INQUIRIES AND ANALYSES OF MASS MEDIA

INFLUENCES ON CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIAL AND

POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

By

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POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The basis for my thesis comes from my own experience living abroad in Santiago, Chile from January 2005-June 2006. I had the opportunity to interact with and get to know many people from all over Latin America who had made their way to Chile. Eight months after I arrived, Hurricane Katrina ripped through the American South, killing roughly 1,800 people and displacing hundreds more. The devastation and aftermath of the hurricane drew a great deal of international attention not only because of its intensity, but also because it happened in one of the world's most influential countries.

One night not long after Katrina had hit, I went by the home of a family that I had known for some time. They were watching a Chilean news channel that was covering the hurricane story. It was showing aerial footage of a highway exit that was surrounded by water with a large group of people huddled up on high ground waiting to be rescued. The father of the family turned to me and asked why, in the United States, we force all of our people of color to live in impoverished areas where things like Katrina are likeliest to hit and be extremely devastating. This man was educated, part of the Chilean middle-class, had never been to the United States, but had known numerous other U.S. citizens apart

from myself. I had been friends with him and his family for seven months, but regardless of how much I tried explaining the U.S.' past involvement with slavery, abolition and civil rights, I could not sway his opinion about the United States. He kept pointing to the television and telling me to look at the news. For him, everything the media presented was accurate and true.

From this personal experience, and others similar to it, stems the overall theme of this thesis: how different forms of mass media influence peoples' political and social perceptions of different nations. This topic is important to consider because it has bearing on both inter- and intracultural relationships. The media can influence countries in many ways, but the main focus here is contributions of the media to the cross-cultural social political misconceptions that people have of one another.

It is important to note that the media cannot be blamed for *all* misconceptions. Whether deserved or not, the media is often times blamed for exacerbating a large majority of the stories they report on. Just as the general public can be frustrated with the media's biased presentation of information, journalists and writers within the media sector can be as well. (Dagenais 124; 132). It is also important to indicate that the media's impact on public opinion depends on each country's political views, where the media sources come from, and the public's access to a press whose content and agenda are not determined by the government (Masmoudi 35-36). In large part, past histories play into present political and social relationships between countries, and consequently, misconceptions. Additionally, we are all products of our upbringing, and the way we perceive others is manifested in the way we interpret what we glean from the media. The media sources and political backgrounds we were exposed to in our homes during our

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formative years can also play into a person's propensity to form stereotypes or not.

Culturally and linguistically interacting with individuals from other regions can be effective ways to break down barriers and stereotypes that people have as a result of predisposed information. Although it is not always the case, exposure from traveling or living abroad can offer opportunities (for lack of a better phrase) to "broaden our horizons." We meet different people and spend some time living how they do, thus increasing our understanding of them and their beliefs. We are able to understand world history outside of the context of our home country's textbooks, and we can understand why some countries and cultures hold the beliefs and ideals they do. We come to be a little more tolerant and accepting of those whose opinions we may not share, but we are at least willing to listen to. We also appreciate a little more those things we may have taken for granted before (Stier 80).

For a lot of people, exposure abroad is minimal, and many have never traveled outside of their home country; even intra-country travel for some people is limited. One might also argue that biases will prevail regardless of exposure from living and traveling abroad. And so we depend on the media and people we associate with to obtain information about other countries (McCombs and Shaw 183; Boutros-Ghali 24; Huang and McAdams 71). Access to accurate and worthwhile information can be difficult to get when inaccuracy of facts in the media is prominent, and sensationalism and shock value are common components of a newspaper front page or an evening news report. It is easy for people to draw conclusions about others when their own information about others is secondhand or incomplete. What we deduce from the news can influence the way we think of others, and how we think they view us.

Wanting to stay connected and feel a part of something that gives us meaning as individuals is a normal and integral part of any society. We rely heavily on the media to not only inform us of worldwide issues, but also to make us feel connected with the rest of the world (Croteau and Hoynes 237; Wanta, Golan and Lee 367). Croteau and Hoynes point out the importance of social interaction and collective communication. They state that "we become who we are largely through our social relations with others. At its most basic level, this means that our sense of identity and individuality emerges from our social interaction with others" (Croteau and Hoynes 19). Communication is, therefore, the most fundamental method of building identities and strengthening relationships. It is both a practical means of transmitting information and a medium by which members of a society can connect and share their emotions (Carey 14-15, 21).

