

INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE IN THE UNITED STATES MEDIA

by

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Abstract of Thesis

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## Abstract

United States media has the power to enlighten the American public about other countries. The media, however, chooses to portray a distorted picture. Previous studies have concluded that there is a lack of international news coverage and that international coverage, when it does exist, is sensational, negative and related to United States interest in some way. This paper will explore to what extent the media utilized by the classified and unclassified staff of a Midwestern university falls in the same categories as previous studies. A survey was developed to identify the two forms of media most utilized by individuals from a Midwestern university. Television (CNN) and radio (NPR/WPR) were chosen as the two primary media. These two media forms were then subjected to a content analysis to explore to what extent the international event characteristics still exist today. The study concluded that the characteristics of international events found in previous studies still apply to international news coverage today.

## International News Coverage in the United States Media

As the Bush administration's Middle East envoy headed back to the region for peace talks, senior Israeli officials said Wednesday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would press Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to take tougher action against militants before Israel agreed to return to the bargaining table. In a further sign of the deep divisions between the two sides, the Palestinians are expected to demand a halt to construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the lifting of restrictions on Palestinians who regard the restrictions as a humiliating collective punishment (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Jan. 3, 2002).

The United States population depends primarily on mass media to learn about world happenings (Willnat, Garf, & Brewer, 2000; Semetko, Brzinski, Weaver, & Willnat, 1991). This is problematic because mass media presents information through a window that is limited, fragmented, partial, and prejudicial (Alexandre, 1989). This fragmented information portrays a world steeped in chaos, with the United States as the savior. As Willnat, Graf, and Brewer (2000) purport, the dissemination of international events affect the way the United States audiences view foreign nations. If the information is prejudicial and fragmented as Alexandre (1989) describes, it may elicit international stereotypes and interfere with developing nations' relationships with the United States or other developing nations' growth. For example, the way United States media treats news originating in or relating to Cuba can result in the United States' public misunderstanding Cuban human rights laws, thereby, affecting Cuba's relationship with the United States.

This can be observed in the Cuban Adjustment Act passed in 1966 by the United States which basically allows a Cuban who touches United States soil to remain in the United States and obtain citizenship within a year (Bilski, 1994). This is treatment that no other developing nation has ever been able to obtain.

The study will examine the treatment of international news in the United States media. It will explore the characteristics of international events being portrayed to the American population. In addition, this study will survey a Midwestern university's classified and unclassified staff to see what types of sources they access for international news. One week's worth of the two most utilized media will be collected and analyzed to examine the type of international news coverage provided in those sources. To understand the treatment of international events by the United States media, moreover, previous researches were studied.

## Literature Review

### *Media Effect*

Media effect research states that there is a relationship between mass media coverage of international news and audience perception (Infante, Rancer & Womack, 1997). According to Harris in a 1994 study, American audiences watch approximately 15 hours of television every week. Additionally, radio has become "the central part of adolescent and young adult culture" (Harris, 1994, p. 8). Newspapers seem to be a preferred form of information for the light viewers of television and for high social-economic status audiences (Harris, 1994), although such audiences also seek news

through television. All of these media forms have effects beyond the conveyance of information.

Two of these effects are agenda setting and priming. According to Harris (1994), agenda setting tells the audience what to think about an issue. Agenda setting also identifies what issues are important (Infante, Rancer & Womack, 1997). Roberts and Bantimaroudis (1997) believe that gatekeepers are responsible for the media and audience's agenda, because gatekeepers are the ones who choose newsworthy events. McCombs and Shaw conducted one of the earliest studies investigating agenda setting. In this study, the researchers examined agenda setting and the 1968 political campaign (as cited in Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). The study found six points that explained how likely an audience is influenced by the media's agenda. These points include: "exposure, type of medium, interest, salience, need for orientation, and interpersonal communication" (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995, p. 287). Infante, Rancer, and Womack (1997) also warn that while a connection may exist between the two, there is "insufficient evidence to show a causal connection between the order of importance placed on issues by the media and the significance attached to those issues by the public" (p. 367).

If agenda setting tells the audience what to think about an issue, what does priming do? According to Perse (2001) priming "is the automatic activation of pre-existing schema by a salient cue in the environment" (p. 206). An example of short-term priming is in media violence where aggressive cues by the media can arouse the individual to act aggressively (Perse, 2001). In other words, the viewing of aggressive films produces a temporary aggressive thought in an individual. A long-term effect is



stereotyping as, for instance, the portrayal of Latinos/Hispanic in movies and the perception of Latinos/Hispanics, such as the Latin lover. Priming can influence how people respond to each other (Perse, 2001), such as calling every individual from the Latino/Hispanic cultures lazy.

