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Amount of International News by Four World Newspapers: Pre and Post-9/11

Sidney Mitchell
San Jose State University

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AMOUNT OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS BY FOUR WORLD NEWSPAPERS:
PRE AND POST-9/11

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Sidney Mitchell

May 2010

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SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

The Undersigned Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

AMOUNT OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS BY FOUR WORLD NEWSPAPERS:

PRE AND POST-9/11

By

Sidney Mitchell

APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS

COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. William Tillinghast, Journalism and Mass Communications

Dr. William Briggs, Journalism and Mass Communications

Dr. Ken Nuger, Political Science

ABSTRACT

AMOUNT OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS BY FOUR WORLD NEWSPAPERS PRE AND POST 9/11

By Sidney Mitchell

World newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The London Times*, *The Australian*, and *The Toronto Star*, have the power to enlighten countries and shape public opinion domestically and abroad. However, at times, newspapers tend to be biased and reflect ideologies or values, which tend to be slanted towards home cultures and personal politics. Consequently, the public often suffers because what it learns about the world may be distorted. As a result, newspapers have witnessed a steady decline in readership following the end of the Cold-War and continuing throughout post-9/11. Irrespectively, studies have reported “spikes” in international news coverage following 9/11 that were either sustained or increased because of this event. Thus, this paper explores to what extent the amount of foreign news coverage increased or decreased as a direct response to 9/11 throughout a pre and post-9/11 period. The study concluded with mixed results.

DEDICATION

I offer this thesis as a gesture to my beloved mother, Mary Magdalene Scott who often wondered if I would ever finish my studies. Unfortunately, she didn't live long enough to witness this moment, but if she's listening, I'm sure she's rejoicing in heaven knowing that I'm finally done! Also, a special thanks to my father who has been a source of inspiration to me for having completed his own Bachelor studies in music. His wonderful wife, Shirley, shared in that accomplishment for her unwavering patience and understanding. To my son, Sidney Thi Mitchell II, I thank you for pursuing and accomplishing your own educational goals. And to my wife, Gemma T. Olazo, I appreciate your continued support as I juggled both family life and the rigors of academia. Finally, a special thanks to Susana "Tex" Hamilton, Esq. who has always been a source of unwavering support and friendship over the years, no doubt one of the best friends anyone could hope for in life. No doubt, there are many others whom I want to thank. So, if I have left out your name, please understand, you too have a special place in my heart.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The closing of international news bureaus and the shrinking numbers of foreign correspondents have led to a decline in foreign news coverage over the past two and a half decades. As a result, numerous studies have emphasized the importance of the media's role as a provider of international news coverage to its readers. Following the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, many newspapers experienced a spike in international news coverage. News media centered much of the attention on the Middle East, Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda, and Osama Bin Laden. During this time, the amount of foreign news coverage related to the attacks increased throughout the newspaper industry as one would expect following a major cataclysmic event of that nature. As coverage began to level off, some newspapers with an international readership, such as the *New York Times*, were able to sustain or increase amounts of foreign news coverage. As a result, studies conducted since the attacks do, in fact, indicate that there has been both an increase as well a renewed interest in international news coverage lasting beyond the so-called "spike" period.

International news plays a vital role in keeping Americans informed about the rest of the world. Since 9/11, there has been a trend towards more news of a localized nature, particularly in the United States. However, there is a potential downside. If one does not pay attention to what is occurring globally, this inattention and ignorance could result in

the same conditions that contributed to 9/11. Thus, the general public risks becoming regrettably provincial, exposing the country to potential danger.

The Decline of Foreign News Bureaus

Following the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the number of United States foreign news bureaus began to decline. The earliest sign of this trend started with the end of the Vietnam War beginning in the late 1970s, and continued to increase during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, following the breakup of the Soviet Union. It was throughout this period of transition that most news executives decided that Americans were not interested in international news. Cunningham's (2001) research supported that finding. He noted newspaper studies showed that international news coverage had dropped significantly during the 1980s and the 1990s (Cunningham, 2001). Specifically, Cunningham reported that United States newspaper space devoted to international news had dropped from 10% in 1971 to a mere 6% in 1995. Parks' (2002) study showed similar findings. He noted one recent analysis by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau estimated that, before 9/11, foreign stories accounted for 2% or less of the average daily paper's newsholes. This was down from 10% in 1971 during the Vietnam War. In addition, the same report estimated that the proportion of international news in the major newsweeklies had declined to 13% from 22% between 1985 and 1995 (Parks, 2002). Shaw (2001) attributed that decline to policy changes by news executives as a result of their interpretation of reader interest. His findings suggested that space and time allotted to foreign coverage was decidedly reduced because the interest of readers and viewers during "post-Cold War America" shifted more towards domestic and entertainment news,

specifically news about “celebrities, scandals, and local news” (Shaw, 2001, p. 1). Consequently, he noted a 70% to 80% drop in foreign news coverage prior to the time the study was conducted (Shaw, 2001). Perhaps, more controversial was the suggestion that the media failed to make international news stories relevant to its readers. To bolster that assertion, Shaw (2001) cited Stuart Wilk, managing editor of *The Dallas Morning News*, whose opinion echoed a similar concern. Wilk felt that perhaps the media might have undermined the true extent of Americans’ interest in foreign news. Furthermore, he questioned if the media had done a good job at all in making “foreign news seem relevant” (Shaw, 2001, p. 4). Consequently, he believed that the way the media covered foreign news itself might have been reason for their perception of Americans' lack of interest (Shaw, 2001).

Seaton’s (2002) findings were similar to Parks’ findings. He noted coverage of international news in newspapers in America before 9/11 was only at 2%, which was down from 10% in 1971, signaling an 80% decline. Other data suggested news organizations pulled back on international coverage to save money. Hamilton and Jenner (2003) argued the reason for the drop in foreign news bureaus was the aggressive bottom-line goals of publicly held media companies and the high cost of maintaining correspondents overseas. Consequently, they felt those underlying factors were not likely to reverse themselves any time soon. Carroll (2006) observed that newspapers had reduced their bureaus, apparently as a response to declining circulations and revenues. Furthermore, she noted data obtained from a variety of sources, including newspapers themselves, pointed to an estimated 10% decline in the number of newspaper-sponsored

foreign bureaus since 2000, with almost all the decline accounted for by mid-sized papers. Other data from that study showed there was a 30% decline in the number of foreign correspondents among both smaller and mid-sized papers.

Nevertheless, there were exceptions in spite of the declining trend. Carroll (2006) found larger newspapers appeared to have held steady in their investment in foreign correspondents. Evidence from this research indicated newspapers treated quality foreign coverage as a distinguishing mark (Carroll, 2006). Seaton (2002) also acknowledged a state of decline. However, he felt it was both necessary and responsible to point out the existence of a two-tiered press. Elite newspapers, like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, offered above average coverage of the world to an elite readership highly interested in foreign policy (Seaton, 2002). This finding and others reflected in a study by The PEW Research Center (PEW) (2002) suggested evidence of sustained international news coverage among some newspapers and the general readership which lasted beyond the initial six-month period following the events of 9/11. PEW (2002) found only a slight increase of 7% in the interest of international news ten months following the 9/11 incident (PEW, 2002).

Although the data represented a small increase in readership, it showed that, nevertheless, a notable trend did, in fact, occur throughout that period. The PEW (2002) study also provided a demographic breakdown of both the level of education and age groups of that data. Specifically, this increase was seen in educated readers over 50 years of age and college students. PEW (2002) noted, however, that the increase occurred in groups that previously indicated a high interest in politics and international events.

These findings were further supported in a survey of males and females over the age of 40. PEW (2002) found that 44% of male college graduates over age 40 paid very close attention to international news, compared with 28% in 2000. Interest among female college graduates in the same age group had nearly tripled from 10% in 2000 to 28% in 2002 (PEW, 2002). This has only widened the age and education gaps in international news. Among men over age 40, the gap between college graduates and those who have not completed college had increased from 6% in 2000 to 20% in the 2002 study. Among women over age 40, the gap between college graduates and non-graduates nearly doubled from 6% in 2000 to 11% in 2002 (PEW, 2002).