Large scale communication is facilitated by mass media. Mass media is a part of everyday life that comes in many forms. Croteau and Hoynes (7) and Janowitz (55) describe mass communication as a product of the institutions, technology and techniques (like the radio, press, the Internet, etc.) that groups use to facilitate the diffusion of information throughout the masses. With the growth of technology and the spread of globalization, cell phones, music and movies can be considered media. Even the rise in popularity of Internet blogging, a fairly recent media phenomenon, can be considered media and has sparked some attention about what is journalism and what is not. Anyone with an opinion and a computer can have access to an audience of thousands willing to read what they have to say. In effect, anything that transmits a message or opinion to others is a form of communication and mass media. These things are so commonplace that we are often indifferent to their presence and potential to influence (Bennett 2004,

129).

To better understand some of the ways the media influences public opinion around the world, the next section will present and investigate a series of questions that will investigate this matter.

THESIS OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For simplification purposes, the general public can be divided into three basic categories in regards to media usage. These categories are offered only as a point of reference and are open to reinterpretation. However, as will be discussed at great length in the results portion of this thesis, the three categories are (1) people that are informed through their own acquisition of information, (2) people that are informed of current events through second-hand information and (3) people that are apathetic and indifferent to current issues that affect them and others. For example:

- Person #1 might be the businessperson whose work requires overseas travel and intercultural interaction, a person that visits family in another country, a student that takes advantage of a study abroad opportunity, or someone that is closer acquaintances with people from other countries. Person #1 also takes an interest in current events.

- Person #2 would most likely resemble the majority of us, someone whose only contact with other countries comes by way of stories and articles on the television, newspapers, coworkers and classmates. Person #2 is genuinely interested in events that concern the world around them.

- Person #3 is apathetic to issues that not only their own community and

country, but the world at large. He or she is indifferent to others, and has no real contact with other cultures and countries, either through work, school, etc. And if they do, it does not greatly sway their indifference.

A person need not be interested in the same topics as other people, or share the same opinions. Needless to say, what constitutes "news" can mean something different to different people, and therefore satisfaction with news sources varies from person to person and country to country. Some suggest public dissatisfaction with the media is a direct result of ever-changing news items and controversial issues (Roberts and Leifer 1975; Gunther 1992; Stone and Beell 1975); as new things happen and the news changes, so do sentiments about the importance of the issues. Dissatisfaction with the media can occur because people feel the media's coverage of an issue does not reflect their own opinion. For example, in a poll conducted in October 2008, the Harris Interactive found that 65% of Republicans felt the media "unfairly favored" President Barack Obama during the presidential campaign (for more information, refer to the article, "Most Republicans See Media Bias; Most Democrats See Fair Media Coverage," by Harris Interactive). If the tables were turned and the same people were polled prior to Obama's rise in popularity and Senator John McCain had the popular vote, those same respondents probably would have felt differently. The fact that the Republican candidate was not favored by the majority of Americans suddenly made mass media the scapegoat for the disparity (for more information, refer to the article, "Obama's 6 Point Lead Holds Steady," by Harris Interactive).

I use this example to show not only the relationship between the media and public opinion about domestic matters, but to also suggest that the media can influence the way

the public perceives other countries and global matters. Mass media, or at least basic communication, is a societal component of any country. We are all subject to other countries' opinions that see our own country through the eyes of the media (Wanta, Golan and Lee 369, 375; Ferguson, Horan and Ferguson 158; Zaharopoulos 283-291). The United States, for example, is closely observed and scrutinized politically during every presidential election campaign, and socially through the lens of the entertainment industry. According to a report put out by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in December of 2008, U.S. favorability has decreased a considerable amount (as much as 47% in some countries) since George Bush, Jr. took office in 2000 (refer to pages 2-4 and 11 of the report). To a large degree, the media contributes to a strong sense of nationalism within a country, but can also exaggerate it when it is seen as a threat to other countries.

