to a situation rather than creating or controlling it.” To get a picture of what’s happening on the religion (Islamic revival) front, I defer to the legend of the Oracle.

Below is a model based on the acrostic “Oracle” to illustrate the process of proactive reporting. The dictionary defines an Oracle as “somebody or something considered to be a source of knowledge, wisdom, or prophecy.” Formerly, when the public’s main source of information was the media, journalists were seen as the oracular source of knowledge and wisdom. Readers relied on journalists for guidance, direction, and explanation of complex issues.



Applying the ORACLE acrostic to the process of reporting about religion, one sees how proactive journalists can approach their work. Proactive journalism refers to journalists taking the initiative to act or break a story instead of being led by events. Proactive journalists go through a continual thinking and narrative process by:

- Observing their environment to make sense of events, abstract issues, and people. Here lies the capacity of journalists to perceive and see what others overlook.
- Reflecting on and recording what is observed, reconciling the differences between what's seen, heard, or felt with what's commonly assumed. Listen to your own counsel and conscience.
- Amplifying and analyzing the significant aspects of the events, issues and people involved to agitate for positive change.
- Contextualizing one's reflection and analysis to clarify and connect with readers. How can you include different perspectives and ideas on the issue?
- Learning more about what you have uncovered and elucidating the true from false, right from wrong. Report and write beyond one in-depth story.
- Educating, enlightening, and enabling your readers to find out more about issues and people in the stories. Because journalists are limited in what they can do to influence public policies, we will need to work together with the public to uncover the truth and seek possible solutions to religion-related issues.

Taking a more proactive approach and through their "considered package of stories" journalists can be a force for good during times of interfaith conflict. Indeed, journalists should develop their knowledge of the world's religions and belief systems, be better educated on the significance of religion in world affairs, and, ultimately, report with a better understanding of what and why people believe and act as they do.

Endnotes

¹ Ibn Sina Abnu Ali Al-Husayn (980-1037), <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/sina/art/ibn%20Sina-REP.htm> [Accessed June 7, 2011]

² Mumbai attacks: Who are the Deccan mujahideen? National Post, Ontario, Canada. Nov.27, 2008 <http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/posted/archive/2008/11/27/mumbai-attacks-who-are-the-deccan-mujahideen.aspx> [Accessed June 8, 2011]

³ Cook, Ivan. (2006). Australia, Indonesia and the World: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy. In The Lowy Institute Poll, Lowy Institute for International Policy.

⁴ Mahony, Inez (2008), Representations of Indonesian Islam in the Australian Press, paper presented at the 17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Melbourne, July 1-3, 2008. Mahony compared the Australian press representation of Indonesian Islam following three events: the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings, and the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta.

⁵ Jones, Benjamin (2011) Thousands of Copt Christians to protest in Sydney CBD, Christian Today Australia, May 21, 2011. <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/thousands-of-copt-christians-to-protest-in-sydney-cbd/11104.htm> [Accessed May 27, 2011]

⁶ Hizb ut-Tahrir, founded in 1952-3 in Jerusalem (or 'Al-Quds' in Arabic as cited in Hizb ut-Tahrir's official website) believes in the re-establishment of a world Islamic caliphate. It preaches a return to the Islamic way of life, opposes (Western) democracy and Muslim integration into non-Muslim society. It hosted a lecture in 2006 in Sydney titled "Israel is an illegal state that Muslims will never accept". A video promoting its conference in Sydney on January 27, 2007 and aired on YouTube claimed the world was "plunged into darkness" on March 3, 1924, the date when the Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk ended the Ottoman caliphate. Source: The Age, Melbourne. Jan, 9, 2007 <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/local-push-for-islamic-state/2007/01/08/1168104922239.html> (Accessed June 7, 2011)

⁷ Barney, Zwartz (2007), 'Limit Muslim immigration, Australia warned', Sydney Morning Herald, Feb.16. <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/limit-muslim-migration-australia-warned/2007/02/15/1171405374552.html> [Accessed June 7, 2011]

⁸ The 2006 Census shows about 340,000 Muslims live in Australia (or about 1.6% of the total population of 21 million), of whom 128,904 (or 0.6%) were born in Australia and the rest overseas. In addition to migrants from Lebanon and Turkey, the other major source countries are: Afghanistan (15,965); Pakistan (13,821); Bangladesh (13,361); Iraq (10,039); and Indonesia (8,656). http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/muslims_in_Australia.html (Accessed June 7, 2011).