Due to the effect of agenda setting and priming, the United States' media international news coverage can affect the United States audience's perception of developing nations. United States media does this by setting an international news agenda that is limited in scope, sensational in nature, related to United States interest in some way, and primarily negative. The choice of this agenda may prime the United States audience to think poorly of developing nations.

### *Mass Media*

Since the invention and introduction of television there have been many studies exploring the effects of television. This medium has become the number one "source of entertainment" (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995, p. 44). Unlike television, radio's primary audiences are teenagers and young adults, while newspapers focus on local news and gossip; magazines are a combination of television and newspapers sources and appeal primarily to adult audiences with the exception of some children's magazines (Harris, 1994).

Television is a tool that provides escape from boredom and reality for many children represents reality. Television provides children with: "entertainment, information and/or social utility" (Cowery & DeFleur, 1995, p. 44). A study conducted

by Gurevich noted that “the portion of violence in America entertainment programs is greater than that broadcasted in any of the other nations (Great Britain, Israel & Sweden)”(as cited in Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). The combination of entertainment and information has created in an international discrepancy. As part of the important that television has in the population, Gebner during his 1967 study concluded that there were 2 types of viewers: heavy viewers which characterizes those viewing 4 hours or more and light viewers which refers to those viewing 2 hours or less (as cited in Infante, Rancer & Womack, 1997).

Media is use by individuals for different purposes: entertainment, social utility and information. These purposes are impacted by the type of viewer the audience falls into. Based on this information the following hypothesis is offered:

H1: Participants consuming between 1:15 hours and 2:15 hours of international news coverage a week will be more aware of international events than those consuming between 15 minutes and 1:15 hour and those consuming more than 2:15 hours.

Obviously, the way in which media chooses to portray events influences audiences’ perception of those events. How, then, does the media portray international news? International news coverage in the United States is characterized by a lack of international news coverage and when international coverage does exist, it is sensational, negative and related to United States interest in some way.

*Lack of coverage*

International news coverage in the United States is minimal. According to Semetko, Brzinski, Weaver and Willnat (1991) international news has never been given proper coverage in the United States, even though the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) provide substantial information on foreign issues (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1981). AP and UPI provide extensive news about developing nation's events, especially dealing with governmental and military happenings (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1981). However, United States news prints very little of the AP and UPI news with regards to development and education of developing nations. An explanation for this is the idea that the American public is not interested in any type of event that is not sensational in nature (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1981).

The scarcity of United States' media coverage of international events is explained by factors beyond the limited use of the AP and UPI. Lent (1975) describes five major reasons for the lack of international coverage: 1) coverage is determined by consideration of international diplomacy, national government, military policies and historical-cultural heritage, 2) coverage is crisis-oriented, 3) censorship policies and image-building activities of other countries influence United States news, 4) correspondents and globally blind editors who are cemented to their swivel chairs stateside, and 5) an American public not generally noted for being cosmopolitan, well informed or interested in world affairs. Based on the information provided above the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H2: There is more national news than international news coverage in the United States media.

### *Sensationalism*

Larson (1979) found that United States news coverage on developing nations was treated with certain ideas in mind. Developing nations were only considered to be newsworthy 1) if they were involved in some type of crisis, 2) if the developing nation was involved with an elite nation such as the United States and 3) if the information only involved one country (Larson, 1979). Other researchers have reached similar conclusions (Peterson, 1979; Kariel & Rosenvall, 1984; Bardhan, 1995; Wu, 2000).

The general consensus seems to be that the type of coverage is predicated on whether the event is 1) crisis-oriented and 2) if the United States is involved in the situation. Non-crisis oriented events are characterized as being too costly, time consuming, difficult to present visually and not of interest to the audience (Alexandre, 1989); therefore, they are not worth covering. The audience also has an appetite for events dealing with coups, disasters, terrorism and unrest (Alexandre, 1989, Griffin & Stevenson, 1991).

When developing nations are covered, the United States' media concentrates on sensationalized stories. According to Gorney (1992), sensationalism is the coverage of unexpected events of "inherent entertainment value and *might* contain certain attributes of context of issues and/or information" (p. 458). For example, developing countries from Latin America, Africa, and Asia often receive sensationalized coverage. With respect to

Africa, Alexandre (1989) feels that the emphasis is placed on human tragedy stories. Weaver and Wilhoit (1981) found that in the wire system utilized by many countries, international features deal with activities that could be characterized as sensational news, such as conflict or crisis. According to Gorney (1992) sensationalized news “limits experience as a source of knowledge in favor of emotional or sensory stimulation” (p. 455). This type of event can include coverage of crimes, disasters, conflicts, accidents, and crisis, to name a few.

