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Issue 2, August 2012

Looking for Transparency: Journalism, Public Relations, and Media in the Middle East



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# **Middle East Media Educator**

Issue 2, August 2012

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Looking for Transparency:  
Journalism, Public Relations, and Media in the Middle East

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**Middle East Media Educator** (MEME) is a refereed journal published at the University of Wollongong in Dubai. It was inspired by Asia Pacific Media Educator (APME), 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 is not widespread.

Research articles and commentary 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 the next MEME in January 2013 and will consider pieces for that issue submitted by Oct. 1, 2012.

In this second issue of MEME, we continue the policy of making the journal available free in two ways: MEME will be distributed at regional and international conferences where issues relevant to media in the Middle East are discussed, and a PDF version is available on the University of Wollongong in Dubai website ([www.uowdubai.ac.ae](http://www.uowdubai.ac.ae)). The second issue will be downloadable from Aug. 1, 2012. For information, contact [alma.kadragic@gmail.com](mailto:alma.kadragic@gmail.com).

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## Introduction

A year ago, I was writing the introduction to the first issue of Middle East Media Educator (MEME). It was part of a new publishing venture at the University of Wollongong in Dubai along the lines of Asia Pacific Media Educator (APME), published since 1996 by Dr. Eric Loo at our parent institution, the University of Wollongong, Australia.

The experience of creating the first issue fast – we used to call it “crashing” when I worked at ABC News – was hectic and instructive. MEME’s goal, to be the platform for dialogue between media practitioners and academics who are teaching future media practitioners and providing theoretical background and wider contexts for working professionals, was only partially realized. In the launch issue, we had fewer academic pieces than we might have liked. In this second issue, we have more academic pieces but fewer from journalists or other media practitioners. We have yet to find a balance.

MEME remains very much a work in progress, and it will continue to be as the Middle East changes. One section of the first MEME featured media coverage of the Arab Spring. In the current issue, the Arab Spring provides the background against which everything in the media in the region and beyond is displayed.

## Defining the Media Market

This issue is organized in three sections, the first much longer than the others. One section, Education and Society, is continued from Issue I. Eventually we may come to permanent sections based on themes or format, but not yet. Too much is uncertain, and media education, like education in general in the region, is continually being reformed and formed again. At the same time, the battle for free and independent media continues, two steps forward, one back, sometimes vice versa. The ultimate direction seems clear, but the rate of change fluctuates.

**In Section I, Media and Society**, five articles analyze various types of media in the greater Middle East. Dr. Matt J. Duffy looks at how newspapers and broadcast news media are engaging audiences by inviting conversation, commentary, and submissions of material, a trend known as “networked journalism.” Duffy is an Assistant Professor at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi and an expert on legal and ethical journalism.

Dr. Elza Ibroscheva posits a declining role for women in new democracies, the “masculinization of politics,” using the examples of Bulgaria in Eastern Europe and Lebanon in the Middle East. Ibroscheva is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville.

Mariam F. Alkazemi writes about perceptions of Muslims in the United States, using print coverage of the television series *Al-American Muslim* to examine how Muslims are viewed by non-Muslims and how Muslims see themselves. *Al-American Muslim* and its cancellation after one season generated great interest among Muslims in the Middle East, which is the reason the piece is included here. Alkazemi is a doctoral student at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Dr. Swapna Koshy describes an example of socially responsible media: a television program that links families in the Indian state of Kerala with missing relatives working in the Gulf. The program demonstrates how the media can benefit people through the access and accessibility. Koshy is Assistant Professor at the University of Wollongong in Dubai; her work also appeared in Issue 1 of MEME.

Lead author Dr. Donelda McKechnie and Sasha Kannan, Gladwin Menezes, and Jim Grant tackle the use of social media in the UAE by nationals and expatriates in an important piece that will lead to further study. McKechnie taught and Kannan and Menezes were students at the University of Wollongong in Dubai while Grant was at Hult University in Dubai when they conducted this study. Their work is nearly twice as long as the usual limit for MEME, but we believe it merits the space.

**In Section II, Education and Media**, academics propose two ways to teach journalism that reflect the development of contemporary media. The article by Brian Bowe, Jennifer Hoewe, and Geri Alunit Zeldes on using wikis provides an accessible model for students to teach themselves about journalism. Although the students are in the American Midwest, the focus on Islam and immigration stories makes the wiki experience relevant to the Middle East. Bowe and Zeldes teach at Michigan State University in East Lansing, while Hoewe teaches at Pennsylvania State University in University Park.

Dr. Cathy Strong relies on convergence to teach Arab students how to marry professional requirements and expertise in social media. Her methods take into account the expectations of students and their future employers. Strong completed her piece while Associate Professor at Zayed University in Dubai.

**In Section III, Thinking about Media**, practitioners examine various aspects of media in today's Middle East. Magda Abu-Fadil evaluates the media in Tunisia and concludes that press freedom hasn't arrived yet. Abu-Fadil is the Director of Media Unlimited in Broummana, Lebanon; a writer on journalism issues and a contributor to the Huffington Post; a trainer of journalists in Arabic, English, and French; and a member of MEME's Editorial Advisory Board. Her piece on Lebanon's draft media law appeared in MEME's first issue.

Katy Branson, head of technology at Hill + Knowlton Strategies in Dubai, discusses to what extent technology creates evolution or revolution. This is an interesting question for everyone involved with media.

Noni Edwards, an Australian broadcast journalist now working at TV station Dubai One, talks about the differences and the similarities between what she was used to and how she works now. Some things about covering the news are the same everywhere, but reporting in the Middle East has its own rules.

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Finally, Dr. Mona Moussa, who was an Assistant Professor at the University of Wollongong in Dubai this year, discusses communication from a psychologist's point of view. It is not technology but the psychologist's self-management that makes the relationship with the patient beneficial or harmful to both. This is a useful reminder to all of us who are mesmerized by technology.

**Alma Kadragic**

Dubai

July 2012



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## **Section I: Media and Society**



## Audience engagement in the Middle East press: An exploration of “networked journalism” amid the new media landscape

By Dr. Matt J. Duffy | [mattjduffy@gmail.com](mailto:mattjduffy@gmail.com) | [@mattjduffy](https://twitter.com/mattjduffy)

### Abstract

*Many news outlets no longer stop with the simple publication of an article or a broadcast report, but actively engage the audience. For instance, the British newspaper The Guardian recently issued social media guidelines for its reporters, encouraging them to enter into conversations with the audience via Twitter and Facebook. Other news outlets have adopted methods that allow readers to help direct the news. Al Jazeera English regularly asks its audience to submit questions for guests and also broadcasts user-created videos offering commentary. CNN’s iReport project invites viewers to contribute their own raw footage of events and, occasionally, structured news reports taken from cell phones, Flip cameras, and other portable devices. Some outlets have engaged in crowdsourcing, in which audience members are asked to help provide information about an event. Journalism observers have called this new paradigm “networked journalism,” defined by the audience’s participatory role in actively shaping the news. Building on other research on networked journalism, this paper explores how several Middle Eastern newspapers, both English and Arabic, have chosen to embrace the new media landscape. A qualitative review of each news outlet’s new media activities—particularly on their websites, Twitter feeds, and Facebook pages—reveals to what extent and to what benefit they have embraced “networked journalism.” The paper concludes with suggestions for improving audience engagement as well as highlighting best known practices of networked journalism.*

Perhaps the most unusual star to emerge from the Arab Spring was an American journalist, based in Washington, D.C., who couldn’t speak Arabic. Andy Carvin worked for National Public Radio as a social media aggregator. He served as an aggregator for the tsunami of information flowing out of the Middle East via Twitter and other new media sites. Carvin collected, analyzed, fact-checked, and verified these reports. His efforts—and surely his NPR credentials—helped guide mainstream outlets in their coverage of 2011’s biggest story. Carvin relied on other Twitter stars who helped aggregate information from non-traditional news sources (Kiss, 2011). Tweepsters like the UAE’s Sultan Al Qassemi (@SultanAlQassemi), Egypt’s Mahmoud Salem (@SandMonkey), and Bahrain’s Zaynab al-Khawaja (@AngryArribiya) helped cover the Arab Spring in a manner never seen before. Perhaps more than any other news event, the Arab Spring forced mainstream media outlets to embrace social media—including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube—in ways previously not necessary.

Some have called this new type of reporting “networked journalism,” with the idea that audiences can work with professionals to create effective, compelling journalism. In previous research, Duffy (2011) showed that Al Jazeera English had made great strides toward embracing networked journalism. This study extends the research by examining how local media outlets in the Middle East have embraced social media and audience engagement through networked journalism.

This article sheds light on current practices in an evolving journalism landscape. Since so much scholarship overlooks the Middle East, the author hopes to help lead journalism scholars to more fully understand and embrace “networked journalism”—particularly in a region where local news outlets (in contrast to satellite news stations) appear hesitant to embrace social media and networked journalism.

### **Models of Journalism**

Attempting to categorize types of journalism can prove troublesome, particularly as the media landscape alters rapidly in the 21st century. Nip (2006) examined the scholarship and pointed to five broad types of journalism: traditional, public, interactive, participatory, and citizen journalism. He defined traditional journalism as conventional reporting in which the producers create news and audiences digest it. The other four models recognize differing levels of audience engagement. For instance, public journalism (or “civic journalism”) sees news consumers as part of news creation, with invitations to editorial board meetings or opinion polls. Interactive journalism is not much different but puts more emphasis on using technology to spur involvement. Participatory journalism invites the audience to help make news. Bowman and Willis (2008) said the audience should play “an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information” (para. 4). The emphasis is on publishing first and filtering later, breaking the heavy gatekeeping role for the media producers that the other models embrace. In the final category, citizen journalism, a wide variety of people produce the news, not only professional journalists. Citizen journalism differs from the other models by removing the authority of the professional journalist.

Perhaps the trouble with these models is their lack of clear boundaries. Arguing that interactive journalism is separate and distinct from public journalism seems counterintuitive; the line between participatory and interactive journalism also seems difficult to find. As for citizen journalism, context seems to determine the boundaries. Is an amateur’s report still citizen journalism after being published by a mainstream media outlet? Kperogi (2011) examined CNN’s citizen journalism vehicle iReport and concluded that “the trend toward corporate-sponsored citizen media may, in the final analysis, blur the distinction between citizen and mainstream journalism” (p. 1).

To these categories of journalism, some scholars have added a new term, “networked journalism,” which describes the current tech-infused, interactive journalism. Coined by Jeff Jarvis in 2006, the term “networked journalism” was meant to replace “citizen journalism.”

‘Networked journalism’ takes into account the collaborative nature of journalism now: professionals and amateurs working together to get the real story, linking to each other across brands and old boundaries to share facts, questions, answers, ideas, perspectives. It recognizes the complex relationships that will make news. And it focuses on the process more than the product. (Jarvis, 2006, para. 2)

Jarvis wanted to emphasize that journalism needs to evolve and embrace collaboration and the sharing of sources. At that time, such engagement with the audience was anathema to many traditional journalists. Those attitudes have shifted over the last five years, but some news outlets still don’t embrace collaboration.



One of the most important concepts behind networked journalism is the importance of using and linking to other sources of information, even if those sources are competitors. Networked journalists accept that audiences can easily get their news from a variety of outlets, so linking to another news site or a supporting document in an online news story shouldn't be considered taboo. Journalism expert Jay Rosen calls linking to other sites or sources part of the “ethic of the Web” that is focused on providing verification as a means to “connect knowledge to people” (2008). The refusal of news sites to provide links goes against the “ethic of the Web” and the natural tendencies of Web audiences.

Networked journalists also welcome audience contributions to the production of news. Journalism scholar Charlie Beckett describes the collaborative nature of the technique: “After the story is published—online, in print, wherever—the public can continue to contribute corrections, questions, facts, and perspective, not to mention promotion via links” (2008, p. 46). Duffy (2011) states that technology allows journalists to engage with audiences in ways that would have seemed like science fiction two decades ago.

Audiences can read a report on a Web site and immediately comment about its perspective or veracity. They can also set up a blog to use as an independent vehicle to comment and critique the news. Readers can also offer comments via their Twitter accounts or social networking sites. This reader commentary can include links to information that they view as important – providing a fact-checking service for the media outlets, a task once handled only internally. They can take video of news events with their cell phones and post it on YouTube or even on some news Web sites. They can send SMS messages from their cell phones to compile aggregated information about disasters. (Duffy, 2011, p. 7)

Audiences can also work together to cull thousands of documents to look for newsworthy information, a technique known as “crowdsourcing.” The Pulitzer Prize-winning, non-profit news site ProPublica asked its users to help track spending of U.S. stimulus funds (Jones, 2010). Ushahidi technology creates a graphical interface for crowdsourced information. Users send geo-location information via e-mail or text messages, and Ushahidi places the information onto a Google map. The more reports from a certain area, the bigger the “dot” on the map, allowing the size of the crowd to determine the weight of the news. Ushahidi users have helped locate violence in Kenya after a disputed election and find victims of Haiti's earthquake disaster (Fildes, 2010).

### **Networked Journalism in the Middle East**

Duffy (2011) points to a variety of news reports in the Middle East that used networked journalism. The independent site Little Green Footballs was the first to expose a freelance photographer for Reuters who had altered photos during the Israel/Hezbollah conflict in 2006 to make air strikes from Israel look worse than they were. After criticism from an engaged audience, Reuters quickly dismissed the photographer and tightened its standards. In pre-revolution Egypt, blogs run by amateurs performed roles usually associated with traditional media. In 2005, a video of a vicious police attack on a defenseless citizen was posted on a blog, leading to the arrest of two officers. In 2009, the cell phone video posted on YouTube showing a young woman dying on the streets of Tehran became a rallying point for Iranian protesters. And in 2011, networked journalism helped transform the Middle East. Satellite news stations such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya reported on the uprising and repression using updates from Twitter feeds, social media sites, and YouTube (Allmeling, 2011).

Mainstream outlets collaborated with the audience to report the news from countries like Syria and Libya where tight government controls prevented the free flow of information.

Scholars see networked journalism providing a variety of benefits. According to Beckett (2010), the practice generates editorial diversity—increasing the sources of information—to help create more substantive, authoritative, and varied news reports. Duffy (2011) also notes the increase in credibility. Outlets practicing networked journalism increase trust when they provide links to their source material or publicly answer questions from their audiences.

Duffy's 2011 study of Al Jazeera English found many examples of networked journalism and areas for improvement. For instance, one of the network's interview shows regularly asks viewers to send in questions for future guests, and the network's media criticism program airs opinions from viewers, uploaded via webcam. However, the main news outlet doesn't engage with the audience on Facebook or Twitter. The Al Jazeera site launched a special Ushahidi map to record violence in the Gaza Strip during the Israeli strikes in late 2009 and early 2010. However, close examination of the Ushahidi reporting showed that crowds actually inside the Palestinian territory did not contribute to the map. While Duffy concluded that Al Jazeera had shown great commitment to networked journalism, he also suggested it should continue to hone its craft in this area.

Middle East media outlets suffer from censorship. The media in most Arab countries are rated "not free" by the advocacy group Freedom House, with Kuwait and Lebanon earning a "partly free" rating. Media laws in the region are heavily restrictive, providing little protection for working journalists. The result is a press that is often timid and exercises self-censorship to avoid trouble with authorities. Governments in the Arab world tend to be authoritarian and do not allow journalists to practice the typical watchdog role (Rugh, 2004).

### **Methodology: Qualitative Analysis**

The next part of this paper details a qualitative analysis of several English- and Arabic-language news outlets in the Middle East. The author conducted the analysis in late January and early February of 2011 with an Arabic-speaking research assistant. For each news outlet, they closely examined the website, the Facebook page, and the Twitter feed. The researchers recorded observations using a form identifying each aspect of networked journalism.

Ten news outlets in various Middle Eastern cities were selected, all capitals except for Dubai; Abu Dhabi, UAE; Dubai, UAE; Manama, Bahrain; Doha, Qatar; Cairo, Egypt; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Amman, Jordan; Muscat, Oman; Beirut, Lebanon; and Baghdad, Iraq. English and Arabic versions of the pan-Arab newspaper Ashawq Alawsat, based in London, were examined.

The ten news outlets are established entities with government licenses. Authorities in their countries rarely or never block content from these sites, although discussion forums and blogs are often blocked. Results from the study have no link to any Internet blocks or filtering by authorities.

The authors looked for specific examples of networked journalism. On websites the following were recorded: links to secondary sources in website articles, comments on the website and whether comments were moderated, engagement with the audience in the comment section, requests for user-generated content, and use of Ushahidi maps. On Twitter, the reviewers checked the existence of a Twitter account, number of followers, number following, and whether the media outlet asks for input from the audience or otherwise engages the audience. On Facebook, the following were examined: existence of a Facebook page, number of “fans,” and signs of engagement with the audience.

## Results

The results of the website analysis show that few media outlets are engaging in networked journalism through their websites (see Table 1). None of the websites used embedded links in their articles. Similarly, none of the websites asked readers to submit their own content or to take part in constructing Ushahidi maps. Dubai’s *Gulf News* did solicit “citizen journalism” articles from its readers, but not on the website’s home page; readers had to find the information from the printed newspaper.

Approaches to allowing comments on the news articles varied. Some outlets allowed no comments at all although they encouraged redistributing articles via Twitter and Facebook. *Gulf News* and *Al Ittihad* allowed comments, but only on certain articles. Comments were usually not requested for politically sensitive reports.

Although a majority of sites allowed comments on some of their articles, many did not. Administrators moderated all comments on all sites. None of the websites featured robust comment sections, and many of the articles generated either no comments or very few. None of the newspapers used comments as a forum for engaging the audience.

In one intriguing case, the comments were relatively uncensored, and journalists actively engaged the audience. *The Arab News* featured an article about the deaths of some workers (Abbas, 2011). The article stated that three people died in an accident; however, several comments noted that the number of deaths was far higher. But the reporter corrected the commenters and offered further defense of his information. Eventually, the commenters agreed that their reports of higher numbers of deaths came from rumors rather than firsthand information. The exchange drew 38 comments.

As seen in Table 2, more than half the sites have Twitter and Facebook accounts, but the news outlets used them to varying degrees. For instance, *The Jordan Times* boasts an incredible 70,000 Twitter followers, while the Beirut *Daily Star*’s moribund account registers only 57 followers. Most of the outlets don’t follow most of their followers, and some follow zero. However, *The Jordan Times* follows an astounding 70,000 Twitter accounts – a number so high that it’s doubtful anyone could keep up with the updates. Other outlets like *Al Bayan* and *Al Madina* follow large, but manageable, numbers of readers. None of the outlets used Twitter to engage with the audience.

Almost all sites had a Facebook presence, but most used the pages just to disseminate their news. Only one English-language outlet, *Gulf News*, interacted with readers on Facebook.

For instance, *Gulf News* readers were invited to comment on news reports or offer information about their favorite places to exercise. Several Arabic-language Facebook pages featured robust engagement: *Al Ittihad*, *Al Bayan*, and *Al Ahram* all interacted with lively audiences on the social networking site.

During the uprising in Egypt, *Al Ahram* invited its readers to ponder the future after Mubarak's resignation. In one odd twist, the official Facebook page for Lebanon's *Annahar* has fewer members than a page set up by a reader. The reader-created page includes robust discussion about the newspaper's reporting. Some outlets, among them *The Arab Times* in Kuwait and *Akhbar al Khaleej* in Sharjah, UAE, use no social media at all.

## Discussion

Media outlets in the Middle East are failing to engage the audience through networked journalism. Many websites do not allow comments on their articles, despite the widespread use of this feature by media outlets around the world. Arabic-language papers were far more likely not to offer the ability to comment, probably because of cultural considerations and government censorship. Allowing website comments may not jibe with cultures in which public speech and criticism of ruling officials are discouraged, both subtly and overtly. Some sites appeared to bend to cultural expectations when they removed the commenting feature from stories that might prompt public discussion uncomfortable for the government.

The complete lack of embedded links is also troubling, indicating that websites are still stuck in "print mindset." (This author has submitted editorials with embedded links to *Gulf News* only to have them appear on the website minus links.) While access to source material could easily be provided via hyperlinks, reporters aren't encouraged to do so for the web edition.

Journalists should make an effort to include such links to other sources and original material whenever possible. *The New York Times* has recently embraced this practice; the online version of an article about the creation of a foreign military force in the United Arab Emirates includes a link to a PDF file of the agreement between the government and the contractor (Mazzetti & Hager, 2011).

Limited use of Twitter feeds and Facebook pages shows that newspapers still consider them a one-directional method of communication. With few exceptions, English-language and Arabic-language outlets use these social media vehicles simply to update the news. They don't try to engage readers in conversation or ask them to help generate news. Contrast this with other outlets that routinely use Twitter and Facebook to gather and gauge the news. For instance, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and TBD.com in the United States often ask for information about car accidents, traffic problems, and snowfalls. At times they ask the audience to help find interview subjects for a story (e.g., people who were recently laid off or pulled their children out of public school). They use social media to ask the audience to help report the news. Cultural considerations probably are the reason for this disparity; rather, the difference can be attributed to employees and management that haven't tried to adapt to new technology.

To escape “print mindset,” news outlets in the Middle East must embrace networked journalism by training their older staff members in these new techniques. Hiring recent graduates and encouraging them to use their social media skills could also help change the culture in Arab newsrooms.

The analysis turned up some notable exceptions. The English-language *Gulf News* in Dubai and the Arabic-language *Al Ahrām* in Cairo both actively engage with their audiences. Both efforts concentrate on Facebook, so more attention could be paid to interacting with the audience on Twitter. Privately owned outlets appeared more willing to test networked journalism than their state-owned counterparts.

*Gulf News* is the only organization that actively solicits “citizen journalism” reports from readers. However, the absence of information about the program online limits its potential. Only readers of the print edition know that the “citizen journalism” program exists. Past reports have spotlighted problems with construction sites, as well as a mosque for poor people that didn’t have running water. *Gulf News* should do more to highlight these audience-generated news stories.

Perhaps the largest mystery revealed by this analysis is the *Jordan Times* Twitter feed. With more than 70,000 followers [actually more than 86,000 at publication], the paper has more Twitter fans than all the other outlets. The reason why is unclear and bears further study.

## Conclusion

The Middle East is ripe for a networked journalism revolution. News outlets throughout the region should embrace technology to expand interaction with the audience. As some parts of the region like Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya start to move away from government intrusion in the media, perhaps outlets can try harder to practice this type of journalism. But even where governments actively regulate the press, networked journalism can help stretch the boundaries of reporting.

As Pintak (2011) notes in his exhaustive overview of Arab journalism, many reporters see little reason to practice good journalism in environments that stifle the press. In newsrooms where self-censorship and overt censorship prevail, many journalists are lackadaisical about verification and accuracy. Trying to add networked journalism into this environment where journalists and editors would be expected to make extra efforts to report more fully and convey accurate information may simply be too much to ask.

The solution, of course, is a freer press with government-mandated legal protections and more journalism training for reporters who have only known how to practice less-than-aggressive reporting. Media educators in the Middle East can help create a better journalism environment by stressing the benefits of networked journalism and giving potential reporters knowledge of the tools they’ll need to actively engage their audience. Graduating journalism students should understand how to communicate with their audience via Facebook and Twitter. They should also grasp the “ethic of the Web” and the importance of hyperlinking to sources. And these students should see communicating with the audience as an integral part of their job rather than an added annoyance.

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Table 1: Newspaper websites

Name of Newspaper	Location	Website links	Embedded links	Comments	Audience engagement in comments	User generated content sought	Ushahidi maps
The National	Abu Dhabi, UAE	www.thenational.ae	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Al Ittihad	Abu Dhabi, UAE	www.alittihad.ae	No	Varied	No	No	No
Gulf News	Dubai, UAE	www.gulfnews.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Al Bayan	Dubai, UAE	www.albayan.ae	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
The Peninsula	Doha, Qatar	www.thepeninsulaqatar.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Al Arab	Qatar	www.alarab.com.qa	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Arab News	Riyadh, SA	www.arabnews.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Al Medina	Jeddah	www.almadina.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Asharq Alawsat	London	www.asharqe.com	No	No	No	No	No
Asharq	London	www.aawsat.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Jordan Times	Amman, Jordan	www.jordantimes.com	No	No	No	No	No
Addustour	Amman	www.addustour.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Arab Times	Kuwait	www.arabtimesonline.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Al Qabas	Kuwait	www.alqabas.com.kw	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Daily Star	Beirut, Lebanon	www.dailystar.com.lb	No	No	No	No	No
An Nahar	Beirut, Lebanon	www.annahar.com	No	No	No	No	No
Oman Daily Observer	Muscat, Oman	www.main.omanobserver.com	No	No	No	No	No
Gulf Daily News	Manama, Bahrain	www.gulf-daily-news.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Akhbar Alkhaleej	Bahrain	www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com	No	No	No	No	No
Aswat Al Iraq	Baghdad, Iraq	en.aswataliraq.info	No	No	No	No	No



Table 1: Newspaper websites (Cont.)