⁹ According to the 2006 census, other religions by percentage of the Australian population are: Roman Catholicism (25.8%); Anglican (18.7%); other Christian denominations (19.4%); Buddhism (2.1%), Hinduism (0.7%) and Judaism (0.4%). Sikhism and Indigenous beliefs (2%); no religion (18.7%).

¹⁰ 'Nile wants to stop Muslim immigrants,' The Australian, March 12, 2007 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21364439-2702,00.html>
No more Muslims, press release on March 10, 2007, by Fred Nile, Christian Democratic Party website. <http://www.cdp.org.au/fed/mr/2007/0703010f.asp> [Accessed June 8, 2011]

¹¹ In the context of this chapter, "factualising" is defined as a process of "objectifying" an issue by bringing to the news narrative sourced empirical data to establish a cause-and-effect

explanation of the issue or event. The problem arises when journalists, by their professional creed, operate on the premise that they are “objective” as long as they give both sides of the story by citing empirical data, which, without critical reflection, often falls out of context. In this case, instead of the adage “never let a fact get in the way of a good story,” it goes the other way: “never let a good story get in the way of the facts.” Selective factualizing, in this context, effectively transforms statements of opinion into facts without due consideration of the antecedents of the event. Hence, context is sacrificed for publishing the contents because of, among other factors, the pressure of news deadlines.

¹² McDonald, Hamish. (2007), <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/islam-in-australia-a-diverse-society-finds-a-new-voice/2007/04/27/1177459982288.html> (Accessed June 8, 2011)

¹³ The Face of Islam, Sydney Morning Herald, Aug.20, 2007 <http://www.smh.com.au/specials/islam/> [Accessed June 8, 2011]

¹⁴ Being a Muslim, Sydney Morning Herald, Aug.20, 2007 <http://www.smh.com.au/multimedia/islamoz/main.html> [Accessed June 8, 2011]

¹⁵ <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/a-leap-of-faith-for-church-and-state-20110421-1dqoo.html> [Accessed June 3, 2011]

¹⁶ <http://www.smh.com.au/national/religions-and-their-followers-find-a-safe-haven-20110421-1dqj8.html> [Accessed June 3, 2011]

¹⁷ ‘Middle East turmoil: A secular or religious revolt, or both?’ Religion Link, http://www.religionlink.com/topic_11021.php [Accessed June 8, 2011]

¹⁸ Mustafa Aykol (2011) Faith versus tradition in Islam, TED Talks. http://www.ted.com/talks/mustafa_aykol_faith_versus_tradition_in_islam.html [Accessed June 7, 2011]

¹⁹ Smock, David (2008), Religion in World Affairs: Its Role in Conflict and Peace: Special Report No.201, February 2008, United States Institute of Peace, p.3 <http://www.usip.org/publications/religion-world-affairs-its-role-conflict-and-peace> [Accessed June 7, 2011]

²⁰ Smock (2008), *ibid*, p.1

²¹ Marshall, P., Gilbert, L., Roberta, G.A. (2009) *Blind Spot: When journalists don’t get religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

²² Pope sorry for offending Muslims, BBC News, Sept.17, 2006 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5353208.stm> (Accessed, June 7, 2011). Pope Benedict XVI was quoting from a text written in 1391 by the Byzantine emperor, Manuel II Paleologus, one of the last Christian rulers before the fall of Constantinople to the Muslim Ottoman Empire. According to his lecture, the quote essentially expressed Manuel II’s aversion to ‘forced conversion’ as irrational, which Pope Benedict cited to explain that spreading one’s faith by violence was unreasonable compared to conversion through reason and knowledge. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html [Accessed June 7, 2011].

²³ Schleifer, Abdallah, A (2006), Media and religion in the Arab/Islamic world, Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Oct. 11. <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20061011.middleeast.schleifer.mediaireligionarabislamicworld.html> (Accessed June 7, 2011)

²⁴ Schleifer, *ibid*.

²⁵ I have demonstrated these models at journalism training workshops in Malaysia, India, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and most recently at the reporting religion conference and workshop in Singapore, April 8-9, 2011.

