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News coverage of the Brazilian rain forest by the domestic and foreign press

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foreign press**

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San Jose State University, 1993

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NEWS COVERAGE OF THE BRAZILIAN RAIN FOREST
BY THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PRESS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism
and Mass Communications

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by

Ana Regina Ponce

December, 1993

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ABSTRACT

NEWS COVERAGE OF THE BRAZILIAN RAIN FOREST BY THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PRESS

By Ana Regina Ponce

This thesis addresses the topic of how the domestic and the foreign press cover events about a crisis. The topic chosen to review this issue was the ecological crisis of the Brazilian Rain Forest. Articles from a Brazilian, a Mexican, and an American newspaper published from December, 1988 to July, 1989, were coded and content analyzed for tone and news categories.

Results from this study revealed that the Brazilian newspaper concentrated its domestic coverage on the need of the country to develop the Rain Forest and the efforts by the government to cope with the obstacles. The foreign press, the New York Times of the United States and El Excelsior of Mexico, on the other hand, emphasized the ecological disaster and the poor government policies in the region.

Overall, this study supports the contention that when it comes to news about a crisis situation in a particular nation, newspapers in other nations tend to emphasize the negative aspects of the situation.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

On December 25, 1988, Brazilian ecologist Chico Mendez, a fierce advocate for the preservation of the Amazon forest, was shot to death. His killer, as was expected, turned out to be one of his many enemies who, wanting to exploit the tropical forest land, severely opposed the ecologist's fight for the preservation of the forest, fauna, and natives of the Amazon.

The death of the ecologist attracted the attention of the international press. Soon, it dug in and started reporting on Brazil's governmental policies in the region, the destruction of the forest, its exploitation, and the life of its natives. Meanwhile, foreign governments, politicians, and ecologists responded to the Brazilian ecological problems, demanding changes. They exerted what some Brazilians considered "the strongest international pressure that ever occurred in the history of Brazil" (Veja, February 1, 1989, p. 25).

The intent of this study is to find out how the Brazilian, Mexican, and American papers reported on the problems of the Amazon. The researcher investigated these questions: Did each paper cover only the "dramatic" and "sensational" aspects of the Brazilian Rain Forest? Or did

they also write about the Brazilian government's victories, obstacles, and efforts to solve problems in the region?

Research findings have pointed out that when it comes to foreign news events, they tend to be covered very similarly regardless of a country's economic or media system. For instance, a major study conducted by Stevenson and Shaw (1986) found that the foreign news of all countries tend to emphasize conflict and sensational events. "It is hard to find definitions of news other than the traditional Western definition of news as the exceptional event" (p. 56). Furthermore, they note that development news (news about the struggles or accomplishments of Third World governments) is rare in any foreign press. They are ". . . concentrated in domestic coverage rather than foreign news" (p. 56).

In light of such findings, the central purpose of this study was to research if the Mexican and U.S. news coverage of the problems occurring in the Rain Forest was similar. Moreover, it was also investigated if the Brazilian paper, for which events in the Rain Forest are domestic news, covered the issues from a development news perspective, that is, emphasizing the Brazilian government's efforts to deal with the problems while downplaying its failures.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This cross-cultural study attempted to assess how Western and Third World newspapers covered ecological issues in the Brazilian Rain Forest. Since news coverage is affected by news values and mass media roles, it is important to review what they are and how they are reflected in the news of both Third World and Western societies. For the purpose of this study, Third World countries are defined as "the nonaligned nations located in the southern half of the globe" (Stevenson & Shaw, 1986, p. 7). Western countries, on the other hand, are the "industrialized democracies located in the northern hemisphere" (p. 6).

Western Mass Media

In Western countries, freedom of the press is considered a fundamental principle for the survival of democracies. Western societies have drawn their mass media philosophy from the libertarian theory. The concept of a free press has also been applied, or modified, to suit the capitalistic and democratic systems of those societies. MacQuail (1984) relates some of the most fundamental principles of the above theory in this way:

- That "Publication should be free from any prior censorship by any third party" (p. 89).

- That "Attack on any government, official or political party . . . should not be punishable even after the event" (p. 89).

- That "Publication of 'error' is protected equally with that of truth, in matters of opinion and belief" (p. 90).

Western societies expect the mass media to be free from any governmental restriction and to do, to the best of its ability, the job of warning audiences about politicians' and parties' misconduct. It should also inform the audience about dissenting voices in any matter of public concern. Ultimately, the Western press is expected to be the "watchdogs" over government and the "protector of people's rights."

Generally speaking, the Western media news values are prominence, proximity, timeliness, human interest, conflict, and oddity (Nasser, 1983). In the United States, for instance, whether an international event makes the pages of its papers depends, partly, on that event's "unexpectedness," "sensationalism," and/or "negativity" (Ahern, 1986, p. 220).

The preference of Western journalists for reporting on the "interesting" and "saleable" angle of news events has received criticism by politicians and intellectuals from Third World countries (Aggarwala, 1990). It is claimed that

when Western journalists cover Third World events, "Their reports, more often than not, . . . ignore . . . the efforts of developing countries to alleviate the problems, often against seemingly insurmountable odds" (p. 356).

Many in the Third World want less "bad news" about their countries and more development news; that is, news about their governmental achievements. These requests, however, do not seem to agree with Western mass media news concept and social roles.