Labeling all forms of communication and media available as misleading or incredulous is not the point of this thesis. Rather, investigating how the media persuades public opinion regarding other countries is the overall point of this thesis. To better understand this, the following question clusters that address mass media, public opinion and intercultural relationships will be examined:

1. *How does mass media influence how people think politically and socially about other countries? How frequently do people use various media sources, and what are the main media sources that people seek out?*

2. *Do people that tend to be interested in only local news or that spend little time informing themselves of the news still voice strong opinions about critical issues, like the war in Iraq?*

3. *Do peoples' experiences from living and studying abroad or knowing people from other countries breakdown or reinforce stereotypes that people have of those not of their own country?*

In order to better answer these questions, a review of current literature concerning

the way in which the media influences political and social life will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

<u>Chapter Introduction</u>

Over the years, scholars have studied the fluctuating and dynamic relationship between the media and its audiences. They have examined whether or not the media is truly influential, or if its actions are misunderstood. In a study about public political opinions following the 1959 general election in England, Joseph Trenaman and Denis McQuail presented findings that yielded "no indication that television and the other media of communication did more than provide the raw material for opinion-information" (178). They furthermore commented that people were aware of what was being communicated and by whom, but that they "do not necessarily take it at its face value," and that the information being relayed to the public had no direct impact on one's political decision-making (178). Katz and Lazarsfield (25) argued that instead of being something that influenced the public directly, mass media was instead a vehicle by which peoples' opinions were spread. However, modern advancements in technology and the spread of globalization have proved Katz's and Lazarsfield's argument more than Trennaman's and McQuail's statement. These advancements have facilitated the media's capability of impacting the public. The more connected the world become through technology and the media, the more impressionable people become.

The following literature review will elaborate on this point and examine scholarly literature that relates to the aforementioned thesis questions outlined earlier on page 7. The literature review, along with the survey results of over 400 university students, will form a foundation from which conclusions to the thesis questions will be formed.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM AND MASS MEDIA

The majority of the developed world enjoys the privilege of a free press and the unrestricted exchange of ideas. Dolby indicates that "nations were originally created through the vehicle of print media, which allows individuals who are geographically dispersed to imagine themselves linked by an affinity to an abstract" (156). In a very real sense the media has a strong role in shaping cultural and political identity (Dolby 157). The United States, in fact, was the first country to officially document and protect "the free marketplace of ideas and the public's right to know," and nearly two centuries passed before the rest of the world incorporated the same concept (Ammon 20). The media has played an important role in both the social and political spheres. Some social movements, such as the civil rights movement, were able to draw greater attention because of the media (Croteau and Hoynes 29; Steel 23-26).

In the United States, confidence in modern journalism and media has fluctuated since the days of early journalism (Lee 8, 429-430; Smythe 15, 49-50). By the eighteenth century sensationalism in journalism (or "yellow journalism" as it came to be known as) was widespread. The term "yellow journalism" came about during the mid-1800s when

influential newspaper owners, like Joseph Pulitzer and William Hearst, purposely embellished news stories in order to attract larger audiences and convince the public that their newspaper was the leading news source (Lee 371-373; Smythe 174; Shrock 180-181). Likewise, leading newspapers of the day openly supported those politicians and political parties that were generous in their monetary donations and bribes to the newspapers themselves (Kaplan 61; 75-79; Douglas 18; Smythe 17-20).

Practices in today's modern mass media are not entirely different from those of its predecessors. Croteau and Hoynes indicate that mass media is a rather recent concept (7, 12). Whereas *journalism* is the actual gathering, interpretation and distribution of news and information, *mass media* refers to the vehicles by which the product of journalism reaches the masses. International affairs are always accompanied by constant media involvement. Strobel points out several examples (the Cold War and the Vietnam War in particular) in which the role of the media was influential and crucial in mediation and resolution processes. He notes that conflicts in effect create an expanding market of foreign affairs for mass media and its users (Strobel 59). Furthermore, the continuation of technological developments and advancements facilitates the ability to transfer more information faster and farther than ever before. As the following chapters will explain, the continuous spread of mass media is both beneficial and harmful.