The Communicative Roles of Saba the Wind in Hafez's Poetry

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Abstract

Many natural elements are present in Hafez' poetry, one of which is Saba Wind. From the viewpoint of communication sciences, Saba Wind demonstrates the components and concepts of a communication process. Saba Wind has many communicative roles in Hafez' poetry: an informed source; a sender giving information; it conveys the message; as a channel, it transmits concepts and messages; it is sometimes a harbinger; it receives messages; it shapes meaning in the mind of the receiver. Performing case studies of Hafez' poems and comparing and contrasting these cases resulted in a tree diagram which shows that Saba Wind plays six major roles consisting of eight subcategories. Analyzing the communicative roles of Saba Wind, this paper is intended to investigate the quality and degree of its roles.

Introduction

Over centuries poets have stated numerous concepts in verse form which have been transmitted and grasped in different ways generation after generation. Today, however, more than any other time, the need to decode and make use of these concepts with communicative aims is gaining importance. The reason is that poetry is very much concerned with both form and content and acts as the main pillar in the edifice of literature. Every individual is likely to use poetry in order to make messages more pleasant, and this is not limited to a particular group or class. Poets, physicians, people in the street, and whoever else, tend to use the poetic side of language when they are unable to express what they intend to say. Imaginative descriptions in poetry are, in fact, used to transfer the meanings in ways that satisfy various tastes.

However, the role of poetry in the vast and long history of Iranian language and culture is fundamentally different than in other cultures and languages such as English. The Iranian emphasis on the necessity of both musical and conceptual beauties of poetry is almost unique and matchless all over the world. Although translating poetry deprives it of a great part of its delicacies and nuances and leaves almost only the conceptual beauty, Persian poetry enjoys a remarkable reputation in the world.

Molavi (globally known as Rumi), Omar Khayyam, Sa'di, Ferdowsi, and Hafez are now widely appreciated. The influence of Hafez on Goethe and his *West-östliches Divan* should not be neglected. A famous poem by Sa'di ("Human beings are members of a whole..."), which focuses on the elevated concept of philanthropy and altruism is used to grace the entrance to the Hall of Nations of the UN building in New York. The many translations of Molavi into different languages and the publishing of numerous books on his poems are indicative of his popularity in the world and especially in the US. The reason for the reputation of Iranian poets lies in their presenting profound humanitarian and mystical concepts through literary devices. Everyone should know before becoming acquainted with Persian poetry that it is mostly concerned with imagination; poems which are empty of imagination, though embellished with rhythm, rhyme, and literary devices, are considered versification but not poetry.

In the past, the only available medium for poets to communicate was writing, and poetry was used to teach the skills of life as well as to convey emotions, experiences, and perceptions of life; in modern times the various types of media do not guarantee the richness of the concepts they transmit, maybe due to the form of the media dominating over poetic content, so much so that poetry seems to be decreasing in importance.

One could name many reasons for the global decrease in the importance and popularity of poetry: emergence of more appealing auditory and visual media and the audience accustomed to ease of comprehension in communication processes, for instance. These concepts are dealt with in detail by theorists like Jürgen Habermas, Marshall McLuhan, and others and, along with bourgeois overindulgence, have led to poetry being less influential and popular. To fit the scope of this paper, however, we discuss the reasons behind the decline of poetry in Iran and why this country introduces fewer and fewer important poets. In the ancient world, Iranian culture and civilization were in contact with other major civilizations like Greece and Rome. In the Middle Ages it overshadowed all other cultures and nations when figures such as Molavi, Hafez, Sa'di, Khayyam and many others grew out of Iran and added a new chapter to world poetry.

But today, the ruling conditions of the society have changed, and poetry has become somehow restrained. A universal poetry entails that the culture of the poet be universal, that is, he must have a universal understanding of the world. This does not mean that the people of the poet's country necessarily have to possess a universal understanding; rather the poet himself, regardless of where he lives, should come to gain a universal way of thinking. In Iran, it is becoming more difficult for the elite to gain such understanding. Reading only translations will not bring universal understanding because it should be remembered that translations convey only thoughts and not understanding. What is important is that these great thoughts become internalized in us. The Iranian poet, or more generally intellectual, does not realize that being either traditional, modernist, or postmodernist changes the individual's character. It is not possible to think modernly and, at the same time, live a traditional life. This lack of people with a universal understanding accounts to a great extent for the sterile field of poetry in Iran.