First, it is the very nature of Western mass media to "watch" governments as opposed to promote them. Secondly, Western audiences tend to expect news that will warn them about conflicts, dissenting voices and threats to their systems instead of, as Third World countries want, news about progress. As Severin and Tankard (1988) observe about the Western press, its "Social Responsibility Theory holds that while the media inform, entertain, and sell, they must also raise conflict to the plane of discussion" (p. 214). In addition, Schoenbach (1983) explains that the value placed by the Western press on the "bad" news, and by the Third World on the "good" news, is a function of each region's economic development. "Negative news is worth reporting in societies that take for granted inevitable positive change, that is, progress. In cultures in which progress is something to fight for, success is news, failure

is old" (Schoenbach, 1983, p. 38). Summarizing then, what is published in the Western papers of the world--and what is not--is based on the rationalizations of mass media philosophies, roles, and news values of Western society.

Third World Mass Media

Many Third World leaders reject the Western mass media model because, they argue, it does not fulfill the needs of their fragile societies. Some politicians and intellectuals in the Third World countries want development news about their societies. That is, they demand that the domestic, as well as the foreign press, cover more news about their country's victories over poverty, diseases, illiteracy, and less news about their nations' riots, natural disasters, and government failures (Nasser, 1983). Venezuelan ex-President Rafael Caldero summarizes well the perception of many on how the Western press reports on their nations:

. . . the phrase "no news is good news" has become "good news is no news." Only the most deplorable incidents, be they caused by nature or by man, receive prominent attention in the media (of the United States); little or nothing is mentioned about literary or scientific achievements; little or nothing is said about the efforts of man to dominate nature and to put it at the service of his needs; little is said about social achievements and the defense against the dangers

which threaten our peace and development (Matta, 1990, p. 255).

Researchers and several studies, however, do not support charges that Third World nations are picked out to be negatively portrayed by the Western media. What they point out is that the Third World's political and social eruptions receive great coverage from all papers of the world. Second, they claim that to depict the developing countries as an area full of turmoil is merely a reflection of realities existing in that part of the world.

Gaddy and Stevenson (1986), for example, compared major newspapers from Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the United States. What they found out was that there was plenty of bad news--particularly political news--about the Third World in all the papers reviewed. Moreover, the authors state, "conflict in the West--such as violence in Northern Ireland, terrorism in West Germany and Italy, and racial conflict in the United States--gets the same kind of heavy media coverage in the West as do coups and earthquakes" (p. 97).

The development kind of news advocated by many leaders in the Third World countries does not have an universal definition. Aggarwala (1979) provides a useful explanation:

Development news is not different from . . .
investigative reporting. It can deal with development
. . . and [it] can take different forms at national and

international levels. In covering the development newsbeat, a journalist should critically examine, evaluate, and report the relevance of a development project to national and local needs, the difference between its impact on people as claimed by government officials and as it actually is. (p. 187)

Clearly, for the most part, journalists from Western democratic societies do not commit their everyday journalism to that type of reporting. They are much more concerned with today's fast moving stories.

Generally speaking, mass media in developing countries are expected to forge a climate conducive to growth and modernization. A large amount of bad news about Third World countries, therefore, is seen by many of their leaders as an undermining force in their task to create nationhood and modernization. Hence, many journalists in those countries are called to be partners with their governments in the process of building nations (Martin & Chaudhary, 1983).

This partnership between journalism and government is often viewed by Westerners with suspicion and it thus encounters strong resistance. Accustomed to a press largely free of political control and in their role as "watchdogs" over governments, many Western journalists criticize their Third World counterparts.

In 1980, for example, while delegates at the UNESCO meeting in Belgrade discussed suggestions to improve international coverage, some in the American press perceive that UNESCO was favoring Third World calls for a press tied to government. American journalists made no bones about their displeasure which made its way into major headlines around the country: "UNESCO as Censor," affirmed the New York Times; "So Long, Free Press," stated the Kansas City Times; "International Big Brother," said the Washington Post (Sussman, 1981, p. 36).

Because the mass media role in Third World countries is more one of educating people and supporting government as opposed to creating or shaping opinions, the criteria for news selection can also be very distinct from those of Western nations (Nasser, 1983). Third World media tend to publish news that "strengthens confidence in governmental actions and projects a good image of the country and the head of state" (p. 51). The production of such news items is often guaranteed by government press control.

Many of the Third World mass media practices are also found in its Latin American region. Yet, the area has also been influenced by Western mass media values. News production in Latin America, as in Western societies, is affected by the "competition for information" and need for "profits." Also, its reporting is mostly based on the fast,

"dramatic" and "sensationalist" angles of events (Nasser, 1983, p. 53). Often, these are readily disseminated and presented without a social context.

The Latin American acceptance of Western news values has encountered some hard criticism. Matta (1990), for instance, argues that journalists in the area do not choose or interpret news based on its importance to Latin America. The researcher calls for journalism in the region which will interpret events from a Latin American perspective.

Jose Castaneda, a political journalist based in Mexico City, is also critical of Latin America's style of news coverage. He relates that sometimes Mexico, for instance, can go as far as just dubbing a Spanish voice over American footage. He believes that this type of news production can create news which is "absurdly irrelevant to the lives of the Mexican people" (Townley, 1990, p. 178).

Another feature of the Latin American style of news coverage is the tendency of many professionals to search for news in government "offices," "palaces," and "agencies" (Nasser, 1983, p. 53). There they wait for the authorities to interpret events. This, obviously, reduces the professionals to just recorders. It also overplays the government's view on issues.

In many Latin American countries, as in other parts of the Third World, the press may also be expected to subscribe

to the government policies. To assure media allegiance, governments may exert press control ranging from prior censorship to guidelines to laws. In his discussion of government press control, for instance, Merrill (1990) points out that Latin American governments were the second most inclined to control the press. They were behind only Middle East authorities.