In another study involving coverage of developing nations in major United States newspapers, it was found that developing nations received sensationalized news coverage and that the coverage was often accompanied by sensational photographs (Langton, 1989). Langton (1989) found that in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, 73% of the photos were sensational in nature for the developing nations compared to 50% for the developed nations (Langton, 1989). Additionally, a study by Tsang (1984) focusing on *Time* magazine found that a majority of the photographs in *Time* and *Newsweek* about Asia were graphically violent in nature (Tsang, 1984). In sum, research demonstrates that “other than world powers, the only alternative way to be cast in the world’s spotlight is to have some large-scale, disruptive incidents” (Wu, 2000, p. 126). Based on the information above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3a: The international news coverage that does exist in United States media sources will be sensational in nature.

### *Type of sensational events*

Sensational events are characterized as crises. Crises stories include *Foreign relations, Domestic 1, Domestic 2, Domestic 3, Race relations/Religion, Human Interest* and *Others*, (Bardhan, 1995). *Foreign relations* are those news coverage dealing with the military, trade, defense, politics, international law and aid about other nations; *Domestic 1* refer to those news covering internal issues; *Domestic 2* consists of news coverage of internal matter; *Domestic 3* refers to internal problems dealing with crimes, terrorism, justice, law, accidents, and violence; *Race relations/religion* is coverage dealing with race relations or religion; *Human interest* news focuses on universal concerns and *Others* refers to a type of story other than the ones previously mentioned (refer to Appendix A). These characteristics of sensational events do not apply to all international news coverage. Based on this information a research question is proposed:

RQ: What type of sensational story is most prevalent?

### *The role of developed nations*

As stated earlier, previous studies demonstrate that international events are only considered newsworthy if they relate to the United States. Bennett et. al. (1997) makes the argument that audience interest is driven by the United States' involvement in a situation. For example, as Bennett et. al. (1997) stated, covering the Bosnian war only occurred when the United States was contemplating sending in troops. Queiser-Morales (1982) described how ABC's, CBS's and NBC's coverage of Latin American countries was based only on United States' interests. "Possibly U.S. diplomatic or political interest

in a country can greatly influence news attention. It may be a more important factor in news coverage decisions than the internal situation of the country itself over a period of time, although a coup, earthquake or other event may briefly draw closer attention” (Haques, 1983, p. 254). Based on the information provided above the following hypothesis is suggested:

H3b: International news coverage that does exist in the United States media is only reported when it is related to United States.

#### *Negative Emphasis*

If the media only presents information about developing nations in which the United States is involved, it may create what Scott (2000) calls a “dangerous world” by creating the view that the developing world needs to be rescued and protected by the United States (Scott, 2000).

Coverage of alternative governments by the United States, moreover, has its own purpose. It serves as a propaganda vehicle for the United States, and according to Alexandre (1989) “over one-half of American students surveyed believed that foreign governments and their ideas are dangerous to America” (Alexandre, 1989, p. 3).

Finally, the treatment given to international news coverage by the United States’ media is negative. Riffe and Shaw (1982) show that Western media exclude positive aspects of international occurrences; they concluded that this creates an international world that is many times different from reality and one that is perceived as dangerous and

deprived (Riffe & Shaw, 1982). The coverage of the developing world is oriented toward negative depictions.

During a ten-year study, the three major United States networks depicted Mexico as plagued by drug problems (Queiser-Morales, 1982). Events taking place in Central and South America and the Caribbean, received less than 6% of the television network coverage in a three-year span (Bardhan, 1995). According to Queiser-Morales (1982) “the collective ‘image’ for Latin America was negative and focused on ‘revolution and earthquakes’” (p. 83). Larson et. al. (1986) found that coverage of Africa during 1972 to 1981 was 37.7% crisis oriented followed by Latin American which received 29.3% coverage of crisis oriented events on the three major networks (e.g. ABC, CBS, NBC). Based on the information mentioned about the following hypothesis is being proposed:

H3c: International news coverage that does exist is negative.

In summary, the research studies reviewed outline the different types of international news coverage in the United States. Four major characteristics have been identified by researchers: 1) lack of coverage 2) sensational events 3) a focus in developing nations’ relationships to United States, and 4) negativism.

The utilization of these four characteristics combined with “the lack of knowledge about and interest in the world place, issues and events” (Alexandre, 1989, p. 1) foster an image of developing nations which is chaotic and violent. Allowing the American public’s constant exposure to this type of coverage continues to propagate a slanted and biased view of the world outside of the United States. Thus, this study is designed to



examine these concerns by surveying a Midwestern university classified and unclassified staff and by analyzing the most utilized media by the participants.