In addition, the gap for senior citizens and college graduates widened between the time the study was initiated in 2000 and two years later in 2002. However, for those under age 30 and those with at least high school education, the percentages did not change significantly (PEW, 2002).

The same patterns are evident when respondents were asked whether they follow international news most of the time, or only when something of significance occurs. Twice as many senior citizens, as well as those under age 30 indicated they paid close attention to international news most of the time, 51% and 26%, respectively. In 2000, the difference was 41% and 25%, respectively. In 2002, nearly half (44%) of college graduates indicated they followed overseas news most of the time, compared with 34% of those with a high school education. This represented approximately an 11% increase for college graduates who followed foreign news between 2000 and 2002 at the time of this

study. The gap for college graduates was smaller in 2000 (39%-31%) when compared to those with a high school education (PEW, 2002).

Evidence of a Growing Core Audience

In addition, through a closer inspection of the international news audience, PEW (2002) was able to identify three distinct core groups in the study:

“The small but growing core international news audience-16% of the public (up from 10% in 2000)-expresses strong and consistent interest in international news. Nine-in-ten say it is important that the news contain information about events in other countries. This group is affluent and highly educated; 64% have attended college. The core international audience is disproportionately white and male. It also is the oldest of the three groups; nearly half (49%) are over age 50 (p.21).”

Specifically, PEW (2002) indicated “the occasional international news audience,” “the disinterested international news audience,” and “the core international news audience” (PEW, 2002, p. 1). For the stated purpose of this research, only the latter will be discussed.

Justification for this Study

Since the attacks on 9/11 constituted a global event, this study attempted to remain balanced considering there were very real and tangible global consequences. Although, the attacks were inflicted upon the United States only, the entire world was affected economically, politically, emotionally, and religiously. It is clear that those events continue to have a global impact even today.

Since that period, research about some elements of international information flow remains underdeveloped. The amount of foreign news coverage reported in previous research varies widely, as does the method with which studies were conducted (Allen, 2005). Adding to this problem, the majority of studies that attempted to document the

amount of international news flow examined mostly American newspapers. Similar studies applied to other countries are rare. For example, Riffe et al. (1994) analyzed foreign news coverage by United States newspapers from the 1960s to the 1990s. Using *The New York Times* as a case study, Riffe et al. (1994) investigated trends in foreign news coverage. Using 10 coders, these researchers analyzed two construct weeks for each year spanning a period of 22 years, from 1969 to 1990. Although, coverage declined from an average of 48.9 items in 1969 to 23.8 items in 1990, they found the newsholes increased (Allen, 2005). However, Riffe et al. (1994) found that the methodology used in previous studies was somewhat flawed and needed to be revamped. Riffe et al. (1994, p.74) stated, “evidence that the foreign newshole is shrinking over time is indirect and comes primarily through juxtaposition of isolated (and methodologically dissimilar) content analyses, rather than from well-designed longitudinal comparisons.” Thus, they felt it necessary to point out the limitations of their own study: the use of one newspaper and the use of only absolute-item frequencies. As a result, Riffe et al. (1994) concluded that in order to achieve a more representative accounting of international news item frequency, more newspapers would have to be included in the study, in addition to adding both foreign and domestic news items. The “complementary proportion” for contrasting both foreign and domestic news and the “item frequency” to maintain a tally of the number of foreign news items was identified in each category (Riffe et al., 1994, p.85).

The type of analysis Riffe et al. (1994) conducted relied on a longitudinal study of representative samples from one newspaper. However, this particular research applied a

“content analysis” study to gather data in a relatively shorter period. As previously noted, the Riffe et al. (1994) study analyzed only one newspaper, *The New York Times*. However, the current research analyzed four newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Toronto Star*, *The London Times*, and *The Australian*. In doing so, the researcher intended to add to the body of knowledge of international news, and, perhaps, help close any remaining gaps in this field of scholarship.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the current study was to examine trends in the world news coverage of four selected international newspapers during a time of relative peace before and after 9/11. Thus, this researcher chose to conduct a single content analysis study covering an 18-month constructed period between 2001 and 2006. This period was further divided into three sub-periods: “pre-9/11,” “post-9/11,” and “five years after 9/11.” Pre-9/11 is a time of relative peace referring to the six-months prior to September 11, 2001, which was used to establish a baseline for comparison. The post-9/11 period represented a time prior to the build-up of the second gulf war in an attempt to remove periods of extreme crises or major “cataclysmic” events. Admittedly, this particular research had challenges due to the fact 9/11 was a major cataclysmic event. Therefore, it was decided that the second six month period analyzed should start six months after the date of the actual attacks. This provided for a “cooling off” period since studies have shown increases in foreign news spiked for the first three to four months after the attacks and then somewhat leveled off, thereafter. Finally, the last six month period (five years

after) was necessary to show whether or not foreign news coverage had dropped back to pre-9/11 levels (2001).

This researcher utilized a content analysis method to determine whether the attacks on 9/11, did in fact, (a) generate a renewed interest in international news coverage immediately following the event, (b) generate a sustained interest beyond the initial so-called “spike” period, and (c) confirm an increased interest to any of the selected four newspapers.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the literature that was used to study the effects of 9/11 on the amount of international news coverage by four newspapers. In addition to providing an overview of amounts of international news coverage before 9/11, a post-period (referred to as a “cooling off” period) following the events was also reviewed. Thus, this overview provides a summary of relevant research of both the United States media’s and non-United States media’s foreign coverage of international news. In the conclusion, the chapter culminates with a formal statement of the problem.

Pre-9/11 Levels

In a study conducted between 1988 and 2000 by scholars at the University of Windsor in Canada, Soderlund et al. (2002) acknowledged there was a decline in international news coverage among local Canadian dailies. A survey was administered to the editors of Canada’s daily newspapers to assess their opinion of international news coverage. An analysis of the data collected for each year, showed a marked decline in the quality and quantity of international news coverage in 1995. In contrast, prior to that decline, the six-year period from 1988–1994 showed remarkable coverage of international politics. Of significant interest, this period saw the end of Communism in Eastern Europe and the break-up of the former USSR (Soviet Union). In addition, there were numerous internal ethnic conflicts in other regions of the world such as Rwanda, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, trade agreements such as the Fair

Trade Agreement (FTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) were also implemented, signaling what was to become a new but controversial shift in world trade policy by the United States government. However, the data were not entirely negative. Overall, Soderlund et al. (2002) found the ten years between 1990 and 2000 less dramatic. In addition, although researchers viewed the 1995 data as a negative reflection of editorial quality and quantity of international news, the 2000 data pointed to a partial recovery suggesting a more positive trend (Soderlund et al., 2002).

Additionally, for Canadians, the term globalization became a household term. Thus, many began to understand the importance of international markets to the extent they showed relevancy or affected domestic prosperity (Soderlund et al., 2002). In addition, this period ushered in a new round of significant developments for the national newspaper industry. Subsequently, one of the first major trends towards newspaper acquisitions began in Canada. In 1996, Conrad Black's Hollinger Corporation owned 58 of the country's 104 newspapers or 56% totaling 41% of the nation's daily circulation (Saunders, Mahood, & Waldie, 1996).

In the spring of 2000, Soderlund et al. (2002) mailed questionnaires to all of Canada's 104 daily newspaper editors. Two subsequent mailings were conducted over a three-month period, resulting in a 33% response rate. This was the lowest response rate of the three surveys conducted (Soderlund et al., 2002). Thirty-two percent of editors rated coverage as "very good to excellent" and 56% rated coverage as "good," while 12% rated coverage as "less than satisfactory" (p. 244). Previous surveys were conducted in 1988 and 1995. The 1988 data indicated that 21% of editors rated coverage as "very

good to excellent” and 57% rated coverage as “good,” while 23% rated coverage as “less than satisfactory” (p. 244). While approximately the same percentage in both samples described the coverage as “good,” the percentage who found the coverage to be “less than satisfactory” in 1995 increased marginally to 29%, while the percentage describing the coverage as “very good” declined by about half, from 21% to 10% (p. 244).