Attempts to defy a Latin American government may cost a journalist his life. The Committee to Protect Journalists, New York, reports that in 1983, 21 journalists were killed in the region. "In the first six months of 1984, 13 died; in 1985, five were killed in Peru and Guatemala" (Garrison & Munoz, 1990, p. 257).

In South America, also, the political regime directly affects news coverage. In Argentina, for example, the 1974 imposition of a state of siege had the press subjected to "prior censorship" (Nam, 1983, p. 319). In 1980, however, the press was freer. Yet, journalists were suffering from "self-censorship." The years of repression led them to be suspicious of press freedom and to feel intimidated by the government. No wonder journalists in Argentina had seen media professionals among the "disappeared" or "under detention" (Nam, 1983, p. 319).

In Brazil, newspapers and political parties are said not to be the same. But, at times, they look alike. In

times of dictatorship, for instance, the big, established Brazilian newspapers may resemble the government party; both present to their audience a peaceful, stable, free of trouble internal reality.

According to Brazilian journalist Rui Mesquita, for instance, it is justifiable for journalists to support a regime which censors the press, if the regime is for the common good of the nation (Capelato, 1988). Explaining the support of his leading newspaper, O Estado de Sao Paulo, to the Brazilian dictatorship of the 1960s, which lasted almost 20 years and took the lives of many journalists, he says that the support "was inevitable. The goal was to avoid communism" (p. 54).

Many in the Brazilian press also quickly learn that they can exchange government support for financial benefits. According to Capelato (1988), such is the case of the newspaper O Globo. Its connivance with the government is alleged to have made it "the largest Brazilian medium in the society's communication sector" (p. 56).

The Brazilian press partisanship can also be noticed during government campaigns. On January 15, 1985, right after Tancredo Neves was appointed as Brazil's President, the newspaper O Jornal da Tarde carried his picture, covering the whole first page. With the picture, one read the following heading: "Lets Celebrate." No comment was

made, for instance, about the fact that the new President had not been chosen by the people's vote.

Government press control is alive and well in Brazil (Garrison & Munoz, 1990). Attempts to point out government's failure can still be met with violence. For instance, a journalist reporting on a death squad was killed. The crime was committed by a former public security official (Garrison & Munoz, 1990).

Moreover, Mexican journalists do not enjoy the freedom and respect given to their western counterparts either. The government is said not to protect journalists against physical abuse. This includes instances when journalists "embarrass" the government (Garrison & Munoz, 1990).

In summary, Latin American news coverage may, at times, be determined by Western criteria of news selection. Yet, the prevailing consideration for news selection is the tolerance of a given political regime towards criticism.

Is There an Universal Concept of Foreign News?

What news is depends on the press system defining it. However, studies show this may be less true for foreign news than domestic news. Researchers say there is a "remarkable similarity of handling of foreign news in media systems as different in social purpose as those of the United States and the Soviet Union and those that function in countries as different as Iceland and Indonesia, Mexico and Zambia"

(Stevenson & Shaw, 1986, p. 63).

In an extensive content analysis of newspapers from 17 countries, Stevenson and Shaw (1986) concluded that foreign news all over seems to be "the Western definition of news as the exceptional event" (p. 56), and that foreign news "is largely conflict" (p. 96). The researchers also pointed out that news about conflict is mostly the foreign news covered by all countries, regardless of their press system.

Along the same line, Gaddy and Stevenson (1986) call attention to the fact that bad news is widely covered even by countries proposing that "positive accomplishments rather than conflict should be reported" (p. 88). In this way, Third World countries do not shy away from reporting bad news about the Third World. It follows, according to this view, that development news is lacking. The good news about the Third World, often demanded by its government, is not intensively covered by any foreign press, including the Third World's.

Stevenson and Cole (1986) reason that this happens because development news is not related to the fast-moving events which mostly make up foreign news items. On the other hand, they contend that development news is actually covered as domestic news. Clearly, this study produces evidence supporting the argument that all different press systems tend to "work" under a very similar assumption of

what foreign news should be.

The Rain Forest: A Brief Retrospect

For many decades, experts in ecology and scholars from many disciples have tried to inform and warn society of the risks our planet faces by ecological devastation. Under the disturbing headline "CAN MAN SAVE THIS FRAGILE EARTH?", National Geographic dedicated its December issue of 1988 to report on the opinions and concerns of several reputable worldwide scholars regarding the ecology of our planet. M. S. Swaninathan, president of the International Union for Conservation of Natural Resources, stated, "The greatest food security challenge will be . . . ecological access to food, arising from . . . environmental degradation" ("Will We Mend," 1988, p. 770). Peter H. Raven, director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, predicted, "At current rates of destruction much of our tropical forest . . . will be gone within 25 years" ("Will We Mend," 1988, p. 770). In addition, the same magazine also published a major article about the Brazilian Rain Forest in which it stated that the region has come to be regarded as an environmental holocaust.

The destruction of the Rain Forest, some say, is about 20%. Behind this drama, however, there are other ones which are shared by Brazil and the governments of most developing nations: lack of financial resources to protect their

environment, poverty, lack of education, as well as the need to develop their region so as to survive in the worldwide reality of competition with richer countries.

Perhaps no other situation better shows the challenges and contradictions affecting the Brazilian government than the following event. At a meeting of the natives of Xingu, in the Amazon city of Altamira, 600 native Indians and renowned ecologists joined to protest the occupation of the forest and the construction of a hydroelectric plant (Veja, March 1, 1989). At the same time, 10,000 farmers, riding horses and displaying banners, celebrated the construction of the same plant. For the latter, the hydroelectric complex would provide prosperity, energy, and development to the poor region.