To ameliorate the situation, we need to investigate and analyze the content of the communication processes inherent in poems. Scholars of communication have so far shown little interest in researching Persian literary texts of the past, their mystical, spiritual, aesthetic, cultural, and political messages, and how these messages are communicated to the public. Research into Persian literature so far has been conducted mostly from purely literary perspectives. Few interdisciplinary studies of mediated communication of poetic texts have been attempted.

A communication process involves a sender (source), a message (encoding), a channel (decoding), and a receiver (target). The communication models often referred to in this field of study are those of Shannon and Weaver (1949), Wilbur Schramm (1954), David Berlo (1960), and Dance Barnlund (1970). Poets, according to their intentions, shape their message in the form of a poem. In other words, the sender or poet creates the message, considers its effect on the audience, and then encodes the message to transfer it to the audience through the channel of the book or magazine.

On the other side, the audience uses the book or magazine and decodes the poems to try to understand the poet's intention and then to close the communication loop. This process is a loop because the receivers, in turn, connect to the beginner of the loop, that is, the poet, through feedback and send back - the difference between the two being that the former is thought out and calculated while the latter is spontaneous and unconscious.

Poems require two types of decoding: first, reading or listening to the poems in the form of rhymed or rhythmic words; second, decoding certain concepts that the poet has concealed beneath the deep layers of the poem and that may be interpreted differently by different individuals. Poems - unlike other media texts which use standard language - do not totally conform to, and sometimes are opposed to, what the receiver understands, due to artistic use of literary language and devices.

To examine the communicative roles of Saba Wind, we should first decode this concept. Then we can see what communicative concepts exist and how they are presented in Hafez's poems, and whether we can allocate a communicative role to Saba Wind. If yes, what parts of the communication process do these roles include? Finally, is there any link between the communicative concepts stated centuries ago by Hafez and those of modern theories of communication studies?

This paper aims to compare the components of a communication process with the communicative act of poets. It will then propose a communication model – based on a textual analysis of Hafez's poem "Saba Wind" - specific to poetry. This will show that the communication theories and principles that students are being taught today are unquestioningly accepted to have originated from Western traditions when they were in fact already integral in the discourse of public intellectuals and mystics in the Persian and Islamic world. This highlights the necessity to conduct research into literary works of the past to shed light on the communicative roles of poems during the time of Hafez.

1. Hafez and His Poetry

Hafez, one of the greatest poets of the world, was born in the eighth century A.H. (14th century A.D.). Most of his poems are in the form of a ghazal (resembling the sonnet) and mostly dealing with love. His Divan or collected works - including nearly 500 ghazals, some qasidas, two masnavis, several qit'as, and a couple of rubaa'ys - has so far been printed in 400 different forms in Persian and other languages.

His profound knowledge of Persian and Arabic language and literature as well as of Islam made him a real Sufi who was the enemy of false Sufis. Hafez went beyond prejudice and freed himself from every sort of restraint to struggle against those who harnessed religion and power to oppress people. This made him a liberating figure whose Divan was for the most part dedicated to fighting against hypocrisy. To show the universal aspect of Hafez's character, it will suffice to mention that Goethe composed his West-Östliches Divan under his influence and dedicated its second chapter, entitled "Book of Hafez," to poems in praise of Hafez. Nietzsche, the great German philosopher, also composed a poem entitled "To Hafez."

Hafez differs from other Iranian poets in that he mostly speaks of divine and mystical love in his poems. In his mystical poems, unreal (i.e., physical) love appears as a curtain behind which divine love is concealed. Many natural elements are present in Hafez's poems among which Saba Wind is probably the most conspicuous. Saba plays crucial roles in the communication between the lover and the beloved, which is a recurring theme in his verse, and these roles will be dealt with in the present paper.