Staying up to date with international affairs is easy and commonplace today with modern technology and easy access to the Internet. With growth and progress also come obstacles and complications. While it is increasingly easy to be well-informed, being *accurately* informed is another matter. One thought to consider surrounding the dissatisfaction with the media is that some mass media companies have allowed

competition and business to get in the way of unprejudiced reporting. The end result is news that is either embellished too much, or not addressed enough. Paraphrasing Georgetown University professor, Dr. Michael J. Robinson, Bruce Sanford states that the media cares too much about the numbers and neglects to pay adequate attention to the importance that the general public ascribes to the media's role in society (Sanford 17). Essentially, in the race to the top to become the leading source that the public should turn to, news sources instead seem to disregard the confidence that the public has placed in them to bring them accurate and credible reporting.

The use of the term "yellow journalism" may not be as common today as in years past, but the central idea is still *very much* a part of modern journalism and mass media. Former *Washington Post* editor, Richard Harwood, said it well when he remarked that "the belief is widespread (if rarely voiced) that the media's search for conflict, human imperfection, scandal and sensation demeans, trivializes and often distorts far more than any political commercial the reputations of not only politicians but the democratic system itself" (Sanford 18).

MODERN MASS MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION

Introduction

How individuals receive and interpret information about current events directly impacts public opinion as a whole. Similarly, the media's ability to amass an audience that will believe them sometimes depends on current events themselves. As Dagenais points out, "a society in crisis also creates a media crisis. And the excitement provoked by a crisis in different sectors of society also reaches the media" (Dagenais 120). As a

result, how the media passes along information about such crisis situations (or any situation, for that matter) impacts public opinion.

The Roles of Mass Media

As a result of technological developments and the spread of globalization in today's world, mass media and journalism are capable of spreading and reaching larger audiences at a fast rate. Croteau and Hoynes point out that mass media has gone through several waves of progression from the television and newspapers, to radio and television, and now on to the Internet and electronics (9-12). It has also been suggested that *people* make up another form of mass media, or "readers" or "leaders" because of the role they play in interpreting and passing on information to others (Croteau and Hoynes 7; Katz and Lazarsfield 31-32, 64).

Bernard Dagenais offers a descriptive and useful approach by which to consider the media and journalists in relation to public opinion (121-126). Although he does so in the context of the kidnappings of two officials in 1970 in Quebec, Canada, his description is still relevant to other situations. News items and how the media goes about presenting them depend a great deal on the political atmosphere and the degree of journalistic independence of a country. Therefore, the pertinence of the following categories to all forms of mass media everywhere is of a general nature. The categories are as follows: (a) an observer; (b) a neutral actor; (c) a transmitter; (d) a mirror; (e) a witness; (f) a manipulated observer; (g) an involved actor; and (h) censored.

As an *observer*, the media takes on the prescribed role of a neutral intermediary.

They convey all the facts, the theories, allegations and angles of the story to the public

(p.122). Similarly, the media can take on the role of a *neutral actor*. In this instance,

reporters' and the overall media's reporting of events and news to the public results in

reactions (both positive and negative) from varying levels within the public (Dagenais

125). Sometimes the media acts as a *transmitter*, or an intermediary between the public

and any other parties involved (such as businesses, governments and politicians, etc.). As

such, Dagenais says that the media acts as a spokesperson and suggests that they color

"with their point of view the relation of events themselves" (p.123). As time passes and

news issues progress, the media takes on the role of a *mirror* (p. 123). Reality and

accuracy become distorted as all angles of the issue are consumed by, interpreted,

rearranged and redistributed by the media to the public. As Dagenais explains (again, in

reference to the aforementioned 1970 incident), as a mirror "the media simultaneously

amplified the reality that they were describing while reflecting back to infinity the image

they were receiving of reality" (p. 123). Simultaneously, the media can be a *witness*, and

as such, they are no longer neutral in their opinions. Instead, they give opinions to what

they observe which consequentially gives "a character of existence and credibility" to the

issue. Furthermore, they ascribe themselves the right to be at the forefront of any

development to ensure that the public is sufficiently informed (p. 123). When the media

acts as *manipulated observers,* it is because the public is dissatisfied with the media's

control over the climate of the news and public opinion (Dagenais 124). As *involved*

actors, the involvement of the media and its contributors results in their taking sides and

actually being politically and socially oriented. Dagenais indicates that "journalists

[abandon] their positions as observers and [become] actors in the developing drama (Dagenais 125). In short, writers and reporters sometimes go against the opinions of their employers and those that support because they side with the public, regardless of the ramifications (Dagenais 125, 132). Finally, the media can sometimes be considered as *censored.* This occurs more or less when the various segments of the public feel that the media itself has somehow skewed issue and they proceed by evaluating the media and its involvement. In fact, "one does not ask what had been the media's role. They are accused of lacking social responsibility and of having circulated unacceptable statements in an improper way" (Dagenais 126-127).