Lacking education and adequate skills to compete in the major industrialized cities of Brazil, many of the settlers of the region chase their dreams of a better and new life through the Rain Forest. "The money I get now," says Mr. Cruz, one of the settlers, "gives me the right to survive and nothing more, but I'm hoping for better things" ("Will We Mend," 1988, p. 787).

To further complicate the issues developing in the Rain Forest, a new economic challenge is posed to the local government. The Brazilian government has been warned by the World Bank that if it doesn't preserve the forest, there

will be no favorable negotiation in its foreign debt of almost 120 billion dollars (Veja, February 1, 1989).

The new "ecological card" on the table to negotiate the Brazilian foreign debt is resentment by some Brazilian authorities. The relationship of Brazilian debt with the occupation of the Amazon is completely spurious," says Brazilian Minister of Economy Mario Henrique Simonsen (Simonsen, 1989, p. 17).

Meanwhile, perhaps due to the frustration of not finding a solution to domestic problems and international pressures, the Brazilian government reacts to foreign citizens with an overdose of nationalism. From the Palace of Planalto, the Brazilian President warns, "We will not accept tutelage . . . We will accept responsibility for the defense of our territory ("Dubious Plan," 1989, p. 67).

Chapter 3

HYPOTHESES

The literature review suggests that journalists tend to apply their own "cultural yardstick" in reporting events. In the United States, for example, journalists will interpret foreign events according to the mass philosophy and political/cultural context of the American society.

As a result, the American coverage of the Brazilian ecology should be more negative because of, for instance, the American criteria for news selection. This guides American journalists to pick events and angles containing conflict and unusualness by American standards. Gans (1980) stated, "Like the news of other countries, American news values its own nation above all others . . . The ethnocentrism is most explicitly in foreign news, which judges other countries by the extent to which they live up to or imitate American practices and values . . ." (p. 40). Since Brazilian ecological events such as Indian killings, massive tree burning, and forest occupation do not occur presently in American society, they are expected to be emphasized by the American press.

Negative coverage is also expected for the Mexican newspaper. This is anticipated also as a result of the Mexican news values and media environment.

The Mexican press, like the press of other Latin American countries, is heavily influenced by the Western press' tendency to emphasize the dramatic and sensationalist angle of events when covering foreign news. Consequently, "the predominance of negative over positive facts becomes a basic part of the professional news yardstick" (Nasser, 1983, p. 53). It is also important to note that although the government-controlled Mexican press tends to avoid criticizing its own government (Townley, 1990), it does not have any problem criticizing other nations. After all, and in the case of the Brazilian ecological problems, it is a foreign event which does not threaten the Mexican government.

Studies on international news coverage do show this peculiarity about many Third World government-controlled press. They avoid their own bad news but do not shy away from publishing the bad news of other Third World countries. For instance, it has been said that "It would be a cold day in Cuernavaca before the finances of President Miguel de la Madrid were questioned on television" (Townley, 1990, p. 178). Yet, in their research about the amount of foreign "bad" news covered by countries, Gaddy and Stevenson (1986) found out that out of all the bad news covered by Mexico, 25% was about Third World countries.

For the Brazilian press, however, it is a whole different story. The Amazon's ecological problems is a local event whose negativity threatens the image of the country and the government. It has even threatened the negotiations over the Brazilian international debt (Veja, February 1, 1989). It follows that the existence of press control in the country and the tendency of Latin American journalists to publish their government's view "verbatim" (Nasser, 1983, p. 53) should produce a less negative coverage than those of the two other presses. Therefore, the first hypothesis is:

H#1: The tone of coverage of the Amazon's ecological problems will be more negative in the New York Times and El Excelsior than in the O Estado de Sao Paulo.

The second hypothesis refers to the categories that will be more frequently covered by each of the newspapers. Here, it is also expected that the mass media and political cultural environment in which the papers operate will affect their choice of news categories.

American journalists, for instance, tend to play an adversarial role to governments. They do not make exceptions to governments in Third World countries. It is anticipated, then, that the American newspaper will concentrate more on categories exposing the failures, brutalities, and corruption of the country and government.

The American paper should also cover such news categories because as Severin and Tankard (1988) explain, the American press' Social Responsibility Theory holds that the media "must also raise conflict to the plane of discussion" (p. 24).

The Mexican press' news categories are also expected to heavily resemble the American categories. This is so because much of the Latin American concept of foreign news "is primarily North American" (Matta, 1990, p. 252). Consequently, it is also determined by the "drama" and "sensationalism of event" (Nasser, 1983, p. 53). Therefore, it is assumed that the Mexican press will also concentrate on the emotional, outrageous aspects of the Brazilian ecological issue. As such, the Mexican press should also cover news categories related to crime, corruption, and poor government performance.

Another reason why the international coverage of the Mexican newspaper should mirror the American press is the fact that the Latin American press does not have 'its own' interpretation for events occurring in Latin America (Matta, 1990). In other words, though the countries in the region do share cultural, historic, and economic characteristics, they do not cover each other differently than the Western press.

Finally, the similarities in news categories anticipated for the American and Mexican press is also due to research findings on international "bad" news (Gaddy & Stevenson, 1986). According to the researchers, all over the world, foreign news about "violence and conflict get reported in pretty much the same way whenever they occur" (p. 97).

The Brazilian newspaper, on the other hand, is not expected to write mainly about the dark spots of the Brazilian ecological problems. In fact, it is anticipated that it will minimize the news categories detracting from the image of the country while favoring news about the government's struggles and accomplishments over the ecological problems.