2. Decoding Saba Wind

Saba is a breeze that blows at sunrise from the east. It is a breeze to which lovers confide their secrets and which, according to Abdul-Razzagh Kashani, is "the Clement Waft" ("Nafahaat-e Rahmaaniyeh") that blows from the Spiritual East. Saba takes on many roles in Hafez's poems and is a harbinger that carries good news between lover and beloved. Saba Wind blows slowly and brings the scent of the beloved to Hafez so that he will not stay alone. In fact, Hafez wants it to convey his obedience to his beloved. Like most poets, Hafez shows naturalistic tendencies and makes use of natural elements. Sometimes he personifies objects and even attributes high and noble traits to them.

For the element wind, he uses 21 attributes in his poems: from wind of spring, autumn, to wind of distress, arrogance, loftiness. He names Saba Wind more than others and ascribes to it many

characteristics. A search of Hafez's poems (Table 1) shows that the word "Saba" is mentioned 97 times and "Saba Wind" 23 times, which is indicative of the crucial importance of wind in the poetry.

| Phrase | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Saba Wind | 23 | 54.76 |
| Saba Breeze | 2 | 4.76 |
| Harbinger of Saba | 3 | 7.14 |
| O! Saba | 12 | 28.57 |
| O! Harbinger of Saba | 1 | 2.38 |
| O! Saba Wind | 1 | 2.38 |
| Total | 42 | 100 |

Table 1: Frequency of different forms of Saba in the sample

3. Saba as Informer

One of the six important roles of Saba in the communication process is to inform. Saba Wind, as the first element of the process, the sender, plays the role of an informer. This informing divides into one-way informing, and two-way informing, as a courier.

3.1. One Way Informer

Saba Wind brings messages and, interestingly, they are all good and pleasant. In five of Hafez's ghazals, this role is obvious where Saba brings good messages for the poet, who plays the role of the lover, and, as a result, is delighted with those pleasant messages and compares Saba to Solomon's hoopoe, a bird known for its striking crown of colorful feathers. In this role, Saba functions only one way, giving a message to the poet, and at this point its task is completed.

*After this, My hand and my skirt; the cypress and the marge of the stream,
Especially, now, that, glad tidings of February, the wind gave.* (Hafez, Ghazal 112)

*With glad tidings, the breeze is the lapwing of Soleiman
That, from the rose-bed of Saba, tidings of joy brought.* (145)

*Last night, news to me the messenger of the morning wind brought,
Saying: "To shortness, its face, the day of labor and of grief hath brought."* (147)

*O heart! glad tidings that the morning breeze hath come back,
From the quarters of Saba the lap-wing of good news hath come back* (174)

3.2. Two Way Informer (Courier)

The term "Courier" refers to that role of Saba Wind whereby it exchanges information between the two participants communicating, as opposed to acting one way and bringing messages to the poet. The communication partner of the poet may be either the beloved or others. Therefore, Saba Wind carries information from the poet to the communication partner and vice versa.

3.2.1. Between Poet and the Beloved

Saba Wind is always coming and going between the lover and beloved. The lover particularly wants it to never leave him uninformed of the beloved. It is the dominant role of Saba Wind and is represented in 13 ghazals—one or more lines in each ghazal—where Hafez appoints Saba Wind to perform this task.

With softness speak to the beautiful fawn, O breeze!

Saying: Thou hast given to us desire for the mountain and the desert. (4)

The disciple of the cup of Jamshid is Hafez. O breeze, go:

And give salutation from the slave to the Shaikh of Jam. (7)

O breeze! if again thou reach the youths of the meadow,

Convey our service to the cypress, the rose, and the sweet basil. (9)

O lapwing of the east wind! to Saba, I send thee:

Behold from where to where, I send thee! (90)

O breeze! utter a secret of my love to the sovereign of the lovely ones,

Who, as the meanest slave, a hundred Jamshids and Kay-Khosros hath (121)

To Him, of our tale none can utter;

Perchance, its reporting the morning breeze maketh (189)

For Thee, the wind and for me the water of the eye became informers:

If not, mystery-keepers the lover and the Beloved are. (195)

3.2.2. Between Poet and Others

O breeze! from us, to the dwellers of Yazd say:

The head of those not recognizing truths the polo ball of yours. (12)

O breeze! If thou see my heart on that tress-tip,

By way of kindness, speak to it; that its own place it may preserve. (122)

Gentle breeze bestow this feast with plentiful horn

The bearer, with a cup or two, those like me may scorn. (390)

4. Saba as Communicator

Communicating with the poet as a rational human being indicates a vital role in human communication which undoubtedly makes of Saba something more than a mere informer. Here Saba is able to enter into conversation and interaction with the poet.