Name of Newspaper	Location	Website links	Embedded links	Comments	Audience engagement in comments	User generated content sought	Ushahidi maps
Baghdad	Iraq, Baghdad	www.baghdad-news.com	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Egyptian Gazette	Cairo, Egypt	http://213.158.162.45/~egyptian/	No	Yes, moderated	No	No	No
Al Ahram	Cairo, Egypt	www.ahram.org.eg	No	No	No	No	No

Table 2: Twitter and Facebook activity

Name of Newspaper	Social Media User?	Twitter Followers	Twitter Following	Twitter Engagement	Facebook Presence	Facebook Likes	Facebook Interaction
The National	No	6,344	152	No	Yes	588	No
Al Ittihad	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	1,204	No
Gulf News	Yes	7,271	135	No	Yes	1,759	Yes
Al Bayan	Yes	583	0	No	Yes	173	No
The (Qatar) Peninsula	Yes	618	90	No	No	N/A	N/A
Al Arab	Yes	412	84	No	Yes	714	No
Arab News (Riyadh)	Yes	1,528	0	No	Yes	3,766	No
Al Medina	Yes	2,504	841	No	Yes	306	Yes
Asharq Alawsat	Yes	121	21	No	Yes	232	No
Asharq	Yes	2,560	42	No	Yes	285	No
Jordan Times	Yes	70,945	70,401	No	Yes	15,728	No
Addustour	Yes	550	0	No	Yes	6,105	No
Arab Times (Kuwait)	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	N/A
Al Qabas	Yes	2,254	70	No	Yes	404	No
Daily Star	Yes	57	1	No	Yes	7	No
An Nahar	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	80	Yes
Oman Daily Observer	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	17	No
Gulf Daily News (Bahrain)	Yes	583	0	No	Yes	178	No
Akhbar Alkhaleej	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	N/A
Aswat Al Iraq	Yes	39	0	No	Yes	39	No
Baghdad	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	N/A
Egyptian Gazette	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	160	Yes
Al Ahram	Yes	9,738	20	No	Yes	41,726	Yes



## Peeking Through the Looking Glass: A Comparative Analysis of Women, Politics and Media in Lebanon and Bulgaria

By Elza Ibroscheva | [eibrosch@siue.edu](mailto:eibrosch@siue.edu)

Among the challenges women around the world face today, one of the biggest is the masculinization of democracy, as it has been identified in the literature on women's empowerment and political representation. Expressed in the underlining "manly" face of the democratic transition, this social phenomenon is defined by an increasingly gendered political discourse, which is also ubiquitously masculine in tone and visual manifestation. In emerging democracies, democratization and marketization are, and by definition have been, launched to the detriment of women through an increased separation of the public and private spheres and a polarization of sex roles. In Eastern Europe, as Watson (1993) pointed out, "(t)he creation of a civil society and market economy . . . fundamentally entails the construction of a 'man's world' and the propagation of masculinism in the public sphere" (p. 472). This in turn has resulted in decreased functional representation of women in the structures of political power, diminishing their opportunity to participate directly in governing a diverse and pluralistic society.

Studies in the field of political science, sociology and gender have indicated that this trend has taken place in Eastern Europe, where the masculinization of democracy has been particularly visible in the political representation of women in the top echelons of power (Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2011). A similar trend has been evident in the representation of women in the political structure of the Middle East, where women's participation has been limited by cultural and religious dogmas, which often stand in the way of a more visible presence of female power on the political and social front. In fact, as 2008 data from the International Women's Democracy Center shows, the average percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by women in the Middle East is a little over 9 percent, the lowest ranking among all the world's geographical regions.

Of particular interest in this region is Lebanon, which despite boasting one of the most democratic systems in the region still lacks full parity in the political rights of women. In fact, women in Lebanon, as Khatib (2008) argues, "are often perceived as enjoying a better status than their sisters in other Arab countries, whether economically, socially or politically" (p. 437). And even though Lebanese women obtained the right to vote in 1952, they are still restricted in exercising full participation rights by a number of bureaucratic obstacles, including required proof of elementary education for female voters (required for men). This trend may be seen as an outgrowth of the cultural peculiarities of the region; however, it is also associated with a whole set of alarming symptoms that threatened the political opportunities for women.

Several studies have examined women's opportunities for political participation in Lebanese politics (Khatib, 2008; Schulze, 1998; Joseph, 2000), but none of them have examined the role of the media in stereotyping the gender roles female politicians are expected to espouse. That is particularly curious in the case of Lebanon, where, as Khatib (2008) pointed out, the Lebanese media play a very important part in sustaining the "rosy picture" of the condition of women, "with a number of prominent female journalists like Maguy Farah, Gisele Khoury, and May Chidyac playing an active on-screen role in televised political debate programs" (p. 438).

Lebanon is also an interesting case study for examining gender and media for another reason: even before the establishment of Al-Jazeera and other popular TV networks that feature female reporters and anchorwomen, it was Lebanon that pioneered the presence of women in TV programs. As Sakr (2007) pointed out, LBC and Future TV, the two Lebanese satellite channels that started in 1996, “used women anchors in low-cut attire in a bid to woo Gulf audiences, who were unaccustomed to seeing women on their own television screens” (p. 94). Furthermore, as data from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia report recently shows, Lebanon has the highest number of female journalists in the region, accounting for 40 percent of the entire media workforce.

So why is it important to turn to Lebanon to understand the dynamics of women’s position in social and political life, as well as their potential to contribute to the governing of emerging democracies in the Middle East? Because women in new and transitional democracies face a formidable yet highly insidious obstacle in their struggles to assert a leading position in society—a ubiquitously growing gender bias in the media. Studies of politics, gender, and media dynamics worldwide reveal that media coverage of female politicians is more negative, tends to focus more on appearance than on issues, and, in general, reinforces deeply rooted social stereotypes (Kahn, 1994, 1996; Herzog, 1998; Ross, 2000; Ross & Sreberny, 2000).

Given the similar context of transitional democracies—in the case of Bulgaria, from post-communism into democracy, and in the case of Lebanon, from civil war into Western-style democratic governance—this study looks at what part gender stereotypes play in the portrayals of female politicians in the Lebanese media. In doing so, it will explore the role of media in defining the gender discourse of politics, since media are to be understood both as social technologies for generating gender stereotypes and as institutions of power. As such, they implicitly espouse the ruling ideologies and fabricate effective matrices that legitimize themselves and maintain the status quo.

Such critical dissection is important because gender biases disseminated by the media can have incredibly important electoral consequences; at a time when politics is thoroughly mediatized, voters respond to candidates largely in accordance with information (and entertainment) received from the media. Media, and specifically journalists, play a very important role in framing the discursive metaphors that define the political process and therefore contribute significantly to defining the political and social positioning of women (Ibroscheva, 2009; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009). It will be interesting to see whether the media play a similar role in Lebanon, where the role of women in political and social life continues to evolve and can potentially lead to a fundamental transformation of traditional cultural norms and societal gender relations.

### **Theoretical framework**

Gidengil and Everitt (1999) identify three phases in the study of women, politics and media, beginning with visibility/invisibility (typified by Tuchman, 1978), then moving to the narrow focus in coverage of female politicians, and finally into “gendered mediation.” The latter “shifts the focus ... to the more subtle, but arguably more insidious, form of bias that arises when conventional political frames are applied to female politicians” (p. 49). The gendered mediation thesis recognizes that media news frames are far from neutral in treating female politicians and that they treat the male as the norm (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999). This bias often

transpires in language used by reporters to cover women in politics, the presence of which is often trivialized by the female politicians themselves, who often see this bias as an integral and normal side of the political process (Ross, 2002; Ross & Sreberny, 2000).

The gendered mediation thesis rests on the assumption that the way politics is reported is significantly determined by a male-oriented agenda that privileges the practice of politics as an essentially male pursuit. The image and language of mediated politics, therefore, “supports the status quo (male as norm) and regards women politicians as novelties” (Ross & Sreberny, 2000, p. 93). The gendered nature of news can be traced to the “gendered structure of news production” (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 43). Indeed, television news has been likened to a “masculine soap opera” (Fiske, 1987, p. 308), constructing politics as if it were a battle, a boxing match, or a horserace. As such, the news is not simply reflecting the fact that politics is still very much a man’s world; it is playing an active role in perpetuating a stereotypically masculine conception of politics and politicians (Rakow & Kranich, 1991; Sreberny & van Zoonen, 2000).

Part of the problem of female politicians’ media profile, and therefore part of the answer, lies in the political economy of the newsroom (see Meehan & Riordan, 2002; Bourdeau, 1998), and in the fact that most newsrooms are dominated by men. As Carter et al. (1998) point out, “feminist gender-sensitive studies of journalism are becoming increasingly concerned with the changing of news media ownership [especially] within local, national and global contexts” (p. 3).

Another paradox is that the news profession, especially in countries in transition, is feminized to such a great degree—clearly the case in Lebanon—from which it follows that the stereotypical representations of women in media are often the fault of women themselves. Yet one should not forget that journalism is the oldest media profession and that the founding myths and skills that bring journalistic glory usually affirm a patriarchal culture of masculinity. Consequently, the socialization of women and their education can by no means be neglected (Tuchman, 1978).

### **Women and politics in Lebanon**

Despite many strides that Lebanese women have made, including higher educational levels and participation rates in business ownership and other leadership position, Lebanon is at the bottom of the table of parliamentary representation of women in the Middle East, with only 3.1 percent of seats now occupied by women. That figure puts Lebanon down with conservative Gulf states like Oman (none), Yemen (0.3 percent) and Bahrain (2.7 percent), whereas neighboring Syria has 12.4 percent and Tunisia has 22.8 percent. Iraq has a 25 percent quota for women.

Analysts and political commentators argue that Lebanon’s 1975-90 civil war, which destroyed many democratic practices, and other domestic tumults slowed political advancement for women, mostly because the volatilities of sectarian political culture came before women’s rights. In reality, Lebanese women have been in parliament since 1992. Women won three seats in that year’s elections, accounting for 2.3 percent of the seats. This was the first time women arrived in Parliament, and it constituted a fundamental transformation.

Another important cultural trend is the fact that women in Lebanon regularly come to power in mourning clothes, stepping into a seat vacated by an assassinated father or spouse. As Al-Rahbani (2009, ¶4) explained, women nominated for political office are selected “on the basis of nepotism, familial political legacies, and martyred relatives.” Examples include former Minister of Industry Leila Solh, daughter of former Lebanese Prime Minister Riad Solh and aunt of the billionaire Prince Walid Bin Talal of Saudi Arabia; former Minister of Health Wafaa Hamza, a Shiite close to the Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri; and Nayla Moawad, widow of former president Rene Moawad, the Social Affairs minister in the former government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora; and Nayla Tueni, at 26 the youngest elected female MP and daughter of Gibran Tueni, a former MP and editor of the daily *An Nahar*, who was killed in 2005.

This situation is not entirely different from the path by which women in the top echelons of power under communism have tended to find political success. As Ibroscheva and Raicheva (2011) contended in their examination of the coverage of Bulgarian women in politics under communism, it was not at all unusual to see female politicians’ familial connections, especially to powerful male functionaries of the Communist Party, strongly emphasized in press coverage. Masked as simple family profiles, the articles in the Communist press about the candidate’s path to political awareness tended to stress the importance of the female candidate’s father and his contribution to the communist revolution, rather than examining her personal characteristics that might qualify her to represent the people. What is even more, as Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover further contend, this pictures did not change as communism fell apart and democracy was ushered in. On the contrary, now the stories of familial bonds so common during communism were transformed into stories of mothers-turned-politicians, or the stories of the political wives of influential husbands, whose careers blossomed because of their spouses’ success as leaders of the democratic revolution.

In both Lebanon and Bulgaria, then, it appears that, regardless of how women’s political role is conceived, women in politics were portrayed in the media as offshoots of their family environment, often described as “loyal daughters, able wives, and devoted mothers,” further stressing the importance of their proven political pedigree as evidence of their potential to carry out their political duties. In Lebanon, and to some extent in the case of communist Bulgaria, the essence of the woman per se was defined through some connection to the men in her family, where she is also expected to cater, implicitly or explicitly, to the interests of men—fathers, brothers, husbands, sons—sometimes to the detriment of her own intrinsic interests. As Joseph and Slyomovics (2001) pointed out:

The relational construct of self is encouraged in both men and women (although other notions are also supported). The implications for women, however, are somewhat different from those of men ... Women, more than men, are expected to put others before themselves and to see their interest as embedded in those of others, especially familial others. In practice this means that women are particularly encouraged to see their interests linked to their male kin. This often has the effect of reinforcing patriarchal hierarchy (p. 7).

In the political realm, the need to recognize and reinforce patriarchal hierarchy is not only further justified by the unwritten rules of the cultural construction of gender in the Middle East, but also further solidified by an attempt to justify politics as an exclusively

male terrain, frequently described as unsafe, unfitted and unwelcoming to women. As Al-Rahbani (2009) contended, “Most party leaders hold a view that women are inferior, and they limit the presence of women to the second and third ranks of the parties and refrain from appointing women to positions within their inner circles even if her aptitude and her superior over her male counterparts is clearly demonstrated” (¶17).

This sentiment was echoed recently by Otaibi and Thomas (2011) in their study of women, politics and the media in Bahrain. While the authors noted that generally the media served as a positive environment fostering a climate of acceptance of women’s participation in the political process, the media also frequently stereotyped women by portraying them essentially as superficial and one-dimensional, and therefore, incapable of making rational decision about who should be elected to office.

### **Lebanese Female Politicians in the News**

The outcome of the 2009 elections dealt a terrible blow to the advancement of women’s political participations. Essentially, only four female MPs were elected to Lebanon’s unicameral legislative body, Majlis Alnuwab: Nayla Mouawad, Solange Gemayel, Nayla Tueni, and Sethrida Geagea. Ironically, they don’t seem to be considered a novelty act in the eyes of Lebanese reporters but, on the contrary, enjoy a definite place in the public limelight. In fact, they are treated like household names, largely because of their long-standing position in domestic politics and their family ties.

More problematic than the low female representation in parliament has been the fact that, unlike prior governments, the newly formed cabinet had no women appointed in any capacity or position of executive power. That is not to say that there have been no women in the Lebanese government. The first woman appointed to a government was Leila Solh Hamadeh, daughter of Lebanon’s first Prime Minister, Riad Solh; she served as industry minister from 2004 to 2005. Saad Hariri’s previous national consensus government had two female members: Raya Haffar Hassan, the first female minister of finance, and Mona Afeish, minister of state.

However, it must be noted that female politicians are rarely expected to make their own, independent ascent into the echelons of power, free of any family or sectarian connections, and when they do, they are still framed by the media in fairly predictable gender-mediated terms. For example, when Hassan’s story was reported in the media, she was often referred to as the “mother of three” or “42-year-old mother,” as if her qualifications to solve financial problems are only to be understood in direct correlation to her ability to raise three children at a fairly young age.

And while women are to be celebrated for their ability to juggle family life and maintain professional careers in a male-dominated terrain such as finance, male politicians, on the other hand, are rarely, if ever, portrayed as father figures or in terms of their responsibilities as head of the household. For example, when Saad Hariri stepped into politics, following in the footsteps of his father, the slain former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, media portrayals focused on his business background as the head of a business empire, as well as his past of a “playboy,” transforming “himself from a rich and inarticulate young man into a much more seasoned and assertive politician” (Antelava, 2009, ¶10).

Gender bias against female politicians is not, however, just a matter of how the media outlets handle the issue. The general sense of suspicion as to a woman's ability to carry out her duties as a deputy or a minister is frequently found in the cultural constructs and legitimization of power, which almost exclusively assume political leadership as a masculine domain. Those cultural constructs are articulated by male politicians themselves, who not only perpetuate the stereotype of the female politician as an inept novice in need of guidance and patronage from a more established, usually male, figure of authority, but also try to rationalize their gender-biased way of viewing female politicians as an act of exercising political wisdom. A particularly illustrative case in point comes from one of the most influential players on the current political scene in Lebanon, General Michel Aoun. General Aoun, who has had a long run in Lebanese politics as a leader of the Christian forces during the Civil War, returned from exile in France in 2005 when Syrian troops, who defeated him earlier and forced him to flee in the first place, withdrew from Lebanon, ushering a new era in Lebanese politics.

In 2006, Aoun reappeared on the political scene as the head of the Free Patriotic Movement, striking an unexpected accord with the Lebanese resistance Hezbollah, and promising the country a fresh start by stamping out corruption. Aoun's party and his political ally Hezbollah were the clear winners of the 2009 parliamentary elections, creating a wider political coalition, named March 8th, which earned them a majority rule with 68 out of the 128 seats, none occupied by women. What is even more, as the leader of the Change and Reform Bloc, Aoun was instrumental in negotiating the current assembly of the Lebanese government, naming 11 ministers; once again, none were women. Questioned by journalists about the total absence of female representation in the new government, Aoun responded: "We did not have any women candidates to nominate, but we welcome their opinions. My house is full of women, and I am very popular among the female population."\*

By comparing the role of women in the Lebanese cabinet with that of his own household, Aoun not only diminished the legitimacy of women as equal players in exercising political power, but also symbolically reinforced the already established stereotype that women fare much better as "leaders" in taking care of family responsibilities than they would in making political decisions. To further trivialize the critically important contribution women can offer to solving political problems, Aoun added: "You all know that women in Lebanon need more practice and experience in the public life so that she may become qualified for parliamentary and ministerial work" (quoted by Moawad in "Situation of Lebanese Women," June 15, 2011). As Nadine Moawad, a Lebanese blogger and feminist activist, pointed out, "Aoun's comments – like all of his counterparts – show that the ruling elite have no awareness whatsoever of the importance of women's political participation. To say that there are no qualified women (out of a population of 2 million) is extremely offensive" (ibid.).

Aoun's remarks can easily be dismissed as crude Lebanese humor, but they could also be interpreted as an exercise in cultural chauvinism, not entirely uncommon in the cultural climate of the Middle East. In fact, the tendency to trivialize and patronize Lebanese women and their role in the political process is not new to Aoun and his political party. To make matters even worse, the media often scrutinize the very few female MPs in an unflattering fashion, focusing on their missteps in their political careers, rather than highlighting their work and contribution to solving political problems.



A particularly glaring example of this trend comes from a news report that originally aired on New TV and quickly found itself in wide circulation on the Internet. In it, Nayla Mouawad and Solange Gemayel are shown stuffing their purses with candy during a formal political function, while male MPs, seen in the background, appear engaged in important political conversation. While these types of etiquette faux pas always seem to capture the media's hungry eye for sensation and often feature both female and male politicians in equally embarrassing moments of their careers, in the case of female politicians, whose media coverage by default is limited in scope, tone, and nature, this type of comprising report can have a much larger damaging impact.

A similarly embarrassing moment was captured in April 2011 when Czech President Vaclav Klaus was caught on camera stealing a pen during a formal signing ceremony. The TV clips also went viral, featuring Mr. Klaus carefully studying the pen during the speech only to put it nonchalantly in his pocket. The clips became so popular that most international networks, including CNN and BBC, also covered the incident as legitimate news. And while there are many parallels with the media mockery of the Lebanese female MPs caught "stealing candy," there are also some obvious distinctions. Klaus's pocketing of the pen was interpreted as misconstrued diplomatic protocol (in fact, a diplomatic etiquette expert on CNN justified Klaus's pocketing of the pen as an innocent mistake, since he is by protocol entitled to keep it), while Mouawad and Gemayel's stealing of the candy was seen as petty coquetry, "women as usual" type of behavior, which no one would recognize as potentially compromising the position of these politicians or, for that matter, try to explain.

While such views might appear to be frequently articulated without much public outrage, the trend becomes more disturbing when they become legitimized by Aoun, a powerful politician who also wields significant influence as the owner of one of the popular TV channels in Lebanon, OTV. (The name is short for Orange TV and comes from the color representing Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement.) OTV first began operating in 2007 and since then has become a legitimate and notable player in the Lebanese mediascape. To find out how reporters working for OTV felt about Aoun's opinions on women's lack of preparedness to handle themselves in politics, I interviewed Chirine Nasser, a female reporter for OTV. Nasser was well aware of Aoun's statements concerning the lack of female representation in the latest Lebanese cabinet and was honest in evaluating his responses as a "blow for women."

However, she was also quick to point out that the lack of women in political leadership is not simply a matter of gender inequality, but rather indicates a larger, systemic problem with the Lebanese political hierarchy, which almost by default demands covering the world of politics as an exclusively male place, where women are seen more as visitors than permanent residents. In addition, Nasser pointed out that, regardless of their lack of visible presence in the media, female politicians like Sethrida Geagea are equally skilled and charismatic as their male counterparts, if not even more. In fact, asked whether she considered Geagea's physical beauty a drawback or an advantage to her political career, Nasser said, "She is most importantly a skilled leader, but it certainly helps that she is noticeably beautiful."\*

## Conclusions

The current situation is clearly not favorable to the political positioning of Lebanese women. Not only are there fewer women MPs, but there are also no female ministers, virtually erasing their presence from the echelons of executive power. The decrease in women's

representation has been markedly notable, as al-Rahbani (2009) contended, leading to a considerable nose dive, from 34 female candidates in 2000 to just 14 in 2004, to 12 in 2009, accounting for less than two percent of overall candidates. Even more alarming is the fact that the newly appointed Lebanese government does not have a single female minister.

Although the complex political environment that has come to define Lebanon as an extremely volatile state can perhaps account for the dismal representation of women in political power, it must also be noted that both the media and the predominantly patriarchal political establishment—often in accord with each other—are also to blame. Michel Aoun's role comes to the fore as exemplary, both as what al-Rahbani calls "the male chauvinistic mentality" and as a glaring example of how members of the male political establishment can legitimize and normalize the absence of women in political power, using gender-mediated rhetoric and delivering it from their own media outlet. In the case of Aoun, OTV has become the network where his political ideology is articulated and his position as wielder of social and culture power is solidified. Confidently, he proclaimed, "No one has the right to question my OTV channel. Weekly questions for OTV officials will not be allowed."\*\*

The dismissive and often implicitly condescending attitude toward women's place in Lebanese politics is without doubt a byproduct of the region's deeply ingrained patriarchy, but it must also be reflected through the eminent role family structure plays in Lebanese society. Not unlike communist Bulgaria, where women's positioning in the political realm was seemingly attributed to their democratic ascent to power when in fact it was possible mostly because of the woman's communist pedigree (usually directly related to her father's role in the socialist revolution), in Lebanon family ties seem to present the most powerful, indisputable qualification for the few female MPs currently in power. As Joseph and Slyomovics (2001) argue, family represents the most reliable network of support and at the same time, an insurmountable bastion of patriarchal power, denying access to the woman who wishes to enter the political field:

For women, these continuities among family, civil society, and state mean that they confront patriarchy in every sphere . . . The outcome is that women and juniors must be embedded in familial relationships to make most effective use of the institutions in these spheres and are therefore subject to patriarchal norms and relationships even in public spaces. Yet most of women and juniors would argue for retention of these familial relationships because the ties also provide support (p. 5).

In this sense, the network of support provided either by familial relations or by institutional ties based on political kinship becomes critical in launching anyone's political career. In the case of Bulgarian women, that network of support was explicitly provided by the Communist Party, whose major goal was to propagate the participation of women in public life as a means of advocating gender equity. Thus, within the Bulgarian context, there was an engineered sense of solidarity, a political sisterhood, which was created and further promoted by the socialist ideology of female camaraderie. In Lebanon, while

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*\*Sethrida Geagea was voted number ten on SPIKE's network list of the sexiest female politicians alive. For more, see <http://www.spike.com/articles/2r1gtb/the-top-10-sexiest-female-politicians-in-the-world>.*

*\*\*For Aoun's remarks, see <http://www.yalibnan.com/2010/06/01/aoun-not-with-me-slam-your-head-on-the-wall/#more-9370>.*

women rally to one another's side when a national crisis ensues, that response is not always universal when it comes to exercising basic political rights, such as participating in governing the country. Though in Bulgaria the socialist female camaraderie was no more than a mask covering the realities of deeply rooted patriarchy, it served as a tool of political empowerment for women. That sense of collective empowerment, outside the family structure, is yet to be instilled among Lebanese women as part of their growing clout as political influencers.

The trend towards the masculinization of democracy in Bulgaria and Lebanon is expressed in the pre-eminence of macho-thinking and reinforced by a strong patriarchal tradition, often bordering on misogyny masquerading as crude political humor. This trend also stresses beauty as a paramount goal and motherhood as the most natural function for the woman in society. Thus it is not unusual to see female politicians portrayed in the media as wives and mothers, even when their public mention is based solely on their political position. This frame also reflects a wider discussion about how women can be social and sexual beings as well as mothers, housewives, and serious professional contributors, but the frivolous portrayals of female politicians in the media make it easy for their colleagues to label them vacuous and unfit for office.

Finally, the importance of forging strong relationships between female politicians and representatives of the media must be noted. In a country like Lebanon where the newsrooms are filled with talented female reporters and media professionals, these relationships can be critical in defining a woman's success or failure as a politician. However, as Al-Rahbani (2010) aptly points out, "the number of women working in the media is not an indication of their influence over content" (p. 21). It is alarming that the trend towards "feminizing" the journalistic profession— in Lebanon and Bulgaria—has failed to produce a lasting impact on the way political discourse is covered in the media.

This, might be explained by the existing political economy of the newsroom, which is intrinsically male-dominated and informed by the norms of the journalistic profession, often instilled in the minds of the young and eager female journalists by seasoned, well-established and, more often than not, male editors. In addition, as Abu-Fadil (2011, p. 26) points out, Lebanese media overall suffer from a "traditional inside-the-box mindset," which often hinders introducing radical changes in the way the media operate. For lasting change to take place in the political positioning of women in Lebanese society, the professional norms and expectations of the journalists themselves must be re-evaluated to delineate and remove any presence of gender bias or tendency to stereotypes whether conscious or unconscious.

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## **Social Construction of Reality Television: An Analysis of Print Journalism Coverage of *All-American Muslim***

**By Mariam F. Alkazemi | [alkazemi@ufl.edu](mailto:alkazemi@ufl.edu)**

Understandably, the perception of Muslims in America was negative after September 11, 2001. Immediately after the terrorist attacks, scholars sought to understand the impact of the media coverage on perceptions of Muslim Americans. Nisbet and Shanahan (2004) found that less than a third of Americans felt that Islamic values were similar to Christian values. Almost half of Americans believed that Islam encourages more violence than other religions, and 44 percent agreed that some restriction of the civil liberties of Muslim Americans was necessary. Those who supported restricted civil liberties for Muslim Americans reported fear of another terrorist attack in the United States, were more likely to self-identify as being religious, and paid greater attention to television news. These trends, published in 2004, may have been a natural reaction of the American public to attacks carried out by terrorists who claimed to be followers of Islam.