## Methods

### *Participants*

One hundred and twenty-six participants completed the study. Fifty-nine participants were male and 67 were female. A total of 84.9% were Caucasian and 13.5% were minority (3.2 % were Hispanic/Latino, 4.8% were African-American, and .8% were Southeast Asian); two females did not indicate their ethnic background. One survey was discarded due to the eligibility of the individual surveyed. This individual was a student worker.

### Procedures

A study was undertaken to examine the viewing of international news by the classified and unclassified staff of a Midwestern public university. This population was chosen because in some ways, it represents “Middle America.” Of seven hundred seventy-eight classified and unclassified staff at the chosen institution, only 76 staff members are non-Caucasian.

The study administered a survey to examine the medium, type and quantity of international news coverage consumed by the participants. Two survey instruments were used. One survey accessed the type of media attended by the participants, and the other survey examines the participants’ knowledge of international news. The results

determined the two most watched medias, then one week worth of content from those two media was subjected to a content analysis, which analyzed type and quantity of international news.

From the 125 surveys two primary sources of international news were identified: television and radio. Forty-five participants (36%) watched CNN as their primary source and 36 participants (28.8%) listened to NPR/WPR as the second most frequent media source for international events. The other 44 participants (35.2%) relied on different media such as: newspaper (22.4%), magazine (5.6%) and internet (9.6%) as their primary source for news of international events

### Measurements

Two methods were implemented in this study: survey and content analysis. The survey assessed demographics, where people sought international news, and the time they spent obtaining international news and their international news knowledge. Demographic data addressed gender, ethnicity, age, educational background, and title/department of employment. Other questions addressed the preferred media used by the participants when seeking international news. When indicating the preferred media, the participants were asked to identify the programs, affiliation, channel and time spent consuming international news. The participants also answered eight general international event questions to assess their international knowledge (refer to Appendix C).

In addition, a content analysis was used to evaluate the news presented during one week's worth of international CNN and NPR/WPR programming. The coding assessed

general questions such as the name/title of the media, date, headline of the story, and demographical region (refer to Appendix B). Coding focused on the four characteristics of international news coverage discussed earlier. These characteristics are: lack of coverage, sensationalism, developed nation(s) involvement, and negative emphasis.

As part of the content analysis, two coders were trained before they coded the international news resources. Coders attended 2.5 hours of training before conducting the content analysis. The two coders went through the coding instruction sheets (refer to Appendix A) and the coding sheet (refer to Appendix B) with the researcher and questions were answered. Then each coder received newspaper articles to code. Upon completion of the first coding, coders compared results and questions were answered. A second coding with different newspaper articles took place. Once the coders reached similar conclusions (80% agreement) with regard to the international news being coded, the rest of the coding took place individually. The information coded consisted of one week's worth of CNN and NPR/WPR news. Each news piece was approximately 30 minutes for CNN and 14 to 16 minutes for NPR/WPR.

## Results

### *Hypothesis 1*

Hypothesis 1 predicted that participants consuming between 1:15 hours and 2:15 hours of international news coverage every week will be more aware of international events than those consuming between 15 minutes to 1:15 hours of international news or those consuming more than 2:15 hours of international news coverage every week. This

hypothesis was not supported. The data collected demonstrated fluctuation throughout the 7 questions. Actually, the data demonstrated that category 3 of 6 out 7 questions (more than 2:15 hours) scored higher, with the higher score being 100% and the lowest 7.6 %. For example, category 3 (more than 2:15 hours) received a perfect score in questions 3, 6 and 7 (refer to Appendix D). If we were to give each category a grade, category 1 (1:15-2:15) and 2 (45 min-1:15) will fail with 57.8% and 59.9 % respectively while category 3 will receive a D+ (68%).

### *Hypothesis 2*

Hypothesis 2 stated that the media will be saturated with national events. This hypothesis was significantly supported. CNN broadcasted 150 (75%) national events compared to 42 (21%) international events, while NPR/WPR aired 45 (60.8%) national events and only 29 (39%) international events.

### *Hypothesis 3a*

Hypothesis 3a studied sensationalism in the United States coverage of international events. This hypothesis was noticeably supported. Nineteen (45.2%) of CNN broadcasts were recognized as sensational and 17 (58.6%) of NPR/WPR aired events were sensational.

### *Research Question*

The research question posed examined the most prevalent type of sensational story. This study found that for both CNN and NPR/WPR the most prevalent story was *Domestic 3*. *Domestic 3* refers to those stories addressing internal problems dealing with crime, terrorism, justice, law, accidents, and violence. CNN broadcasted 12 (28.5%)

*Domestic 3* and NPR/WPR aired 10 (34.4%) *Domestic 3* stories, while 30 (71.4%) CNN coverage and 19 (65.6%) NPR/WPR coverage was distributed among the other sensational stories.