Several factors led to the above expectation. First, the press in Brazil is subjected to government. Jorge Pinheiros, a Brazilian journalist, summarizes well the Brazilian press and government relationship. He says that in Brazil, "The government is the biggest advertising client, it also controls the economy, law and order with an iron fist. It is not surprising, then, that it also owns the information" (Capelato, 1988, p. 63). Alberto Dinez, another Brazilian journalist, refers to the tendency of the Brazilian press to omit the government's mistakes: "The journalist (in Brazil) forgot that he is a public service

created by the readers to defend them" (Capelato, 1988, p. 63). Carlos Bickmann, another journalist in the country, states that, "In Brazil, the newspapers function as the appendix of the government" (Capelato, 1988, p. 64).

Finally, the Brazilian press should also be the one to cover more development news because, as Martin (1990) observes, "This kind of news is not as plentiful as foreign news in the press of any country. It is quite frequently covered as domestic news in the press of each country" (p. 250). It makes sense, then, to expect that the Brazilian local press would produce more news about its government's victories and obstacles over the ecological problems. After all, they are of more immediate impact to the Brazilian population. Therefore, the second hypothesis is:

H#2A: The New York Times and El Excelsior will cover the categories of corruption and crime, government administration, and emphasizing ecology more often than O Estado de Sao Paulo.

H#2B: O Estado de Sao Paulo will cover the categories of foreign institutions, sovereignty, progress, government challenge, downplaying ecology and first world ecological history more often than the New York Times and El Excelsior.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

Content analysis of three major leading and privately owned newspapers was the method chosen for this study. The papers used for the study were the New York Times (United States), El Excelsior (Mexico), and O Estado de Sao Paulo (Brazil).

This study deals with news content about ecological problems in the Brazilian Rain Forest, which is defined as any news having anything to do with deforestation, occupation, and preservation of the Amazon, including its native tribes. The Rain Forest news has been classified under the categories developed according to Budd, Thorp, and Donohew (1967). The categories (1) describe the content of the ecological articles in the three papers, (2) are exhaustive, and (3) are mutually exclusive. In this way, they are actually the tools used to yield the data to answer the hypotheses.

Categories

Progress. Any news reporting or implying Brazil's industrialization, development, and implementation of technology in the Amazon. Such news would be, for example, the construction of hydroelectric plants, dams, highways, roads, houses, and news relating the amount of mineral

reserves in the region being explored for development purposes.

Sovereignty. Any news dealing with rejection of international interference in the area, Brazil's authority, or legal power to its territory. In addition, news related to national security and news stating or implying that the development of the country should be based on domestic needs instead of international expectations.

Government challenge. News relating the difficulties and obstacles of Brazil's government to deal with internal problems such as foreign debt, poverty, environmental problems, lack of education, population growth, and migration.

Corruption and crime. Any news reporting killing or fights among settlers, ranchers, workers, or native Indians in the region as well as news involving the abuse of power by major companies, or landowners in the region, and in detriment of an equal distribution of land and rights to natives or settlers.

Governmental administration. Any news describing or evaluating the way the country, any region in the country, or any Brazilian group is managed by the Brazilian authorities. Also, any new reporting issues regarding health assistance or quality of life in the country. In addition, any news covering Brazilian governmental plans or

laws (old or new) for any region within Brazil's territory.

Foreign institutions. Any news describing or evaluating the assistance of international institutions such as banks, international monetary funds, or any foreign groups to develop in the past, or future, Brazil. In addition, news which reports or evaluates the foreign press coverage of Brazil's ecological problems.

First world ecological history. News involving or implying environmental destruction by developed countries. Such news would be, for example, news describing toxic waste production or the production of anything that is harming to human, animal, or ecological survival by developed countries in the past or future.

Emphasizing ecology. News reporting ecological theories, or the opinion of experts, scientists, or ecologists to support the argument that the destruction of the Amazon affects our planet or environment.

Downplaying ecology. Any news implying or stating that the ecology science is still new, and therefore, that it should be taken more cautiously. Also, news suggesting that ecological assumptions are more guesses than proved theories. Furthermore, any news suggesting that the devastation of the Amazon, in fact, has not or will not affect our environment significantly.

Tone

The definitions of direction stated below are as those suggested by Budd (1962) and quoted in Budd et al. (1967, p. 53).

Positive. Those items reflecting social cohesion and cooperation and political and economic stability and/or strength. Positive news will be judged on the basis of international cooperation (political, social, and economic) in which the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, or any group or individual representing the United States, Mexico, or Brazil is depicted as strong, right, or cooperative. In internal affairs, positive will be judged on the basis of persons cooperating in political, social, and economic affairs. For example, events and incidents which depict the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, or any group or individual within the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, as progressive, successful, peace-loving, moral, intelligent, lawful, unified, or as exercising leadership will be considered positive. This classification will not be assigned where the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, or any group or individual thereof, is depicted as exploiting its strength upon weaker nations, groups, or individuals.

Negative. Those items which report social conflict and disorganization and political and economic instability and/or weakness. Negative news will be judged on the basis

of international tensions (political, social, and economic) in which the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, or any group or individual representing the United States, Mexico, or Brazil is depicted as weak, wrong, or uncooperative. In internal affairs, positive will be judged on the basis of civil disruption in which there is a conflict between persons or groups within the United States, Mexico, or Brazil in political, economic, or social affairs. For example, events and incidents which depict the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, or any group or individual within the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, as backward, domineering, immoral, impractical, unlawful, disunited, or lacking in leadership will be classified negative.