However, such negative perceptions of Muslim Americans still prevailed by 2011. A decade after 9/11 the Pew Center for Research (2011) found that while 21 percent of Muslim Americans believe there is substantial support for extremism in the Muslim American community, 40 percent of the general American public believe that Muslim Americans support extremism.

In a survey of 1,033 Muslim Americans, 28 percent say they have been approached with suspicion, 22 percent report being called offensive names, 21 percent say they have been targeted by airport security, and 13 percent say they are targeted by law enforcement officials. More than half of the Muslim Americans surveyed report being targeted in government efforts to prevent terrorism. Therefore, negative perceptions of Muslim Americans result in their feeling targeted by the broad American public and American law enforcement agencies—although they too are Americans.

More than half of the surveyed Muslim Americans expressed a desire to assimilate into American society and adopt an American lifestyle, but 49 percent self-identify first as Muslims while 26 percent self-identify first as Americans. Actually, Muslim Americans seem to have accepted many aspects of American life. The majority of those surveyed believe there is no difference between men and women political leaders, and 90 percent say that women should be able to work outside the home. However, the problem most frequently reported by Muslim Americans is the general public's stereotypes of Muslims.

This study analyzes 271 articles from American newspapers and news wires covering the television show *All-American Muslim*, which was canceled after one season on The Learning Channel (TLC) (Goldberg, 2012). Some companies pulled their advertising from the show after the conservative Florida Family Association (FFA) complained that the show represents Muslims in a deceptively positive light. The social construct of reality theoretical framework is used to examine how coverage of the controversy impacted portrayals of Muslim Americans. Such an examination contributes to the current understanding of media portrayals of Muslims, and the general American public's opinion of Muslim Americans.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Social Construction and the Reality of Muslims**

Rodgers, Kenix and Thorson (2007) explained the social construction of reality as a process in which social and political issues carry meaning through media images. They argue that visual images can be instrumental in creation of meaning because of the subtlety of how the information is presented. They considered the emotions captured in photographs to find associations between gender, age, and ethnicity and stereotypes of emotions propagated by the media. Overall, they argue that some portrayals of the emotions of minorities reinforce inaccurate stereotypes.

Interestingly, media images generated by the Indian cinema set forth positive images of the Hindu nationalist movement (Murty, 2009). Themes of “nationalism, masculinity and religion intersected during this particular historical conjuncture in the Indian subcontinent to form hegemonic patterns that represented and reinforced Hindu nationalism” (p. 267). In the six films that he analyzed, Murty argues that “the narratives of the films demand the suppression of religious identities in favor of a national identity” (p. 279). Islam “is no longer a faith, a way of life, a simple belief in a god; it is a dogmatic monolith, and demands power” (p. 279). Negative portrayals of Muslims as “violent, aggressive, and a threat to the nation, to simplify complex political and social situations and present an easy resolution” (p. 280) contrast with Hindu nationalism which shows the direction to be followed.

Negative media portrayals of Muslims do not affect only non-Muslim populations; negative media portrayals also impact Muslims. Focus groups with Muslim Australians conducted by Green and Aly (2011) reveal that Muslim Australians were afraid because of “constructions of the media discourse on terrorism in which they perceived themselves to be the objects of fear” (p. 67). At the same time, such media portrayals of Muslims made the general Australian public fear the religious conviction of Muslims and afraid that international terrorism might impact life in Australia. Meanwhile, Muslim Australians experienced fear of physical harm, worried about losing civil liberties, and in general felt insecure. Thus, negative media portrayals of Muslims impact the whole society.

Globally, efforts have been made by Muslims to create positive media images. Al-Jazeera was launched as a global news network by the emir of Qatar in 1995 (Cherribi, 2006). According to Cherribi, “before Al-Jazeera was on the scene, BBC world radio in Arabic was the most trusted source of information in an Arab world dominated by official state media” (p. 123). When France passed a law outlawing the hijab, the full face covering worn by some Muslim women, in public schools, Al-Jazeera framed the newly passed law as “a problem for Muslim women and men around the world” (p. 124). Cherribi argues that Al-Jazeera advocated Islamic values because their “viewers are exposed to many opportunities to see ads encouraging women to buy and wear the veil” (125). He counted 282 programs focusing on the veil—including one that was “as if CNN had an extremely popular Christian minister each week in a one-hour program live during prime time” (p. 132).

Another way that Muslims have attempted to construct social reality is through Arab reality television shows. Kraidy (2008) argues that because “reality TV’s protagonists are not media professionals,” there is a sense of unpredictability that “claims to represent reality” (p. 52). By depicting individuals from “separate nations, ethnic groups and classes, but also the socio-cultural hybrids in which the traditional and modern are mixed,” reality television manifests



modernity in the Arab world where Islam is the dominant religion. Such media portrayals have been criticized by Islamists in Saudi Arabia, who claim reality shows are “fostering interaction between unmarried men and women” and thus refer to the show *Star Academy* as Satan Academy. Though some shows emerged that were similar to *Cops* in the United States and *UK Idol* in the United Kingdom, Kraidy (2008) points to other shows that “reaffirm cultural norms but with a twist,” such as *Millions Poet*, which is broadcast on Abu Dhabi TV. Clearly, reality television plays an important part in the construction of social and political realities.

In the United States, *The Real World* brings “charged confrontation between people of different races to the forefront of the audience’s attention (Park, 2009, p. 154). Park explains that the program gives the cast “an unusual opportunity to speak for themselves and voice their critical opinions about race” (p. 155). Racial minorities are given an opportunity to share their experiences, thus contributing to the construction of social realities that may be difficult to find in more homogeneous regions of the U.S. The strategic function of reality television contributed to the creation of the television series *All-American Muslim*, in which Muslim-Americans were able to share their narrative with the general American public a decade after the 9/11 (Rose, 2011).

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW: Portrayal of Muslims in the Media**

While negative opinions of Muslims might have been expected to increase after 9/11, Trevino, Kanso, and Nelson (2010) found that American editorial writers were more careful in their descriptions of Muslims after the terrorist attack. They analyzed the portrayals of Muslims in editorials published in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Los Angeles Times* between September 2000 and September 2002. Their findings suggest that most news coverage of Muslims was negative before and after September 11, 2001.

In fact, the authors found that most references described Muslims with words formed from the nouns terror, extremism, fundamentalism, kidnapping, assassination, murder, “killers, beheading, militant, jihad and guerilla” (p.13). Interestingly, the researchers found that neutral references to Muslims increased after 9/11, and negative references to Muslims decreased. They argue that although columnists and writers of editorials are expected to have a point of view, their research suggests “evidence of an effort since the 9/11 attacks to be more fair-minded and measured in the gathering and presentation of news and opinion” (p. 14).

Ibrahim (2008) has argued that Muslims are presented as either friendly or hostile, depending on their nationality. Her qualitative research examined the frames used on television news from September 11 - 25, 2001 in the portrayals of various countries with a majority of Muslims. Three were American allies: Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Ibrahim compared their portrayals to four countries with which the U.S. has a more hostile relationship: Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya. Her findings suggest that network anchors made an effort to identify American allies as “friends of the United States, not as countries who were implicated in the attacks despite the fact that the hijackers included Saudis and Egyptians” (p. 293). While “the networks chose to marginalize Arab opinion and decontextualize the anger in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt,” representatives of countries that criticize American foreign policy were “marginalized and framed as irrational by network reporters” (p. 294). Therefore, Ibrahim’s research suggests that the dichotomy presented to the general American public is that there are friendly Muslims and hostile Muslims.

The idea that some Muslims are portrayed positively while others are portrayed negatively is interesting. All-American Muslim is a reality television show that lets Muslim Americans from Michigan present their lives to the general American public. Media coverage of the television show could have supported American Muslims or not. Because of the controversy around the show contributed to increasing the viewership (Goldberg, 2012), the tone of the print coverage is worth investigating.

### **RQ1: How does the article portray All-American Muslims?**

The tone in which print news coverage depicts the reality television show is important to understand the media messages with regard to the show. Ibrahim (2008) found that many Arabs from predominantly Muslim countries are articulate enough in English to communicate to western audiences. According to Ibrahim, television news coverage in the two weeks after the 9/11 attacks marked “a major shift from earlier years, when reporters would find it difficult to find an Arab who was highly articulate and appealed to a western audience” (p. 294). Noteworthy is Ibrahim’s conclusion that “there are more Arab experts quoted on TV than there were twenty years before the September 11 attacks” (p. 294), and her description of such experts as “articulate and know[ing] how to make their messages and viewpoints relate to Americans” (p. 294).

The language barrier is a problem, but has been decreasing since 9/11. More English-speaking experts translates into more potential sources for American journalists. Moreover, advocacy for Muslim Americans today is more prominent since two U.S. Congressmen are Muslim (Newton-Small, 2010).

### **RQ2: How does print newspaper coverage of All-American Muslim portray advocacy for and against the television show or Muslim Americans?**

Since the program was broadcast on TLC to increase the awareness of issues facing Muslim Americans in the post-9/11 world, it is useful to examine the proportion of articles advocating for or against Muslim Americans. This is particularly interesting because the show clearly illustrates that there are many Muslim Americans who can articulate the cohesion of their American and Islamic values.

The emergence of eloquent Muslim representatives in the English-language news makes sense, considering that most Muslims immigrated to the United States in the 1990s while the emergence of a Muslim identity in Great Britain occurred in the late 1980s. (Pew, 2011; Meer, Dwyer, & Modood, 2010). Meer, Dwyer, and Modood examined 497 news items published in the British press after a British politician wrote in a column in the Lancashire Telegraph that he requires Muslim women to unveil their faces when meeting with him. The analyzed data included letters to the editors, and the authors concluded that Muslims in Britain are only recently portrayed in the media as not marginalized, though they have not yet reached mainstream status.

Letters to the editor can be used by Muslims to influence the way media portray them. Atkin and Richardson (2007) say that though arguing is a necessary part of conflict resolution, some letters to the editor in British media use “unreasonable argumentation” (p.13). Their findings show that “unreasonable argumentation about Islam and Muslims can, at best, hamper our

judgment and impede understanding; or, at worst, actualize and reinforce racial or ethnicist inequalities” (p. 22). Letters to the editors may help perpetuate positive media portrayals of Muslims, but they may also perpetuate negative media portrayals of Muslims. It depends on the content.

An example of negative media portrayals of Muslims is the association of Muslims with terrorism. *All-American Muslim* depicted the reaction of Muslim Americans to 9/11 and its aftermath.

**RQ3: How is terrorism portrayed in print coverage of the reality show, *All-American Muslim*?**

An analysis of the appearance of terrorism in print media coverage of the television show reveals its success at challenging the association of Muslims with terrorism domestically. Such prejudices are not limited to religious minorities. In the U.S. some regional differences have been found in attitudes towards gender (Armstrong and Gao, 2010). Since the show is based in Dearborn, Michigan, home to a very large Muslim community, one may assume that the local press would be more vocal about issues facing Muslims. Many Americans in other regions only ever interact with a Muslim through the media.

**RQ4: Are there regional differences in the way *All-American Muslims* is portrayed in reports about the show?**

Since the complaints against the show were coming from the FFA which is based in Florida, it is logical to assume that regional differences would exist. Regional differences in media coverage could impact media portrayals of the show *All-American Muslim*.

## **METHOD**

*Sample:* The current study employs qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Academic databases Lexis Nexis and NewsBank were searched for English-language news stories in which the words “*All-American Muslim*” appeared. From Lexis Nexis, more than a thousand articles were found; however, not all of them related to the show. Articles that did not relate to the television show were eliminated, along with those not from a U.S. source. NewsBank was searched for articles from the states of North Carolina and Florida which include newspapers not accessible via Lexis Nexis. Duplicates were eliminated, along with television listings. The result was 188 news stories published in newspapers and 83 articles from news wires. Thus, 271 news stories from print journalism sources were content-analyzed for this study.

*Coding Categories:* There were nine coding categories, including: type of story (news, review, opinion-editorial, or letter to the editor); type of sources (no source attributed, journalist, editorial writer, politician, organizational spokesperson, multiple sources, educator, activist or other); and tone (negative, neutral positive). Since mass communication researchers have used proportions as a method of testing attitudes towards gender (Armstrong and Gao, 2010), four coding categories were used to create proportions. For example, coders counted the number of paragraphs that mention the reality show as well as the length of the reference in paragraphs. Additionally, the coders counted the number of sources advocating for and against Muslim Americans and/or *All-American Muslim*.

Proportions were calculated to depict how many sources were advocating for or against the show to the total sources that advocating either for or against the show. Because some mass communications scholars have emphasized the influence of letters to the editor from a newspaper’s Muslim readership to challenge negative portrayals (Meer, Dwyer & Modood, 2010), coders included mention of terrorism (absent or present), and self-identity as a Muslim (absent or negative).

*Coders:* Intercooder reliabilities were calculated using ReCal, a web application that calculates Krippendorff’s alpha (Freelon, 2010). Graduate students coded 54 news stories or 20 percent of the data. The results of the intercoder reliability are summarized in Table 1. The second time the intercoder reliability was calculated, the Krippendorff’s alpha value exceeded .70 in the categories.

**Table 1. Intercooder Reliability of Coding Categories**

Category	α Value
Type of story	1.0
Number of graphs regarding show	0.97
Number of total graphs	1.0
Type of sources	0.86
Number of sources advocating for	0 .95
Number of sources advocating against	0.80
Appearance of mention of terrorism	1 .0
Author self-identifies as Muslim	N/ A*
Tone	0.76**

\*Because there are not many instances in which the two coders agreed data that fit into this category was present, Krippendorff’s alpha was unavailable although percent agreement is high (Freelon, 2009).

\*\*The category was collapsed from a 5-point scale to a 3-point scale the second time intercoder reliability was calculated.

The average intercoder reliability for eight of the categories was .92. Table 2 shows the frequencies of the variables

**Table 2. Frequency of Coding Categories**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>Type of story</i>		
News	190	70.1
Reviews	17	6.3
Opinion editorials	44	16.2
Letters by the audience	20	7.4
<i>Type of source</i>		
No attribution	86	31.7
Journalist	2	.7
Editorial writer	1	.4
Politicians	21	7.7
Organizational spokesperson	28	10.3
Multiple sources	124	45.8
Educator	1	.4
Activist	7	.7
Other	1	.4
<i>Tone</i>		
Negative	17	6.3
Neutral	74	27.3
Positive	180	66.4
<i>Terrorism Mention</i>		
Present	210	77.5
Absent	61	22.5
<i>Region of newspaper</i>		
Northeast	70	37.2
Southwest	38	20.2
Midwest	21	11.2
Mountain	18	9.6
West	41	21.8

The intercoder reliability for the story type was 1.0, and it was .86 the type of source. The intercoder reliability for the collapsed tone was .76. The average of intercoder reliability for these categories is .87. The region category was constructed by the author based on adjustments made to online maps (American, n.d.).

## DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

The strategy employed to address the research questions includes statistical and non-statistical methods. The first research question was answered using descriptive statistics. The second research question was answered using a paired sample t-test as well as a qualitative analysis. The third research question was answered using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis. Finally, the fourth research question was answered using a one-way ANOVA test.

Results

This study analyzes content in 188 news stories from American newspapers and 83 news stories from American wire services in which the television show, *All-American Muslim*, was covered. The 271 news stories were analyzed for type, type of sources, tone, presence of a mention of terrorism, presence of an author who self-identifies as Muslim, the length of the coverage of the show, and the number of sources advocating for or against the show.

A second coder coded 54 news stories, approximately 20 percent of the data, to determine inter-coder reliability. Krippendorff's alpha was used, and the average inter-coder reliability was 0.92.

The first research question asked, **In what tone does the article portray All-American Muslims?** The tone was coded on a three-point scale as negative (1), neutral (2), or positive. Of 271 articles, 17 had a negative tone (6.3 percent), 74 had a neutral tone (27.3 percent), and 180 had a positive tone (66.4 percent). The average tone was 2.60 with a standard deviation of 0.61. This shows that the majority of the portrayals of the show were neutral or positive.

The second research question asked, **How does print newspaper coverage of All-American Muslim portray advocacy against and for the reality show or Muslim Americans?** The coders coded the number of sources arguing both for and against the TLC show or Muslim Americans. A proportion was created to show the ratio of sources negative about the show or Muslim Americans out of the total number of sources for or against the show or the minority group.

Another proportion was created to show the ratio of sources advocating for the show or Muslim Americans out of the total number of sources for or against the show or the minority group. A paired sample t-test was run to compare the means of the two proportions. The results indicate that the inclusion of sources advocating for the show or Muslim Americans was much more likely in print news stories (difference of mean=.25 SD=.74,  $t(184)=4.66$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Therefore, a significant relationship was found between the likelihood of a story having more sources advocating for All-American Muslim or for Muslim Americans and the likelihood of a story that advocates against them.

Qualitative analysis further illuminates the answer to this research question. An example of a source advocating for the show is Sueheila Amen, one of the characters. In an Associate Press news story (2011) by David Bauder, she describes her reaction to 9/11. "It was the first time I realized that people looked at me as less American," said Suehaila Amen. "As a person who was born and raised in this country, it was very difficult'" (p. 1). Another example of a source cited by journalists is the Muslim U.S. Congressman, Keith Ellison.

Another AP writer stated that Ellison “released a statement Monday condemning Lowe’s for choosing ‘to uphold the beliefs of a fringe hate group and not the creed of the First Amendment’” (Anderson, 2011, p. 1).

An example of sources advocating against the reality television show or Muslim Americans was commonly cited and attributed to the website of the FFA, which complained that Lowe’s was supporting the show; that led to Lowe’s suspending its advertising. State News Agency, a news wire that focuses on political news published the following:

The Florida Family Association (FFA) complained that the show features “ordinary folk while excluding many Islamic believers whose agenda poses a clear and present danger to the liberties and traditional values that the majority of Americans cherish” (Mattu, 2012, p.1).

This quote was often used by reporters in a neutral setting, and by columnists who insisted that Muslims are ordinary Americans. A qualitative examination of the sources with clear opinions about Muslim Americans and the reality show adds a dimension to understanding portrayals of Muslim Americans in the American media.

The third research question asked, How is terrorism portrayed in print coverage about the reality show, *All-American Muslim*? The coders looked for references to terrorism, such as Osama Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, and September 11. The word fundamentalist was not included because it may or may not describe terrorism. The results are outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3. Number of Articles that Mention Terrorism, Categorized by Tone.**

	Mention Present	Mention Absent
Negative	3	14
Neutral	9	65
Positive	49	131
Total	61	210

The results show 80 percent of the articles in which terrorism was mentioned are positive, which may sound counterintuitive.

Qualitative analysis may explain the results. An example of how terrorism could be mentioned in print coverage of *All-American Muslim* is in an AP story:

Mike Jaafar, a deputy sheriff who participated in a Sept. 11 memorial service at Tiger Stadium in Detroit, helped law enforcement prepare for any problems related to the anniversary. He choked up when recalling how police officers in New York City were killed as they tried to rescue people at the World Trade Center (Bauder, 2011, p.1).

Even though the terrorists were associated with Islam, the quote demonstrates a distance being drawn between terrorism and the Muslim police officer from Detroit, Mike Jaafar. In other words, 80 percent of the articles that mentioned terrorism challenged the association of Muslim Americans with terrorism.

The fourth research question asked, **Are there regional differences in the way All-American Muslims is portrayed in reports about the show?** One coder listed the name of all the newspapers in which 188 news stories appeared. The author then constructed a region category based on adjustments made to an online map on the website of a professional organization (American, n.d.). The regions were northeast, southeast, midwest, mountain, and west.

The statistical test used to test the relationship between region and tone was a one-way ANOVA, with a post-hoc test. The northeast region included 70 news stories with average tone 2.48. The southeast region included 38 news stories with average tone 2.57. The midwest region included 21 news stories with average tone 2.71. The mountain region included 18 stories with average tone 2.50. The west region included 41 stories with average tone 2.63. The results were not statistically significant.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first research question examines the tone of the news items. The results show that the tone of the media portrayals of the show and Muslim Americans was mostly neutral or positive. The social construction of reality would suggest that the goals of TLC were met, “the decision – strategy, even – of the Discovery-owned cable channel to once again deep dive into an unfamiliar and potentially controversial subculture” in order to portray Muslim Americans as normal Americans (Rose, 2011, p. 1). From the perspective of the social construction of reality, the positive tone of the media portrayals of Muslim Americans is evidence of a process of re-creating the meaning of Islam in American culture.

The second research question examines the sources advocating for or against the reality show and religious minority group. Results illustrate that the sources were more likely to advocate for the show or the minority religious group than against them. By constructing a mediated social reality of Muslim Americans in which advocates speak favorably about them, the spiral of silence theory may be reconfigured. The spiral of silence theory suggests that most minorities often do not express their opinion, unless they feel the majority’s opinion is subject to change (Donsbach & Stevenson, 1984).

Individuals use the media to calculate the degree to which others would agree with their opinions before expressing them, except for an outspoken minority capable of changing the majority opinion when they feel very strongly about the subject (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). A change in the attitude of the general American public towards Islam and Muslims requires more advocates willing to speak on behalf of Muslim Americans.

The third research question analyzes the presence or absence of any reference to terrorism. The results demonstrate that most references to terrorism appeared in articles with a positive tone. Qualitative analysis suggests that the positive tone may overcompensate for references to terrorism in articles featuring Muslim Americans—a norm established in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. This suggests a shift in the attitudes towards Muslim Americans. The former stereotypes of terrorism may be replaced with perceptions of Muslim Americans as positively contributing members of American society.



The fourth research question examines differences of tone based on region of the U.S. The results show tone did not differ by region. Kaufer and Al-Maliki (2009) argue that some media like the Michigan-based Arab-American News provide alternative frames that are more consistent with the views of Arab-Americans. One possible explanation for the lack of regional differences is that while Michigan is home to a large Arab-American population, not all the immigrants are Muslim. Another possible explanation is the importance of freedom of religion in the U.S.

Finally, at least one of the authors of 12 analyzed news items identified as a Muslim. In an editorial the writer said the show “represents a slice of my diverse Muslim world,” while noting that its portrayal of Muslims is limited (Shadia, 2011, p.1). Such a reaction suggests that Muslim Americans feel an increased sense of agency, which could be the result of an increasingly fluent and assimilated generation of Muslim Americans—a new phenomenon since most Muslims began immigrating to the United States in the early 1990s (Pew, 2011). As Muslim Americans decide to break the silence and share their experiences of being both American and Muslim, a new narrative is likely to alter the social construction of reality for Muslim Americans.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

There are several limitations to the research presented in this study. One such limitation is the fact that only one medium was analyzed: print media. Another limitation may lie in the sample size of 271 articles. Finally, portrayals of Muslim Americans were limited to print coverage of the reality television show, *All-American Muslim*. Therefore the generalizability of this study may be limited.

Nonetheless, this study offers an examination of how reality television gives voice to members of religious minorities. Future research can expand the current knowledge of portrayals of Muslim Americans in broadcast media. Moreover, a content analysis of blogs written by those who self-identify as Muslims may be useful in examining what does not reach traditional media. Finally, a content analysis of Muslims that are not American may be useful in determining attitudes towards Muslims around the world.

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## Socially Responsible Journalism - The Kerala Model

By Swapna Koshy | [SwapnaKoshy@uowdubai.ac.ae](mailto:SwapnaKoshy@uowdubai.ac.ae)

### Introduction

Though the Indian diaspora is scattered all over the world, the GCC countries have a remarkably high presence of Indian expatriates. The number of Non Resident Indians or NRIs in the GCC alone is an astounding six million (Shamnad, 2011). Unlike in the US, UK, Canada and other favourite NRI destinations, NRIs in the GCC countries are mainly from the southern Indian states of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu with Kerala the main contributor. The favoured destination for Keralites in the Arabian Gulf is the UAE. In 2007 42 percent of emigrants from Kerala chose to work in the UAE (Zachariah and Rajan, 2007).

Along with the states of Punjab and Gujarat, Kerala has for centuries engaged in trade with far-away lands. In the early 20th century there was a considerable influx into Ceylon and Malaysia. Most of the emigrants were semi-skilled workers who picked up jobs in tea and rubber plantations. In the mid 1970s the Arabian Gulf emerged as a favourite destination for job seekers. Professionals - especially nurses, teachers, doctors and IT specialists - from Kerala have sought occupation in Germany, US, UK and various African countries for decades (Samuel, 2011).

### The Kerala Model

The reasons for the high migration from Kerala are many. Kerala is a small strip of land on the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent accounting for only one percent of the total area of the country yet supporting a massive population of 31.8 million - about three percent of India's total population with the highest population density in the country (Prokerala.com, 2011). Kerala stands very high on human development indices in spite of comparatively low incomes and GDP. This anomaly has been termed the Kerala Model.

Richard W. Franke, an American sociologist who studied the social situation in Kerala, presented interesting findings in 2003 comparing Kerala with the United States based on life indicators. Franke points out that though the per capita GDP of Kerala is only \$566 and that of the US is \$34,260, the life expectancy for a North American male is 74, while the life expectancy for a Keralite male is 68. Kerala's birth rate is an estimated 17 per thousand compared with 16 per thousand in the United States. Adult literacy in Kerala is also comparable to the US (Franke 2003). In 1991 the United Nations certified Kerala as 100 percent literate (McKibben 2011). Density of population, high literacy, and exposure to foreign lands all account for the increased emigration from Kerala.