The categories described above offer an outline by which to consider the various roles that media assumes in influencing the public. The following section will define what public opinion is, as a byproduct of the media, and will also discuss some of the implications that biased and over-influential media can have on political and social opinions. Regardless of the role that the media takes on in any given situation, the media's influential presence in society is evident.

<center>Explaining Public Opinion</center>

Public opinion is the combining of common beliefs and opinions that people within a group share (Crespi 47; Childs 24, 35; Oskamp and Schultz 16). Walter Lippmann is one of a handful of pioneers credited for introducing the idea in 1922 of *modern* media and its influential power over public opinion and policymaking (Steel 27, 172, 212; Riccio 58-59, 98). It was derived from the notion that people are distantly connected to the political realm and that they develop images that are shaped by the

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media, which in turn influence peoples' behaviors (Lippmann 29-30). Mass media is a

means by which these ideas are shared and disseminated throughout a group. In a very

real way, the relationship between public opinion and mass media is synergetic in nature;

any change in the course of one can directly impact the direction of the other. Therefore,

providing the public with all sides of the story is essential, but is not always done (Yahya

and Begawan, 2007). The danger in only providing the public with insufficient and

inaccurate information is that it can create or propagate political and social repercussions;

people tend to believe what they hear.

<center>Public Political Opinion as a Byproduct of the Media</center>

At the individual level, people differ in how much they follow and use the media

(McCombs and Shaw 176-177). However, the fact remains that people do use it to some

degree or another (Degenais 123). According to Gunther, individuals often base their

own opinions on how they think the rest of the general public interprets the media (487-

488). As a result, people influence one another not only through the sharing and

exchange of their ideas, but also through conjecture. This is explained by two different

theories: (1) the third-person effect (Davidson 1983), and (2) the false consensus effect

(Ross 1977). The "third-person effect" states that "people will tend to overestimate the

influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behaviors of others" and

that people "will expect the communication to have a greater effect on others than on

themselves," even if what is being communicated is not intended to be persuasive

(Davidson 3). In contrast, the "false consensus effect" holds that a person believes that

other people tend to think and act as they do. This is based on the premise that they "see

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their own behavioral choices and judgments as relatively common and appropriate" and that anything otherwise is "uncommon, deviant, and inappropriate" (Ross 188).

From a mass media/public opinion perspective, people that fall under the "false consensus effect" would assert that their opinions and way of thinking are common throughout society, regardless of others' actual media usage. Similarly, a "third-person effect" thinker would argue that other people are influenced by the media and not themselves, that others' social and political opinions are not entirely their own and that they are somehow immune to being influenced by the media in any way. These two schools of thought outline a significant consequence of mass media: the way in which people tend to perceive others, through the media, is often times inaccurate and conjectural. As a result, biases and stereotypes constitute the public opinion between different groups of people.

Some scholars have suggested that the media can be so influential in the political arena that it is responsible for "agenda-setting" when it highlights certain issues and overlooks others (Gunther 489; McCombs and Shaw 177, 180; Powlick and Katz 38; Croteau and Hoynes 239-241). In short, the "agenda-setting theory" affirms that "the media plays an influential part in how issues gain public attention" (Durie, Elolf, McKain and Patterson 2002). However, McCombs and Shaw assert that "for most, mass media provide the best—and only—easily available approximation of ever changing political realities" (185). They also argue that while mass media may not always be successful in telling the public *what* to believe, they are at least successful in persuading the public what to think *about* (McCombs and Shaw 185). Likewise, the media's influence depends, in part, on the public's own participation in and awareness of current issues.