So that, everywhere, it may not boast of the evening of Thy tress-tip,

Conversation with the breeze, mine a morning is nor that is not (73)

5. Saba and the Necessity of Not Knowing

Despite its various communicative roles, Saba Wind should sometimes remain silent and unaware. Knowing that Saba is a telltale, the poet now and then wishes that it remains unaware so as not to reveal his secrets. There are a few poems where Hafez considers the unawareness of Saba Wind as necessary.

6. Saba as an Informed Source

Saba is informed of two issues: first, the distressing situation of the lover/poet who suffers from the absence of the beloved - and this is because Saba is intimate with the poet; second, where the beloved lives since Saba is her confidant and travels from her to the lover to bring him messages. Thus, the poet considers Saba Wind a witness to his love and, therefore, in some lines is called an informed source.

6.1. A Source Informed of the Lover

*Of our straitened heart, gives the breeze what news,
That, like the folding of the leaves of the rosebud, tightly folded it is.* (58)

*When from around lover's heart, He loosed the snare of the tress,
To the informer of the wind, He speaketh saying: "Secret, our mystery, he hath."* (120)

*Hafez consumed; and took not the perfume of the Beloved's tress:
Perchance, the guide of this fortune of his, the wind maketh.* (187)

6.2. A Source Informed of the Beloved

*Of whom, may I ask the trace of the Beloved, many a journey made?
For whatever the wind's messenger uttered, confusedly he uttered.* (88)

*O wind! if thou have the remedy, this time the time:
For, design upon my soul, the pain of desire made.* (137)

*I sacrifice my life in the trap of your hair
O morning breeze speak of the stranger in the night* (415)

7. Saba as Channel

The most important communicative aspect of Saba in Hafez's poems is perhaps as a transmitting channel— a critical role in communication sciences. As well as transmitting messages and information, this time Saba channels the scent of the beloved to the poet. This causes the meaning, which is the remembrance of the beloved, to crystallize in the poet's mind. David Berlo, a communication theorist, commented in *The Meaning of Meaning* (1960), "We have all heard the tale of the person who, when asking why a pig is called pig, is told "because it's dirty."

We use language to express and extract meanings. Meaning is inseparable from most of the definitions of language. In teaching communication to others, in communicating among ourselves, in criticizing the communication of others, and in all similar cases, we should always focus our attention on meaning. Obviously, meaning depends on the codes we select in communication. In using language, we put our intentions into messages and responses that we have encoded (Mohseniyan-raad, 82).

In fact, the gist of Berlo's theory is that meaning does not lie in the message, rather it is in the receiver's mind:

*In the morning breeze, your scent, whoever inhaled
A close friend these familiar words, in his ear hailed*

Therefore, Saba confirms Berlo's opinion whenever it conveys the scent of the beloved to the lover. As well as carrying scents which create meaning in minds, Saba carries other concepts and plays a pivotal role in the communication process.

7.1. Carrying the Beloved’s Scent

By reason of the perfume of the musk-pod, that, at the end, the breeze displayed from that fore-lock, From the twist of its musky curl, what blood befell the hearts! (1)

*Along with the wind, send from Thy cheek a handful of roses:
It may be that I may perceive a perfume from the dust of the rose garden of Thin. (12)*

*O Breeze! If thy path should chance by the Land of the Friend.
Bring a fragrant waft of air from the be-perfumed tress of the Friend. (61)*

*Where is the breeze? For this life, blood gathered, like the rose,
A sacrifice for the perfume of the Beloved’s tress, I will make. (135)*

*At morning time, a perfume from the Beloved’s tress, the breeze brought:
Into action, our heart distraught for Thee brought. (146)*

*In the morning breeze, your scent, whoever inhaled
A close friend these familiar words, in his ear hailed; (243)*

*Fragrance of oriental perfumes do not begin to approach
That aromatic breeze, that life-giving morning sign (357)*

7.2. Carrying Other Concepts

*Through shame of that one who likened it to thy face,
Dust into her own mouth, by the hand of the wind, the lily cast. (16)*

*The hope of my friend’s home is my water of life
Let the scent of Shiraz upon the breeze set sail. (333)*

*Blow our dust O gentle breeze And throw at the Master’s knees
The Good King has the keys While we glance at the sign (374)*

8. The Harbinger of Saba

Although frequently attributing physical roles to Saba and, as mentioned earlier, personifying it sometimes as a human, Hafez objects to its slow movements - which are due to its nature - to such an extent that sometimes he mentions Saba as being sick. What is indeed important is that Saba also takes the role of a steed or courier and uses this physicality in transmitting the message, information, and concepts to complete its communicative roles and indicate that it occupies a complex position in Hafez’s poetry.