### Media consumption

High media consumption in the state can be traced to the high literacy rates. Malayalam vernacular dailies like the *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhoomi* enjoy circulations that are the highest in the country. More than 12 television channels vie for air space. The presence of Malayalam media abroad is phenomenal as are the contributions of non-Keralites to the state's media. The first Malayalam daily *Malayala Panchangam* was published in 1846 by the German scholar, Dr Herman Gundert (Manalil 2003). The first Malayalam television channel Asianet is now part of the Murdoch empire.

Most Malayalam print and television media have Gulf editions catering to the diaspora in the GCC. This has been a boon mainly for the men, so-called bachelors, who live away from their families, visiting them, if lucky, once in two years for a month. This forced fragmentation of families has led to many social problems both for those languishing at home and those pursuing their dream on foreign soil. One such social problem has been termed the Gulf wife syndrome - the malaise that affects women whose husbands are in the Gulf for extended periods of time.

### **Keralites in the Gulf**

The situation of Keralite workers in the Gulf is different from that of the diaspora elsewhere. A majority are unskilled and illiterate who work as drivers, cooks, gardeners, construction laborers, and so on. Many pay hefty amounts averaging over AED 10,000 – for a work visa for jobs that pay them AED 500 per month. (AED 3.67 = USD 1.) This money is often raised from loan sharks or by selling/pawning family property. The onus is on the worker to return the money, and it becomes a noose around his neck. Even when working conditions are not suitable, and salary is unpaid, many are forced to continue toiling because of the fear of going back empty handed.

These men are easily exploited. Ignorance of local law also works against them, and many are incarcerated for known or unknown offenses. Some are isolated in farms hundreds of kilometres away from civilisation forced to work in unfamiliar surroundings under the scorching desert sun. For Keralite workers, this is an added challenge as the small state boasts 44 rivers, placid backwaters, two copious monsoons which bring 3000 mm of rain every year, and lush greenery. Many workers are cheated by their own kin and have nowhere to turn to. Some abscond from their employers and remain illegally in the country unable to travel home.

### **World of Expats – *Pravasalokam***

Social and financial pressures have contributed to the disappearance of workers of both genders. Financial constraints of families limit the efficacy of their search, and many are separated from loved ones forever. Help from the Indian government and social welfare agencies is inadequate. It is this wide chasm that the television program *Expat World* or *Pravasalokam* tries to fill. The program was one of the first to be aired after the launch of the Kairali TV channel in 2000. Kairali was a venture of the Communist party which was popular in the state mainly among the working class. In fact, Kerala had the first democratically elected Communist government in the world. Among Kairali's shareholders are some 250,000 ordinary workers, half of them from the Gulf region (Kairali TV, 2010).

Rafiq Rawther, the current director of the program, conceived of a 30-minute series introducing prominent Keralites who live in the Gulf. As the episodes unrolled, a team of nonresident Keralites brought to the channel's notice the plight of Kunju Mohammed who had sold one of his kidneys for AED2000. His story moved viewers, and the man was offered a visa and work. The success of this episode spawned many compassionate requests from the community in Kerala, most seeking information about missing relatives. The socially marginalized were featured on *Pravasalokam*, now an example of social activism in Indian television.

The presenter of the programme is P.T. Kunhi Mohammed. He has lived in the UAE and is familiar with the social milieu. He is also an acclaimed film director, actor, and scriptwriter who was twice elected to Kerala's legislative assembly. In each episode, Mohammed talks to the families of missing persons and reconstructs the story of their lives. On the screen a photo of the missing person plays for five minutes while words with details in English scroll. Contact details of volunteers in various parts of the GCC are also provided. The program airs during prime time on Thursday evenings. Since the weekend in most GCC countries runs from Friday to Saturday, Thursday evening is the start of the weekend. In the early years it was a half hour phone-in-program, but now it has become a one- hour show where families plead with their loved ones to contact them and talk about their hardship. Kunhi Mohammed's difficult job sees him in a variety of roles as mediator, supporter, comforter, and anchor all in one.

Here is a typical segment as reported at The Hindu.com, 2011.

An old, ailing mother, sitting in a television studio at Thiruvananthapuram, goes on air letting the world know that her middle-aged daughter is missing in Saudi Arabia. Naseema, poor and divorced, had left for Saudi Arabia 12 years back to work as a housemaid, leaving her two children in her mother's custody. She used to send money until two years before, but never visited home in the past 12 years. And, for two years, there has been no word from her. Apparently, someone else is in control of her life. The old woman, amid sobs, says she just wants to see her daughter once before she dies and hand back the children. "Could anyone help me find my daughter?" The anchor of the TV programme — filmmaker and former MLA P.T. Kunhi Mohammed — steps in and asks the Keralite viewers in the Gulf region to help trace Naseema. The television screen scrolls the phone numbers of the programme's representatives in the Gulf countries so that anyone having any information about Naseema could call. Then Mr. Kunhi Mohammed makes a direct request to Naseema (in case she happens to watch the programme): "Please let us know if you are alive. If you are in trouble we can help you out. If you have lost your passport, we can help you get a new one and we can also get you an air ticket to return home."

Hundreds of families have had the joy of locating loved ones in the past 11 years. Viewers of the 550 plus episodes have witnessed lives and communities changing forever. Missing people have been located in prisons, hospitals, desolate farms, and even brothels. Some had been missing for over three decades and were not recognized by their family. The success of the program has generated cries for help from other states in India and also from countries like Singapore. The number of requests keeps mounting, and the channel has limited the search to those who have gone missing in the past two years only.

Typically, two cases are aired every week though around 20 requests are received. The program also gives financial aid to the needy and sponsors the education of children whose parents are missing. The success of the program can be attributed to the dedicated volunteers and activists who lead the man hunt. The wide viewership of the channel in the GCC is also a favourable factor. Many viewers have been surprised to find that a friend they have known for years is a missing person or that he/she has another family back home. Ordinary viewers are as much stalwarts of the cause as the committed volunteers.

## Catalyst for change

*Pravasalokam's* contribution has also been to bring social awareness in Kerala about the dangers of falling prey to illegal job and visa agents. Advertisements run in various media to educate people about the rules to be followed when taking a job abroad. Prospective candidates are also advised to process their applications only through government-approved agencies.

The Indian government now has a dedicated ministry for overseas workers that champions them. In 2003 a compulsory insurance scheme, the *Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana*, was implemented for migrant workers. "Under the 2003 regulations, all entitled workers receive a minimum insurance cover of INR200,000 for death or disability; INR50,000 in the event of accident or sickness; and INR20,000 maternity coverage, among others" (Asian Migrant Centre 2005).

Programs like *Pravasalokam* have helped to expose the harsh realities of living in the Gulf. The flaunting of wealth by nouveau riche Keralites created unrealistic expectations about work and life in the GCC. Many of the expatriates rescued by *Pravasalokam* were domestic workers. In recognition of this effort the creators of the program were invited to witness the passing of historic legislation by the ILO during the Geneva conference in June 2010.

The amendment asserted that "domestic workers around the world who care for families and households, must have the same basic labour rights as those available to other workers: reasonable hours of work, weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours, a limit on in-kind payment, clear information on terms and conditions of employment, as well as respect for fundamental principles and rights at work including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining" (ILO.org 2011). Interestingly, many member nations of the United Nations including India with six million listed domestic workers lobbied against the amendment.

## Inspiring others

The success of *Pravasalokam* has spawned several similar programs on Kerala's airwaves. Malayala Manorama television now runs a program to find loved ones lost in the country. Amrita TV in association with the state's legal cell provides free legal advice to the marginalized who approach the channel with civil suits. The Australian TV program *Find My Family* which has aired on Seven Network since 26 August 2008 has a similar theme. In the US We TVs *The Locator* began broadcasting in 2008 and has helped to reunite families. The example of *Pravasalokam* may inspire other media into providing social empowerment.



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## Social networking sites: Expatriate and National users in an emerging market

By Donelda S. McKechnie | dsmckechnie@gmail.com

Sasha Kannan, Gladwin Menezes, Jim Grant

### Abstract

*This study addressed the literature gap about users of social networking sites in an east-meets-west setting with specific attention to expatriates and the country's Nationals. Dubai is the fieldwork location. Previous studies typically focused on a narrowly defined age group for the respondent sample, and little attention has been directed towards nationality. This exploratory study considered demographics, i.e., age, nationality, gender and length of time living in Dubai as well as purpose of use and views about privacy.*

*Following the literature review, two in-depth interviews from industry and two focus groups informed the development of the questionnaire. After pre-testing, the survey was distributed at seven venues around the city to obtain a population cross-section. Two hundred and fifty-four usable surveys were received from social networking site users.*

*This exploratory study identified that expatriates appear to use social networking sites as a familial link rather than a tool for communication. Comparisons for purpose and privacy noted differences across age, nationality, gender, and years lived in Dubai.*

*Research about social networking site use and users is still in its infancy. The sites appear to hold strong appeal for expatriates far from home and nationals who are distanced from others by society's cultural and religious values. Future research may seek to understand expatriate use with more in-depth attention to nationality segments.*

### Introduction

Social networking sites have been receiving increased research attention and interest. However, the noticeable shortcoming in the literature is that the respondent sample has often been drawn from the student body at university campuses in developed countries (Hargittai, 2008; Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009; Young and Quan-Haase, 2009). In emerging markets and developing nations, research about social networking sites is also taking place (Kim et al, 2010; Shen and Khalifa, 2010) yet, arguably, it is not keeping pace with the rapid increase in members. Enrollment is swelling in the tumultuous Middle East countries where sites such as Facebook have been an important vehicle for disseminating information among the people trying to change leaders and governments ([www.insidefacebook.com](http://www.insidefacebook.com)).

The purpose of this study was to learn more about the users of social networking sites in an emerging market. The fieldwork location was Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where the diverse population provided a unique opportunity to draw respondents from multiple nationalities and age groups within the context of an east-meets-west culture and emerging market setting. The result is a study that segments respondents by expatriate and national residency for similarities and differences across demographics including age that crosses two or more generations, gender, and nationality. Respondents' views about purpose of use and privacy have been addressed.

The research question was What is the reach of social networking sites in an east-meets-west emerging market? Three objectives that guided the study were: (1) to what extent do demographic factors indicate the likely use of social networking sites, (2) to what extent is purpose of use similar or different across demographically-diverse segments, and (3) to what extent is privacy a concern amongst users of social networking sites.

### **United Arab Emirates and Dubai**

United Arab Emirates is a relatively small country made up of seven city-states including Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The economy of Abu Dhabi is recognized for its oil wealth while Dubai has increasingly shifted to being trade-based. Total population for the country is estimated at eight million ([www.uaeinteract.com](http://www.uaeinteract.com); 2010). More than 80 percent of residents are expatriates. The remaining 20 percent are the host country nationals called locals or Emiratis. Laws preclude expatriates from applying for UAE citizenship. Eventually expatriates must leave as residency is conditional on employment. Age ceilings exist for job tenure in most industry sectors and vary according to education levels.

Dubai's population split is demographically similar, 80 percent expatriates and 20 percent nationals, as business investment has attracted people and industry from many countries. Despite the negative financial reports about Dubai in recent years ([www.uaeinteract.com](http://www.uaeinteract.com); 2009), it continues to be an important hub for east-west trade and commerce.

### **Social networking sites – membership growth**

World rankings for social networking site membership show UAE in second place (46 percent) behind The Netherlands (49 percent) and ahead of Canada (44 percent) and United States (40 percent) which are all more developed economically (Menon, 2008). The global average is estimated at 26 percent. Mobile phone penetration in UAE is approximately 352 percent (Staff Writer, 2010) with 75 percent of the population using the internet ([www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com)). Thus, new technology has become an indisputable part of culture in the country.

In the early days of the social portals, potential users of Facebook or MySpace had challenges. For example, telecommunications officials announced that areas within the sites, such as online dating, breached cultural and religious values and would be made inaccessible (Glass, 2008). The social aspects of these sites had generated more scrutiny than the business-oriented LinkedIn and the mini-blog Twitter. Intervention by government slowed but did not stop membership growth. Some companies began to shift marketing tactics and include the social platforms to reach target customers (admin, 2010). Membership on Twitter increased dramatically from early 2009 to 2010. One estimate was 300 percent (Menon, 2009) while another counted 15,000 new accounts over the period (Shabandri, 2010).

A change in Twitter's demographics was also noted; once the domain of internet professionals, the portal was being adopted by individuals for virtual relationship building and companies were signing on to Twitter as another medium in the marketing promotion mix (Lowe, 2010). As regional interest in the social networking sites grew, two portals - d1g.com and Faye3.com - were introduced to target Middle East users (Gale, 2007).

Arabic language and culture were featured to capture the non-English speaking segments who wanted access to social networking. Facebook, however, remains popular among users in the Arab world ([www.insidefacebook.com](http://www.insidefacebook.com)) for social interaction as well as “an organizing tool of choice for people in Arab countries attempting to promote freedom of speech, human rights, and democracy” (Kim et al, 2010, p 216).

### **Social networking sites – a definition for understanding**

Authors boyd and Ellison (2008) make an important distinction between network and networking in their seminal article. They suggest that network implies communication open to the greater participant body and thus visible to all in the network. Networking, they suggest, is the term for accumulating or gathering contacts and associations to build relationships of varying intensity and interests. In practice, then, network would describe sites such as Facebook whose interface is social connection. Gathering contacts for business purposes suggests that networking applies to a site such as LinkedIn.

Notably, boyd and Ellison (p. 211) refer to such sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.” Hargittai (2008) positions the social interface sites within daily routine suggesting that “the membership of certain online communities mirrors people’s social networks in their everyday lives ...” (p 293).

Social engagement, whether business or personal, connects people and their associations through the virtual setting (boyd and Ellison, 2008; Ellison et al, 2007). Arguably, network and networking are interchangeable terms as they are similarly related in the context of defining social networking sites for understanding.

### **Users as the unit of analysis**

Scholarship about social networking sites has become increasingly complex as the topic crosses various disciplines and methodologies (boyd and Ellison, 2008). Advances in technology have made it difficult for researchers to keep pace with the rapid changes (Kim et al, 2010). As a result, a common theme within the literature has been the user as the unit of analysis. For example, studies have focused on users’ demographic characteristics (Hargittai, 2008; Shen and Khalifa, 2010) and psychographic interests (Liu, 2008). In addition, constructs such as privacy (Brown et al, 2008; Young and Quan-Haase, 2009), trust (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009), and sociability (Hart et al, 2008; Lampe et al, 2008; Viswanath et al, 2009; Ferebee and Davis, 2009; Thelwall, 2009) or social capital (Java et al, 2007; Valenzuela et al, 2009) have been the subject of empirical studies. The number of users has been identified as one of the three key elements for the value-add that social networks contribute to business revenue generation (Enders et al, 2008).

However, Hargittai (2008) says that “researchers should tread lightly when generalizing from studies about the use of one SNS to the use of another such service” (p 277). Typically, it is users who attract users (Hart et al, 2008; Java et al, 2007) rather than random interest in a site that influences selection and joining.

The premise that users are central to the success of social networking sites adds greater emphasis to characterizing the segments and factors with the potential to influence selection including the association with other users. Hargittai (2008) adds the additional caution that review of any research should consider whether non-users have been included in or excluded from the research. If excluded, this may omit a key segment from the population and impact the interpretation of results.

### Using demographics to segment users

A noticeable gap in the research about social networking sites is that respondents are often drawn from a narrow age range. For example, students at universities have often been the sample which has limited empirical findings to age groups such as 18 to 19 year olds (Hargittai, 2008), between 18 and 30 (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009), undergraduates (Lampe et al, 2008), and 17 to 25 (Young and Quan-Haase, 2009). Gender response and nationality in studies about social networking sites are also limited (Shen and Khalifa, 2010).

However, user demographics have research potential as indicated by the unexpected result in the Valenzuela et al (2009) study leading to questions about the use of age and gender to definitely provide a “demographic portrayal of Facebook users” (p. 894). Their findings from student respondents 18-29 refute the “popular myth that Facebook is dominated by idle, young, female, upper-middle class college undergraduates” (p. 894). Pfeil et al (2009) compared teenagers’ use of social networking sites to that of respondents 60 years and older. The results indicated that the friend network of teenagers was generally +/- two years to their own age whereas older respondents’ network was more age diverse.

Membership in social networking sites has to some extent aligned with age demographics as members may initially join one site and then migrate to another as their interests change. Educational transitions appear to be an important element for this switching behaviour (Shih, 2009). MySpace, for example, was the domain of children and teenagers. After leaving school, users were likely to change over to sites such as LinkedIn as they entered the workplace. Additionally, site selection has also been influenced by culture and nationality demographics. Some sites, such as Friendster and Hi5 have been the preference for users whose first language is not English.

However, because some countries have blocked sites, they may have pushed traffic to other sites. Regulatory action was taken against Orkut by the UAE government (Bardsley, 2007) enabling Facebook to gain members. Race and ethnicity proved to be important variables in research conducted on a US campus with 18-19 year old respondents (Hargittai, 2008). The study found that “it is important to note that in this sample, users from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are not equally drawn to the various social network sites” (p.291). Thus, information about respondents’ race, ethnicity, and nationality provides key demographic information for understanding the users.

*Purpose:* Social engagement through “social interaction in a virtual environment” (Pempek et al, 2009, p. 228) is the underpinning premise of social networking sites. It is not unexpected, then, that research would discuss joining and belonging as the social capital derived from community membership (Ellison et al, 2007; Tong et al, 2008; Zywicki and

James, 2008; Pempek et al, 2009; Valenzuela et al, 2009). Yet intensity of the membership bond or commitment is not constant. Rather, over time, intensity is likely to change (Subrahmanyam et al, 2008) where “social links can grow stronger or weaker” (Viswanath et al, 2009, p. 37). For example, strength of attachment may be determined by such constructs as playfulness - defined by Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009, p 75) as “the degree to which a current or potential user believes that the social network site will bring him/her a sense of enjoyment and pleasure.”

While much attention has been directed to the social aspects of the networking sites, information about purpose and the extent to which users make activities such as messaging and communication into daily routines remains a gap in the literature (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009). The need for further research was noted in an earlier UAE-based study that found Facebook participation to be greater among females than males according to purpose categorized as informational, social, entertainment, and development pursuits (Shen and Khalifa, 2010).

However, beyond the academic literature, social issues appear to be shifting purpose of use and thereby opening gaps that will require research attention. For instance, health awareness (Nielsen Wire, 27 April 2009) and up-to-the-minute entertainment news (Nielsen Wire, 8 July 2009) were early focal points for information through social networking sites. More recently, the rallying of crowds for street demonstrations and protest support (Social Capital Blog, 2011) reveals a lack of knowledge about how social networking sites are being used during times of societal tensions and conflicts. The suggestion is that purpose may be shifting from being primarily communication to becoming sources of information for users to engage interactively in the message and the medium. Although this shift is already established, the need to understand purpose among users in emerging markets remains.

*Privacy:* Signing on to a social network site is done with the knowledge that “communication is facilitated through information posted in the profile (the user’s personal page), which often includes a photograph of the member and personal information describing interests, both of which provide information about one’s identity” (Pempek et al, 2009, p. 228). As a result, privacy has increasingly become a topic of interest. One view of privacy has been noted in studies about the degree of access and openness (Buchanan et al, 2007; Lewis et al, 2008; Debatin et al, 2009; Fogel and Nehmad, 2008; Young and Quan-Haase, 2009) and the extent to which users consider privacy when activating and/or corresponding within the social networking site domains.

A study addressing gender differences regarding privacy found that women are more concerned than men (Fogel and Nehmad, 2008). However, the Young and Quant-Haase research suggests that young people who are the drivers of social networking have instituted access barriers that strengthen privacy checks and balances.

For instance, students indicated that emails through Facebook were sent person to person rather than as wall postings. Additionally, students said that they had blocked users, deleted unwanted messages, and/or removed images or pictures that might expose or identify them.

Another approach has addressed privacy from the perspective that information in a personal profile conveys preferences leading to possible connections with others who share the preferences (Liu, 2008). Privacy settings allow the user to fit within a category or segment of hobby or leisure activity. Lewis et al (2009, p. 83) explain this privacy approach as “simply another taste, in keeping with the broader menu of cultural preferences that characterizes an individual.”

Thus, privacy may be a barrier to prevent others from gaining access to a personal profile, or it may be a gateway to reach others who share the same interests. In practice, this ambiguity may be less evident given that other issues such as social acceptance and culture may influence users. This may well be the case in markets such as Dubai and UAE where interaction between genders must adhere to religious, cultural, and legal protocols. The settings for privacy on social networking sites may be less a reflection of personal choice and more a response to cultural norms.

## Methodology

Information about social networking sites in emerging markets generally and the Arab world specifically is limited. Thus, this study began as exploratory research guided by the question What is the reach of social networking sites in an east-meets-west emerging market?

Review of the literature was conducted throughout the study as the topic is moving and changing fast. Initial fieldwork involved two in-depth interviews with respondents from industry with different perspectives about reaching potential consumers through social networking sites. The first respondent held a senior position at the Dubai branch of a well known international information services and research organization.

The interviewee's knowledge was based on the company's strategic alliance with Facebook involving research to obtain customer perceptions and views about advertisements on the site and brand recognition measurements. The second respondent markets to reach and recruit students for a major educational institution in the emirate. Information from the first respondent was valued for the marketplace insight while the second respondent offered views about demographics, particularly age segmentation for reaching target markets. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Two focus groups were conducted for the study. Respondents were selected by judgment and convenience. Six persons were in the first focus group, ages 16 – 20; nationalities were Saudi Arabian/Puerto Rican, Portuguese, Canadian, Indian, American/Palestinian, and Pakistani. This focus group represented the student-age respondents in the study. The second focus group was four working persons 25-39. Their nationalities were Emirati/Filipino, Emirati, Indian, and Filipino. Extensive notes were taken. The second group was recorded and transcribed.

The questionnaire was developed from the secondary and primary data collection. The instrument was constructed in three parts according to the study's three objectives. Part one contained demographics as well as the social network site(s) used. The option “not applicable” was included for respondents who did not use the sites. The need for this



option was identified in the focus groups which noted that not everyone has social network accounts. Part two focused on the purpose of use, the second objective. Part three addressed respondents' privacy concerns, the study's third objective.

The questionnaire was piloted with six respondents prior to being used in the field. Minor changes were suggested and implemented. The final instrument was distributed at locations in seven districts of the city to obtain a cross-section of the resident population. Surveys were self-administered and person-administered using convenience and judgment sampling. Two hundred and seventy-five (275) usable questionnaires were obtained. Twenty-one respondents (8 percent) indicated they did not use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or MySpace. Data from those respondents was not used in the analysis. SPSS software was used for the non-parametric tests, including cross-tabulations, chi-square and Kruskal-Wallis.

## Findings

### *Demographics*

The first objective asked: to what extent do demographic factors indicate the likely use of social networking sites. In addition to describing the respondents who participated in the study, the concern was also whether the sample was representative of the resident population – expatriates and nationals. This section of the survey asked about gender, age, education, and occupation. Nationality was an open-ended question which made it possible to later group the respondents into similar geographic and cultural backgrounds. Years lived in the country was also asked. The second part included information about respondents' use of social networking sites: choice and preference, whether a site was used for business or personal reasons, length of time since joining, and time on the sites each day.

### *Respondents*

The gender split for the study respondents was males, 51 percent, and females, 49 percent. The age ranges were combined to three categories: 25 years of age and younger (54 percent), 26 – 34 years (32 percent), and 35 years and older (14 percent). The level of education reached by respondents was high school (26 percent); undergraduate (55 percent); graduate, including PhD (15 percent), and professional degree (4 percent). The country emphasizes higher education which is seen in the high percentage of respondents currently in or having completed university studies. For marital status, the split was 70 percent single and 30 percent married.

The survey question about nationality was open-ended to collect specific information about the respondent's home country. Results were collapsed to six segments based on geography as well as cultural considerations according to Dubai and UAE population demographics. These included: India and Pakistan (29 percent); UAE (7 percent); Americas (north and south) and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand (11 percent); Middle East, North Africa, Iran and GCC [ ] (23 percent); Asia excluding India and Pakistan, Philippines and African countries bordering the Arabian Peninsula [ ] (18 percent); UK and Europe (12 percent).

Responses for occupation were grouped into seven categories: student (41 percent); manager (17 percent); executive (24 percent); entrepreneur (3 percent); professional (7 percent); non-working (2 percent); and other (6 percent).

How long respondents had lived in Dubai was also asked given the UAE’s youth as a country (founded in 1971). People come to Dubai for work. Many stay short term while others become settled and renew their contractual employment. Responses for duration in the country were: less than one year (6 percent); 1-2 years (8 percent); 2-5 years (28 percent); 6-10 years (16 percent); 11-15 years (11 percent); 16-20 years (11 percent); and 21-30 years (20 percent). For data analysis, 5 years and less in Dubai was recoded to one segment (42 percent). This reflects the transient nature of the population where the typical employment contract is two years or less.

**Which social networking sites & why**

Respondents were asked to tick all the social networking sites they use. Percentages indicated that some respondents are members of more than one site: Facebook, 98 percent; Twitter, 21 percent; LinkedIn, 21 percent; and MySpace, 6 percent. Respondents gave reasons for use as personal (97 percent) and business (27 percent). Site preference choice was Facebook (90 percent). The non-users (8 percent) indicated their reasons as not interested (48 percent), don’t want personal information published online (38 percent), no time (33 percent), and it is culturally frowned upon (5 percent).

Time on site was questioned from two perspectives. The first was length of time since joining: less than 1 year (15 percent), 1-2 years (24 percent), 2-4 years (39 percent) and more than 4 years (22 percent). The second was length of time spent on social networking sites each day. Respondents indicated less than 1 hour (37 percent), 1-2 hours (26 percent), 2-4 hours (14 percent), more than 4 hours daily (10 percent) and not every day (13 percent).

When respondents were asked which personal information they include on their profile, the percentage of yes responses were: photograph, 68 percent; email address, 63 percent; relationship status, 47 percent; and mobile (cell) telephone number, 19 percent. Those who reveal no personal information were 10 percent of respondents.