People who are not decisively committed to a particular point of view are more likely to be persuaded and to listen to both sides of an issue than those who are already politically committed (McCombs and Shaw 182). Wanta, Golan and Lee (364), and Huang and McAdams (59) assert that the media *is* successful in telling the public what to believe because it *is* so persuasive. Wanta, Golan and Lee likewise add a second level of "agenda-setting" to the classic McCombs and Shaw argument and describe it as "the transmission of attributes of actors in the news from media coverage of these attributes to the public's recall of the same attributes" (365). They continue by indicating that "while first-level agenda setting suggests media coverage influences what we think about, second-level agenda setting suggests media coverage influences how we think" (McCombs and Shaw 367). In short, certain attributes are ascribed by the public to the media and in effect influence the way the public perceives not only the subject matter mass media reports on, but also the media itself.

A study conducted by Powlick and Katz showed that some people believed the media to be more persuasive than elected officials (37). Strobel notes that there has been a shift of influential power from politicians to the media in the years during and since the Cold War era (58-59). This may be due, in part, to the fact that mass media is the constant mode of communication between the public and politicians. Therefore, politicians' reputations and credibility can be affected by the way the public see them through the media lens. Furthermore, how the public feels about politicians' knowledge of important issues and their ability to effectively address them is held in question by the media. Ammon (2001) points out that mass media can have such an impact on foreign affairs and policymaking that politicians use the media sources when conducting foreign

policy. The media has indeed contributed a great deal to the efficiency of how countries interact with one another and conduct foreign policy, but there are some downsides. Ammon indicates that instead of talking with each other, countries instead talk *at* one another through the media (74). For example, during the Gulf War years "several top policymakers…argued that the media operated as an out-of-control 'front channel' for diplomatic communication, quite apart from traditional diplomatic channels" (Ammon 75). Furthermore, governments and politicians have long since recognized the effect that technological diplomacy has on international affairs and that "'government-to-government communications [have] become less important'" (Ammon 75).

Ammon describes this trend as "communication loops" between the politicians, the media and the public. His description is very similar to some ideas laid out by Dagenais (2001: 1992). Ammon notes that, in some cases, politicians base their decision making on how they perceive the public opinion to be through the interpretations of the media. This is evidence of "a change in international public relations" and "diplomacy's crisis management and negotiation functions" (Ammon 75-76, 78). Ammon gives the example of former president George Bush during the Gulf War (75). While watching a CNN news report about Saddam Hussein's decision to pull his forces out of Kuwait, President Bush promptly decided to give a public relations counter-speech on CNN encouraging the Iraqi people to overthrow the Hussein regime. He did so knowing very well that the speech would be televised in not only Baghdad but other parts of the world where other Arab would hear it. The implications of using the media in such a way demonstrates the effectiveness that it can have on the way the public receives information about issues both inside and outside of their own country. As Kellner (1992), and

Croteau and Hoynes (2000) indicate *propaganda* is one such implication. Kellner notes

that, in an attempt to gain leverage over a political opponent and rally support,

governments and leaders sometimes make their assumptions public, assumptions which

are often times premature and lack sufficient evidence (60). He uses the example of the

first Gulf War and points out instances the Bush administration used the media to throw

insults and ultimatums at Saddam Hussein, thus "making the possibility of a peaceful

solution increasingly remote" (Kellner 57). Hussein, no doubt, replied with his own

abuse of the media. This was done, of course, in full view of the international public in

the attempts to spotlight their own dominance and highlight the imperfections of the

other. While the U.S. administration's and the media's motives for entering the Gulf War

may have been justified in the beginning (peace in the Middle East for the Arab people

and US interests), the clarity of the motives became clouded through reinterpretation after

reinterpretation of the facts on the part of the media. This, in turn, affected public

opinion. The more the media sways public opinion in such a way that is interpreted as

manipulative, the more mass media is thought of as destructive.

CULTURAL AWARENESS AND THE IMPACTS OF CREATING AND BREAKING STERYOTYPES

Introduction

During an event addressing the decline of positive public opinion towards the

United States and the importance of international education abroad, Keith Reinhard

(president and founder of Businesses for Diplomatic Action) remarked on the idea of

"branding." Referring to immigration issues, Reinhard said:

> In branding, we listen to all perceptions. The positive ones we hope are

true, and we want to build them. The negative ones we have to divide into two. Negative perceptions which are true, we have to change the product.[1]

Reinhard's assertion that cultural branding is an issue that countries should be aware of deserves further instigation. This next section will discuss in further detail how the media influences peoples' social perceptions and ideologies about others.