During the spring of 1995, Soderlund et al. (1999) sent questionnaires to 107 daily newspaper editors and, after two follow-up letters, 48 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 45%. The first and most general question asked editors to evaluate Canadian newspaper coverage of international news based on such factors as “amount, quality, depth, range, and objectivity” (Soderlund et al., 1999, p. 244). The respondents’ answers to this question set the tone for the remainder of the survey. None of the editors surveyed characterized international reporting as “excellent” and only 10% classified it as “very good” (p. 244). Of the remainder of the sample, 60% described the coverage as “good,” while 29% believed it to be “less than satisfactory” (p. 244). No editor described coverage as “poor” (p. 244). This distribution suggests that newspaper editors perceive international reporting, at best, as adequate (Soderlund et al., 1999).

Overall, the sample of 1995 spring data over-represents editors of large-circulation dailies and those located on the prairies and in Ontario, while it under-represents those of small-circulation papers and those located in Atlantic Canada and Quebec. The sample roughly parallels the size and composition of the sample obtained for the 1988 study. In both studies, the most significant independent variables were

region and language in which the newspaper was published, its circulation, and whether or not it was independent or chain-owned (Soderlund et al., 2002).

Although the 2000 survey sample yielded only 33% compared to the higher rates found in the 1988 and 1995 samples, it was not necessary to exclude it from the study. Therefore, Soderlund, et al. (2002, p.76) applied the “goodness of fit” (region, circulation, ownership type, and language) test to the sample and thus, it was determined that the 2000 sample was, nonetheless, reasonable (Soderlund et al., 2002). This was because the questionnaires used in the Soderlund et al. (2002) survey were structured similarly to the earlier versions. This method was used for the purposes of accuracy and consistency of language in order to maintain valid longitudinal data to track changes of key concern such as quality of reporting and relative importance by editors and sources (Soderlund et al., 2002). As a result, the researchers gathered multiple datum concerning trends in international news reporting, perceptions of Canadians’ interest in international affairs, relative ranking of international news among its competitors, and trends in percentage of newshole (non-advertising space) devoted to international stories (Soderlund et al., 2002). In Table 1 of their study, Soderlund et al. (2002, p.77) showed a significant turn-around in their opinion based on results of the three surveys when compared with the 1995 survey. Specifically, some editors felt the quality had decreased, with 17% indicating “less than satisfactory.” Those who rated quality as “very good” had increased to 22%, whereas the figures for both “very good” to “excellent” had jumped by at least 10%, which was highest when compared to all of the surveys. These changes showed that editors’ opinions over the past five years had undergone a reassessment.

[E]ditors' responses over the three surveys are indicative of sharp positive re-evaluation since 1995. Editors who saw the quality as "less than satisfactory" declined by 17% over the past five years, while those in the "very good to excellent" category increased by 22%. Indeed, the 32% reporting the quality of international reporting as "very good" to "excellent" is (by at least 10%) the highest seen in any of the surveys (Soderlund et al., 2002, p. 77).

Based on a survey conducted from 1998-2002 by Newspaper Audience Databank Inc. (NADbank), Ferguson (2000) found *The Toronto Star* increased its dominance in the Greater Toronto Area, as did four of the city's English-language dailies (Ferguson, 2000). NADbank is the market research arm for daily newspapers, advertising agencies, and advertisers in Canada. The survey covered a five-month period and gathered data in 25 cities across Canada. It had been described as effectual in helping advertisers reach their clients, because it bears similarity to the television industry's rating system. Overall, the data suggested an increased interest in current events by Canadians (Ferguson, 2000). These factors indicate that in 2000, circulation at *The Toronto Star* was reasonably at a healthy level. For instance, according to the last NADbank survey in 1999, its readership represented 32.9% of the population in the Greater Toronto area. However, in 2000, The Star experienced a 66,000-readership gain, which boosted its readership to 34%, or to almost 1.25 million per day (Ferguson, 2000).

The decision to include *The New York Times* in the current study was based on the following factors. Riffe et al. (1994) described it as an atypical newspaper. In addition to its elite status, and given its reputable international news coverage, it has an overseas news staff, which is capable of acquiring foreign news stories from varied international news sources. Consequently, *The New York Times* is a legendary leader in the print media industry, which carries considerable influence among newspapers both foreign and

domestic. Hence, it is not uncommon for other organizations to adjust their foreign news coverage in keeping with practices of *The New York Times* (Riffe et al., 1994). In other words, *The New York Times* serves as a relative type of barometer that can be used to measure quantitative shifts or trends among newspapers of similar stature and their coverage of foreign news.

Riffe et al. (1994) built upon a previous data set from 1969–1979 and used the data to juxtapose results in their particular study which covers the period from 1981–1990. All international news identified by dateline, headline, and text on all pages and sections of *The New York Times*, excluding editorial or opinion items, were coded in microfilmed issues from two construct weeks (two randomly selected Sundays, Mondays, etc.) per year from 1969 to 1990 inclusively, or 308 total issues (Riffe et al., 1994).

After grouping results from the past two studies, which represent 25 years from the commencement of their study, Riffe et al. (1994) found *The New York Times* had clearly cut the number of foreign items it selected for publication by half. However, what is important to note is that at the same time, they found stories containing “world items” actually increased in length (p. 77). Riffe et al. (1994) hypothesized that if the paper ran fewer world items through the 1980s, it also ran, on average, longer items. For example, for 1969, the average item length was eight paragraphs, the smallest average in the 22 years examined. Additionally, in only four of the 22 years did length average fewer than nine paragraphs. The longest stories were published in the last half dozen years—peaking at 13.8 paragraphs in 1989—when the paper published the fewest items (Riffe et al., 1994). Although Riffe et al. (1994) determined that the trend to publish longer items

did not offset the effect of fewer items, they did attempt to explain why *The New York Times* shrinking newsholes were not simply replaced by wire copy. Riffe et al. (1994) cautioned that although *The New York Times*' reputation as an elite paper is indisputable, any evidence of a reduced newshole should not automatically assume foreign news stories were simply lengthened as a response to a decrease in coverage. To do so would simply undermine the extent of their resources (Riffe et al., 1994). As a result, Riffe et al. (1994) suggested that the trend to fewer but longer items might be more simply explained in terms of a costly resource. Moreover, Riffe et al. (1994) pointed out because *The New York Times* has a large correspondent pool overseas and it is relegated to events deemed most important, it is likely they would continue to cover those events as opposed to deferring to wire copy, even during times of a shrinking foreign newshole (Riffe et al., 1994). Based on their findings, a reasonable explanation is simply the impact of foreign newshole reductions in *The New York Times* was seemingly greatest on a number of wire service pieces compared with correspondent-produced pieces which were likely longer. What did this mean in terms of overall significance? Riffe et al. (1994) underscored the significance of that finding, suggesting any attempt at oversimplification would be inaccurate. The trend towards changes in item length and agent differences in quality of foreign news coverage made the shrinking newshole shift difficult to explain. In other words, the gradual decrease in news items suggested a more complex phenomenon (Riffe et al., 1994). Additionally, these researchers also found as foreign newsholes increased in length, so did the proportion of "Third World" news coverage, which they felt, was an important discovery (Riffe et al., 1994, p. 3).

Riffe et al. (1994) confirmed that *The New York Times'* window on the world became smaller between 1969 and 1990 in number of items, a conclusion based on multiple, equal interval data points, and not on interpolation of widely separate individual data points (Riffe et al., 1994). This raised a critical question once again. Mainly, what did this suggest about *The New York Times* and its shrinking foreign newsholes? It is safe to say, based on their research, *The New York Times'* view changed in other ways over the 22-year period. International news stories became longer, important stories continued to be displayed on page one, and a larger proportion of stories dealt with Third World topics. However, the proportion that dealt with bad news remained constant (Riffe et al., 1994).