**Table 1** shows the results for content on sites cross-tabulated with four demographic categories: age, nationality, gender, and years lived in Dubai. Those 35 years and older were less likely to include their phone number and their photograph. The number of those who reveal nothing was higher in the 26-34 age group followed closely by the 35+ segment. UAE nationals were more likely to add their phone number (43 percent) than other nationality groups. Respondents from the UK and Europe might add their photograph (63 percent) but were less likely to include their phone number (11 percent), email address (44 percent), and/or relationship status (33 percent). This nationality group had the highest percentage (22) who reveals nothing.

Generally, females were not as willing to provide information compared to males with the exception of including a photograph. This percentage was similar for the genders: males, 69 percent, and females, 68 percent, include a picture on their profile. The highest percentage of yes responses for including a phone number on the personal profile was given by those who have lived in Dubai the shortest time (22 percent) and the longest (26 percent).

Chi square goodness of fit tests were significant for gender and mobile (cell) telephone number,  $p = .000$ , gender and email address,  $p = .010$ , and gender and reveal nothing,  $p = .015$ .

**Table 1: Percentage Yes responses for site content cross-tabulated with demographics**

		Mobile (cell) number on site	Email on site	Relationship status on site	Photograph on site	Reveal nothing
Age	<25	21	65	47	72	7
	26-34	20	58	46	68	15
	35 +	12	68	47	56	12
Nationality	India, Pakistan	19	71	46	66	6
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	11	58	42	73	8
	UK, Europe	11	44	33	63	22
	Africa, Asia	15	55	51	79	11
	Iran, MENA, GCC	25	70	53	66	8
	UAE	43	57	43	57	14
Gender	Males	33	70	50	69	5
	Females	7	59	43	68	15
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	22	58	46	65	11
	5-10	16	67	44	72	9
	11-15	4	61	43	64	11
	16-20	19	77	50	85	8
	20+ yrs	26	62	50	66	8

### Purpose

The second objective asked: to what extent is purpose of use similar or different across demographically diverse segments (see **Table 2**). Based on comments from the focus groups, interviews and secondary research, six reasons were selected for statements about purpose.

Answer options were Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. Strongly agree and agree combined showed the following overall results: keep in touch with family/friends back home, 91 percent; because my friends and family are on the sites, 89 percent; to find information about other people, 69 percent; consider social networking sites to be a key tool for advertising/promoting products and events, 58 percent; I can make new friends, 47 percent; and allows me to build business relationships, 37 percent.

These results along with mean and standard deviation for each reason are shown on Table 2. A follow-up question about the likelihood that respondents would click through on advertisements had 11 percent saying frequently or often; 21 percent said sometimes; 32 percent answered rarely; and 37 percent indicated they would never click through.

When cross tabulated with age, respondents under 25 indicated less agreement with the purpose “to build business relationships.” However, for age, responses for “make new friends” were lowest - 45 percent - for those under 25 followed by 47 percent for respondents 35 and older, and 50 percent for the 26-34 group. The older group of respondents, 35+ years of age, also expressed less agreement with the statement that social networking sites are a key tool for advertising and promotion of products and events (42 percent).

Cross tabulation with nationality indicated a high percentage of agreement for the purpose statements “friends and family are on it” and “to keep in touch with friends and family.” Respondents from the Americas and Oceania indicated 96 percent agreement with the statement “because friends and family are on social networking sites” and 100 percent agreement with “to keep in touch.” The purpose “to keep in touch” had the highest agree responses from all nationalities including UAE locals.

The lowest agree responses for the six purpose statements were “to make new friends” and “build business relationships.” In the first instance, 16 percent of respondents from the Americas and Oceania and 33 percent of those from the UK and Europe indicated agreement. In the latter case, only 14 percent of UAE nationals agreed. Notable results with gender were the lesser agreement from females (39 percent) than males (54 percent) for the purpose statement “to make new friends.”

For building business relationships, both genders gave similar agree responses: males, 38 percent, and females, 36 percent. When cross tabulated with years in Dubai, the purpose statement “to make new friends” received the lowest number of agree responses compared to “friends and family are on it” and “to keep in touch.”

The independent samples Kruskal-Wallis test had significant results for age with “to build business relationships” ( $p = .000$ ) and using social networking sites because they are a “key tool for advertising/promoting products and events” ( $p = .010$ ). When nationality was considered, two variables that had significant  $p$  values with the Kruskal-Wallis test included: using social networking sites to make new friends,  $p = .012$ , and keeping in touch with family and friends,  $p = .038$ . Gender and make new friends and gender with build business relationships also had significant Kruskal-Wallis test results at  $p = .002$  and  $p = .013$ , respectively.

**Privacy**

To what extent is privacy a concern among users of social networking sites was the third objective guiding the study (see Table 3). Five Likert scale statements, with 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree were used. Strongly agree and agree overall results were noted as follows: social networking sites are a privacy concern, 68 percent; I worry that my privacy will be compromised by information posted by others, 60 percent; I fear that strangers who view my profile are invading my privacy, 56 percent; I trust that social networking sites will not misuse my personal information, 41 percent; and I fear that what I publish online can be used against me in a job interview, 34 percent. These results along with mean and standard deviation for each statement are shown in Table 3.

When the privacy statements were cross-tabulated with age, the percentage agreement that

**Table 2: Percentage agreement with purpose of use statements cross-tabulated with demographics**

		Friends & family are on it	Make new friends	Build business relationships	Keep in touch with family & friends	Find info about other people	Key tool for advertising & promotion
Overall results	Percentage	89	47	37	91	69	58
	Mean	1.69	2.82	3.08	1.52	2.10	2.54
	SD	.981	1.289	1.392	.737	.949	1.366
Age	<25	89	45	23	90	69	55
	26-34	89	50	54	92	69	69
	35 +	88	47	47	97	67	42
Nationality	India, Pakistan	90	53	31	90	74	58
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	96	16	42	100	68	56
	UK, Europe	85	33	30	93	58	41
	Africa, Asia	87	53	47	87	68	64
	Iran, MENA, GCC	90	49	42	92	68	62
	UAE	79	57	14	93	71	57
Gender	Males	91	54	38	92	68	61
	Females	87	39	36	91	70	55
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	89	52	42	94	67	56
	5-10	98	37	42	88	67	56
	11-15	89	39	36	93	67	56
	16-20	89	48	19	89	74	48
	20+ yrs	82	46	32	88	72	70

privacy is a concern was consistent for the three categories: those under 25, 66 percent; 26-34 years, 69 percent; and 35+ years, 74 percent. Fear that information may be used against them in a job interview was also similar across the three categories: those under 25, 32 percent; 26-34 years, 37 percent; and 35+ years, 36 percent. The oldest and youngest age groups were least trusting about sites and information misuse: those less than 25 years (37 percent) and 35+ years (35 percent) expressed agreement that they distrust sites.

Cross tabulation with nationality showed that UAE nationals and those from Africa, Asia countries were more likely to agree that social networking sites are a privacy concern with 79 percent and 77 percent respectively. Percentage agreement about fear that strangers viewing respondents’ profile is a privacy invasion was highest for those from the UK and Europe (63 percent) with the Iran, MENA and GCC segment a close second with 62 percent. UAE Nationals were more likely to worry that their privacy would be compromised when information was posted by others (71 percent) and those from India and Pakistan were least likely to be concerned that information posted would be used against them in a job interview (25 percent). Respondents from the Americas and Oceania indicated their lack of trust with only 27 percent agreeing that the sites would not misuse personal information.

Table 3: Percentage agreement with privacy statements cross tabulated with demographics

		Sites are a privacy concern	Strangers invading privacy if view my profile	Privacy compromise when info posted by others	Info used against me in job interview	Trust sites not to misuse my info
Overall results	Percentage	68	56	60	34	41
	Mean SD	2.21 .963	2.46 1.109	2.39 1.071	3.13 1.322	2.85 1.102
Age	<25	66	58	59	32	37
	26-34	69	51	63	37	51
	35 +	74	62	59	36	35
Nationality	India, Pakistan	69	54	59	25	43
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	65	54	65	35	27
	UK, Europe	56	63	56	40	41
	Africa, Asia	77	53	57	28	53
	Iran, MENA, GCC	63	62	60	46	33
	UAE	79	50	71	43	50
Gender	Males	65	49	58	41	48
	Females	70	64	62	27	34
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	61	54	49	33	43
	5-10	58	47	57	27	47
	11-15	71	82	71	32	39
	16-20	85	59	74	22	37
	20+ yrs	78	54	71	50	34

Gender results showed higher agreement responses amongst females cross tabulated with sites are a privacy concern (70 percent); worry that strangers invade privacy if viewing a respondent's profile (64 percent); and privacy is compromised when information is posted by others (62 percent). Females (27 percent) were not as concerned as males (41 percent) about information on social networking sites being used against them and fewer females (34 percent) than males (48 percent) trusted that sites would not misuse information.

Fear that privacy would be compromised when information was posted by others was least worrisome for those who had lived in Dubai the shortest time: less than 5 years (49 percent) and 5-10 years (57 percent). The results from those who had lived longer in Dubai indicated greater agreement about the privacy compromise: 11-15 years, 71 percent; 16-20 years, 74 percent; and over 20 years, 71 percent. Cross tabulations of years lived in Dubai with trust that sites would not misuse information trended to less agreement as the years increased: less than 5 years, 43 percent; 5-10 years, 47 percent; 11-15 years, 39 percent; 16-20 years, 37 percent; and over 20 years, 34 percent.

Results for the Kruskal-Wallis independent samples test had significant p values for gender and I fear that strangers who view my profile are invading my privacy ( $p = .017$ ); information that I publish online may be used against me in a job interview ( $p = .049$ ); and I trust social networking sites not to misuse my information ( $p = .010$ ). Years lived in Dubai and I fear that my privacy may be compromised by information posted by others, ( $p = .031$ ), and information that I publish online may be used against me in a job interview ( $p = .031$ ) also had significant p value results for the Kruskal-Wallis independent samples test.

Table 4: Percentages for most secure networking site

		Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn	MySpace	Not Applicable
Overall results		56	5	11	2	26
Age	<25	67	7	5	3	18
	26-34	50	4	18	0	28
	35 +	28	3	16	3	50
Nationality	India, Pakistan	57	10	17	3	18
	NA, SA, AUS, NZ	70	0	13	4	13
	UK, Europe	48	4	7	4	37
	Africa, Asia	63	5	7	0	25
	Iran, MENA, GCC	50	3	16	2	29
	UAE	50	0	0	0	50
Gender	Males	56	9	8	2	25
	Females	57	2	13	2	26
Years in Dubai	< 5 yrs	61	3	14	1	21
	5-10	45	10	7	2	36
	11-15	70	4	8	7	11
	16-20	64	12	4	4	16
	20+ yrs	44	4	13	0	39

Respondents were asked to tick one answer only for the question Which, in your opinion, is the most secure social networking site? Answer options included the four sites - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace - as well as a “not applicable” option that security was not applicable to any of those listed. The results indicate that Facebook is viewed as the most secure site with results for security is “not applicable” as the second highest percentage (see Table 4). The results show that LinkedIn had the third highest percentage for views about security, followed by Twitter. MySpace was very clearly last amongst respondents who answered this question.



## Discussion

The research question asked What is the reach of social networking sites in an east-meets-west emerging market? Considering that only 8 percent of respondents in the convenience judgment sample did not use social networking sites, arguably use has reached well into the emerging market that is the UAE and Dubai. The age range and the nationality mix of respondents support this view.

This study has two main respondent groups: expatriates (93 percent) and nationals (7 percent). This differs somewhat from the population which may be the result of the small sample size (254 respondents). However, the percentages of each nationality group, according to geography and culture, are a reasonable representation of the diversity of the expatriate residents. Thus, distinctions that can be drawn through the similarities and the differences contribute to knowledge about users leading to results that may be generalized to other expatriate populations in emerging markets.

When purpose of use is considered, the findings suggest that expatriates turn to social networking sites because family and friends are members and to keep in touch with family and friends. Meeting new friends or using the sites for information about people or products and events are of less consequence. The high percentage of agree responses for family and friend contact may also reflect that all expatriates are transient according to the residency laws. Thus, expatriates appear to use social networking sites as a familial link rather than a tool for communication.

For UAE nationals, the country's indigenous people, the findings indicate that they too use the sites for contact with friends and family. However, this may be due to society's pressures that genders do not mingle prior to marriage. The notable result from this segment is that they are not likely to use social networking sites to build business relationships. It is likely that they network through direct contact in face-to-face settings or by telephone. As the results show, UAE nationals were more likely to add a phone number (43 percent) to their personal profile than other nationality groups.

Agreement about making new friends and building business relationships was lower among those from developed countries with western cultures. This suggests that western culture expatriates were not enmeshed by the host country's Muslim society in meeting new friends and, thus, reliance on social networking is not as evident as with those from eastern culture countries.

The respondents in this study span an age range across at least two generational cohorts. The findings show that the age group 26-34 is more likely to use social networking sites for building business relationships as well as for information about products and events than those younger and older. They had less trust in sites not misusing personal information which would explain that they did not express concern that posted information might be used against them in an interview. Apparently, they take more care with content – maybe because they are actively in the job market.

Gender responses indicated that females appear more concerned about privacy issues than males. Females were less likely to turn to social networking sites to make new friends than males. The data implies that females were more guarded than males about the way they use the sites. The unanswered question is whether this hesitation is linked to living as an expatriate rather than in their home country. Research that focuses specifically on female expatriates would increase knowledge about this exploratory finding.

The fourth demographic that was used for the cross tabulations was the number of years respondents had lived in Dubai. This was used to consider whether their approach to purpose of use and privacy changed as years increased. One finding was that using social networking sites to make new friends had higher agree responses from those who had moved to the emirate within the previous five years and those who had lived here for sixteen years or more. It is not unexpected that newcomers would use the sites for this purpose. However, the interesting point is that those of longer tenure also used the sites for making new friends. Because expatriates come and go, the need to replenish social circles comes as friends leave. The data supports this real-life issue.

Finally, respondents indicated Facebook as their social networking site of choice. This was not surprising given that respondents join for familial reasons – their friends and family are already members, and they use it to keep in touch. The site appears to hold strong appeal for expatriates far from home, and nationals distanced from others by society's cultural and religious values.

### **Limitations and future research**

An obvious limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size. The results of non-parametric tests might have had more significant outcomes had more respondents been reached. However, care was taken to collect questionnaires at several venues across the city to achieve a good cross-section of the populace.

One of the questions on the survey asked respondents to indicate the length of time they had belonged to any social networking site. The answer options began at six months and increased incrementally. This question was not used for cross tabulation for two reasons.

The first is that social portals are a relatively new phenomenon and joining has taken place only within recent years. Second, respondents' recall about when they had joined social networking sites may not have been sufficiently specific to facilitate distinctions across the data analysis.

Missing from the research were questions about whether expatriates had joined social networking sites since moving to Dubai and greater focus on those who did not belong to any social portal. As Hargittai (2007) noted, information from non-users is also important and not including them in the data risks losing a valuable respondent segment. However, the omission provides an opportunity for carrying this research topic forward.

In addition, the question that asked if respondents click through on advertisements could have been developed. This was an opportunity to identify the extent to which expatriates use social networking sites when seeking information about their home away from home. Extending the questions to include whether the sites are used as a word of mouth reference would also have added value.

This is an exploratory study that has contributed to the literature with information about expatriates and nationals in an emerging market. Future research may seek to better understand expatriate use with more in-depth attention to nationality segments.

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## **Section II: Education and Media**



## An Andragogical Approach to Developing Dialogic Learning through Wikis

By Brian J. Bowe, Jennifer Hoewe, Geri Alunit Zeldes

brianjbowe@yahoo.com | geri.zeldes@gmail.com | jennifer.hoewe@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This article examines the effectiveness of using wikis for collaborative projects in college journalism classrooms, with the principles of andragogy as a framework. The use of wikis in two journalism courses at a large university in the American Midwest illustrates how wikis can encourage learners to become more self-directed by engaging in online collaborative writing about how best to produce reports about diverse populations. Two case studies are related to journalistic best practices in the coverage of two sensitive topics: Islam and immigration. The content of these wikis was compiled into best-practices documents that informed the students' subsequent coursework. The documents were also published online for use in classrooms and newsrooms, offering a "real world" audience for the work. This article provides educators with an outline for engaging students in similar projects to improve their application skills as well as critical thinking.*

In recent years, educational paradigms have shifted from teacher-centric models based on providing instruction to learner-centered models focused on the production of learning (Switzer, 2004; Morris, 2004). Consistent with this shift is an acknowledgement that helping students become self-directed learners is one of the main goals of the educational process — the "North Star" of adult education (Grow, 1991, p. 128). Placed in counterpoint to pedagogical models, andragogy is defined as learning for adults where student and teacher learn together and from each other.

Thus andragogy provides a powerful framework for understanding what differentiates adult learning from childhood learning. Not only are so-called "Web 2.0" tools increasingly popular with students, but research also suggests they have potential to create collaborative learning environments (Wheeler & Wheeler, 2009). However, these tools are rarely developed with the specific needs of teachers and learners in mind (Laurillard, 2009). As more and more college courses migrate online, it is important to examine whether wikis could provide the interaction to enhance the student experience or give a voice to students who are unable to or unwilling to communicate in a classroom discussion setting.

Using the principles of andragogy as a framework, this article examines the use of wikis in two journalism courses at a large Midwestern university, encouraging learners to become more self-directed by engaging them in an online dialogue about how best to report on diverse populations. The contents of the wikis were compiled into best-practices documents that informed the students' subsequent coursework (and professional work as journalists). These documents also were published online, giving their student authors a publication citation on their resumes.

Furthermore, this article discusses the use of media technology to foster student interaction and growth, representing a method to educate practicing journalists as well as future journalists. It provides educators with an outline for engaging students in similar projects to improve their skills as journalists and critical thinkers.

This article presents two case studies applicable to self-directed learning and critical thinking within journalism classes, which should also help journalism instructors encourage accurate and objective reporting. It also provides a method for applying wiki-based projects in non-journalism classrooms.

### **Andragogy: An Approach to Adult Learning**

Introduced by Knowles in the 1960s, the concept of andragogy focuses on the ways adult learning differs from childhood learning. The exact nature of adult learners is complex. To better understand adult learners, researchers have examined biological, psychological, and sociocultural models, while integrative models have been developed to consider combinations of those three factors (Imel, 2001). When considering what it means for adults to learn, it is important to remember that adult learning needs are intertwined with the social context in which they are rooted (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Bandura (2008) noted: "People are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them" (p. 1). The phrase "not just" suggests that there is some interplay between human choice and behavioral predetermination, and educators should not ignore either.

To understand the complexities of andragogical learning, one must attempt to define what it means to be an adult learner. Research in adult learning examines participants with minimum ages from 16 to 25 (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Such a wide range is needed because learners progress into adulthood at different speeds. Similarly, the divide between pedagogy and andragogy is a continuum upon which learners travel as they develop and become more self-directed (Knowles, 1990). However, research suggests that learners should be making the switch from pedagogical to andragogical styles of learning by late adolescence (Knowles, 1990) — a period that encompasses traditional college undergraduates.

Andragogy is based on six assumptions:

1. Adult learners are moving from dependency to self-direction.
2. Prior experiences offer a rich resource for learning.
3. Adult learners' readiness to learn is associated with real-life tasks or problems.
4. Adult learners use education to develop competence to solve problems.
5. Adults need to know the reasons they are learning something.
6. The most powerful motivations for adult learning are internal (Knowles, 1990; Kerka, 2002; St. Clair, 2002).

Thus, if andragogy tells us that adult learners are motivated by goal- and relevancy-oriented learning opportunities coupled with experience-based problem solving (Wang, 2007), then the biggest qualitative difference between adult learners and childhood learners is the necessity to consider adult learners co-equal partners in the learning process. Vella (2002) asserted that the key to successful adult learning is a relationship that promotes respect between learner and teacher, adding that without respect "there is no honest defining of learning needs, no dialogue, no listening" (p. 62). Moreover, given their previous experiences, adult learners may be capable of teaching themselves to a certain degree. In fact, Wang (2007) concluded that an andragogical student-centered approach with adult students is a much better choice than a teacher-centered pedagogical approach. The incorporation of a wiki into a classroom involving adult learners results in equal partnerships that assist their learning.

## Courses Using Wikis to Create Best-Practices Documents

A strong critique of traditional teacher-centered educational practices is Freire's banking concept of education (1970), in which education "becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (p. 72). An important part of encouraging learners to become self-directed is adopting a dialogic approach to instruction, based on the principle that adult learners have enough experience to engage in dialogue with teachers about myriad topics (Vella, 2002). The following course projects engaged students in this type of learning environment, recognizing their participatory skills as andragogical learners.

## Research Method

To engage today's "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001a; Prensky, 2001b), the instructor of the two courses at a large Midwestern university chose wiki projects to generate discussions while also promoting learning in an online environment. This research investigates the effectiveness of wikis in the two case studies or courses detailed below. Research suggests that wikis are useful in the development of formative assessments which transcend simple grade-giving and promote dialogue between learners and instructors (Hatzipanagos & Warburton, 2009). They have also been found to encourage students' critical awareness of citing sources and intellectual property (Wheeler & Wheeler, 2009).

A wiki -- a website that allows individuals to interact through contributions and corrections to material that they create online -- was used because of the shift in contemporary news media toward online interaction. As media consumers continue to turn to the Internet for news, students need to feel comfortable working in an online environment. Wikis possess several characteristics that make them useful in collaborative learning environments: ease of use, ability to co-edit documents, automatic publication of contributions, and non-hierarchical control structures that give students ownership and control over their contributions (Larsson & Alterman, 2009). Furthermore, wikis promote teaching strategies focused on thinking in ways that allow classrooms to function as systems capable of growth that mirrors human progress (Glassman & Kang, 2011). Classroom use of wikis simultaneously promotes individual learning and building collaborative knowledge (Cress & Kimmerle, 2008; Harrer et al., 2008).

During each 15-week semester, the wikis used in both courses allowed students to write and share their suggestions, comment on one another's ideas, and edit the compilation of these suggestions to amass collectively agreed-upon lists of best practices. Figure 1 illustrates each of the primary steps in this process.



Figure 1. Model for wiki use in a journalism classroom

### **Case One – “Reporting on Islam” Course**

In the fall of 2009, a pilot course called “Reporting on Islam” offered students the opportunity to learn more about the complexities involved in such coverage. The class consisted of fourteen students (eight undergraduates, five master’s students and one doctoral candidate; seven women and seven men; all Caucasian except for one African-American woman and one Chinese woman). Ten students listed journalism as their primary major; two were majoring in international relations, one in comparative cultures, and the doctoral student was enrolled in the media and information studies program. Using a wiki, the instructor assigned students to contribute to a list of best practices for reporting on the topic. What ensued was the aggregation of current and past reporting experiences with examples from recent news media. The material was compiled, edited, and ultimately formed into a document titled “Best Practices for Reporting on Islam,” which is available online.

### **Case Two – “Telling Immigrant Stories” Course**

In Spring 2010, the same instructor developed a course called “Telling Immigrant Stories.” It gave students the chance to learn more about the diverse immigrant populations in the United States and analyze news coverage. There were ten students (five undergraduates and five master’s students; nine women and one man; all Caucasian except for one African-American). Eight listed journalism as their major; one was in communication and the other in American studies. Using a wiki, students collaborated to create a journalistic resource that presents answers to frequently asked questions about immigrants and how they should be covered by the news media. This wiki produced an online document, “100 Questions and Answers About Reporting on Immigrants.”

### **The Wiki Projects**

Before students were asked to contribute to their respective wikis, they were exposed to media texts, media critiques, and presentations by guest speakers. The media texts included recent examples of U.S. news coverage. Students also read scholarly media critiques and developed their own critiques through in-class discussions and analyses of news stories. Guest speakers ranged from journalists to scholars and included practicing Muslims and recent immigrants. Students were encouraged to make decisions about what constitutes fair or unfair coverage of Muslims and immigrants. They were asked to add to the wikis only after they had developed a basic knowledge of the topic and reflected on deficiencies in news coverage. The learning was self-directed, as it was left up to the students to identify and expand their own critiques of the media coverage. Their critiques informed the subsequent class discussions and, ultimately, the direction of the class, encouraging “iterative exchange of ideas and practice attempts” as suggested by Laurillard (2009) to allow student contributions to clearly influence the synthesis of ideas in the course, giving them ownership of their learning process (p. 14).

Halfway through the semester, the instructor enabled the wiki and assigned its use. In the first stage, each student contributed five guidelines for journalists to follow when reporting on Muslims or immigrants. Students were encouraged to submit specific examples from news coverage to illustrate the relevance of their submissions and to make sure their contributions were grounded in real journalistic problems. Since many guidelines were

submitted, some overlap emerged. In the intermediate stage, the instructor edited each document to merge similar submissions. For example, in “Best Practices for Reporting on Islam” several contributions mentioned the need to avoid generalizing about Muslims, since they are diverse; these were summed up under one topic: “Research Islam.” Next, students participated in class discussions and online revisions. By the end of the semester, a list of best practices was distributed to each class. The resulting documents show what a collaborative, dialogic approach to journalism instruction can produce in upper level classes.

### **Results of Wiki Assignments**

The effectiveness of online learning has been demonstrated in journalistic and academic contexts. The social nature of online tools such as blogs and wikis encourages the development of open and less formal dialogue (Hatzipanagos & Warburton, 2009). Wolfe et al. (1998) predicted that assisting students in generating Internet-facilitated materials would engage them and encourage collaborative learning. The authors presented four case studies and found journalism students effectively taught themselves by using Web-based resources enabled by the teacher (p. 43). More recently, Pena-Shaff and Altman (2009) surveyed students after their participation in online discussions. While some students identified disadvantages of the technique, a majority found it useful in understanding course content.