Global Media in a Global World

Globalization is met by praise for the ever-growing exchange of ideas, technology, fashion, lifestyles and even people between countries (Stier 77). But it also has been met with opposition towards the rising economic, political, environmental and cultural handicaps other regions face as a result of it. Regardless of a person's personal feelings on the subject, all can agree that technology has been one of the foremost developments throughout the globalization era. Mass media is one branch of technology that continues to expand and change as societies change. The more information mass media produces and circulates, and the faster it does so, the smaller the world seems to get. Likewise, the defining boundary lines between local, national and international news are blurred as these topics can often times cross over and influence one another (Dolby 157).

Additionally, media sources are rarely constricted by territorial borders. Many leading media networks, like FOX , CNN, the BBC, and so on, are available all over the world, and have secondary channels and programs specifically intended to target specific audiences (like www.bbcarabic.com).

As referenced earlier, most media sources come with a political agenda, which is

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[1] Refer to the NAFSA online article, "Special Report: International Education is Key Element of U.S. Public Diplomacy and National Security, Experts and Presidential Campaign Advisers Say."

incorporated into the way they interpret and redistribute news and stories, whether they intend to or not. These agendas are often, and not surprisingly, determined by either the corporation or country that own(s) them. Many people also make a point of seeking out more than one source so as to get a broader, less subjective point of view. While this is a practical way to be a well-rounded informant, it is still nearly impossible to avoid some sort of political bias and prejudice. In the United States, one of the most well-known rivalries is between CNN (considered to be left-leaning) and the notoriously right-leaning FOX network. Part of the appeal of these two media giants has been their long-standing competitive pursuit to bringing their audiences news from around the world. But at what point does the competition between networks become more and more of a business rather than a pursuit to bring accurate news? The majority of Yahoo! news pieces are generally supplied by the Associated Press (a not-for-profit cooperative based out of New York) and Reuters (based out of the UK). Even if a person uses Yahoo! just for email, he/she are automatically redirected to Yahoo!'s news-covered main page when they sign out of their email account. Google pays the Associated Press to supply their website with news for their users (McCarthy 2009; Marketing VOX 2006).

The Media's Impact on Society at Home and Abroad

Public reaction to political-related issues is just one of the ways the media's influence is manifested. Just as the relationship between mass media and politics is symbiotic in nature, so is the relationship of mass media and society. Croteau and Hoynes (245) illustrate this point in the context of social movements. They note that "movements ask the media to communicate their message to the public, while the media

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look to movements as one potential source of 'news'." Thus, how people feel about their own society, as well as others, is another potential byproduct of mass media. What the media tells us about the social structure and stability of a country at any given time can form both positive or negative ideas and images of that country and its people. Often times, these ideas and images are perpetuated and passed on, long after the initial idea was formed. Once again, this can be done through agenda-setting in the social context (Croteau and Hoynes 244).

One consistent "source of information" in any society is the tabloid. Bruck talks about the effects that tabloid news media can have on crisis situations and how the public responds (109). Tabloids are specifically designed and marketed to target particular audiences (generally people that are in informal settings and that only receive their information in bits and pieces, such as the grocery store and doctors' offices). The danger with "news" sources such as these is that their content is generally anything but news. As Bruck points out, their stories lack a considerable amount of credible evidence or pertinence to issues that have actual importance, and instead focus on "the latest celebrity gossip, tales of instant fortune and freakish disaster" (111-112). The danger with these sources is, while they lack legitimacy as sources of credible news, they are still very popular. This sensational-driven agenda is unsettling not only because of the way that it passes half-truths off as reliable information, but because it is easily regarded as news by those that consume it. To this, media critic, professor and director of the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, Tom Rosenstiel, said: "The line between fact and fiction in America, between what is real and made up, is blurring. The move in journalism toward *infotainment* invites just such confusion, as news becomes

entertainment and entertainment becomes news" (Clark 2009; italics added for emphasis).