*If from Thee, the footman of the east wind will learn work possible:
For movement, swifter than this, the wind made not. (138)*

| Phrase | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| <i>Khabar</i> (news) | 5 | 41.66 |
| <i>Agahi</i> (tidings) | 2 | 16.66 |
| <i>Payam</i> (message) | 1 | 8.33 |
| <i>Peygham</i> (message) | 1 | 8.33 |
| <i>Mozhdeh</i> (good news) | 3 | 25 |
| Total Number | 12 | 100 |

Table 2: Frequency of different communicative forms of the word “message” in the sample.

| Phrase | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|
| <i>Bu</i> (smell) | 8 | 47.05 |
| <i>Nek-hat</i> (scent) | 5 | 29.41 |
| <i>Nafheh</i> (scent) | 1 | 5.88 |
| <i>Mo'anbar</i> (scented) | 1 | 5.88 |
| <i>Moshk-bu</i> (scented) | 1 | 5.88 |
| <i>Moshk</i> (perfume) | 1 | 5.88 |
| Total Number | 17 | 100 |

Table 3: Frequency of the word "scent" and its synonyms in the sample.

Conclusion

In the modern world, where media are a prime focus and their content informs the public and helps them make daily decisions, more attention should be paid to their content. A critical study and analysis of Persian texts of the past can help improve the current state of the media in the country since in the works of well-known poets of centuries ago, there are many concepts that can be harnessed to implement the communicative aims of the mass media as well as in improving their audience in all aspects, including cultural.

The media in Iran are not in an acceptable situation since the print media, especially newspapers, are connected to the government and political parties and, instead of being informative, reflect political conflicts in domestic and foreign issues. At the same time, audiovisual media - especially television channels which are under the strict control of the government - are more inclined to provide banal and entertaining programs without any useful content, and sports programs such as football matches are replacing cultural and artistic programs. Most programs lack worthwhile content and tend to imitate common foreign programs. They are, in fact, setting aside the Iranian essence and history while Iran is bombarded with satellite channels, and no measures are taken against these attacks.

Simply studying communicative theories from Western thinkers is not sufficient; rather we need to domesticate the current knowledge along with purposeful extracting of the resources inherited from our past figures of science and literature. After examining old Persian works of prose and verse, we see that communication theories and principles generally accepted as originating from the West were in fact already integral in the discourse of poets and mystics in the Persian and Islamic world who had used them in communicating their messages to their audience. This makes it more important for research into literary works of the past to shed light on the communication models in the time of Hafez.

As we have seen, Saba Wind may undertake most of the roles of the communication process, from sender to receiver. Playing eight communicative roles for a single concept is indicative of the richness of content, the attention paid by the poet to the components of a communication process, as well as the correct and intelligent use of it in implementing the poet's intended communicative aim. Hafez appoints Saba to the role of a channel which carries the beloved's scent, particularly in these lines: "In the morning breeze, your scent, whoever inhaled A close friend these familiar words, in his ear hailed," underlining a subtle point that would be stated centuries later by David Berlo as a universal theory that meaning lies not in the message but in the receiver's mind, a theory that became widely popular among media scholars.

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The Role of Media in Arab Societies, June 14, 2011, Zayed University, Abu Dhabi

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What's going on today in the Arab world is an evolution of media to match the revolutions in some countries and stirrings of civic society in others. That became very clear at the recent conference The Role of Media in Arab Societies held at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi and co sponsored by the German think tank Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Most speakers talked about social media, discussed its role in the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, and agreed that Facebook or Twitter alone cannot bring about a change of government. However, given the huge numbers of young people in these countries and the Arab world as a whole, it's hard to imagine political and social change happening today without social media playing a big part.