The wikis used in these courses proved a way to engage journalism students in reflective and collaborative learning environment. The students were able to consider the implications of poor news coverage (i.e., media effects) and justify the need for substantial efforts to increase education among journalists to improve reporting. Contributing to the wikis gave them the opportunity to share ideas with other aspiring or working journalists.

The results of these wiki interactions included classic reporting standards such as adherence to established ethics, accuracy in gathering facts, striving for objectivity, and using sources. The students found that journalists must better adhere to well established standards of good journalism enumerated in the resulting documents. The student work suggested that these standards should be practiced regardless of subject matter, including a strong commitment to the core democratic values of a free press. Both documents gave reporters an outline for how to avoid common misperceptions about Muslims and immigrants often perpetuated in news reports.

### **Effectiveness of the Wiki Projects**

These two case studies provide successful examples of how instructors can lead adult learners to produce better news coverage. Both courses facilitated critical thinking among future journalists in an interactive online environment. Furthermore, these courses created best-practices documents that are now available online as informational resources for journalists. Hoewe, Bowe, and Zeldes (2011) illustrated the positive implications of using a wiki in a journalism classroom and documented the students’ improved journalistic skills. Elaborating on those ideas, the wikis used in these two case studies provide more evidence that the method is effective. Both sets of reporting guidelines have been covered by the International Journalists’ Network (2010a; 2010b), which has users, primarily journalists and media managers, from 185 countries. The Media Diversity Institute, a non-profit organization headquartered in London, also posted the “Reporting on Islam” guidelines.

Furthermore, these wiki exercises produced tangible, practical results for the students, lending authenticity to the task, a key component of the success of collaborative learning (Grant, 2009). After posting the best practices documents, students wrote news stories related to the course topic. Students in "Reporting on Islam" produced thirteen news stories published by an international wire service and three published by local news outlets. Several were also picked up by an online weekly news site. The same site published three news articles by students in "Telling Immigrant Stories," some written by undergraduates who were not journalism majors. In "Reporting on Islam," another student who is not a journalism major received second place in a prominent national competition for newswriting on religion. In "Telling Immigrant Stories," one student received honorable mention in a national student radio competition for her stories about an immigrant-owned business and the increase of foreign-born priests in the state.

Interviews conducted at the beginning and end of "Reporting on Islam" - posted on YouTube - suggest that as a result of the course, students gained a more sophisticated understanding of Islam. On the first day of class in September 2009 and the last day of class in December 2009, the instructor asked students, "What is Islam?" One student's response in September reflects a motivation for taking the course and his baseline knowledge of Islam: "Basically, I guess I probably know enough to know I don't know enough about Islam to probably speak on it. So, I'm looking for this class to help me kind of have guidance on that as well."

Asked the same question at the end of the course, this student said, "It's a culture, a religion, a political expression that is a way of life for individuals. And individuals apply it in different ways. It is not monolithic. It's not something that is the same in all circumstances and in all universes and time. It's something that is changing that responds to modernity and is also at the same time traditional."

Taken together, the comments reveal that the course was meaningful for him: It "definitely made me uncomfortable at times, but honestly, that is how I know it was worthwhile ... It helped me experience a part of the world and this country that I never had before."



Figure 2. A screen shot of an article on the course "Reporting on Islam" published on the wire service.

In "Telling Immigrant Stories" the words of a student interviewed for a radio story illustrate how the course pushed students to gain practical knowledge: "I think it's hard to access immigrant populations and kind of put yourself out there because there can be cultural barriers and language barriers but I think it can really help you develop as a journalist and as a person."



Figure 3. A screen shot of an article on the course “Telling Immigrant Stories” published on the wire service.



Interviews with students, publication of students’ work produced in these courses, and coverage of the best-practices documents testify to the success of the wiki projects. This supporting evidence should encourage other instructors to employ similar methods as a way of promoting learning among adult students.

### Application to Other Academic Contexts

The wiki projects outlined here are applicable to non-journalistic academic settings. Figure 4 illustrates the primary steps involved in implementing a wiki project in a non-journalism classroom.

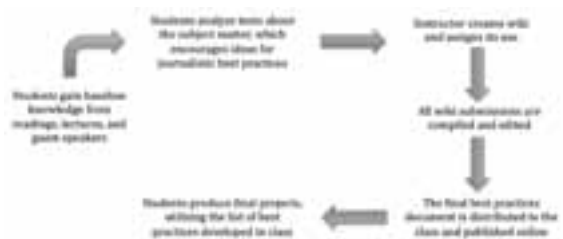


Figure 4. Model for wiki use in a non-journalism classroom

To implement this type of project, instructors should begin by providing students with baseline knowledge through readings, lectures, and guest speakers. Students should have access to a number of texts related to the subject matter. The texts should be critiqued as positive and negative examples of writing and research about the course’s primary topic. The critiques of these texts are fodder for the wiki submissions.

After the introductory learning experience, the instructor should enable the wiki. Students should be required to produce at least five entries to be included in a list of best practices about the topic. They also should have the opportunity to collaborate by examining other students’ submissions and providing feedback. The instructor should also provide feedback to each student. These steps will culminate in editing, compressing, and compiling the work.

The instructor should conduct a last edit of the document and post it online so the students as well as the public have access. Finally, students should be assigned a final project that offers them the opportunity to use the best practices document they created. As these steps show, the case studies described in this article show how wiki projects can encourage dialogic learning among adult learners.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Best practices for teachers dictate that teaching should match the level of the learners' self-direction while pushing them toward greater self-direction — a process that educators can either help or hinder (Grow, 1991). The wiki projects outlined in this article featured minimal instructor direction at key parts of the project; rather, they allowed students the opportunity for intellectual heavy lifting. As Wolfe et al. (1998) predicted, the use of wikis helped a faculty member advance active learning, reinforce community, and enhance the intellectual interactions among students.

The use of wikis in the two courses examined illustrates a way in which journalism instructors can help students cover specific populations more accurately; it involves asking them to work with their peers in an online environment that requires the analysis of common stereotypes and generalizations. The wiki projects empowered students to use classroom-based knowledge to critique the news media, media texts, and ultimately news media production. As students created their contributions for the best-practices documents, they generated a greater knowledge of Muslims, Islam, and immigrants while simultaneously improving their reporting. Enabling critical thinking that produced a set of best practices helped spur introspection among the future journalists in the courses. Students were then able to produce news stories with fewer instances of biased and unfair reporting.

Overall, the courses examined in this article provide a framework upon which other courses can be developed. They shine a light on the need for critical thinking within journalistic classrooms and sparking desire within students to produce better news coverage.

Similar to Weisgerber's findings (2009), each of these wiki projects served a twofold purpose, offering students a way of documenting their progress over the semester while simultaneously giving the instructor a way to assess their achievement of course goals. Ultimately, it coupled dialogic learning through an online tool with andragogy to produce an effective teaching strategy in journalism classrooms that is applicable in other academic contexts as well.

By developing their own list of best practices and using them to produce copy, adult learners use the principles of andragogy in which they can "participate in the diagnosis of their learning needs, the planning and implementation of the learning experiences, and the evaluation of those experiences" (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 85). Notably, students have varying degrees of ability to function in a self-directed learning environment — a situation that can become particularly problematic when a student who needs direction encounters a teacher who does not provide it (Grow, 1991). The wiki projects outlined here encouraged interaction in a collaborative environment with both the instructor and fellow students, which formed the type of co-equal relationship proven necessary by prior research about adult learning. The results bolster Yukawa's (2006) finding that wikis can play an integral role in encouraging co-reflection — a type of collaborative critical thinking that involves cognitive and affective interactions along with personal relationship building.

By allowing students to offer ideas and test their theoretical understanding in an environment where they receive feedback from instructor and peers, this combination of activities is congruent with the type of learner-centric framework proposed by Laurillard (2009).

Limitations, however, do exist if these wikis are not properly implemented. Cubric (2007) cautioned that student engagement in wiki-based learning projects is directly related to the frequency of instructor feedback and the clarity of the assignment design — limitations that educators should heed when conceptualizing such assignments.

While the results of one-shot case studies like these cannot be generalized, they may offer a necessary incremental step toward understanding the use of an online social media tool in educational settings, as suggested by Wheeler and Wheeler (2009). Since such use of social media tools brings both great enthusiasm and “moral panic” in the education community and little solid evidence has been found to support either perspective (Selwyn & Grant, 2009, p. 82), the case studies presented here offer some evidence in support of an enthusiastic and positive approach to use of these tools in the classroom. However, the design of the wiki tool itself can erect barriers to collaborative writing (Forte & Bruckman, 2007). This project did not conduct usability tests, and it is certainly possible that a different wiki tool would yield better results.

Future study should include the production of more classes that seek to produce best-practice documents. While some such information is available now, reworking it into a compressed, simple, and functional model will facilitate and encourage its use in both the classroom and the newsroom. Ultimately, the use of wikis in journalism and other courses will help instructors create in an online environment the kinds of “real-life” projects that may benefit adult learners during their formal studies and long after.

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## Teaching Converged Media to Arab Students: University/external partnerships in social media campaigns

By Cathy Strong | C.R.Strong@massey.ac.nz

### Abstract

*Although many students are proficient in using social media among friends, they are not necessarily proficient in using it professionally. On the other hand, organizations are struggling with using social media to get important information to younger people. They lack the resources and sometimes the experience to produce content for the social media sites.*

*The solution for organizations is to rely on graduates of today's communication programs. Educators face the task of merging professional communication skills and new media applications to extend students beyond what they already know from personal use of social media.*

*This paper describes a model to teach social media content skills to Arab students in the United Arab Emirates. The model relies on the educational theory of scaffolding and meets the needs of Arab learners working within a collectivistic and high-context culture as outlined by Ahmad Al-Issa.*

### Introduction

Using converged media means producing a story for distribution on several platforms including the traditional print newspaper, broadcast radio and television, plus the Internet for blogs, news websites, and the increasingly popular social media.

Communication training limited to one style such as radio production or print production is less valuable than training that encompasses all styles (The Missouri Group, 2010). The new communication professional requires a strategic focus as well as basic technical and content skills that incorporate converged media. As outlined in previous research studies (Aviles & Carvajal, 2008; Chung, 2008), professionals already in the middle of their careers find it difficult to adapt to the new converged media, a challenge for industries in western countries as well as Arab countries (Handy & Auter, 2011).

With increased demand for professionals capable of producing content for all platforms, universities should prepare their students accordingly. This paper provides a case study of an interactive program to ease female Arab students into learning converged media. The teaching model utilizes Al-Issa's study of Arab learning styles and Vygotski's scaffolding theory. The program was in the College of Communication and Media Sciences at Zayed University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The students were female Emirati nationals within a year of graduation.

## Converged Media Education

Most university communication courses are moving towards incorporating converged media into their curriculum (Dailey, Demo, & Spillman, 2005; Lowrey, Daniels, & Becker, 2005). A major impetus for including converged media is to meet industry requirements.

Journalism is increasingly using converged media technology and content to gather and report information to audiences (Straubhaar, LaRose, & Davenport, 2012). Although converged media is still being called “the wave of the future” in newsrooms (Missouri Group, 2010, p. 33), it is no longer considered new. For the past decade, employers have valued employees willing and able to work in the new media environment (p.33).

Professionals in other media disciplines such as public relations and marketing also must understand and master converged media (Rodman, 2010). Public Relations students are told to consider converged media and social media in communication plans. “Long after the buzz surrounding the terms is gone, the reality for public relations will be to include strategies that encourage or build on these tools” (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009, p. 361).

Converged media is divided into three segments: technology, industries, and content (Rodman, 2010). Converged media requires teaching students skills in journalism as well as digital technology such as producing podcasts, editing and uploading video clips, and writing online text with hyperlinks, as well as recording with video, audio, and photographic equipment (Strong, 2008). New information has to be produced and uploaded “at increasing speed” (Daily, Demo, & Spillman, ¶12). The issue of speed is important to this study because it is not easily taught in traditional university classrooms in 50-minute classes.

Converged media includes social media, another name for interactive Internet sites that develop a relationship between the producer of information and the recipient. This is true in journalism when a news agency asks its online readers and viewers to comment, and for public relations departments of companies and government agencies that use Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube for dialogue with the public.

Social media is what its name implies – social communication - originally developed for recreational use. However, for many younger people, it has become a key source of information. This is particularly true in the Arab countries that now have the digital infrastructure for people to use social media (Dubai School of Government, 2011).

Although several studies have explored various methods of teaching converged media (Bhuiyan, 2010; Dailey, Demo, & Spillman, 2005; Strong, 2008), few are based on teaching Arab students, who require a customized approach to satisfy their unique learning needs. These needs have been documented by Al-Issa (2005).

Additional challenges arise with teaching converged journalism in the United Arab Emirates because journalism itself is a fairly new industry. Daily newspapers are less than 50 years old (Kirat, 2005), and literacy has only become common in the past 40 years (Hammoud, 2006). The country itself celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2011. Media have more constraints than in Taiwan, New Zealand, or North America. Therefore, students do not have local role models among journalists, and becoming journalist is not something that most Emirati parents would consider appropriate for their daughters.



Despite the relative newness of literacy and formal education, citizens are rapidly catching up with other parts of the world (Strong & Hareb, 2011). Emiratis are flocking to universities, which are free for them. Emirati females in particular are becoming well educated, and make up 76 percent of university students (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 2012).

Digital fluency is very high in the country. A recent government survey showed that 79 percent of the population has regular access to the Internet, and half of them use social media (TRA, 2010). Emirati females are particularly digitally fluent with easy access to computers and software (Piecowye, 2003; Walters & Jendli, 2006). A 2011 study of young female Emiratis showed that one-third had two or more mobile phones, and were heavy users of Twitter (Strong & Hareb, 2011).

### **Scaffolding Pedagogy**

For the past 70 years academics have accepted the theory of scaffolding as an effective method for learning new skills (Donato, 1994). Scaffolding, first devised by Leo Vygotski in the 1930s, requires the teacher to build on what the student already knows. Learning moves cohesively from existing knowledge to new knowledge. The theory posits that teachers should act as coaches to develop learning activities whereby students “can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competency” (p 4). Tasks are interesting, fun, and simple enough to maintain the students’ interest, and they can gauge their work against the ideal (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976, cited in Donato, 1994.).

Successful scaffolding requires the teacher to provide the student with ample preparation so that she can successfully perform the new skills or incorporate the knowledge. As McKenzie reports in the chapter “Scaffolding for Success” (1999), scaffolding should provide clear instructions and clear purpose, keep students on task, offer assessment to clarify expectations, deliver efficiency, and also reduce uncertainty, surprise, and disappointment.

Using scaffolding to teach Arab university students has been successful (Bacha, 2010), but most studies have been in other cultures. A study of scaffolding among American university students learning a second language found that working in a group setting further enhanced learning. Students working in groups and talking among themselves to complete the assignment learned much more than a control group of students that completed their assignment individually (Donato, 1994). Peers automatically used scaffolding to help each other learn new skills, “the rich fabric of inter-individual help that arises in social interactions” (p. 52).

Teaching converged media to students in the United Arab Emirates brings a new twist to scaffolding. Whereas students in other regions may have a strong grounding in journalism and need to branch out into digital platforms, UAE students already have strong skills in digital technology, but need to branch out into professional newsgathering. On top of this, many Emirati students speak the local version of Arabic as their first language, but their classroom studies are entirely in English. Therefore, content both in terms of media format and language can be more of a challenge than the technology.

Students also require a shift in mindset because they consider digital information dissemination as recreation. Teachers criticize them if they try to use laptops or mobile phones in class. Students also feel they know how to use digital technology and do not readily see it in terms of professional engagement.

## **Arab Learning Style**

Arab students have a different learning style than western students (Oxford & Anderson, 1995; Reid, 1987), and all students learn more effectively when they are taught in their own style. When teaching style conflicts with learning style, students tune out, filtering out the information (Moore, 1999).

According to Al-Issa (2005) there are two fundamental cultural aspects of Arab learning style that differ from western learning style. The first is that Arab students tend to value collectivism meaning they prefer working towards a goal for the group, rather than an individual goal. This is manifested in the lack of competition for grades as individuals, but an eagerness to work for recognition of a group project. Al-Issa says that individual competition is considered showing off, and “harmony and interdependence of group members are stressed and valued” (p. 153).

The second significant characteristic of Arab students identified by Al-Issa is that they prefer that communication be contextualized, meaning they don’t rely solely on words for new knowledge. Students want to experience the knowledge in a physical context or to internalize it. Al-Issa contrasts this to western culture where students are used to being taught by direct communication, which includes reliance on lectures and instruction manuals. Al-Issa calls this the high-context learning style of Arab students and the low-context learning style of westerners.

The concept of high-context versus low-context cultures, developed in 1976 by anthropologist Edward T. Hall, applied to education contends that while low-content teaching relies on direct communication, high-context is indirect (Wilson B., n.d.). High-context students process new information from social cues and from non-verbal activities (Twu, 2000). Other characteristics of high-culture students are that they learn better in groups and in an environment where they can discuss and actively practice what they are learning (Haynes, 2001).

Female Arabs learning converged media face additional problems. Some are restricted in travelling outside the university campus without a chaperone. Others are not allowed to be photographed or to appear in media, thereby preventing them from doing pieces-to-camera or on-camera interviews as part of their media training, if the recordings may be seen outside the campus (Shakir, Shen, Vodanovich, & Urquhart, 2008).

These characteristics of teaching female Arab students were taken into account in a learning project that relied on student groups working in real-life situations. As a group and with faculty chaperones, students worked at various week long events gathering and producing converged media information. The students refined skills and knowledge gained in the classroom, but also learned important concepts of converged media in the commercial world, or independent businesses, or government departments. The project centered on social media content providers, as described below.

## **Scaffolding University Lectures to New Media Business Tools**

This project was conducted with communication majors at Zayed University, all female students, United Arab Emirates nationals who wear the dress of long black abaya cloak and shayla head scarf. Most are in their early 20s.

Using the scaffolding education model, teaching converged media starts with what they already know and are comfortable with, the technical side of converged media. With minimal class instructions, most students are quickly proficient in social media use and digital production: video and audio recording, editing, and uploading. Many own their own equipment and software. Most have Internet access at home, as well as on campus. Most have mobile Internet on their phone devices.

The next step was to lead the students from the comfort of their technology to gathering converged information with it. Classroom teaching concentrated on the skills and theories of information gathering. This included learning news judgement, issue of accuracy and objectivity. The classroom was also the venue to show students the level of quality expected in their photography, video shots, audio editing, online writing, and hard and soft article leads.

The final step in the scaffolding model was for the students to take their new knowledge into the professional world and meet the challenges of newsgathering outside the security of the classroom. This involved the university's social media content production team. The university and several Dubai-based organizations formed partnerships for the students to produce content for their social media platforms.

The team included students who worked outside the university and outside class hours on professional projects with extremely tight deadlines. About 70 students contributed to the team, although only 20 to 50 students worked together at any time on an event.

The challenging learning step for the students was to gather information from people who had not been contacted by the professor, and upload it to a corporate website for a global audience. Producing professionally acceptable content for an organization's social media websites satisfied the students' need to put new knowledge into context, and learn from social cues, as outlined by Al-Issa.

On the other side were six organizations that wanted quality content for their websites, particularly social media. They found it difficult to produce large amounts of new and relevant content continuously during major events while their own staffs were fully employed with other activities.

Each organization had an event featured on its website. Five were week-long international conferences or festivals, and the sixth was an eight-week long call for nominations to an awards event. All were in the city of Dubai. Two organizations were government departments, two were quasi government entities, and two were foreign organizations.

Each organization created a designated YouTube channel, Facebook page, Twitter account, and, in one instance, a blog site on the parent organization's website. Each provided a workspace with computers and equipment at the event venue for the students. They also gave the students access to all parts of the event and to celebrities or VIPs for interviews.

The students would cover the event by interviewing speakers, participants, exhibitors, organizers, or visitors on video. They also took still photographs. Photos and text were immediately uploaded to Facebook; video and identification were uploaded to YouTube; and links and direct information were tweeted on Twitter.

Students produced a total of 200 hours of video, and 285 edited clips posted online. Directly after the events, there were more than 50,000 views from 51 countries. The assessment from the organizations was positive. They all expressed keen appreciation of the students' work and asked for the student social media content production team to work with them again.

### **Elements of Success**

The most successful project was for the Road Transport Authority (RTA) which hosted the international transport providers (UITP) conference in late 2011. It was held at Dubai's World Trade Center, and was the second-largest conference ever held in Dubai, with more than 2000 participants from more than 100 countries.

In a series of focus groups with 40 students, the consensus was that the RTA conference was the one where they learned the most, in addition to enjoying it. The professor in charge also found that when the students returned to the classroom after the RTA week, they had a better focus and understanding of converged media strategies and skills. Therefore, this study concentrates on student attitudes relating to this particular project.

Prior to the content production week, the students researched global issues on transport provision and details of the exhibitors and speakers confirmed for the conference. Students were invited to the RTA Head Office where they met in a boardroom with the authority's public relations team. The university provided the recording equipment, protocol for sending messages from the official conference Twitter account, and a customized video clip to start and end each upload.

The students were rostered into 6-hour shifts during the week, depending on their other classes. At the beginning of each shift, students would determine among themselves (with faculty guidance) general assignments such as who would conduct an interview, who would operate the camera and sound, and who would edit and upload to the Internet. The expectation was that every student was able to take any of the various jobs.

The student teams provided a daily average of five video interviews each which were uploaded immediately to the designated YouTube channel. They tweeted throughout the day, with the Twitter Internet site shown on large monitors around the venue. Tweet messages were often about the interview currently being uploaded to the internet. Conference participants forwarded the tweets to their offices around the world.

Feedback from students was very positive, and they requested more opportunities to work in an independent team. It is sometimes difficult to determine if students enjoy an off-campus learning opportunity simply because it is something different, or if they truly extend their learning. This study used focus groups and individual interviews to explore how much students were able to learn while working in social media teams.

The research participants were students who had worked at most of the five events. Interviews were conducted the following semester, after the students completed the course to ensure there was no perceived linkage between opinion and grades.

The participants were asked what helped and what hindered the learning process while working in the social media content production teams. Responses were both verbal and written; thus no quantitative data are available.

### Learning Outcomes

What did they learn? They enjoyed the activities simply because they were away from the campus, but the series of focus group and individual interviews teased out what the students learned that added to what they gained in the classroom.

Several learning outcomes would never be available in the classroom. One was that newsmakers are more likely to give a student an interview, and a good interview, when the student acts confident. A second was that when students used professional-looking equipment (using a separate microphone instead of an internal one), the newsmaker talked to them in more detail and made more newsworthy comments. A third was that using professional equipment (external microphone, SLR digital camera, and/or higher level video) looked more professional on the internet, and also required less post-production correction.

Students recounted specific instances when they tried something they had not done before. For example, one student interviewed a municipal authority manager from a western country. The interview was on stage with many people watching, and the topic was moderately technical. "I was so scared. I never thought I could interview someone like that on camera," the student said. She explained that having the professor in the room made it easier. "She gave me confidence, and then I did several more interviews like that later. I loved it."

Another said her first interview was with an Asian businessman. "I think he was as nervous as me. That made me feel better," she said. Another student admitted, "I was never before so careful about getting good sound recording and watching the lighting."

One student noticed the poor sound quality in the large cavernous conference hall and with her own money purchased four special lavalier microphones for the team to use at the RTA conference.

A professor said it was enlightening to watch the students meet the rapid deadlines and observe how they were able to turn around a story from interview through editing and writing text to upload in a short amount of time. "In class these same students would be often late in turning in assignments, but in the peer-group team environment, they became conscious of the need for deadlines," she said.

The media skills learned during the event fell into two categories: new information that they thought they couldn't learn in a classroom and, second, information they had been told before, that was reinforced by the conference work. See **Table 1**

Students learned from mistakes that if they didn't check their digital equipment and review the information they received immediately after an interview, they had to return to the newsmaker. The problem was compounded when the lower-quality interview was rejected by team members trying to upload it.

**Table 1: Media principles learned on the social media content providers team**

Previous learning reinforced	New principles learned
Importance of open-ended questions	How to quickly and effectively identify news angles
Writing for internet and usage of social media	Preparation of question lines for different people
Developing question lines to elicit interesting quotes	Importance of correct spelling
How to position camera and microphone	Confidence in approaching strangers
Importance of meeting rapid deadlines	How to effectively get a newsmaker to be interviewed
How to make complex technical information interesting for the general audience	Importance of reviewing your data BEFORE ending the interview

Evaluation was also provided by the anonymous social media audience. The students received instant feedback if they uploaded an interesting interview with a conference speaker, as it received more “hits” within a few hours. In this way, they learned the value of selecting WHO they interviewed, as interviews with more important people got more “hits.” Global social media feedback operated with on Twitter. The more newsy tweets were retweeted by conference participants.

The students also felt they were treated with respect at the conference, and several students said that they were not treated as though they were doing student work. The RTA recognized the students as professional communicators rather than “only students.”

- 1.Top leaders of the RTA and the UITP made themselves available for interviews.
- 2.The students’ identification tags to gain entrance through security were labelled Press. The students felt this was an honor and more valuable than being identified as Student, Staff, or Volunteer.
- 3.They were given a comfortable and large workspace. It was a quiet corridor, but it had been set up with tables and seating, giving the students a quiet place to work and a venue for potential interviewees.
- 4. The RTA staff liaised directly with the students, giving them ideas for interviews and checking that facilities were satisfactory. It was a partnership.

The students who had been on several social media teams previously facilitated by the University were asked what made them rate the RTA event the highest. Table 2 reports those mentioned most often in two distinct themes: those that gave the students autonomy over their work and those that gave the students confidence that they could produce professional work.