### *Hypothesis 3b*

Hypothesis 3b examined the involvement of the United States in the news covered. This hypothesis was partially supported. CNN broadcasted 16 (55.1%) international news items involving the United States and NPR/WPR aired 7 (28%) international news items involving the United States.

### *Hypothesis 3c*

Hypothesis 3c stated that the international news coverage would be negative. This hypothesis was markedly supported. 18 (42.8%) CNN broadcasts were about negative events. Meanwhile, NPR/WPR aired 13 (44.8%) negative events. This hypothesis indicated that CNN and NPR/WPR events were negative.

## Discussion

The results of this study both agree and disagree with previous research. Hypothesis 1 explored the time consumption of international news with the knowledge of international events. The findings indicated a fluctuation between the time consume in international news coverage and the knowledge of international events. The close relationship between the findings can be attributable to the nature of each question posed and the relationship of those developing nations with the United States. Each question addresses an event that has been taking place for a period of time and that has re-surfaced

due to an unexpected event at the particular regions. The regions being dealt with have relationships with the United States. These regions are Puerto Rico, Latin American countries, Israel and Palestine, Cuba, and China. For example, Puerto Rico is not only a commonwealth of the U.S., but the island of Vieques is the primary ground military practice for the United States, while Cuba has always been of interest to the United States since its freedom from Spain and the rise and fall of General Batista and the creation of Fidel Castro's new government which has survived for more than 41 years.

Hypothesis 2 studied the concentration of national versus international news. The study found that, indeed, during broadcasts the majority of the coverage was national. The study supported the findings of previous researchers in that the total amount of international news coverage was limited to both CNN and NPR/WPR news. The nature of this limitation cannot be determined in this research, although according to previous studies there are plenty of international stories at the AP and UPI to select from; editors are just choosing not to print or air them.

One possibility for the lack of international coverage can arise from the idea that developing nations are not worth covering unless the news is negative and is linked with the United States. Larson suggested these characteristics in his 1979 study. This study, as well as previous studies, suggests that the media is not interested in broadcasting issues related to the growth of developing nations.

Additionally, the American population is only interested in sensational stories. These stories provide some type of entertainment and continue to feed into the distorted view of developing nations. Therefore, any change in media coverage that will benefit

developing nations is unlikely to occur. This can be influenced by what is known as desensitization. Desensitization states that if an individual is exposed to repetitive images of violence or crisis, the individual will become desensitized, therefore, becoming “less sensitive to it, more jaded, and less aroused, and bothered by it” (Harris, 1994, p. 195). This may explain why the American population has never rebelled against the image of international events constantly fed to them by the mass media. The American population has come to a point where they are not bothered with the international information given to them, even if it results in a lack of world knowledge.

Sensationalism still plays a major role in international news coverage in the United States media. In both, radio and television, there are media exploitation stories categorized as sensational. Gatekeepers and editors utilized stories such as, “Terror bombing in Indonesia” and “200 Haitians in detention in Miami” to capture the audience’s attention. This brings us to coverage that involves conflicts and crises as stated by Weaver and Wilhoit in their 1981 study. Even when societies have changed, the media still finds a way to continue feeding the same type of story over and over again to the American people. Fragmented stories only produce slanted images and depictions that support discrimination, racism, injustice, prejudice, poverty, and cynicism. This approach transmits an image that hinders the American populations’ ability to believe that there are other countries where individuals possess a healthy and normal economic and political structure. The image portrayed is one in which the United States is the savior and in which there is no other way but the American way.

Hypothesis 3a studied sensationalism in international events. The findings support previous studies. CNN and NPR/WPR indeed carried sensationalized international events. This usage of events continues to add to the ignorance of Americans regarding the rest of the world. A study conducted by Perry (1985) found that dissemination of European and African events had an effect on the American's population knowledge of these two countries. This might explain the ignorance of international events outside of sensationalized news. This also explains why the American public knows little about developing nations' economies and politics.

The research question in this study investigated the most prevalent type of story. The study found that the number one type of story described events emphasizing crime, terrorism, accidents, war, violence, justice and law (*Domestic 3*). The findings indicated that the American audience continues to prefer sensationalized international events. The American audience's interest is still driven by events providing some type of entertainment by describing the misfortune of others. This can be observed by the large number of sensationalized stories aired on CNN and NPR/WPR.