What accounted for those changes? During those last few decades, newspapers that had experienced a change in their foreign coverage did so for several reasons. Economic pressures of that period such as the reduction of foreign news bureaus and correspondents accounted for some of those reasons. Others had to do with creating more ad space to offset the path towards revenue decreases and rising newsprint costs, which had increased 383% since 1970. Throughout this period, papers such as *The New York Times* did not escape the effects of those forces. As Riffe et al. (1994) clearly pointed out, “*The New York Times* cut by half the number of foreign items it selects for publication,” but at the same time, they found stories containing “world items” actually increased in length (Riffe et al., 1994, p. 77). In addition, during the first period, between 1969 and 1979, the newspaper industry, as a whole, was experiencing a slump in the amount of advertising content. The second period, between 1981 and 1990, saw

remarkable growth, which may help to explain any shifting of trends by newspapers during this period. Riffe et al. (1994) gave several reasons as to why this shifting occurs. Although traditionally their elite readership may have been accustomed to a certain quantity of foreign newsholes, other factors may have influenced *The New York Times* to shift away from this practice. Specifically, new trends noted among the general readership and advertisers such as “enhances lifestyle coverage,” and “narrowing preferences of readers,” made it necessary for *The New York Times* to adjust in an effort to respond accordingly (Riffe et al., 1994, p. 84).

The London Times also found itself responding to the growing economic forces that were taking place throughout the post-war and pre-war era. During Simon Jenkins’ tenure, *The London Times* experienced a revitalization of the editorial pages as was represented by the quality of letters to the editor that the newspaper was once again receiving. In spite of Jenkins’ accomplishments, Cassidy (1992) noted that circulation had been falling for most British newspapers, including *The London Times*. Additionally, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, *The London Times* had an average daily circulation of 390,323 in the first half of 1992, down nearly 16,000 from a year earlier (Cassidy, 1992). Nonetheless, *The London Times* had lost fewer readers than *The Independent*, and its circulation lead over its rival with an increase to 13,800 from 11,685 (Cassidy, 1992). *The Independent* was a rival newspaper, started in 1986, that challenged Jenkins to a contest with the aim of achieving increased circulation following his ascendency as editor in March of 1990. During his tenure, Jenkins expanded *The London Times*’ foreign and business coverage and added a features section called Life & Times.

He also expanded *The London Times* on Saturday, adding more sections, including a magazine (Cassidy, 1992).

In 1993, *The London Times* reduced the cover price for its paper, which resulted in a heated circulation battle against *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Independent*. It was described as the so-called “price war” (Hargreaves, 2000, p.56). During this period, *The London Times* was led by then-editor Peter Stothard (1992-2002), and saw a remarkable boost in circulation to nearly 850,000 (Glover, 2002).

Nonetheless, there continued to be a gradual erosion of Britain’s national newspaper sales towards the latter half of that decade. In 1999, Hargreaves (2000) found that the erosion had an effect on both broadsheet and tabloid style newspapers; however, the tabloids were hardest hit. Furthermore, he noted that the sales of Britain’s national newspapers continued to decline dramatically. For instance, sales of white broadsheets fell by over 2% as decreased sales for the *Financial Times* were higher. Despite an aggressive marketing campaign for the tabloids outside of the UK, sales dropped much faster compared with broadsheets. Moreover, Hargreaves (2000) forecasted that in the long-term, this phenomenon would only increase as interest in the Internet becomes more widespread. Thus, attempts to employ a more aggressive marketing campaign, reduction in “editorial resources” or “price wars” (p. 56), would become symptomatic of the problem, which unsurprisingly may explain the continued drop in foreign news coverage.

Nonetheless, Hargreaves (2000) interpreted those factors somewhat differently and put a more positive spin on what the evidence otherwise suggested, which was a decline of white broadsheets. He found that broadsheet newspapers looked at the actual

sales statistics somewhat differently. Specifically, Hargreaves (2000) explained that broadsheet newspapers insisted columns had not been reduced compared to 10-30 years ago. Furthermore, he believed that while the volume of about 20 columns did not change relatively, the overall package had, in fact, exceeded the volume of 30 years ago.

Nonetheless, despite episodes of increased circulation throughout the last decade (1990-2002), *The London Times* found it necessary to respond to the growing influences of the Internet on readership. During this period, actual numbers of news readers was higher than ever, and many shifted to the web for news, especially young people. In 1999, publishers attempted return to what worked in the past. In doing so, they sought to reaffirm the notion that smaller newspapers rather than larger publications would be more effective in terms of sales. Moreover, there was good reason for this shift. In November of 1999, *The London Times* adapted a tabloid format, which led to a “30,000 reader boost in sales” (What’s with the newspapers?, 2005, p. 1).

September 11, 2001

The attacks on September 11, 2001 undoubtedly affected both quality and quantity of international and domestic news covered in the United States. What resulted was a spike in the media’s coverage of the events and related news that lasted for three to four months. Heisel (2000) noted international news selection following the attacks, when he analyzed the changes in international news between 2000 and 2002, showed a trend that signaled a most identifiable increase. Specifically, he observed, “The number of stories about international news, both traditional and localized, increased since the Sept. 11 attacks, as did their display above the fold” (Heisel, 2003, p. 46). Not only did

this data indicate an increased interest by editors, they indicated an increased sense of importance for stories concerning those areas of international interest. Heisel (2000, p. 43) cautioned that although the so-called “change in interest” and “news judgment” could not be attributable to the attacks of 9/11, the timing of the events suggests some correlation. In addition, Heisel (2000) pointed out, there may be other variables as well that might explain that shift. However, it is understood that spikes in news coverage, which may sustain, increase, or return to pre-event levels normally follow major “cataclysmic” events. Again, Heisel (2000) observed a trend between 2000 and 2002 that signaled an identifiable increase in international news. This research further explored those findings to determine whether the conclusion yielded any relevance for the four newspapers selected for this study.

Post-9/11 Levels

As previously demonstrated, studies have shown that a decline in international news coverage for many newspapers did occur over the last two decades. There was, however, evidence of a slight increase for some newspapers such as *The New York Times*. Additionally, although there was shrinkage of newsholes devoted to foreign news prior to 9/11, studies have indicated a trend toward lengthier coverage of foreign news stories instead. As noted earlier, Riffe et al. (1994) made the same observation when they discovered that stories published in *The New York Times* contained “world items,” which actually increased in length. To what extent this strategy may have influenced *The New York Times*’ increased circulation is debatable, but it was likely to appease its more elite readership. Nonetheless, *The New York Times* managed to see an increase in circulation,

which lasted beyond the previously mentioned six-month period. Barringer (2002) found daily circulation at *The New York Times* rose 3.8%, to 1,194,000, in the wake of the attacks, the highest figure in nine years. Similarly, for *The New York Times*, the Sunday circulation increased 2.4%, to 1,735,000 (Barringer, 2002). The *New York Times* Company, based on an Audit Bureau of Circulations six-month average, published those same figures in 2007. The data represented circulation totals from 1998–2003 for both *The New York Times*' Daily and Sunday newspapers.

Overall, for the year 2002, *The New York Times* reported that its readership had shown evidence of a significant increase. MacIntosh (2004) conceded some support for that increase as noted in his research of *The New York Times*. In their 2002 Annual Report, The New York Times Company, which owns *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Boston Globe* and 16 other newspapers, boasted of \$3.1 billion (US) in yearly revenues, an increase of 11% in readership, and the nine Pulitzer Prizes it was awarded (MacIntosh, 2004).

However, they remained cautious insofar as the actual validity of the data given. Thus, MacIntosh (2004) was not as convinced. Although, they believed there was some credibility in the numbers, they felt it was not unreasonable to question the accuracy of the data. In other words, they cautioned that the truth could be unintentionally illusive (MacIntosh, 2004). This is why a study such as this one is so important. Throughout this research, studies have raised questions suggesting ambiguity and ambivalence about newspaper circulation data. Therefore, it was the intent of this researcher to fill some of those gaps and answer relevant questions with more accuracy. Although it could not be

said for certain that there existed a correlation between amounts of foreign news coverage and a cause and effect in increased circulation, one of the goals of this research was to explore any possible relationship. Moreover, since other countries derive their foreign news from the United States media, the decision was made to explore this theory to see if, in fact, a correlation could be established. Nevertheless, it remains true that much of how other nations view the world and how they may respond to the international community is arguably dependent on both the quality and quantity of news provided by the United States news media. For instance, studies have shown that a considerable amount of foreign news that reaches Canadians is extrapolated from American news sources and printed in Canadian newspapers. Thus, it should come as no surprise that both countries are not only affected by the quality of foreign news, but the quantity of foreign news coverage provided by each, respectively. This type of relationship is often described as “interdependent.”