Neutral. Those items which reflect neither negative nor positive conditions either through balance of content or lack of controversial material. In addition, articles will be rates on a continuum of very positive to very negative. The degree of positive or negative tone contained in an unit will be determined by its relationship to other statements in the same unit. Therefore, to two positive statements and two negative statements, a neutral value will be assigned, whereas three positive and two negative statements will be considered a positive direction. On the other hand, four positive and two negative statements will be rated as very positive. The reverse is also true when there are more

negative than positive statements. The scale rating for the articles for tone was (5) Very Positive; (4) Positive; (3) Neutral; (2) Negative; (1) Very Negative.

Units of Analysis and Measurement

The unit of analysis for this research is any article related to the Amazon forest in the morning editions of the three newspapers. It includes articles such as editorials, commentaries, and straight news related to the Rain Forest. Photographs were not included.

In major terms, however, where there was a subheading dealing with a different subject matter, the latter was classified under the category in which it fit best. The news articles were coded only once for category and once for tone.

This study has two hypotheses. The first one predicts the tone with which each of the newspapers will more often cover the ecological problems. To compare if the difference in tone for the three groups is statistically different, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied. The second hypothesis refers to the frequency with which the articles of each of the newspapers fall into the categories defined for this study. Chi-square is the statistic which determines if the differences of frequency distribution for articles of the three newspapers is statistically significant.

The level of significance for this study was set at .05. The time period for this research was December 26, 1988 to July 16, 1989. December 26, 1988 was chosen because it was exactly one day after a Brazilian ecologist was killed, and when the domestic and international press started increasing their coverage of the Rain Forest.

This study is confined to the following sample periods: The first group was 36 consecutive days starting from December 26, 1988 and ending January 31, 1989. This method was chosen because it increases the probability of finding sufficient articles. In other words, since this study is about problems in the Rain Forest and not more dramatic events such as war or natural crisis, it was felt that to look for articles only once a week, for instance, would not be enough to construct a sample large enough to study the event.

The second time period was from February 1 to July 16, 1989; that is, more than 1 month after the death of the ecologist and when, it was felt, news coverage about the region would decrease. Therefore, the sample for this period was assembled by taking 1 day every 2 weeks beginning on February 1 and ending on July 16. The sample dates are: 37 consecutive days from December 26, 1988 to January 31, 1989; and 15 days assembled by taking 1 day every 2 weeks from February 1 to July 16, 1989--February 1 and 16, March 3

and 18, April 2 and 17, May 2 and 17, June 1 and 16, and July 1 and 16.

Inter-Coder Reliability

In addition to the researcher, who speaks Spanish/Portuguese, two assistant coders, both bilingual, were used to establish the inter-coder reliability, which refers to the percentage of agreement among coders. After the researcher and assistants selected and coded a random sample of 6 issues for each of the 3 papers, Holsti's formula (Budd et al., 1967) was used to establish the inter-coder reliability coefficient which, for this study, was .90.

Chapter 5

RESULTS

The first hypothesis that the New York Times and El Excelsior would cover the ecological problems in the Amazon more negatively than O Estado de Sao Paulo was supported. Table 1A indicates that both the Mexican and American papers were more negative in tone than the Brazilian papers.

A statistical examination (ANOVA) in Table 1B shows that while the overall tone of the Brazilian paper was neutral, that of the Mexican and American papers was significantly more negative. There was no significant difference between the New York Times and El Excelsior.

Indeed, results for the Mexican and American papers reflected severe criticism of the Brazilian government for turning its back on the violence and ecological chaos of the Forest. The following articles are just a small sample of how the American and Mexican press sounded on the issue. In "The Death of the Ecologist Mendes Attracts the World Attention to the Devastation of the Forest" (January 4, 1989), the Mexican paper, for instance, asserts that the crime against the ecologist was just one among many occurring in the lawless Amazon land. It cites that the Brazilian government had previously been aware of threats against the ecologist, but that it chose to look the other

way. Moreover, in "No Protection to the Yanomamis" (December 27, 1988), the same paper blames the Brazilian gold seekers, as well as government policy, for the diseases and violence brought to the Indians Yanomamis, one of the main tribes in the Amazon.

The American paper also chose to report the Brazilian Rain Forest through pointing out the government's poor performance in the area. The article "In the Gold Rush, Nature is Viciously Trampled" (May 17, 1989), it blames the government's policies for the gold mining in the forest, the imbalance of rivers, food chain disruption, and water poisoning of the region. In "Brazil Burns the Future" (December 28, 1988, there is a clear position against the development of the Rain Forest. The article asserts that the ongoing tree burning in the region adds to the greenhouse-effect besides killing many species and devastating the home of Indians. In "The Greenhouse-Effect is for Real" (January 27, 1989), Brazil is charged with injecting carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by its tree burning and, thus, contributing to our planet's temperature warming.

It is also worth mentioning that the resemblance of the Mexican to the American paper's tone is also a result of the fact that Mexican articles were sometimes just a Spanish translation of American ones. Such is the case of the

article "The Murder of An Ecologist," by Tom Wicker of the New York Times, which found its way in the Mexican paper.

The Brazilian paper, on the other hand, has a less negative tone than the other two papers. Yet, its mean of 2.9 is not on a positive but a more neutral zone. This indicates that the paper was not totally uncritical. Consider, for instance, the headline "Who Killed Chico Mendes?" (December 30, 1988). This question is answered by the charge that, to some extent, all Brazilians did, for they overlooked the violence occurring over the years in the Rain Forest. Furthermore, the article "The History of Death in the Gangsters Valley" (January 26, 1989) declares the Brazilian region of Vale do Rio Doce (Sweet River Valley) as the most violent in the country. Articles following this line were usually against the unplanned development of the forest which led to violence. But they were not, it is important to note, against the development itself as many of the American and Mexican articles were.