What's interesting is that speakers seemed to agree on the lesser role played by traditional media, both print and broadcast. Although Al Jazeera Arabic's extensive coverage helped focus attention on first Tunisia and then Egypt, it has been much less involved in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and is facing the same problems of coverage as western media in countries such as Syria where the government doesn't allow foreign media to enter the country or sharply restricts them as does Libya.

Almost everything we see from Syria today is coming from civilians, people using mobile phone cameras and uploading photos and video to YouTube and similar sites. Information too is coming from reports on social media, and that is the problem for traditional western journalism operating according to ethical standards and free of government control.

How to evaluate information from anonymous sources or sources whose identity is masked: That's the task today for BBC, CNN, and other international media organizations caught between their goal to report news and the difficulty of determining if the information and images from outside and sometimes unknown sources can be credible.

One way is not to use anything coming from people who don't work for the media organization, but that's impossible for those that pride themselves on being first or at least very fast with the key news events. Weekly news magazines and documentary TV programs don't have this problem - they don't need to be first with breaking news; they specialize in long form news analysis.

Providers of daily news know their key competition is online, so they provide news alerts on email which get picked up on Twitter and spread around the world long before the broadcast or print deadline. If something turns out to be wrong, the correction is made on Twitter and in the alerts.

I often find news from Libya or Syria or anywhere that anything unexpected happens on Twitter before it shows up as an alert from the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, or ABC News, all of which send me reports of breaking news. To keep up with the Arab Spring or news anywhere in the world, I have to be on Twitter, and you should too. [Follow me @almakad]

Covering Science and Religion in the Middle East, June 23, 2011, American University of Sharjah

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Recently, I attended a session of the conference Belief in Dialogue: Science, Culture and Modernity at the American University of Sharjah, organized by the British Council, in partnership with the University in association with the International Society of Science and Religion. Billed as a media roundtable, the session closed the three-day conference that included scholars from Europe, North America, UK, Asia, and the Middle East discussing how science and religion might be reconciled in an Islamic context and in the context of other religions.

It was impossible for me to participate for three days, but I was eager to hear local media representatives talk about how they handled coverage of science and religion and made it to Sharjah for the final event. As often happens, the panel was somewhat ill-assorted. Several non journalists who were included - perhaps because they were guests at the conference - didn't add much to the discussion.

However, foreign journalists of the caliber of Martin Redfern who reports on science and religion for BBC's World Service; Andrew Brown who does the same at the Guardian; Essam Assoud who writes for Nature magazine; and John Scammett who writes opinion columns at USA Today were matched with major local figures: Francis Matthew, Editor at large, Gulf News; Nabil Khatib, Executive Editor, Al Arabiya; and Mishaal Al Gergawi, columnist, Gulf News.

Why isn't there more coverage of science and religion? The journalists and editors from the US and Europe talked about the difference in audiences. "The problem is with academic writers who don't write for mass media," Scammett said. Brown agreed that the material he sees provides either "a niche picture" or is broadly general. They were reflecting a concern with readership, reaching the largest number because topics that don't interest readers get minimized or ignored.

The concerns are totally different in the Middle East. Because television is not like print and is the major source of information for people in the region, Khatib said, it cannot go against local culture, and "issues of religion and science are of special sensitivity." Not coincidentally, Al Arabiya, one of the major satellite news channels broadcasting in Arabic, has neither a religion editor nor a science editor.

When Al Arabiya decided a year ago to do more stories about global warming to increase awareness in the region about the problem, Khatib added, the audience reaction was lukewarm. On the other hand, viewers everywhere have followed the manifestations of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere with tremendous interest.

The difficulty in covering science and religion in the Middle East is that the first isn't considered interesting while the second is off limits. Al Gergawi said that science isn't seen as a good career choice, at least not in the Gulf. People study science to teach, not to perform research. He noted too that secularism tends to be identified with atheism which limits discussion and news coverage. "We don't have much of a sense of dialogue between science and religion," Matthew concluded.

FILE 230: CHAOS

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TASK: STAKEHOLDER'S GALA

DATE: 4 DAYS TO EVENT

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He's at the procurement meeting
Then have Ravi download the file
He doesn't have the software
Get Nisha to do it
She's meeting suppliers
Is the event agenda ready?
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How about press coverage?
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