A Windsor study conducted in Canada indicated, “the events of September 11, 2001 transformed international politics and, in so doing, also brought international news to the media forefront” (Soderlund et al., 2002, p. 75). The study’s aim was to determine trends of international news coverage in Canadian newspapers. As a result, Soderlund et al. (2002) conceded that events of 9/11 might have indeed obscured the line between local and international news. Nonetheless, the message set forth clearly showed that international politics do have a direct impact on North American communities. Consequently, what has emerged has proliferated into a renewed interest in international news coverage. However, their suggestion of whether or not those events have caused

significant and long-lasting change in reader interest may be pursued in future studies consisting of editors and their respective perceptions of that effect (Soderlund et al., 2002). One study conducted by PEW (2002) surveyed newspaper readers to determine if there were any long-lasting changes in reader interest comparing pre-9/11 with post-9/11 coverage levels.

PEW (2002) found slightly higher interest levels as participants stated they paid close attention to overseas news most of the time, 37% in 2002, compared to a 61% majority who followed international news only when something important happened (PEW, 2002). The PEW study also revealed that much of this increased interest had come from older, well-educated Americans: groups that already showed disproportionately high interest in international news. Although, the interest in the amount of international news coverage seemed to have increased slightly among its consumers, the amount of coverage newspapers gave to international news during that period remains uncertain. When Americans were asked about the amount of international news coverage attributable to newspapers prior to the attacks, the PEW study found that "seven-in-ten" (p. 26) felt the amount of international news coverage by the media was adequate. However, since the attacks of 9/11, those who felt the media devoted too little coverage to foreign news dropped from 29% to 15% after media coverage was expanded (Pew, 2002).

Although Seaton (2002) acknowledged that the use of international news by mainstream United States media has declined significantly in the last two decades, he stated there are exceptions to those trends. He explained that in the United States, there is

such a thing as a two-tier press evident in the elite newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. It is generally accepted that each provides comparable coverage of the world, as well, to an elite readership highly interested in foreign policy. In addition, Seaton (2002) further defended his position in saying that there has always been an interest in international news coverage by subscribers of leading newspapers such as *The New York Times*. However, he felt the way it has been packaged may be, in part, responsible for misinterpretations concerning the actual degree of interest represented. Seaton (2002) found readers were more engaged with the world than ever, yet indicated that news columns seldom helped them understand that world (Seaton, 2002). Seaton's (2002) observations are critical because they speak to the urgency and long-term importance of maintaining an informed citizenry, which is the backbone of Western democracy. This is a concept Americans are very protective of and work diligently to preserve. Others, such as Shah (2007), hold similar views and understand the inherent role of the media as the public's watchdogs.

Shah (2007) emphasized that a critical aspect of a functioning democracy is to be well informed in order to participate effectively in that democracy. In addition, one of the most important ways that many people are informed is through mainstream media. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon mainstream media to provide their readership with non-biased reporting that seeks accuracy in truth and captures a broad picture of events around the world. In addition, since most news sources derive the majority of their information from mainstream media, the media is likewise accountable (Shah, 2007).

Summary

Results from this study may be useful for understanding what type of international news stories are considered more important than others, as reflected in the data extracted from this research's four most influential international newspapers with large circulations. Second, it could serve as a tool that the editors of each paper, respectively, could use to gauge differences or commonality among themselves as it relates to which stories are published. Third, it will serve to assist editors of each publication to understand more about their readership and what type of news stories have more relevance to them. Finally, it assists to better understand how newspapers see their role as the public's watchdog and how they interpret their roles during periods of uncertainty such as when a nation experiences a cataclysmic event as was seen with the 9/11 attacks. As Shah (2007, p. 1) said, "One of the most important ways that many people are informed is through their mainstream media." During an address given to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council on April 17, 2007, the President of National Public Radio, Kevin Klose (2007), acknowledged that there is a deficit in international news reporting and that we need to ask ourselves what we might do about it and what the consequences of it mean. Finally, he asked the reader to consider the potential damage a deficit in international news reporting could have on democracy. Thus, he implored Americans to be participatory and proactive in ensuring mainstream media delivers the necessary information he believes is tantamount to the preservation of a free democratic society. Consequently, he stated, "people cannot be ignorant and free" (Klose, 2007, p. 1). His quote was a reference to the pre-Declaration of Independence writings of Thomas

Jefferson in 1816, who in his letter to Colonel Charles Yancy wrote, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be” (Padover, 1953, p. 89).

CHAPTER III

Methods

This section discusses the essential features of the research project, including the purpose, newspaper selection, date randomization, and the process used to avoid times of major crises. Operational definitions of both dependent and independent variables are provided and the process of coding described. Finally, plans for analysis of the data are discussed.

General Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine and study trends in the quantity and type of world news coverage printed in the four selected international newspapers during, before, and after a time of relative peace. For the purpose of this research, the period of relative peace was six months before 9/11, six months post-9/11 (starting in Feb/March, 2002), and the first six months of 2006. As explained earlier, the post-9/11 period was chosen as a “cooling-off” period because no other major cataclysmic events occurred during that time. The importance of the latter was relative to previous studies that have demonstrated when a major cataclysmic event occurs, natural spikes in news coverage follow. Nonetheless, spikes are generally said to last a few months before news coverage tends to return to previous levels. Overall, the three periods chosen reviewed the proportion and kinds of international news coverage, which have occurred within an eighteen-month period between the years 2001-2006.

To gather the necessary data, a content analysis of the four international newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The Toronto Star*, *The London Times*, and *The Australian* was conducted. Specifically, for the six months prior to the events of 9/11, the amount of international news coverage was analyzed for the purpose of creating a baseline for comparison of the second and third construct six-month periods. For each newspaper, 14 issues were analyzed for each period chosen. The first six-month period spanned from April 2, 2001 through September 10, 2001. The second six-month period spanned from June 1, 2002 through November 30, 2002. The last six-month period spanned from January 1, 2006 through June 30, 2006. A total of 42 issues per newspaper, or a total of 168 issues, were analyzed. The articles for all four newspapers were obtained using the databases of Lexis/Nexis and Pro-Quest via the Martin Luther King Jr./San Jose Library database. In addition, the language used to search terms was English since the language of each respective newspaper is English and cultural practices are similar.

“Coverage” was the dependent variable. The “study units,” which were the elements of content selected and defined by the analyst, were based on “Analyzing Media Messages” by Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998). The sampling unit, that is, the physical unit selected for study, was the newspaper issue. Two recording units, both physical, were used: the number of articles and the number of words per article. They are also referred to as “units of analysis” which in one way, are analyzed statistically to test percentages of articles that fit into specific categories.

Foreign news was defined as copy about events and issues in any country, identified by headline, dateline, and text on all pages and sections of the newspaper. This research extrapolated from all sections of the newspapers, relevant articles in keeping with the designated codeable categories. A news item/article was a discrete piece of information four lines or longer that typically was indicated by use of a headline. Coders analyzed each news item to ensure it met the criteria outlined in the coding categories from all sections of the newspaper (i.e., front page, feature page, sports, news briefs, overseas news, and others) and sources (i.e., newspaper correspondent, wire service, AP, overseas correspondent, or none), as well as, countries involved and issue of concern.

The content focus categories were political, social/cultural, economics, and sports. Political was defined as diplomatic and/or military activities that underpin governance of states and other political units. It may include human rights issues and violence related to politics (i.e., genocide in Darfur). Public health and environmental issues were included if a political unit discussed the issue as a societal threat (i.e., AIDS, foot and mouth disease, SARS, or global warming).

The social/cultural focus included crime, disasters, lifestyle/travel, religion, arts/media/entertainment, food, society news, births/deaths, science/technology (including health or technology with the above exceptions), weather, and sports. For example, the natural death of a Canadian labor leader and the pregnancy of a Japanese princess would be coded in this category.