Hypothesis 3b examined the involvement of the United States as a focus of United States international news stories. The findings indicated that involvement of the United States was a reason for focusing on an international event. The data indicated involvement with the United States and other developing nations. This could have been due to the recent tragedy of the United States: 9/11. Since the 9/11 incident, a United States campaign targeting terrorism has affected developing and developed nations



throughout the world. CNN, it appears, carried more international events related to United States than NPR/WPR.

Hypothesis 3c studied the negativism in international events. NPR/WPR carried more negative international events than CNN. Both mediums broadcasted negative international news, but radio, upon analysis, is the one carrying the most negativism. In both media, the coverage of developing nations included words such as: rebels, killer, shot, takeover, hostage, threat, raid, savage capitalism, horrible crime, destroys peace, no peace, terrorist and cannibalism. This contributes to a negative picture of developing nations and goes hand in hand with the type of story most prevalent: *Domestic 3* (refer to Appendix C). These words are used to sell stories to those individuals consuming the media, but in reality, outside of selling the story, the image that is promoted is one of danger and an unsafe place for Americans to visit. As such, Americans relegate themselves to areas that they consider safe such as areas where Americans reside and/or have their businesses.

The investigation revealed that television and radio delivered more *Domestic 3* types of stories. As previous researchers stated, the audience is only interested in stories dealing with crime, terrorism, disasters, and unrest (Alexander, 1989 and Griffin & Stevenson, 1991). These types of stories were considered by the editors of CNN and NPR/WPR as newsworthy, therefore, portraying a negative picture of developing nations across the United States. By the continued dissemination of these types of stories, mass media continues to nurture the ideas cemented in the American mind. This is what Jo and Berkowitz (1994) refer to as priming. According to these researchers “when people

witness, read or hear of an event via the mass media, ideas having a similar meaning are activated in them for a short time afterwards, and these thoughts in turn can activate other semantically related ideas and action tendencies” (Jo & Berkowitz, 1994, p. 45).

Basically, the repetitiveness of the negative characteristics of international news keeps fresh in the American mind the image of the horrors of developing nations and the United States as a the savior.

This negativism can also be observed through the answers given to the open ended question that the participants answered during part 2 of the survey. Out of the eight questions included in the survey one question explores how the participants felt about Cuba. The results revealed negative word choice by some of the participants. They used words such as socialism, communism, nuked and tyrant. Once again the word choice used by the participants reflect the type of headlines and word choice used by the gatekeepers and editors. The coverage given to developing nations contribute to previous findings. The study found similar findings to those previous studies.

### Limitations

This study faces three major limitations, that is, the recording of content, the coders who were used and the question on the survey related to time. The manner of recording the information from television was not problematic because the standard 30 minutes of every news program was used. However, recording the radio news was more troublesome because there were two time lapses of eight minutes that needed to be recorded, and both recorders gathered the information differently with one recorder

forgetting the cues to identify the days. Without the cues, the coder was confused as to when each day began and ended, delaying the coding process.

Secondly, the coders training sections were done by coding newspaper articles instead of televised international news. The coders reviewed newspaper articles instead of televised news because there was no sign of what medium the participants preferred. In addition, because of the participants' careers, it was assumed that the participants most likely would choose the newspaper as one of the mediums.

Another aspect limiting the study was the background of the coders. Both were female coders with higher education degrees. One possesses a history degree and the other a Master's degree in mass communication. Additionally, both coders have traveled to developing nations and are activists. Their perception of the world outside of the United States does not represent the status quo opinion in the United States. Their philosophy and knowledge about the underdeveloped world may have impacted their coding of the news stories.

In addition, Hypothesis 1 had implications. After reviewing and analyzing the results, it was obvious that the question posted in the survey could have misled the participants, not to mention that after analyzing CNN and NPR/WPR international events coverage, it was obvious that in a week's worth of international news, the participant would have been unable to consume more than 45 minutes of international events. For example, the majority of the events broadcasted by the two media were national events and the duration of international event was less than one minute. This makes it

impossible for the participants to be able to consume between 45 minutes to 2:15 hours of international events.

### Future Studies

This study explored the treatment of international news coverage in two forms of United States media, but further study is necessary. An investigation studying the impact of the United States journalistic system in a developing nation might reveal whether or not American journalism has had an impact in the journalistic approach of developing nations. This investigation might be able to answer the particular question, that is, has United States journalism practices influenced the developing nations' journalistic methodology, and, if so, how does this practice affect international news coverage? This can also, explain the available international events at the Associate Press and United Press International.

Another study could explore the treatment the United States receives in the developing nation's news media. Are developing nations' U.S. coverage characterized as sensational and negative? Or is the treatment of the United States glorified? This investigation would explore the position played by the United States in developing nations, and the developing nations' contribution to United States propaganda.