The Brazilian coverage was also made up of many articles which considered only two possibilities for the Amazon ecological discussion: To agree with the Brazilian government or to be its enemy. These sort of articles attacked First World countries while projecting a good image of the Brazilian government. They also discussed the country's victories, obstacles, and challenges in overcoming

its ecological problems while developing as a nation. In "The Deforestation of the Amazon" (January 20, 1989), for instance, it is pointed out that developed countries did not consider ecology to develop themselves. It follows that, according to this view, to expect Brazil to consider it is to condemn the country to poverty. Along the same line, in "The Minister Considers the Exchange of International Debt for Ecological Preservation" (January 27, 1989), the Minister of International Relations talks about the country's challenge to preserve the forest with so little human and financial resources. Moreover, in "Sarney Reminds that the Amazon Belongs to Brazil" (April 21, 1989), the President declares that Brazil has been threatened in its right to conduct its own destiny. Showing the government's strength, he promises to repel any foreign attempt to interfere with the Amazon.

It is clearly noticeable that many of these articles functioned as channels to promote the government's view or policies. Loyal support to Brazil's development was often made not only by government officials but also by journalists. In "Defense of the Brazilian Amazon," Paulo Zingg, president of one of the Brazilian's press associations, equates any criticism of Brazilian's development of the Forest, as do many in the government, with conspiracy against the government. The journalist

declares that the international ecological campaign is just a smoke-screen created by developed countries to obstruct Brazil's development.

The second hypothesis has two parts. Part A predicts the categories upon which the New York Times and El Excelsior will cover more often than O Estado de Sao Paulo. Part B anticipates the categories which O Estado de Sao Paulo will cover more frequently than the New York Times and El Excelsior.

As expected, the New York Times did concentrate on the categories of government administration, corruption and crime, and emphasizing ecology more often than the Brazilian paper. In fact, 82% of its ecological articles fell within these categories, while only 42% of the Brazilian articles did so. Closely resembling the American paper, El Excelsior also concentrated in the above categories, which totalled 78% of its coverage.

Moreover, and as anticipated in Part B of the hypothesis, O Estado de Sao Paulo did concentrate on foreign institution, sovereignty, progress, government challenge, downplaying ecology, and first world ecological history more often than the other two papers. Some 58% of its news were within these categories compared to only 22% for the Mexican and 18% for the American papers.

To compare the ecological coverage by the three newspapers, the chi-square technique was applied to a 3 X 2 contingency table. To compose the table, the categories predicted for the Mexican paper composed one group while the categories anticipated for the Brazilian paper composed another group, as did the categories expected for the American paper. News coverage for the three papers was found to be significantly different at $P=.005$.

Since the Mexican and American papers' coverage seem to be almost identical, χ^2 was applied to compare their coverage. There was no significant difference between them. Table 2 indicates the percentage of news by categories for each of the two papers.

For Tables 3 and 4, chi-square was applied to 2 X 2 tables after the data was collapsed into the predicted categories for each paper.

Table 3 shows the distribution of news articles for the Mexican and Brazilian papers. Once the two groups were compared, a χ^2 of 16.97 was significantly different at $P=.005$ level. Table 4 presents the percentage of articles for the Brazilian and American papers. With a χ^2 of 19.11, the two groups were significantly different at $P=.005$ level.

In sum, the second hypothesis is also supported. The New York Times and El Excelsior covered the Rain Forest ecological problems similarly to each other and differently

than the Brazilian paper.

Overall, we can say that the Brazilian press did expose some of the downside of the occupation and deforestation of the Amazon. This is demonstrated in its 12% coverage of crime and corruption. But, the great bulk of its coverage really went towards what is called development news. Protecting national interests, the Brazilian newspaper used 58% of its coverage to discuss Brazil's need to develop, its legitimate right to do so, and some of its obstacles, including sovereignty threats by First World nations. In the Mexican and U.S. papers, however, Brazil's need to develop took a back seat, and they emphasized the country's poor government policies and environmental destruction. These items were more newsworthy than any others in the U.S. and Mexican papers, 82% and 78%, respectively.

Table 1A

Mean Tone of Ecological News in Brazilian, American, and Mexican Papers (1 = very negative; 2 = negative; 3 = neutral; 4 = positive; 5 = very positive).

Paper	<u>M</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>STDEV</u>
O Estado de Sao Paulo	2.9	105	1.599
New York Times	2.2	43	1.214
El Excelsior	2.0	46	1.273

Table 1B

Analysis of Variance for the Tone of the News in the Brazilian, American, and Mexican Papers

Source	<u>DF</u>	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Factor	2	33.77	16.88	8.05	.001
Error	191	400.69	2.10		
Total	193	434.45			

Table 2

Percentage of Ecological News Articles in the American and Mexican Papers by Content and Category

Category	<u>New York Times</u>		<u>El Excelsior</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%
Total	43		46	
Crime/corruption		28		28
Government administration		30		35
Emphasizing ecology		24		15
Progress		2		2
Sovereignty		2		7
Government challenge		2		4
Foreign institutions		2		2
First world ecological history		10		7
Downplaying ecology		0		0

Table 3

Percentage of Ecological News Articles in the Mexican and
Brazilian Papers by Content and Category