Coders selected the economic focus if the news item reported an event, problem, or issue in terms of the economic impact on an individual, group, institution, region, or

country; if the item mentioned financial gains/losses now or in the future; or if the costs/degree of expense involved was discussed. The item was acceptable whether it referred to the economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action. Finally, 10% of the articles were re-coded to test for inter-coder reliability scores of .80 to 1.00. Results for inter-coder reliability were required to be at least 80% in agreement using Scott's pi formula.

Category Definitions

The following definitions were used to code the newspaper content:

Economic News: Economic news included general economics, including news about finance, currency, prices of commodities, enterprise, stock, investment, international income and expenditure, economic development, and international financial aid. Also included were industrial activity, labor problems, enterprise management, merger, cooperation, product, commodity, inroads into foreign markets, imports and exports, trade and expenditure, and international trade fairs.

International News: International news included information about events or issues that happened outside of the United States, U.K., Canada, and Australia, as well as other world news regardless of the origin of the news. International stories were analyzed in terms of topical category. Topics of international news included political, economic, social, sports, and other news.

Political News: Political news included general politics, administration, policy, cabinet, legislation, budget, political party, diplomacy, foreign policy, treaty, pact, alliance, international conference, international cooperation, diplomatic relation, territory, international critics, deportation, exile, military affairs, war, invasion, coup d'état, revolution, guerrillas, riot, dispute, and crusade.

Social News: Social news included stories about population, household, poverty, immigration, refugees, welfare, local society, communication, human rights, discrimination, traffic, disaster, natural calamity, disaster prevention, crime, graft, trial, prevention of crime, destruction, pollution, and weather. It also included news about clothing, food, housing, leisure, travel, hobbies, marriage, recreation, consumer movements, custom, fashion, health, culture, art, religion, morality, ethics, education, and science technology.

Sports News: Sports news included international tournaments, sporting events, and sports groups.

Why these Four Newspapers Were Selected

The four newspapers were selected because they are major international newspapers similar in international prominence and circulation. In addition, they represent English-speaking countries that are members of The Group of Eight Industrialized Nations (G8). All four newspapers are considered leading newspapers in their countries, respectively, with relatively high circulation from 600,000 to over 1,000,000 readers. For instance, *The New York Times* trails in circulation only to *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*. In March 2007, the paper reported a circulation of roughly 1,120,420 copies on weekdays and 1,627,062 copies on Sundays. *The Toronto Star* is the circulation leader in the most competitive newspaper market in Canada with a daily circulation of over 600,000. Additionally, the certified average circulation figures for November 2005 show that *The London Times* sold 692,581 copies. In Australia, *The Australian* is the country's preeminent national daily newspaper with a circulation of over 136,000 and a readership of over 450,000. The assumption was that newspapers of similar circulation size would have roughly the same newshole, which would facilitate comparison.

Avoiding Times of Crisis

The years 2001-2006 and their three previously defined six-month construct periods were selected for three reasons. To reiterate, the first period was chosen to create a baseline from which to draw a comparison to subsequent data gathered from the second period and the third period. The second period starts after the six-month "cooling-off"

period after 9/11 and prior to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Overall, the first, second, and third periods were chosen in order to avoid major acts of war and major domestic catastrophes. The rationale being that a major domestic catastrophe could also potentially affect the amount of foreign news that would be published in a standard newshole. The date April 1, 2001 was omitted from consideration because on that day, a Chinese F-8 jet intercepted a US EP-3E Spy plane off the Chinese coast in international waters over the South China Sea. The F-8 collided with the US plane. The F-8's pilot was killed while the US plane was forced to make a crash landing in China. The US crew attempted to destroy all of the top-secret equipment aboard the plane but there was not enough time. The Chinese held the 24-member US crew for 11 days. The date September 20, 2002, was omitted from consideration because on that day, President Bush, in his address to Congress on September 20, demanded that the Taliban, who governed Afghanistan, turn over the Al-Qaeda members who were in Afghanistan including Bin-Laden. October 7, 2002, was also omitted because when the Taliban refused, the United States, together with members of NATO, began a campaign to remove the Taliban from Afghanistan and capture members of Al-Qaeda. Thus, on October 7, 2002, NATO forces began air assaults on Taliban and Al-Qaeda targets. Finally, it was decided to designate the beginning of the year 2006 as the third and last six-month period for two reasons. In the last half of 2005, two incidents, international in scope, occurred. Namely, on July 21, 2005, terrorists failed to detonate four bombs throughout London's public transport system and escaped authorities. In addition, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the United States Gulf Coast, which

included Louisiana and the Florida Panhandle area, killing thousands and leaving over \$100 billion in damages (History's Home on the Internet, 2008). The dates selected were double-checked in annual *Facts on File* and History Central online to ascertain whether or not the designated dates were times of relative peace.

Procedures

This study was undertaken to examine amounts of international news coverage over three construct periods (2001, 2002, and 2006) among four major internationally known newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The London Times*, *The Toronto Star*, and *The Australian*. Contrary to studies that noted a decline in international news stories among major newspapers following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, some studies have drawn opposite results. In fact, some studies cited earlier in this research paper have reported either evidence of “sustained” foreign news coverage, an “increase” in international news coverage, or a “renewed-interest” in international news following the attacks of 9/11 and some years later. Thus, the objective of this research was to determine if, in fact, any of the claims cited had validity. In order to research such claims, it was necessary to examine each medium, the type, and quantity of international news coverage. As a result, this researcher chose the four major newspapers cited.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Of the 13,165 total stories read and analyzed, which represented the four newspapers combined, and covered the three six-month construct periods, 3,928 or 29.8% were identified as international news stories. The percentage of international news stories of the total stories for the *The Toronto Star* was 44% followed by *The Australian* at 41%. *The New York Times* was 31% and *The London Times* devoted only 16.8% of its coverage to international news stories. Over the three construct periods, *The Australian* had the most significant increase in international news coverage in both 2002 and 2006. *The London Times* also showed an increase in international newsholes during 2006 compared with 2001. However, both *The New York Times* and *The Toronto Star* experienced a continual decline from 2001 to 2002, which remained constant throughout 2006, five years later.

Table 1

Percentage of International News Stories by Year

| Year | <i>New York Times</i> n=(3,307) | <i>London Times</i> n=(5,028) | <i>Australian</i> n= (2,652) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (2,178) |
|------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2001 | 35.5 | 14.2 | 26.9 | 52.5 |
| 2002 | 24.0 | 14.4 | 30.6 | 36.4 |
| 2006 | 20.6 | 16.6 | 56.3 | 27.4 |

The total number of words for all 3,928 international stories combined totaled 1,364,446. *The London Times* accounted for 415,013 (30%) followed by *The Toronto Star*, 408,109 (30%), *The New York Times*, 287,711 (21%), and *The Australian*, 253,613

(19%). Compared to 2001, both *The London Times* and *The Australian* indicated increases in story lengths in 2006 although, *The London Times* reflected the most significant increase overall of the four newspapers in 2006. However, both *The New York Times* and *The Toronto Star* nearly doubled the lengths of their foreign news stories between 2001 and 2006. As was noted earlier, although there was shrinkage of newsholes devoted to foreign news prior to 9/11, the trend was toward lengthier coverage of foreign news stories instead. As previously noted, following the end of the Cold War period, Riffe et al. (1994) made a similar observation when they discovered that stories published in *The New York Times* contained “world items” which actually increased in length. However, 12 years later, there was still evidence that *The New York Times* continued to publish lengthier foreign news stories. The data from this research showed that from 2001 to 2002, story lengths did in fact increase by 10% subsequent to 9/11 and continued to increase 8% through 2006, five years later. Research also indicates a similar increase in story length for the *Toronto Star*. Based on this information one might expect Canada’s story length to increase as well, particularly if there exists interdependency on American newspapers as a prime source of international news. This research was able to show a correlation does exist. Fifty-six percent of the *Toronto Star*’s foreign newsholes analyzed were of United States origin.