Since gatekeeper and/or editors continue to practice and use the characteristics mentioned above, another study can investigate the effect of the mass media on the immigrant population. Do the immigrants agree with what the media is saying? And how

does the portrayal of their country affect their thoughts and perceptions of the United States?

### Conclusion

The findings of this investigation are similar to previous research findings. It is obvious that developing nations are not treated with equality or balance in the United States media. The distorted picture created by the media only harms the average United States citizens' acceptance of other nations. The media continues to portray the image that has surrounded the United States with regard to its position in the world. The propaganda distributed by the media is still using methods used decades ago. The American public continues to search for the sensational stories, giving neither space nor coverage to any other type of international event.

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## APPENDIX A

**International News***Code Sheet Instructions*

Code all international news from the two most utilized news sources used by classified and unclassified UW-Whitewater employee. Complete one code sheet for each story pertaining to international events. Please fill the coding sheet according to the response most reflective of your views for each category.

**Definition of Terms**

1. **International news**→ news that originates outside the United States of America.  
The news needs to cover a problem, concern and/or cultural event of a developing or developed country that is not the United States of America.
2. **Headline**→ Catchy phrases used to emphasize the importance of the event/news being covered.
3. **Region**→ a particular district or territory of a country outside of the United States (i.e. Latin America)
  - a). **Developing nation(s)**→ refers to undeveloped countries of the world including those countries with alternative governments. Please see attachment for a list of developing countries.
  - b). **Developed nation(s)**→ are those countries that resemble the United States' level of industrialization and standard of living.
4. **News Characteristics**

a). ***Lack of Coverage*** → refers to the amount of time and/or length of coverage given to an international event. It also refers to minimal or no coverage of international events in the different media. For example, out of a half hour news program, how many international events were covered in comparison to the total number of news covered? If the total comes out to be less than 15% for the week this would indicate a lack of coverage.

b) ***Sensationalism*** → unexpected events that “have some inherent entertainment value and might contain attributes of context of issues and/or information” (Gorney, 1992, p. 458) such as crimes, disasters, conflicts, accidents, and crisis, to name a few.

### Type of Story

1b). *Foreign relations* relates to news coverage dealing with the military, trade, defense, politics, international law and aid about other nations

2b). *Domestic 1* consists of news covering internal issues that are political, governmental, and military or defense

3b). *Domestic 2* consists of news coverage of internal matters. This type of news deals with the economics, business, agriculture, labor and wages of the country

4b). *Domestic 3* refers to internal problems dealing with crime, terrorism, justice, law, accidents, and violence

5b). *Race relations/Religion* is coverage dealing with race relations or religion differences with the culture

6b). *Human interest* news focuses on universal concerns such as disasters

7b). *Other* refers to a type of story other than the ones previously mentioned. This can include but is not limited to important people who are not political figures, such as sport figures and/or a particular celebration and/or event that is important for the culture of the region

c). *Developed Nation(s) Involvement* → the article/news mentions the consequences the event can have on a developed nation (United States) due to political and/or business relations. The article/news will continually make references to the ongoing or future relation between nations

d). *Negative Emphasis* → Not allied with, supporting, or facing either side of the issues

## APPENDIX B

Standardized Coding Sheet for the Study of International News Coverage**INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE**

Name/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Source/affiliation) (Of story)

Headline \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Word for word)

**I. Region**

a). Developing Nation(s) \_\_\_\_\_

b). Developed Nation(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**II. News Characteristics**

a). *Sensational* Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

If yes, please circle the best category that describes the type of story covered.

1. Foreign Relations 2. Domestic 1

3. Domestic 2 4. Domestic 3

5. Race relations/Religion 6. Human Interest

7. Other

b). *Developed Nation(s) Involvement* Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

If yes, please indicate which developed nation(s) and how many times the country (ies) is mentioned during the coverage

Nation(s) \_\_\_\_\_

# of times mentioned \_\_\_\_\_

c). *Negative Emphasis* Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

If yes, please indicate specific words and description of images used:

\_\_\_\_\_

Standardized Coding Sheet for the Study of International News Coverage

### INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE

Name/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Week of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Source/affiliation)

*Be advise that in order to find out whether there is a lack of coverage you need to indicate the number of international news for the day compare to the total of news given in the specify day. If the total of international news is less than 10% of the overall total of news this would mean that there is a lack of coverage in that particular day.*

*Lack of Coverage* (On a daily bases)

**DAY 1:** Out of the total number of stories, how many stories pertained to International events?  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total) Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

**DAY 2:** Out of the total number of stories, how many stories pertained to International events?  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total) Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

**DAY 3:** Out of the total number of stories, how many stories pertained to International events?  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total) Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