Category	<u>El Excelsior</u>		<u>O Estado de Sao Paulo</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%
Total	46		105	
Predicted categories for <u>El Excelsior</u> to have greater coverage than <u>O Estado de Sao Paulo</u>				
Crime and corruption	28		12	
Government administration	35	78%	27	42%
Emphasizing ecology	15		3	
Predicted categories for <u>O Estado de Sao Paulo</u> to have greater coverage than <u>El Excelsior</u>				
Progress	2		9	
Sovereignty	7		11	
Government challenge	4		7	
Foreign institutions	2	22%	19	58%
First world ecological history	7		5	
Downplaying ecology	0		7	

$$\chi^2(1) = 16.97, p < .005$$

Table 4

Percentage of Ecological News Articles in the Brazilian and American Papers by Content and Category

Category	<u>O Estado de Sao Paulo</u>		<u>New York Times</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%
Total	105		43	
<u>Predicted categories for O Estado de Sao Paulo to have greater coverage than New York Times</u>				
Progress		9		2
Sovereignty		11		2
Government challenge		7		2
Foreign institutions		19		2
First world ecological history		5		10
Downplaying ecology		7		0
<u>Predicted categories for New York Times to have greater coverage than O Estado de Sao Paulo</u>				
Crime and corruption		12		28
Government administration		27		30
Emphasizing ecology		3		24

$$\chi^2(1) = 19.11, p < .005$$

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

Results for this study point out that Third World press tend to cover its own domestic news from a development journalism perspective. Yet, when it comes to foreign "bad news," including that from the Third World, they will cover it pretty much the same way as the Western press.

The Third World Brazilian paper did cover its Rain Forest domestic news from a Third World mass media perspective. Its coverage, to some extent, reflected the interdependence between journalism, politics, and national developing existing in the region.

In other words, the near neutral tone of the Brazilian paper, combined with its concentration on development news (58%), indicates support of national development as well as timidity towards criticizing the government. That may have happened as a result of government pressure or simply because Brazilian journalists may have freely written from a position of commitment to build their nation.

On the other hand, it is fair to note the Brazilian paper did not cover the ecological issues from a totally positive and uncritical view. This may mean that some of the political changes towards democracy in the country may already have affected the Brazilian press.

The American paper, on the other hand, wrote from a Western mass media perspective; more specifically, from a watchdog over government and defender of people's right point of view. It exposed the government's shortsighted policies, possibly because what took place in the forest would be objectionable by its audience. So, it blew the whistle!

The Mexican paper chose to view the ecological problems and attempts to develop the Rain Forest from the same perspective as the American paper. This may come as a surprise to some. After all, the Mexican press shares with the Brazilian press the fact that it, too, operates in a developing country trying to develop in an era much less forgiving of ecological abuses. On January 23, 1983, for instance, Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari told El Excelsior that Mexico City was one of the biggest ecological problems in the world. But, at the same time, he reasoned that it is very difficult to balance environment, development, and a higher standard of living.

It follows that one might have expected from Third World Mexican press a perspective about ecological problems, when linked to development in the Third World, differently than the American press. The latter, after all, functions in an already highly developed environment. So, understandably, it would be more difficult for it to place

itself in a developing country's shoes.

Such was not the case. The Mexican coverage mirrored the American press. There was no significant difference between the two papers' coverage and tone. This result, then, supports what Matta (1990) has previously found: There is no such thing as a Latin American way of interpreting Latin American foreign news.

This results also supports Stevenson and Shaw's (1986) finding that Third World countries do not treat Third World "bad" news differently than the Western. And that, of course, indicates that the exposure of Third World "bad" news is as much a result of the Third World's coverage as it is the Western's.

Further Research

A great deal of what we know about ecology is learned from the press. The problem is that we do not know much about how the press covers ecology. The following suggestions are based on the fact that the way the press covers ecological issues affects our understanding about them.

1. It has been said that foreign news deals mostly with crisis and fast-moving events. But it happens that ecological degradation does not necessarily qualify as any of those two things. In fact, it often takes place quietly, slowly, over the years. Studies, therefore, need to find

out if we learn about ecological degradation abroad, mainly when it is related to or becomes a crisis. Whenever is too late.

2. One of the main findings of this study is that the Mexican and U.S. press covered ecological destructions in the Third World similarly. To find out if these two press systems use the same yardstick to cover ecological destruction abroad as they do at home, studies should find out how U.S. and Mexico cover ecological destruction in their own countries.

3. This study also pointed out that Brazilian journalists covered deforestation at home from a "Third World mass media perspective." It is not clear, however, if it happened because of government pressure or as a reflection of their own perception. Studies should find out what are the Brazilian journalists' attitudes, feelings, and views on the Amazon ecological issues.

4. It is also important to analyze the degree to which the Western and Third World press follow their respective government ecological policies. Such studies can be undertaken by comparisons between the country's government policies and the position of the editorial pages of newspapers.

5. Last, but not least, we need to look at the ideological component which may transpire in ecological

reports. For instance, theoretical explanations for the causes of ecological deforestation are many. In Bendix and Liebler (1991), for example, we can find seven. While one theory contends that deforestation is caused by government policies, another asserts that it is a mere result of population increases which force people to unspoiled areas. Still, there's the explanation that the real reason for Third World deforestation is found in its need to pay a gigantic international debt to the First World. What it all means is that when reporters choose one of these theories to explain ecological destruction in forests, they are entering, realizing it or not, the realm of ideologies.

It is imperative that studies determine the variety of explanations and sources contained in reports about environmental issue. Such studies will determine if the press' interpretation of ecological destruction is accurate enough to warn readers of the inconclusiveness and competitiveness of theories explaining it.

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