Table 2

Percentage of Words in Story by Year

| Year | <i>New York</i> | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | <i>Times</i> n=(287,711) | <i>London Times</i> n=(415,013) | <i>Australian</i> n= (253,613) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (408,109) |
| 2001 | 24.0 | 21.0 | 32.0 | 29.0 |
| 2002 | 34.0 | 43.0 | 25.0 | 30.0 |
| 2006 | 42.0 | 36.0 | 43.0 | 41.0 |

Next, this research analyzed the following four coded categories: political, social, economics, and sports, in order to determine amounts of foreign news coverage provided by the four newspapers. The data showed that *The London Times* surpassed all three in international political coverage based on the total number of stories, which included international stories, for the three construct periods. Of the total 5,028 stories analyzed, 288 (5.7 %) of its stories were devoted to political news. *The New York Times* accounted for 3,307 total stories of which 506 (15%) filled its newsholes, while *The Toronto Star* totaled 2,178 total stories of which 156 (7.2 %) was political news. *The Australian* had a total of 2,652 stories of which 312 (11.7%) was allotted to its newsholes.

Table 3

Percentage of International News Stories by Year and Category: Political Stories

| Political Stories | <i>New York</i> | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | <i>Times</i> n=(506) | <i>London Times</i> n=(288) | <i>Australian</i> n= (310) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (156) |
| 2001 | 38.7 | 29.5 | 36.7 | 35.8 |
| 2002 | 22.3 | 33.3 | 17.4 | 32.6 |
| 2006 | 38.9 | 37.0 | 45.8 | 31.4 |

Of *The Australian*'s total 2,652 stories, 1,088 international stories were extrapolated. A further analysis of the data by the remaining three categories showed that *The Australian* had the largest percentage of social stories, 361 (37%). *The New York Times* had the second largest percentage of social stories totaling 226 (26%) out of 3,307 international stories analyzed. *The London Times*, which had 5,028 international stories, was third, totaling 280 (16%). Finally, *The Toronto Star* had 2,178 international stories of which 219 (22%) were social stories. However, out of *The New York Times*' total 3,307 international stories, 200 (6%) dealt with economics which was the largest percentage, followed by *The Toronto Star*, 170 (7.8%), *The London Times*, 123 (2.4%), and *The Australian*, 185 (17%). The last coded category was sports. *The Toronto Star* totaled 417 (19%) international sports stories representing the most international sports stories of the four newspapers. *The Australian* had 232 (21%), *The New York Times*, 65 (2%), and *The London Times* accounted for 54 (1%) of international sports stories.

Table 4

Percentage of International News Stories by Year and Category: Social Stories

| Social Stories | <i>New York Times</i> n=(262) | <i>London Times</i> n=(280) | <i>Australian</i> n= (361) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (219) |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2001 | 48.4 | 24.6 | 25.4 | 30.0 |
| 2002 | 22.9 | 19.6 | 22.0 | 31.9 |
| 2006 | 28.6 | 55.7 | 52.3 | 37.8 |

Table 5

Percentage of International News Stories by Year and Category: Economic Stories

| Economic Stories | <i>New York</i> | <i>London Times</i> | <i>Australian</i> | <i>Toronto Star</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>Times</i> n=(200) | n=(123) | n= (185) | n= (170) |
| 2001 | 43.5 | 25.2 | 24.8 | 37.6 |
| 2002 | 28.5 | 6.5 | 17.8 | 28.2 |
| 2006 | 28.0 | 68.2 | 57.2 | 34.1 |

Table 6

Percentage of International News Stories by Year and Category: Sports Stories

| Sports Stories | <i>New York</i> | <i>London Times</i> | <i>Australian</i> | <i>Toronto Star</i> |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>Times</i> n=(65) | n=(154) | n= (232) | n= (417) |
| 2001 | 41.5 | 26.6 | 23.2 | 51.0 |
| 2002 | 32.3 | 25.3 | 12.9 | 15.3 |
| 2006 | 26.1 | 48.0 | 63.7 | 33.5 |

The primary international topic of the four newspapers overall was “politics.” Thirty-five percent of all stories dealt with political issues, systems, or events (including military conflicts, terrorism, elections, refugee issues, etc.). Closely following were “social” issues at 28%, which included entertainment, famine, crime, medical issues, etc. Next was “economics” at 20%, including trade and finance issues. Finally, “sports” represented only 17% of the overall foreign news coverage.

Table 7

International News Stories by Category and News Source

| Category | <i>New York Times</i> | <i>London Times</i> | <i>Australian</i> | <i>Toronto Star</i> |
|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | n=(1,033) | n=(845) | n= (1,088) | n= (962) |
| Political | 49.0 | 34.0 | 28.0 | 16.0 |
| Social | 25.0 | 33.0 | 33.0 | 23.0 |
| Economics | 19.0 | 15.0 | 17.0 | 18.0 |
| Sports | 6.0 | 18.0 | 21.0 | 43.0 |

Among the four newspapers, *The New York Times* had the most “political” stories, which accounted for 49% of its total international stories. *The Toronto Star* led the four newspapers in “sports” coverage with 43%, however, devoted the least amount of coverage to “political” (16%) and “social” (23%) stories. In contrast, both *The Australian* and *The London Times* placed similar emphasis on “social stories” devoting 33% of their news coverage to this category.

In addition to the four codeable categories (political, social, economics, and sports), demographics, specifically the region of a story’s origin, were also important to this research. Specifically, this researcher hoped to learn whether events on 9/11 might have spiked a renewed interest in international news, particularly of the Middle East and Africa, since those responsible were traced back to both regions. Therefore, this researcher felt it relevant to determine the amount of Middle East and Africa news coverage by the four newspapers given the origin of the terrorists and Taliban threat in both the Middle East and Africa. The purpose was to gauge whether or not significant attention was given to those regions as a response to 9/11 by the four newspapers.

Additionally, this research set out to measure whether both regions remained significant areas of interest throughout the three construct periods of this research.

The results show that of the 3,928 total foreign news stories, 252 (6.4%) of the total newsholes combined for the four newspapers were focused directly on the Middle East and Africa.

Table 8

Middle-East & Africa Newsholes for Each Newspaper by Percentage

| Region | <i>New York</i> | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | <i>Times</i> n=(1,033) | <i>London Times</i> n=(845) | <i>Australian</i> n= (1,088) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (962) |
| Middle East and Africa | 6.1 | 9.4 | 7.1 | 3.1 |

Table 9

Middle-East & Africa Newsholes for Each Newspaper by Year

| Year | <i>New York</i> | | | |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | <i>Times</i> n=(1,033) | <i>London Times</i> n=(845) | <i>Australian</i> n= (1,088) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (962) |
| 2001 | 4.3 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 1.2 |
| 2002 | 8.7 | 14.6 | 7.6 | 6.4 |
| 2006 | 6.6 | 8.7 | 7.0 | 3.0 |

A further analysis of the above data provides a clearer indication of foreign newshole trends by all four newspapers for both regions. Based on the data extracted from the three construct periods (2001, 2002, 2006) of the total number of Middle-East and Africa newsholes, early research, that claimed there may have been a “renewed interest” in foreign news post-9/11 cannot be substantiated by the data for each

newspaper. Using 2001 as a comparison ((except for *The London Times* whose coverage more than doubled (from 14 to 29 stories), and *The Toronto Star* whose coverage tripled (from 5 to 15 stories)), focus on the two areas did not show any significant change post-9/11 (2002) for the *The New York Times*. Its focus on the two regions increased from 19 to only 22 stories. In contrast, *The Australian* dropped in coverage from 22 to 15 stories. Therefore, while coverage stayed static for *The New York Times*, it dropped nearly 25% by *The Australian*. However, what is worth noting is that looking at these figures five years later, in 2006, each newspaper except for *The Australian* did, in fact, exceed pre-9/11 levels of foreign news coverage of the Middle-East and Africa by a few percentage points, whereas *The Australian's* coverage managed to sustain itself throughout the three construct periods.

Discussion

The percentage of international news stories in *The New York Times* in 2001 was 35.5% of the total news stories published in the six-month period before 9/11. Subsequent to 9/11, during the 2002 period, its foreign news coverage dropped to 24%, and by 2006, it had declined to 20.6%.