**DAY 4:** Out of the total number of stories, how many stories pertained to International events?  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total) Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

**DAY 5:** Out of the total number of stories, how many stories pertained to International events?  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total) Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

**DAY 6:** Out of the total number of stories, how many stories pertained to International events?  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total) Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

**DAY 7:** Out of the total number of stories, how many stories pertained to International events?  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total) Y\_\_\_ N\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

**Media Attended Survey**

Please take a moment to complete this survey about the type of media you use to obtain international news.

|   |                              |                            |                            |           |           |           |                   |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>   | Male _____                   | Female _____               |                            |           |           |           |                   |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>  | African-American _____       | Caucasian _____            | Latino/Hispanic _____      |           |           |           |                   |
|   | Southeast Asian _____        | Bi-Racial _____            | (please indicate)          |           |           |           |                   |
|   | American-Indian _____        | Other _____                | (please indicate)          |           |           |           |                   |
|   |                              |                            |                            |           |           |           |                   |
| <b>Age</b>  | ____24-Under                 | ____25-30                  | ____31-36                  | ____37-42 | ____43-48 | ____49-54 | ____55-Over       |
| <b>Educational Background</b>   |                              |                            |                            |           |           |           |                   |
|   | High School Diploma _____    | Associate Degree _____     | Undergraduate Degree _____ |           |           |           |                   |
|   | Graduate Degree-Master _____ | Graduate Degree-PhD. _____ | Other: _____               |           |           |           | (please indicate) |
| <b>Please indicate your job title and department in which you are employed:</b> |                              |                            |                            |           |           |           |                   |
| _____   |                              |                            |                            |           |           |           |                   |

Rank the following media in order of how often you use them to obtain International news [With 1 being the most frequent and 5 the least frequent]

Television \_\_\_\_\_ Newspaper(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Radio \_\_\_\_\_  
 Internet \_\_\_\_\_ News Magazine(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Take the 2 forms of media that you ranked 1 and 2 respectively in the previous question and fill them in on the lines below. For each form please indicate the specific name/titles/affiliates of 2 programs, papers, websites, or magazines that you especially like for International news.

**For Example:**

[1] Newspaper

- New York Times-Section C
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel-Section K

[2] News Magazine

- Time Magazine
- Newsweek Magazine

[1] \_\_\_\_\_  
 a. \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. \_\_\_\_\_

[2] \_\_\_\_\_  
 a. \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. \_\_\_\_\_

*In 15 minutes increments indicate how much time you spend consuming International news per week? [On average]*

\_\_\_ Less than 15 min    \_\_\_ 15-30min    \_\_\_ 30-45min    \_\_\_ 45-60min    \_\_\_ 1hr-1:15hr  
\_\_\_ 1:15hr-1:30hr    \_\_\_ 1:30hr-1:45hr    \_\_\_ 1:45hr-2hrs    \_\_\_ 2hrs-2:15hrs  
\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

**International Knowledge Survey**

*Please take a moment to answer each question to the best of your ability regarding International events.*  
 [PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR ANSWERS]

1. What situation has been taking place in the island of Vieques for the past few years?
  - a. The military bases are being indicted due to malpractice
  - b. Vieques is working with the United States military to improve the quality of health on the island
  - c. Puerto Ricans and *Viequenses* are trying to remove the military from the island
  - d. The United States is asking for more territorial land for their military bases and training
  - e. I do not know
  
2. What regions of Latin America have been affected most by DROUGHT over the past few years?
  - a. Mexico, Chile, Guadalajara, Bolivia
  - b. Panama, Costa Rica, Guinea
  - c. Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil
  - d. Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua
  - e. I do not know
  
3. Israelis and Palestinians have been in constant war for decades. What is the primary reason behind this animosity?
  - a. Territorial/Religious conflict
  - b. Relationship of the particular territories with the United States
  - c. Lack of nutrition affecting the individuals' cognitive consciousness
  - d. Educational differences
  - e. I do not know
  
4. What country voted for the first time this past year to allow United Nations inspection of Human Rights violations in Cuba?
  - a. Africa
  - b. Mexico
  - c. China
  - d. United States
  - e. I do not know
  
5. What country currently has the highest rate of AIDS?
  - a. South Africa
  - b. Zimbabwe
  - c. Zambia



- d. Union of South Africa
- e. I do not know

6. What country allows a family to have only one child?

- a. Japan
- b. China
- c. Iraq
- d. India
- e. I do not know

7. Where was the first case of Mad Cow disease diagnosed?

- a. Britain
- b. Poland
- c. Ireland
- d. Ghana
- e. I do not know

8. How do you feel about Cuba?

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