Table 2: Characteristics of a successful off-campus project

Autonomy	Programme for Success
Students supervised and edited	Having professional, but small, equipment, ensured quality sound, video, photographs
Students decided who to interview and the question line	Urging from faculty/supervisor to push themselves into more challenges
Students were given full access to every place in the conference venue, including executive board room.	Professors were available but not leading
Students had the opportunity to do all jobs	Having the organisation acknowledged their expertise
Students solved own technical problems (best lighting, interesting background, less noisy).	Having specific Twitter guidelines set by the professors and organisation (which avoided potential problems)
Editorial guidelines were flexible	Being treated as professionals, not “only” students

## Discussion

It is clear that the partnership between the university and external organizations was successful and that the social media content team was popular. The students, the professors, and the professionals involved expressed satisfaction with the outcome. As shown above, it was also a valuable method for students to learn skills required in converged media.

Part of the learning project's success was its adherence to Arab-style teaching methods, as outlined by Al-Issa. The two main issues he raised were incorporated: using team goals rather than individual competition, and relying more on direct teaching methods that let the students interpret the significance of the knowledge.

The learning seemed to benefit from the blend of autonomy and coaching in the social media content providers team. The teams were loosely organized as determined by the students. In addition, the students could rely on two faculty members - one professor and one technician - for assistance, but at the same time were free to make their own editorial judgements and help each other develop converged media skills. Even on the technical side, the environment allowed students to learn in their way - to watch someone else (visual), or to listen to instructions (audio), or to try it out, and then determine what went wrong or right (kinetic).

The evaluation of their work was not the traditional grade from a teacher. Evaluation was peer-reviewed, as other students had to determine which videos were good enough to post. Evaluation also came from the "hits" on the Internet or "retweets" on Twitter that indicated they were popular media items. These were positive feedback for the whole team, therefore satisfying the collective nature of Arab learners' style.

However, the "group success" (described by Al-Issa as a goal for the students) was not only for their student colleagues, but also included the RTA. The focus groups showed students were eager to produce content that made the RTA look professional to the global audience. The leaders of the RTA were also Arab and were committed to helping the students succeed. This extended the concept of group success to include the organization they were working for, as well as their team.

One point realized from this study is the requirement for a project to program the students for success. Programing for failure comes when participants are given substandard equipment or cannot access newsmakers to interview. Poor technical quality and poor content lead to students' seeing themselves as "only students" instead of semi-professionals. Comments from students and professor indicated the partnership with university and external organizations was a positive learning environment for Arab students.

## Conclusion

This study explores a model of using traditionally recognized education methodology to teach new media professional skills to female Arab university students. It acknowledges that some venerable education theories such as scaffolding can help mold learning projects that catapult the students into the most current communications practices. However, this study concludes that the model worked well because it also incorporated Al-Issa's characteristics of successful Arab teaching methods - non-competitive, group oriented goals, and clearly linked classroom learning to practical application.



This study found that Arab female students responded well to a learning environment that gave them some autonomy. Autonomy, however, needs to be managed by the faculty in a way that ensures a high probability of success. Faculty can help ensure success by incorporating quality equipment, appropriate facilities, and available coaching as needed.

After the six projects, Zayed University's College of Communication and Media Sciences has a large group of students who are experts in social media content production - in Arabic and English. They have shifted from recreational use of digital information to professional use. They previously knew how to produce converged content to share with friends on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and traditional print documents. However, now they can produce content of much higher standard with a focused goal in a professional time frame. They have become a commercially valuable content production team able to access the new media audience on behalf of their future employers.

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## **Section III: Thinking about Media and Communication**



## Tunisian Media Aren't Quite Free Yet

By Magda Abu-Fadil | [magda.abufadil@gmail.com](mailto:magda.abufadil@gmail.com)

It all seemed so promising.

Tunisia rid itself of the shackles that had choked it for 23 years under the oppressive rule of Zine El Abdine Ben Ali and the media started breathing easier when journalists, bloggers and activists of all stripes made up for lost time with a vengeance.

But since that unforgettable December 2010 when Mohammad Bouazizi set himself ablaze to protest being roughed up by a policewoman and died of his burns, it's been a bumpy ride for Tunisian media and there was still no light at the end of the tunnel at press-time.

It was encouraging to see first-time, post-revolution satirical newspapers like *Al Qatoos* [The Cat] (<http://www.daralhayat.com/print/309966>) emerge on the scene, since publisher Salim Boukhazir had made a career of being anti-ancien regime.

He told Agence France-Presse in September 2011 that "This type of journalism is the most potent weapon against fear and is the closest to readers," noting that comedy was a remedy for people who had grown tired of desperation and hardship.

Boukhazir likened himself to "the cat" who may not have been able to topple the old regime with his companions, but who had managed to make enough of a racket by publishing satirical articles in more than one vehicle to prevent Ben Ali from sleeping.

He was arrested in November 2007 and jailed for eight months on charges of attacking a security officer, refusing to identify himself, and assaulting high morals, which various sources considered a cover for retribution against the journalist who dared to uncover corruption and abuse of power by the regime and its cronies, the pan-Arab daily *Al Hayat* reported.

Many seemed heartened when in March 2011 *The Economist* magazine published a piece entitled "It could be normal, Tunisia is getting back on track" (<http://www.economist.com/node/18491692/print>).

It said Bouazizi's picture adorned the main street of his hometown Sidi Bouzid, banners promised to keep his memory alive, and graffiti across its walls exhorted the population to stand up for their rights and fight for their freedom.

It referred to the Islamist Annahda party that has since won legislative and presidential elections as promising all manner of reforms. "Its leaders say it wants to be part of a modern democracy with a separation of powers, independent courts and a free press," the article said.

Ironically, Ben Ali had visited Bouazizi in hospital after his self-immolation and in a TV address on December 28, 2010, the Tunisian president placed the blame for unrest in his country squarely at the door of foreign media, which he said had exaggerated the extent of the revolt and were egged on by certain political parties aiming to harm their country.

Tunisia's National Journalists Syndicate blasted the state-run media's censorship of events at the outset of the revolution that eventually toppled Ben Ali, saying the lack of clear information had led to countless rumors and interpretations.

As the International Freedom of Expression Exchange Tunisia Monitoring Group (IFEX-TMG) reported about a weeklong mission it undertook a month later, old habits die hard, and leave a foul after-taste.

"Scars left by the former regime remain apparent in the media industry, while the legislative framework left behind fails to adequately respond to the requirements of the emerging media stakeholders," it said, adding that freedom of expression groups were vying for a place in discussions that would define the new society. (<http://ifex.org/tunisia/tmg>)

According to IFEX-TMG, support for the independent press and broadcast sectors, plus promotion of professional journalism practices and thorough revision of the media legal framework were crucial criteria for the transitional period through which Tunisia was passing ahead of its Constituent Assembly elections in October 2011.

The Islamists won a majority and set the ball rolling for liberal and secular journalists who feared their newly won freedom would be overturned by Annahda party members who had been jailed, were in exile, and, would be intolerant of criticism or accountability.

Female journalist/blogger Wajd Bouedbellah ([www.wajdblog.wordpress.com](http://www.wajdblog.wordpress.com)) identified by the Twitter handle "Tounsia Hourra" (a free Tunisian) @tounsiahourra tweeted a message to her country's cabinet minister for religious affairs with a variation on Gebran Khalil Gebran's famous line, "You have your Lebanon, and I have mine."

Her version in a tweet to the minister was "You have your religion, and I have mine. You've turned [the Prophet] Mohammad's religion into one of killing and making it acceptable to shed people's blood and covering up instigation to murder. Shame!" Her outrage reflects other Tunisians' dismay at the turn of events involving not just Annahda partisans but hardline Islamic Salafists who harass journalists, beat them up, go after various media figures, and target artists and performers with claims of blasphemy against their religion.

Lebanese journalist and "Future TV" program director Diana Moukalled wrote in a column entitled "A Knife in the Face of a Painting" that Salafist groups had exercised extreme violence in reaction to a painting they said was immoral.

"These are the same groups that 'railed' more than once against films, exhibitions and photos as well as unveiled women students and gatherings related to expression and creativity, but the Salafists' latest outburst caused widespread security agitation across Tunisia that translated into the carrying of knives, Molotov cocktails and assaults on police," she said. (<http://www.aawsat.com//print.asp?did=682905&issueno=12259>)

The sense of bitterness is widespread among Tunisian youth and cultural circles, Moukalled reported in the pan-Arab daily *Asharq Al-Awsat*, as the new authorities had jailed an editor for publishing a picture they deemed x-rated.



She added that authorities treated the revolution's wounded who demanded their rights harshly, whilst it dealt leniently with those who attacked universities, faculty members, and were accused of beating up journalists and debasing the Tunisian flag to replace it with a religious [Islamic] banner.

"The Tunisian revolution called for liberty and dignity, not the establishment of a theocracy or a particular way of life," Moukalled said, adding that freedom of belief, freedom of women, freedom of the arts and the body were the basic tenets for the battle of democracy in the Arab world.

The debate over pro- and anti-secular values has been raging on Tunisian TV talk shows, with supporters of the former warning against the spread of intellectual fanaticism, while the latter charge their opponents with provoking people's feelings and values.

"Where did all these Salafists come from?" was the headline of a feature in the pan-Arab daily *Al Hayat*'s youth supplement on June 4, 2012. The Salafists' "emergence onto the political scene constitutes a new element that may turn intellectual conflicts in the country into bloody confrontations in light of the state's negative position," wrote Samira Alsafdi of the spreading religious trend.

Also in June, The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) blasted authorities for resorting to a Ben-Ali era anti-terrorism law to prosecute a Tunisian activist who had criticized police brutality on his Facebook page and charged him with burning down a police station. (<http://www.anhri.net/?p=55500&print=1>)

Activist Imad Deghij was being punished for his activities and defense of the rights of the revolution's martyrs and injured, a dangerous throwback to deposed president Ben Ali's police tactics, the Cairo-based ANHRI said. "ANHRI joins other Tunisian rights organizations in demanding that Tunisian authorities put an immediate halt to the implementation of the anti-terrorism law and turn that page forever."

The Nawat portal couldn't have been more expressive with its poster of a brain (<http://nawaat.org/portail/3mai12>) sprouting out of a tree trunk and the words "comedy, culture, creativity, thought, press, ijtihad [diligence], cinema and freedom of expression" surrounding the design.

On June 21 the site published a manifesto issued by assorted activists insisting: "Our revolution is not a rumor." (<http://nawaat.org/portail/2012/06/21/manifeste-notre-revolution-nest-pas-une-rumeur>)

In their opening statement, the signatories said that more than ever, their aim was to topple the regime. "Our slogan remains: work, liberty, national dignity." That slogan was the clarion call of Tunisian journalists demanding press freedom during the Ben Ali era and has been revived following the current post-revolution government's adoption of measures deemed suppressive of those short-lived liberties.

One of the problems the secularists and activists (with their respective members in the media) face, as in other countries undergoing transitions in the Arab region, is their disunity,

Fluid opposition coalitions seem in a state of disarray, which is reflected in their organizations, alliances and staying power, wrote Marina Ottaway, senior associate in the Middle East program of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Her commentary (<http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/06/19/tunisian-political-spectrum-still-unbalanced/c088>) entitled “The Tunisian Political Spectrum: Still Unbalanced” sheds light on the opposition’s fragmentation, which, in turn, is reflected in the media’s output and tug-of-war between liberals and conservatives over what can and cannot be published, disseminated, and broadcast.

The sore point of media censorship, long a thorn in Tunisians’ side, is back at the forefront of conversations, analyses, blogposts and other forms of communication. Under Ben Ali, the Internet was heavily censored, and this writer had to meet secretly with journalists in the capital Tunis to discuss press freedom issues. Several of them were under heavy surveillance and those who dared to speak out or write (in print or online) anything critical of the regime faced uncertain futures, or worse.

On that first pre-revolution visit, it was almost impossible to check one’s innocuous business email, much less send out subversive content. One journalist/activist is Kamel Labidi, who lived in self-exile for several years after being dismissed from media jobs and being harassed for his activism. He returned to head a national commission set up by the first post-revolution cabinet to reform and update the country’s media laws ahead of legislative and presidential elections.

But he was up against tremendous odds and younger journalists dismissed his efforts as too little too late, given the Islamists’ aversion to criticism and a free press. Labidi and his commission resigned in early July, charging the government with “censorship and misleading the public.”

After the revolution, access to the Internet was easier and this writer could actually send emails, tweet and blog during an international conference in Tunis. But, the new authorities may be reverting to Ben Ali type by clamping down on dissidents.

Jillian York, director for international freedom of expression at the San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation believes Tunisia could set an example for the region by standing against Internet censorship. (<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/201222381652993947.html>)

In an opinion piece on the Aljazeera English website in February 2012, York acknowledged the progress made in opening up the media’s scope of freedom but cautioned against crackdowns that would be a throwback to the Ben Ali days.

“That openness, however, was not without challenge: in May [2011], a military tribunal ordered the blocking of several Facebook pages, a move quickly followed by a civilian lawsuit demanding the blocking of pornography,” she said.

The Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) surprisingly stood its ground and appealed the decision on the pornography issue, she added.

But, she argued, installing a system of censorship “like the one previously used by the Ben Ali government (which was, incidentally, built by American company McAfee, owned by Intel) would leave the ATI vulnerable to further government demands.”

Interestingly, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) held its 5th Arab Press Freedom Forum in Tunis in January 2012 to “celebrate the major advances and underline the critical challenges still ahead for freedom of expression and the Arab media.”

That same month, Afef Abrougui expressed her concern (<http://wp.me/p16NIR-2QV>) about the army becoming a censor after it had helped topple Ben Ali. Her blogpost “Freedom of expression in post-revolution Tunisia: ‘moral’ and ‘legal’ new basis for censorship” on the Nawat portal referred to the censorship of five Facebook pages that sharply criticized the army.

Ironically, even the ATI had to backpedal on the decision, she wrote: “The Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) an eternal scapegoat for censorship in Tunisia, took in charge the filtering of these pages listed on the website: (<http://filtrage.ati.tn>). After putting into practice the decision of the tribunal, the ATI decided to finally lift censorship on these pages due to a breakdown in global filters, as it is indicated by the following message available on the filtering website: For technical constraints, the equipment at the disposal of the Tunisian Internet Agency (ATI) can no longer ensure a web filtering service in accordance with the requisitions (issued by the tribunal).”

While censorship was more political in nature pre-revolution, there’s been a drift towards religious and moral censorship, she reported, with Islamists acting as social pressure groups and Salafists calling for an Islamic state as well as the right of female university students to wear the niqab [full-facial veil].

It’s a race against time between Annahda partisans and Salafists on the one hand, and liberals on the other, who worry that media freedom may once again become an elusive dream. “‘J’accuse,’ you Islamists who are trying to unravel the state,” wrote Rajaa Ben Slama in a take on French author Emile Zola’s famous line from the open letter he wrote to President Félix Faure in 1898 in the newspaper *L’Aurore* accusing the government of anti-Semitism for jailing a Jewish army general, Alfred Dreyfus, on charges of espionage.

In Ben Slama’s discourse in the Lebanese daily *Al Akhbar*, the accusatory finger is pointed at Islamists and Salafists who she claimed had hijacked the revolution, used violence to snuff out liberal dissent, and tightened the noose around the media’s neck, all in the name of religion. (<http://www.al-akhbar.com/print/96049>)

She slammed the ministers of religious affairs and of culture for provoking fanatics and instigating to violence against liberal manifestations of media, art and culture.

“And I condemn Mr. Rached Al Ghannouchi [head of the ruling Annahda Party] because on the night of June 13, while a curfew was in place across the country, and our hearts were quivering, we saw him on state-run TV calling for demonstrations on Friday in support of what he deemed protecting what is holy,” she said.

The article was illustrated by a caricature in French of a bearded Salafist holding a club telling his fully veiled wife he was going to see an exhibition, under the headline “Tunisian cultural life” and the suggestion he planned to destroy the exhibits on display.

Although faulted for many misdeeds during his long tenure, Tunisia’s first post-independence president, Habib Bourguiba, was considered a trailblazer in the Arab world for granting women social rights and supporting secularism when other countries in the region stuck to their non-emancipation guns.

To Abrougui, the sensationalism currently pervading Tunisian media is very dangerous and may lead to the justification of a return to censorship, or self-censorship, that characterized the Ben Ali era. “So, making Tunisian media aware about their responsibility to disseminate verified and unbiased information is crucial in protecting freedom of speech,” she argued. “It is also crucial to reform laws that were used to silence protesting voices, and which today represent a danger to the fundamental freedoms of citizens.”

Four months later, the Paris-based UNESCO held its “World Press Freedom Day” in Tunis, which journalist Sana Sboui found highly symbolic. “The event boosted Tunisia’s fledgling democracy, and reinforced the idea that a free press is essential to the country and to others looking to it as a model,” she wrote. (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/ArticlePrint.aspx?id=177407&mode=print>)

UNESCO’s concept paper for the event *New Voices: Media Freedom Helping to Transform Societies* underlined the radical changes on the media landscape and new ways to communicate, share information and knowledge, and for people to widen their sense of participation, identity and belonging. “Yet, media freedom is fragile, and it is also not yet within the reach of everyone,” was the clear admission.

The concept paper also said that Tunisia had demonstrated the transformative power that could be brought forth by the convergence of social media, mobile connections, satellite TV and an earnest desire to fundamentally change socio-economic-political conditions, noting that the Bouazizi affair had started a domino effect that went on to reach Tahrir Square in Egypt, Benghazi in Libya, and other parts of the region. “The actions of young people have been crucial during the movement, and amongst their tools has been social media,” it added.

But, Rome wasn’t built in a day. Tunisian reformers, activists, bloggers, journalists and others who suffered under Ben Ali are eager to see radical changes in record time, which may not be realistic, as the dust has yet to settle on their country’s revolution. Their impatience is understandable after more than two decades of oppression.

However, the systems needed to ensure the freedoms for which they clamor are not fully in place, and many Tunisians working in the media have to learn how to become journalists. Foreign funders have been quick to jump on the reform, teaching, and training bandwagon, as most do when regimes change.

Their efforts will only bear fruit when they provide sustainable financial and technical support, not the usual one-off or short-term remedies that are captives of donor government budget cycles and expedient cliché-ridden programs that recycle the money to their cronies back home who provide the much-needed coaching and mentoring.

## Technology in media and communications: catalyst, enabler, or driver of change?

Katy Branson | [Katy.Branson@hkstrategies.com](mailto:Katy.Branson@hkstrategies.com)

In today's world of always-on connectivity, convergent communications and media pervasiveness, it would be difficult to deny the pivotal role of technology in changing the shape of society in general and communications specifically. The 'art' of communication is unrecognizable in comparison to what our predecessors would have had to go to in order to speak with relatives, friends and business contacts. And by predecessors, we do not need to search back far— just through one generation to the world in which our parents were raised is enough to ring the changes.

The question is whether it is the technology itself that is driving evolution in our communications environment. To what extent is the rate of technological change in communications media exerting a direct influence on aspects such as the need for regulatory change in the industry, creation of new media markets and spurring quite radical social change in the region...or should we be looking at social change from a different perspective?

### Technology and Cultural Determinism

Introduction of the first industrial printing press by The Times of London in 1814 is the starting point for nearly two centuries of relentless progress and innovation in communications media. In the interim period there are few genuinely key milestones where new technologies can be seen to fundamentally change the communications media and policy environment. On a global scale, these might include the advent of television, the launch of the first satellites into space, and – from the 1980s to date – the introduction of the now ubiquitous worldwide web.

Whilst there are few facets of life and industry that technology doesn't touch, it is sometimes a 'chicken versus egg' situation as to whether a change in the status quo triggers the need for innovation or whether innovation leads to change.

Author and academic, Brian Winston, has dedicated much of his research to investigating the complex and intertwined relationship between media, technology and society, producing a number of books and papers on the topic. One framework that he proposes distinguishes between 'change' where technology is the dominant, determining factor compared to situations where social and economic factors either support or block technology innovation in the course of events (1995, p.55).

Here, technology determinism is a situation where technologies follow "an inevitable logic and [act] as a catalyst for other kinds of change". In this case technology is the primary factor that can be isolated and traced as the driver behind change.

In contrast, when social, economic and cultural factors dominate and, as a result, either promote or hinder the advance of technology, technology is clearly just part of a solution and not a driver of change. This Winston defines as cultural determinism, where technology is seen as one of many contributing factors behind progress rather than the clear catalyst and instigator.

With this useful framework in mind, we can look at economic and social trends from a fresh perspective to identify the role of technology in evolving and reshaping our media environment.

### **Influencing media regulation**

Regulatory development, emerging media markets and radical social change are often difficult to clearly separate, with one often influencing the other and periods of development frequently interlinked.

One significant milestone in the 1960s is the development made by the US and Soviet Union military in satellite technology, which prompted urgent review by many countries not only of their national security but also of market regulations for ownership, financing and governance in their domestic broadcast industry. Spectrum licensing, broadcasting regulations and standards' control for content were brought to the fore and created technical and administrative challenges for governments aiming to preserve cultural identity and promote social cohesion (Ward, 1989). This era in technology history had such revolutionary effect that it is recognized as heralding a 'new communications policy paradigm', where mass media became inextricably linked to telecommunications regulation, which previously focused predominantly on the infrastructure (Van Cuilenburg and McQuail, 2003, p. 197).

Around the world, the challenges of spectrum licensing, broadcast rights, regulations and controls remain issues to be resolved as US-led satellite channels increasingly gain widespread audiences.

It could be argued in support of 'technology determinism' that satellite is one such innovation that created a fundamental shift in the communications media landscape and directly influenced its social, economic and political structure through its need for new regulatory control in broadcasting and receiving communities.

Bringing the discussion into the present day, the rise of news blogging creates new challenges for policy makers and the industry alike. The lack of accountability in 'participatory' or 'citizen' journalism is often outside the realm of formal, established regulations and though some bloggers may be professionally trained journalists, the majority is not. Availability of easy-to-use Web publishing tools, connected mobile devices and a proliferation of computers in homes, at work, and in internet cafes, gives anyone, anywhere the tools to play an active part in the creation and communication of news.

There is no 'code of conduct' for bloggers, setting out ethics, professional practices and standards for the industry. In this environment, technology has clearly prompted a need for regulatory change – and fast! A 'bloggers code' might extend to the new issues of transparency, freedom and interactivity that are introduced by the Web.

But how can governments create new regulatory policy for the content when the infrastructure expands beyond national jurisdictions? The borderless nature of the internet arguably makes such a framework difficult to negotiate, implement and enforce effectively. However it could be considered here that the challenges and goals of content (online, print and broadcast) regulations are altogether different from those of infrastructure

(telecommunications) regulations. The former has a 'public interest' role, whilst the latter is concerned with access to communications services. From this perspective, infrastructure change is predominantly in the technology domain, and we may apply a view of technology determinism to policy regulation that is driven by innovation and advances in telecommunications. Content-based regulation remains more aligned with a model of cultural determinism, which might shape our tastes, beliefs and behaviours over time.

In January 2011, the Saudi Arabian government took action within its own borders with an attempt to regulate online media – including blogs and forums – as the Kingdom's print publications are regulated (*Arab News*, 2011). All online media is now required to register with the Ministry of Information and Culture for a licence to operate, and the regulations also specify a code of conduct and penalties for violation of these rules. Commenting in a report in *Arab News*, an English language newspaper in the Kingdom, the minister of information and culture, Abdul Aziz Khoja, said that the system is "in line with the development moves that the media sector is witnessing" but there was a fear over the social impact of this move, for example on freedom of speech.

The driving forces for the Government policy development are clearly cultural. Also supporting the 'cultural determinist' model for regulatory change is the profit-orientated commercial nature of the media industry at large – including the commercial blog, paid-for content and online media ventures. An article in the *New York Times* online summed this up neatly, by saying "A few blogs have thousands of readers, but never have so many people written so much to be read by so few" (Hafner, 2004). This suggests the problem is not as large as some may make out, less of a revolutionary shift and more of a prevailing trend, perhaps.

Ultimately any media that is sufficiently popular and influential to impact on policy and regulation will be responding to a view of what interests the public, driven by profitability, audience figures and society-led, ethical content parameters. Therefore social, economic and political agendas are dominant in this view of regulatory change and innovation in technology is merely an enabling factor.

### **Creating new media markets**

This intersection between media and cultural industries created by the internet not only impacts existing markets and policy, but also leads to the emergence of new environments, from social media platforms to advertising in outer space! With technology, even the sky is not the limit.

Governments and organisations have invested in the physical networking infrastructure, to a greater or lesser degree, around the region and the world. The internet is now part of our daily life – even though in some parts of the region it might go off if the air conditioning is on too high! Those analysing the industry still question whether technology can be identified as the determining factor behind this changing state and the resulting globalisation of media markets. Their argument is based on the fact that there needs to be an economic, social and political motive behind the investment in technology...which in turn impacts the media environment

In fact, brand new media markets do not appear very often. The industrial printing press, satellite and mobile communications, consumer technologies and the internet are all examples of game-changing technologies as we have seen; but contrary to our instincts it is actually the technology going mainstream that creates the new media market.

Commercial capabilities or limitations of certain technologies, the ever-growing expectations of audiences and – above all – proof for the need or value of the technology determine the future of any innovation. How many times have you heard people refer to the ‘killer app’ when talking about the success of the internet, the smartphone or the tablet computer? Whilst technology is undoubtedly an enabler for communications media, the influence it has is usually strongest in what gets communicated once the market has been established.