Foreign news coverage in *The London Times* was 16.6% of its news stories in 2006 compared with 14.2% in 2001. Following 9/11, its foreign news coverage did increase slightly to 14.4% in the following year. *The Toronto Star* declined in international news coverage following 2001. In 2001, its coverage was 52.5% but fell to 36.4% in 2002. By 2006, its coverage had fallen to 27.4%. In 2001, *The Australian's* international coverage was at 26.9%. However, following 9/11, its coverage had increased to 30.6% of its total foreign news coverage, and in 2006, it more than doubled to 56.3% compared with 2001 when it was at 26.9%.

Overall, the data indicates there was, in fact, a noticeable drop in international news coverage for two (*The New York Times* and *The Toronto Star*) of the four newspapers post-9/11 in 2002. However, *The London Times's* coverage had dropped only by slightly less than half a percentage point. Therefore, it appears its foreign news coverage was somewhat sustained following 9/11. A further analysis of the data, when 2002 was compared with 2006, showed increases in foreign news coverage for only two (*The London Times* and *The Australian*) of the four newspapers. In contrast, foreign news coverage for both *The New York Times* and *The Toronto Star* had dropped

significantly. Coverage for *The New York Times* was only 58% of the pre-9/11 level and *The Toronto Star*'s coverage was only 52%. Conversely, both *The London Times* and *The Australian* exceeded pre-9/11 levels. *The London Times* exceeded pre-9/11 levels by 11.6% and *The Australian*'s foreign coverage increased well over 100%.

Table 10

International News Stories as a Percentage by Year

| Year | <i>New York Times</i> n=(3,307) | <i>London Times</i> n=(5,028) | <i>Australian</i> n= (2,652) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (2,178) |
|------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2001 | 13.2 | 4.4 | 11.5 | 18.3 |
| 2002 | 7.5 | 3.9 | 7.4 | 10.6 |
| 2006 | 10.4 | 8.3 | 22.0 | 15.0 |

Data from this research support earlier research findings that suggest international news stories have increased in length as a response to decreased international newsholes. Three of the four newspapers (all excluding *The Australian*) increased their article lengths in 2002 following 9/11. Notably, two had the most significant increases between 2002 and 2006. In 2006, *The Australian* had increased the number of words in its stories by 67% from an average of 64,179 words in 2002 to 108,438 words in 2006. *The Toronto Star* had averaged 121,534 words in 2002 and 166,825 in 2006, which represented a 37% increase. By 2006, *The New York Times* had only gained 23% in average word count. Its story lengths went from 98,386 words in 2002 to only 121,143 words in 2006. Conversely, *The London Times* had fallen by a considerable margin of 15% from 177,984 words in 2002 down to 151,210 words in 2006.

Table 11

Percentage of Story Word Length by Year

| Year | <i>New York</i> | <i>London Times</i> | <i>Australian</i> | <i>Toronto Star</i> |
|------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>Times</i> n=(287,711) | n=(415,013) | n= (253,613) | n= (408,109) |
| 2001 | 23.6 | 20.6 | 32.0 | 29.3 |
| 2002 | 34.0 | 42.8 | 25.3 | 29.8 |
| 2006 | 42.0 | 36.4 | 42.7 | 40.8 |

Overall, of the 1,364,446 words that comprised the 3,982 international stories combined, the newspaper containing the lengthiest international stories was *The London Times* at 415,013 words. *The Toronto Star* at 408,109 was second, *The New York Times* at 287,711 third, followed by *The Australian*, which accounted for 253,623 words.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

The data collected in this study confirm what earlier research findings indicated; there was a continued decline in international newsholes and foreign news coverage during times of peace, specifically, between 2001 and 2006. This trend holds true for at least two of the four newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Toronto Star*. However, according to studies cited throughout this research, following 9/11, there was evidence of a renewed, sustained, or an increase in foreign news coverage reported by many newspapers. Nonetheless, data gathered from this research seem to support each of those claims. Of the four newspapers analyzed, *The London Times* and *The Australian* indicated increased international newsholes over the six year period, whereas *The New York Times* saw a continual decrease and *The Toronto Star* saw no significant increases in newsholes for that same period.

In terms of earlier findings that suggest story lengths had increased during periods of declining coverage, the results are inconclusive as both an increase and decrease were indicated. For instance, *The New York Times* and *The London Times* experienced a gradual increase in story length from 2001 to 2002. Therefore, early claims that *The New York Times* tended to publish lengthier stories following a decrease in international newsholes over the three construct periods does appear to be supported. In contrast, *The Australian* showed a reduction in words from 2001 to 2002 and *The Toronto Star* showed no significant increases or decreases for that same period.

As for the four codeable categories (political, social, economics, and sports), the newspapers that showed significant increases in coverage in one or more categories post-9/11 and five years later, were *The London Times* and *The Australian*. *The New York Times* showed increases in “political” and “social” coverage but sustained coverage in “economics,” followed by a decrease in “sports.” *The Toronto Star* did well in all categories except for “political” which was down post-9/11. Overall, political stories accounted for the majority of stories among the four newspapers while economic stories were the least covered.

Finally, the data represented in Table 9 indicate there was a uniform drop in foreign news coverage between 2001 and 2002 for all four newspapers when the percentage of international stories was represented for each newspaper. However, the data show that, five years later, international news stories for at least two newspapers (*The London Times* and *The Australian*) did increase significantly. Therefore, findings of earlier research that purported a renewed interest in international news coverage holds some validity in post-9/11 and appears to have continued five years later in the case of at least the two newspapers cited.

| Region | <i>New York Times</i> n=(1,033) | <i>London Times</i> n=(845) | <i>Australian</i> n= (1,088) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (962) |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Middle East and Africa | 6.1 | 9.4 | 7.1 | 3.1 |

| Year | <i>New York Times</i> n=(1,033) | <i>London Times</i> n=(845) | <i>Australian</i> n= (1,088) | <i>Toronto Star</i> n= (962) |
|------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2001 | 4.3 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 1.2 |
| 2002 | 8.7 | 14.6 | 7.6 | 6.4 |
| 2006 | 6.6 | 8.7 | 7.0 | 3.0 |

Future Studies

The specific intent of this study was to focus on the amount of foreign news coverage by western newspapers. *The New York Times*, *The London Times*, and *The Toronto Star* were the western newspapers considered in the northern hemisphere. However, in order to eliminate any sense of bias and to include a different regional perspective towards foreign news, it was necessary to include a newspaper from elsewhere than the northern hemisphere. *The Australian* is the only non-northern based newspaper in this study. In addition, the decision was made to include *The Australian* since it is printed in English and has one of the largest circulations throughout Australia. Nonetheless, despite the inclusion of a newspaper from the southern hemisphere, this study remained limited. It is obvious that additional research is needed, but that research should provide direct comparisons of international news coverage between several countries, specifically non-English speaking countries whose press may or may not have reported on the events of 9/11. Therefore, an expanded study should include more southern hemisphere newspapers as well as eastern hemisphere newspapers. This will allow researchers to better gauge the priorities or emphasis cultures in those respective hemispheres place on news originating from western cultures, particularly, the United States since it was the target of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Perhaps in doing so, our nation, its allies, and western democracies may continue to be enlightened to cultural practices unfamiliar to us, thus paving the way towards better international relations. This

direction is especially vital to addressing cultures that may have felt ignored by the west, and finally, to help prevent conditions which may have contributed to the events of 9/11.

It is true that press systems develop to serve political and social systems, and if these systems vary, research must assume that the press systems vary as well. Often times, negative perceptions of a culture cast upon it by another are due to misinformation and propaganda. However, the press has the power to shape how individuals view themselves and the rest of the world. Perhaps of more concern is governmental control of its media, which can limit what a society knows about the world much less itself. Granted, some countries are extremely repressive and practice media censorship, which makes it difficult for any outside information to filter through. When this occurs, it is difficult for the people of any nation to achieve objectivity and rational responses towards other cultures and world events. Consequently, under these conditions, people are easily swayed to ideologies that are often irrationally based. Unfortunately, governments who practice media censorship risk producing the kind of terrorist who attacked on 9/11. Thus, more research into the amount of international news coverage can help researchers to better understand where the deficit in global information lies and how societies can begin to break down the barriers of miscommunication that sometimes give rise to resentment and anger among nations of the world whose perception of the west is at times mischaracterized, misunderstood, and often distorted.

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