For example, many people won’t realise that a workable model of the television was ready for the UK market by 1925 but war, infrastructure investment, government support, policy and content did not converge to bring it into mainstream adoption until a full thirty years later, in the mid-1950s. From this point the mass uptake of television gathered speed and created a genuinely new media market that moved real-time visual broadcasting into people’s homes and living rooms. It changed the format of mass media from audio-only to audio and visual, then from black and white to colour...to record and play-back, high definition (HD), interactive services, Internet Protocol Television (IPTV), smart TVs and even onto mobile devices today. One can only imagine what innovation lies in store for this most popular of media in the future!

Technology is clearly a critical foundation for new media markets but credited only as an influencer in regulatory policy and an enabler of new media markets. Commercial and government interests – underpinned by social and cultural norms, values and ethics – remain dominant in determining the actual process of evolution in our media landscape.

### **Driving radical social change**

What happens when these social and cultural norms, values and ethics themselves are challenged or undergo radical change? Can technology be a primary force behind radical social change, or do we need to approach this kind of movement from a different perspective?

Marshall McLuhan most strongly emphasised the impact of media technology on society way back in 1964 in his well-known statement “the medium is the message”, following which he refers to the power and scale of media to change people’s feelings and perceptions through an extension to their own understanding (1964, p.107). Those in academia have interpreted McLuhan’s statement to suggest that the message of the media (i.e. its content) in fact has less impact or portrays less about the communication than the impact of the medium selected, in terms of effect on society and culture over time. To take McLuhan’s example, the invention of the light bulb to conquer darkness profoundly changed social conditions and he would consider the industrial printing press and beginnings of the ‘information society’ to have had comparable impact.

From individual experience, it is clear that visual images – more than text or sound alone – are incredibly effective in inspiring action, and McLuhan’s theory can be applied with increasing force as broadcast, internet and mobile technology bombards communities worldwide with



an onslaught of video and images on a second-by-second basis, 365 days a year.

The internet has given a powerful tool to the organisation of groups, networking and the dissemination of information, which are all core components of social change for time immemorial. The potential of the internet for mobilising political, special interest and minority groups by far outpaces mainstream media in its agility, connectivity and interactivity. We have clearly seen this in action in many parts of our own region, where a dictator-led regime controls the print and public service broadcast media. In countries such as these, where press freedom and freedom of speech are restricted, the internet presents a particularly powerful, largely unregulated new media marketplace.

Blogging, microblogging, social media and location-based mobile services are vehicles that move the power of the media away from the established institutions and regulated authorities, into the hands of society. But can it be considered as the driving force of radical social change? According to the *Arab Social Media Report* (Dubai School of Government, 2011), it can.

The first quarter of 2011, termed the “Arab Spring”, saw a significant increase in social media engagement in the Arab world. *The Arab Social Media Report* interestingly notes that social media was extensively used by citizens to raise awareness (both locally and globally), spread information and organize demonstrations. It was also used extensively by governments to proactively engage or to reactively monitor, control or block access to websites. The report highlights an unequivocal correlation between calls to protest on Facebook on a given date and those demonstrations manifesting in the streets (with the exception of the first protest in Tunisia).

Furthermore, the international nature of television broadcast from the region and, in a second, around the world presented problems for the regimes under threat. Citizen upload of videos and images from mobile devices, to the broadcasting of high definition news live from the scene by sources such as Al Jazeera and CNN, present two ends of a challenging spectrum for the government authorities involved.

Clearly radical social change relies on communication, underpinned by technologies that deliver speed and accuracy of distribution to a mass audience – to inform, engage and, over all, inspire action. *The Arab Social Media Report* claims that “the growth of social media in the region and the shift in usage trends have played a critical role in mobilization, empowerment, shaping opinions and influencing change”, highlighting that internet and mobile technologies were used by some of the governments as they tried to resist change.

Discourse in online and offline media around the world following the Arab Spring has asked whether technology was a primary force in events of momentous change. Commenting at an e-G8 forum in Paris, May 2011, Facebook Founder Mark Zuckerberg said of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt: “My own opinion is that it would be extremely arrogant for any specific tech company to claim any meaningful role in those” (*Financial Times*, 2011), though some might have tried. General consensus in developed world media appears to be that anyone attributing this part of history to the technology that underpinned and facilitated it is cheating the social revolutionaries and their reform movements of true recognition for their actions. Change as significant as this does not happen simply because the tools are there; it is the people have to make it happen.

Technology – in this case, the internet – only provides an open, somewhat egalitarian forum through which citizens can communicate, and is therefore identifiable as both a catalyst and a facilitator for action; but arguably not itself a driver for radical social change.

Technology: catalyst, enabler or driver?

Though the continuing convergence of media across all of its various forms may mean that the impact of technology is felt more strongly, technology itself – and the rapid pace of innovation – is rarely, if ever, a primary driver of radical change. Arguably, its role and impact in the growing pervasiveness and influence of media in society, economics and politics do, however, single it out as a powerful catalyst and enabler behind social development.

This conclusion supports Winston's cultural determinist view, where it is necessary to examine the social context through "the circumstances into which the technology is introduced and diffused through society" (1995, p. 62). In fact, he describes this as 'empowering', in contrast to the technology determinist view, which he considers "presents us as comparatively impotent, as malleable consumers, unthinking and unprotesting, in the face of media technology power." (p. 73).

Throughout history, momentous social change has been instigated within the boundaries of technology and conditions of the time, with effects rippling through all of the complexities of long term social welfare. What has become clear is that relationship between communication technology and society is incredibly complex and interwoven with political, economic and cultural influences. In many situations – and equally applicable to developed as developing markets – significant change harnesses technology as a catalyst or an enabler, but more often technology is merely adapted by society, commerce or politics in support of its mission.

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## Delivering Emirates News

**Noni Edwards | [noni.edwards@dmi.ae](mailto:noni.edwards@dmi.ae)**

As a journalist with the English language Emirates News in Dubai, every day is different. As my colleague, reporter Sheri Jamkhoul, puts it, “The best points of the job are that it’s not monotonous, you get to meet different people from all walks of life, and a new opportunity arises every day.”

### The News Day

For most members of the team (and any journalist with even a minor addiction to news) the day starts as soon as we switch on a television, scan through internet news sites or scroll through our Twitter feeds. We bring ourselves up-to-speed on the local, regional and international news of the day and begin to consider which stories may be appropriate for us to cover in that evening’s half-hour bulletin. As a part of Dubai Media Incorporated (a Dubai Government department), our news priorities start in Dubai, move to the rest of the UAE, the Gulf and Middle East, and finally broaden out to international stories, where we have time in the bulletin. The main reason we focus on local stories over international news, is that there are cable networks and international providers who already cover global news well, but our niche, our advantage and indeed our charter is to provide news on Dubai to our Anglophone audience.

Our audience is very diverse in practically every demographic. It includes those in Dubai and the UAE: local Emiratis, people from neighbouring Arab nations and expatriates from further afield, with both English-speaking and non-English speaking backgrounds. Then there is a large audience not based in the UAE, who watch Dubai One on a regional network, or via the internet ([http://vod.dmi.ae/media/program/222/Emirates\\_News\\_Dubai\\_One](http://vod.dmi.ae/media/program/222/Emirates_News_Dubai_One)). We know from our feedback that our internet viewers are loyal and regular watchers – usually with a deep affinity for Dubai, perhaps as former residents who wish to stay in touch and keep up-to-date with developments here.

Going to air at 8:30pm, we start work on the bulletin at 1pm. Any reporters who are assigned to cover early shoots in the morning will turn up before the rest of the team, but depending on how long it takes to file their reports, they will usually be able to leave early as well. So, after we arrive at the Dubai TV News Center in Media City we do a quick scan of the news sites, make some notes, then gather for our editorial meeting.

This is a consultative process, run by the producer of the day and an opportunity from the entire team to get an overview of which stories are on the day’s news agenda. Business editor Greg Fairlie says one of the best points of the job is “suggesting stories in editorial meetings and seeing them that evening form part of the news-day.”

We’ll discuss the local newspapers, international sources (including AP and Reuters newswires) and consult our DMI colleagues who work on the Arabic language programmes (Local News, International, Business and Sport). The producer will assign stories to individual writers and then we’ll raise any other housekeeping or forward planning issues.

I manage the team's presence on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube presence, so once a week I will usually give my colleagues an update on which stories have been the most popular and how our stats are comparing against other shows on Dubai One (there's nothing wrong with a little bit of healthy competition in television!)

### **On-the-Road or In-house**

So now it's time to get to work preparing our individual news elements for the evening's bulletin. When preparing a piece of news for TV, depending on the origin of the story this will either involve heading out with a crew to film, or cover the story in-house, using a resources in the newsroom. There are pros and cons to both and every bulletin has a mix of the two, but I really enjoy sourcing my own stories from local contacts, arranging interviews and filming on location. Sheri agrees: "There's also a lot I've learned from the job such as how to interact with people from different nationalities and backgrounds."

The best thing about working in general news is that on any given day we can cover anything from the top of the bulletin (news about the President, Vice-President or ruling families) to business, international news, sport or weather at the bottom. It's truly a vocation where you become a jack-of-all-trades and master of none! Some of my recent reports include the UAE's organic-food industry; the importance of body language in business; recycling and sustainability; shark conservation and a multiple births festival.

Amir also likes the variety. He says "I have had the opportunity to work on many different aspects in journalism, not tied down to one role, i.e. working on business to protocol, entertainment to the lighter side of news." Even within a specialty like sport, there's more freedom here. According to Graham, "If I was working in sports TV in the UK, I would most likely be attached to one sport only, where as here I can move between many."

If it's happening elsewhere, then we're still able to cover it in-house, as we have plenty of access to different news sources to research and write it. We have several options for sourcing footage: either from a shoot our colleagues have loaded onto our internal servers; file footage from the archives or international sources that are available on the newswires. Sometimes there is a very important story our producers deem worthy to include but there is no footage available. This is frustrating but one of the limitations of news everywhere. In this case we have access to a talented team of graphic artists who can create a map, a gallery of still photos, or other kinds of graphic elements to portray the story in another way, and still make good television.

### **News Gathering**

It's very easy to open your inbox, look through the media releases you have been sent, and decide what you will report on that day. But as a journalist, there is an expectation to be proactive in finding your own stories to bring to the team. There is a certain thrill in being able to announce at the editorial meeting that someone has agreed to an exclusive interview. The number one thing a reporter can do to find their own stories is to manage their contacts thoroughly and network, network, network!

As a young reporter I was taught to keep a little black book of every person I'd ever spoken to

for a story, and guard it jealously. I was taught to 'do my rounds' making calls to each of them on a regular basis, to sniff out my next stories. Cultivating sources is much easier with email, but regular personal contact is the key.

Sometimes however, in cases of sensitive news, even with good networking, it is just not possible to get comment on the story of the day, and without confirmation or denial, there is no story. My colleague Robert Hillier, an executive producer, believes it's often not that strategic. "It doesn't necessarily mean that's part of official policy but it's often based on people's personal ease at dealing with the media," says Robert, "because of the hierarchical structure of the country, people tend to refer-up. The top guy has to be the spokesman and if that guy is uncomfortable dealing with the media, that then permeates down through the rest of the organization."

To give a regional perspective, a former colleague on our Arabic international news team, Omar Makhfi, told me, "sources are very accessible here compared to other places with a high-level of freedom like Lebanon and Morocco, it's easier to get in contact with a minister."

### **News values**

Like journalists everywhere, we are required to use our professional judgment and experience to assess an item's newsworthiness and determine how any given story should or should not be covered in our broadcast. We have very few formal guidelines and most often come to a consensus amongst ourselves, occasionally seeing fit to refer an editorial decision to management.

My studies in journalism taught me that news values (criteria for judging newsworthiness) were firmly rooted in culture. I remember a very convenient (and probably too convenient) list of seven factors that influenced how news should be judged: impact, timeliness, prominence, proximity, conflict, currency and bizarreness". I won't even try to convince you that we apply these measures to any of our editorial decisions, but I will give you an example of the last factor, bizarreness, that has stuck with me for years. The headline 'Dog Bites Man' doesn't carry any weight at all, it's just not newsworthy. 'Man Bites Dog', is a completely different story!

But we don't need textbooks to know that each journalist in our newsroom has gained their own sense of newsworthiness from their own cultural background. The experience on our team covers every continent on Earth (except Antarctica, unfortunately) and this diversity often makes for lively debate! My news values have been shaped in regional Australian television, public broadcasting, cable TV newsrooms in London, and now here in Dubai.

"It's not all that different from BBC producer guidelines in terms of ethical treatment, in terms of balance and fairness, in terms of libels and so on," says Robert, "I think informally, you kind of just know, and you kind of just know fairly quickly, what you can and cannot do."

Amir sums it up nicely: "The majority of media outlets where I have worked in Dubai have shown me that everyone seems to know what the deal is in our part of the world when it comes to journalism and how we portray things."

Robert cautions us to keep perspective when assessing our news values:

What we mustn't do is import our Western liberal centuries-old media culture into a new country with a different set of norms, values and sociopolitical structures. I think in that context if you think about what we would call non-democratic countries around the world, i.e. where the leadership is not directly elected, there are many forms that the media in those countries take and we're not North Korea, we're not Burma, we're not Zimbabwe, we actually have enormous amounts of freedom to write and say what we like. Whether or not being what we would consider a typical investigative journalist is possible here, maybe it's not, but it's also not possible in about 120 countries around the world either and I may well include the UK and the US in that too.

### **Specialisations**

As well as general news, on weekdays we have dedicated business and sports segments compiled by our very experienced business and sports editors. They are largely autonomous and are each responsible for filling approximately 5 minutes of the bulletin each night Sunday to Thursday. But with their experience and contacts all over the country, this is a piece of cake. They often manage to secure exclusive announcements and high profile interviews live in studio.

Our business editor, Greg Fairlie, is a senior presenter at Dubai One. He's worked in media for more than 20 years. He began his career in radio in the UK, working for Virgin, RTL and the BBC before moving to Austria, and then Australia. Greg then moved to the Middle East, as a breakfast radio host on Lebanon's Radio One. He crossed into television in 2000, for CNBC, MBC, NBN and Zee TV in Lebanon before moving to Dubai. But even someone with as much experience as Greg still finds inspiration in his work. "Stories about the many entrepreneurs in Dubai are always enlightening," he says. "With the business sector being diverse, there have been numerous stories out on the road that inspire one as a reporter."

We are equally lucky to have our sports editor Graham Clews on board, and it seems the feeling is mutual "I enjoy the freedom to do my own thing with little interference, mainly because I'm one of the only ones who understands sport." Prior to joining the news team he worked on Dubai One's 'World of Sports' programme. He's an accomplished TV producer, reporter and anchor, with a professional background hosting events as a compere and MC. Hailing from Watford, just north of London, Graham's personal favourite sports are football and golf.

### **Daily Grind vs Special Perks**

I think any of my colleagues would agree with me, that the most common reaction we receive on saying we work in television, is something along the lines of it being a glamorous vocation. Deadlines, having to work with limited time and resources, a schedule sometimes anti-social, filming in sometimes hot, dusty, conditions with lots of waiting around and a lot of hard slog. I hope I've convinced you that it is rarely glamorous! But, yes, there are certain perks.

The truly rewarding moments are when you realize you've been able to help effect social change, or give an opportunity to someone who needs to be heard. But other than that, there are some other perks to the job, and my colleagues certainly agree that these centre around travel and celebrities! My career highlights include meeting Morgan Freeman and filming in Afghanistan.



Sheri says: "Working as a journalist has given me the chance to meet influential people, and that wouldn't arise elsewhere. I've had the chance to meet people from the fashion industry such as Roberto Cavalli, and big names in sport too, like Boris Becker."

"Meeting extremely diverse people from all cultures and backgrounds are the best things about my job," says Greg, "I also went with Dubai One to Nepal for the first time and that was life changing."

Graham's top moments have been his interviews with sports stars such as Tiger Woods, Roger Federer and Lewis Hamilton. And Amir lists his favourite parts of the job as "Car launches, film festivals and covering stories outside the country. I have had the opportunity to travel to countries I may not have traveled to had it not been for work."

But, I do want to emphasise, it's certainly not always so glamorous!

### Media in Dubai

One thing we all agree on is that we are fairly lucky to be able to do what we do here, with so few English-language television news outlets in the region, especially those with daily coverage and a commitment to local news. The UAE is always offering up wonderful stories with vibrant characters and colourful events, so our job telling these stories, is made easy.

"I'm always fascinated by the difference in the seven emirates, each has its own character," says Greg. "The first time I went to Al Ain I was mesmerized by the number of roundabouts and how green it is there. Driving into Ras Al Khaimah stuck behind ten or so camels was also a memory I'm holding onto."

For those applying Western liberal norms, the way we use our professional judgement may appear different. I asked my colleagues how they thought we may appear to those abroad:

**Robert:** I would say they would think we were extremely 'on message', but you have to have an experience of actually living and working here. You can't report bad news if it isn't there, that's the problem. The fact is that things are actually OK.

**Omar:** I think there are a lot of clichés about the Arab media. Some people, through my knowledge of the French press for example, think the Arab media are omnipotent, they are strong. And they are, judging by the effect that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya have. This is one perception, the other one, of course is that the media are very weak, but I think somehow, the media in the Arab world is in the middle. The 'human capital', the journalists themselves, are highly competitive if you put them in an international context.

Sheri is excited about the future of media here. "Dubai is an emerging city, and the role of media is also growing too with the city, which makes it ever-changing and exciting," she says, "hopefully I'll be able to excel in my position as a reporter and present a segment in the near future."

But maybe now's a good time to include a word of advice from her more senior colleague, Greg: "Opportunities come through hard work, there are no short cuts anywhere."



## A Transparent Look at a Counsellor's Inner World: Learning to Self-differentiate and Hold the Client's Pain

**Mona Moussa | [MonaMoussa@uowdubai.ac.ae](mailto:MonaMoussa@uowdubai.ac.ae)**

The first time I encountered the concept of “sitting with the pain” was in supervision, some eight years ago when I was doing an internship in counselling psychology. This was following a particularly difficult session with a client, who was clinically depressed and was desperately trying to process her feelings of grief and loss. As I sat with her in the session, an intense feeling of helplessness took over me and I fought hard to resist the urge to provide her with a solution and a “quick-fix”. Later in supervision, as I related what happened, I realized that I was actually afraid to confront my own anxiety in the session, and to confront my own assumptions about what my role as a therapist is. As I delved deeper into my own fears, I realized that I was afraid to confront the reality, the fact that I could not “save” my clients, that I could not take away their pain and that I could not do their work for them.

This was a turning point for me, as I gradually learned to question what I was doing: During my counselling work, I tend to prepare for a session by formulating a number of hypotheses to follow-up on, reading numerous books, and providing a lot of psycho-education and process comments during the session. However, as I later realized, this meant that I was actually “doing the work” for my clients and unintentionally taking away from them the opportunity to learn on their own and find their own answers. Thus, I realized that I needed to find a balance between providing relief from pain to my clients while at the same time giving them the space to struggle on their own.

The concept of struggling with distress is strongly emphasized by Calhoun and Tedeschi (1998, 2001). According to their model, growth can only occur out of the struggle as individuals try to survive in the midst of the destruction of their fundamental assumptions about the world (1998) and as they gradually come to acknowledge each of the positive and negative aspects of their experience (1998; 2001). Throughout subsequent sessions during my counselling internship, I found that encouraging my client to sit with her pain and experience it rather than try to repress it proved to be fruitful as she gradually got in touch with some of her deeply grounded painful feelings. This gave her the opportunity to process these and gradually grow from this experience.

A few months down the track, another client sought my assistance in reaching a decision by choosing one of two alternatives in his current marriage. He was feeling highly anxious and expected to get a clear-cut answer about what decision to make. This was a good opportunity for me to practice the skill of learning to sit with the pain and holding my client while he was struggling with his conflicting feelings. I noticed that with this particular client, I had to make the therapeutic process that was happening in the here-and-now clear. Thus, I demystified his view of the therapist as a guru who has all the answers and instead gently encouraged him to find his own answer by encouraging him to re-question some of his basic assumptions: he explored his views about relationships, what they meant to him, what his expectations and unspoken assumptions were, how he acquired these views, and whether these may have been influenced by previous models he was exposed to, such as his parents' relationship.

Thus the aim was to shift the focus away from the content and details of his current marriage, and direct it towards the underlying meaning he attributed to his marriage, and the needs that it was fulfilling.

Shifting the focus away from my client's content was a particularly challenging job as I was often pulled in to take sides. Thus I had to consciously step out of the content, and consider the process. This allowed me to avoid becoming gridlocked into my client's own dilemma, and to encourage him to do the same by considering the underlying patterns and the basic unmet needs that he was trying to fulfil.

The essential message in my work with this client was that he had the inherent ability to find his own answer and that even though he had momentarily lost his way because of his current stress; he was still his own best expert. Thus rather than attempt to give him the answer, my role was to provide him with a safe, accepting environment and to coach him to reconnect with his underlying strength and ultimately grow.

This idea is largely based on Rogers' (1961) person-centred humanistic therapy. It is based on an unconditional, non-judgmental positive regard to the client's feelings and actions, which is believed to provide the space for clients to ultimately access their innate tendencies towards growth. Thus the basic element is the inherent belief in clients' ability to find their own answers within the context of a safe, accepting environment.

Later as I started counselling couples, the concept of sitting with the pain and allowing clients to find their own answer through their struggle with distress became harder to implement. I had to learn to sit with the couple's pain and model to them the way to contain each other's pain. I also worked hard to show them that the problem does not lie in one partner or the other, and that therapy is not about "fixing" the flawed partner. Rather it is about viewing both partners as part of a system and identifying the unhelpful pattern of interaction in which they have become stuck (Gottman, 1999).

Through supervision I learned about the concept of self-differentiation, a concept that proved very useful in my work. Self-differentiation involves balancing the drive for individuality and the drive for togetherness (Schnarch, 1997). It refers to the ability to remain emotionally connected to significant others even when anxiety intensifies in the relationship, and to preserve one's sense of self, beliefs, values, and principles even if these run counter to others' expectations, wishes, or needs. This can be achieved by maintaining the focus on one's self rather than focusing and reacting to others' responses and actions. The aim is to define a responsible position in the relationship based on one's values and beliefs rather than attempt to be responsible for the significant other (Lerner, 1989). In other words, the aim is to hold onto one's self rather than hold onto one's partner (Schnarch, 1997).

Thus, I had to model to my clients the ability to sit and empathize with their distressed partner's pain while holding on to my sense of self and refraining from taking responsibility for the distressed partner's feelings. As I soon discovered, this was not an easy task. I realized that the concept of differentiation was not only relevant to my clients, but was also relevant to my work as a therapist. I realized that I too needed to differentiate from my clients and to move against my wish to fix things and rescue others in order to ultimately provide them with the opportunity to struggle with their own problems. This is particularly important because

there is a risk that I might be inadvertently contributing to my clients' gridlock and to their propensity to under-function whenever I over-function for them. Lerner (1989) referred to this pattern as the "overfunctioning"- "underfunctioning" pattern in a relationship system whereby a person's overfunctioning brings about the other's underfunctioning.

In other words, by taking responsibility for my clients' feelings and lessening their pain, I was unintentionally depriving them of the chance to struggle with their pain and realise their own competence. The more I did that, the less chance they had to be confronted with their distress. As much as I had to coach my clients to learn to differentiate, I also had to learn to differentiate from my clients. I had to refrain from reducing my clients' anxiety and just hold their pain, connect with them, and be fully present in the here-and-now of the session.

Self-differentiation is a difficult concept to explain and to apply. It is likely to be met with resistance particularly given clients' tendency to look for clear-cut, concrete answers. It demands a strong therapeutic alliance and patience as it requires convincing clients of the benefit of change even though it may be difficult and painful. It is also difficult to apply given that it demands simultaneous processing at different levels including the content of the client's accounts, the process and underlying patterns in the session, as well as the process of one's own reactions, and responses. However, with consistent work, a therapist will ultimately be able to hold on to the sense of self and resist the urge to rescue clients by prematurely reducing their anxiety while still remaining connected with them. The ultimate outcome is richer relationships, a strong sense of self, and more insightful therapeutic work.

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## FILE 230: CHAOS

CLIENT ARCHIVES 2011

**COMPANY:** MIDRANGE TRANSGEARS INC  
**TASK:** STAKEHOLDER'S GALA  
**DATE:** 4 DAYS TO EVENT

Amina, where's the creative?  
I already emailed it to David  
Call him in  
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?  
Lorna's supposed to do that  
How about press coverage?  
We haven't called the media yet  
And the event branding?  
Actually... the logo is a tad off colour  
Didn't Luciano supervise it?  
Abdullah has the brand guidelines  
Why is everything so last minute?  
Because John's is in Muscat, Mahra is in training and Georgina is...  
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Huh?  
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UNIVERSITY OF  
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One of the first decisions I had to make when I arrived at the University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD) early in 2012 was whether to go ahead immediately with the new master's program in Media and Communications. The decision was to go ahead, we began the program in February 2012, and we are committed to growing and developing it this year, next year, and into the future.

The need for postgraduate education in media and communications is clear when we consider the development of media and media industries in Dubai at Media City, in Abu Dhabi at twofour54, in Sharjah and other emirates, and in the region . We will prepare students to work in these industries; we will provide people already working in media industries with the theoretical background and international context that can lead to career advancement.

Even before MMC started officially, we published a journal called **Middle East Media Educator** in August 2011. We made it available to everyone for free on our website. Now I am happy to welcome the second issue of **Middle East Media Educator** or **MEME**, once again published by UOWD and available on our website for free download.

**MEME** links us with our parent institution, the University of Wollongong in Australia, where a similar journal focusing on Asia Pacific media education has been produced since 1996. Both journals try "to bridge the gap" between the people who produce media or work in media-related industries and the academics who prepare the media professionals of tomorrow.

We hope that **MEME** will contribute to a continuing dialogue between media practitioners in the UAE and beyond, our faculty, and our students.

**Professor Ghassan Aouad**  
**President**  
**University of Wollongong in Dubai**