Along similar lines is the issue of quick reference news sources. Much of the news that a person soaks up is done in snippets. We live busy lives and so seek sources that offer instantaneous news results. Almost every newspaper and television news source imaginable has turned to the Internet as another outlet for mass media dispersal. Large networks, like ABC News, pay large amounts of money to be the preferred news source on Internet websites, like Yahoo!. Essentially, news is business. And which website a person frequents can determine how politically and socially slanted his/her acquired information is. Ultimately, "the problem is that as such arrangements become more common, a user's search for information becomes more and more likely to turn up a paid advertisement rather than the best source of information. This begins to undermine one of the Internet's biggest selling points: its diversity and decentralization" (Croteau and Hoynes 322).

Some scholars address some of the concerns surrounding loose forms of media in today's society. They point out the reality that a young person's development, socialization, and acculturation are, in large part, products of the media (Croteau and Hoynes 15; Zaharopoulos 279). What this indicates is that many of the social norms and morals that people acquire are gleaned from the kinds of television shows they watch, what types of Internet websites they frequent, the music they listen to, and how much time they spend using these things.

The media not only communicates news to the public, but it also acts as an advertising agent. Advertising can very easily be considered just as persuasive and

opinion-forming as actual news media. Because advertisers pay for a great deal of the operational costs of mass media, the public is exposed to those advertisements and messages that pay the most. In a very real sense, "the media are in the business of 'delivering audiences to advertisers'" and their efforts are so persistent that they "also make their way…into unlikely places such as the high-school classroom or the doctor's office" (Croteau and Hoynes 63-64). Broadcasting an advertisement-filled agenda more than offering useful information is not uncommon in the practices of mass media (Croteau and Hoynes 63). Product-placement and marketing in pop culture bombard everyday life in more ways then we are sometimes aware: through magazines, television, even in movies (Croteau and Hoynes 64-65). Often times a country's success and recognition are followed by outsiders and what they see through entertainment media which can greatly distort actuality. Not only can media's impacts on society cross national lines, its impact also can be felt strongly at home. Croteau and Hoynes note that the impact of advertising and media on society is constantly evolving and progressing, adapting to society as society itself evolves and progresses (63). As a result, the media shapes society to a large degree, but society also shapes the media. What we buy, how we live, what we eat, and even where we go on vacation, all of these things feed back into the mass media and what it advertizes and markets right back to the public. In effect, the media is embedded in culture, but culture is also embedded in the media.

This "shrinking" of the world plays out in both positive and negative ways. The more connected we get the more potentially accepting of other cultures we become. The more positive interactions we have with others, the more likely we are to be tolerant of the things that make us different and unique. The "shrinking" of the global world also

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facilitates easier exchanges of ideas on business practices, respond to humanitarian issues more effectively and form alliances. But there are some potential social ramifications. We already have addressed the issue of foreign relations and how the media can influence how people perceive others politically. Instead of breaking down stereotypes and cultural barriers, mass media helps to create them (Igartua, Cheng and Muñiz 369-370; Huang and McAdams 61). Some suggest that the media is both ambiguous and direct in its portrayal of racial and culture issues, and sometimes portrays such issues within a foreign country as being more intense then they actually are, especially during times of crises (Commission on Civil Disorders 205, 211; Huang and McAdams 61). The problem with this is that one racially related incident that receives media coverage can be overly analyzed and perpetuate the duration of the issue and the sentiments of people that may or may not have some sort of connection with the issue at hand (i.e., a political, social, religious or personal connection). In the case of the United States, for example, most of the world-renown media sources today are American generated, making it possible for American ideologies (about fashion, culture, lifestyles, social beliefs, political agendas, etc.) to spread easily throughout the world (Primo 180-181; Amin 331-333).

The United States has been the benefactor of positive service and assistance to countless foreign nations for many years, but some countries are concerned about the influx of American influences on their societies. Some are concerned with "cultural imperialism" and "Americanization." Their fear is that they are losing their own social and national identities, and even social safety, to the influences from America and the rest of the Western World that continue to attract their youth (Primo 182-183; Lisosky 337-343; Amin 328). To some, this might appear to be a positive change and an advance

towards modernity. But those areas that are fighting it are doing so to protect their own national identity and curb other concerns that they feel are being caused by all too influential popular trends that are advertised and promoted by the media of outside sources.

Media interference, for instance, can influence the way in which race is defined in a country, the way that immigrants are treated (Igartua, Cheng and Muñiz 360-361), and the way that minorities are regarded. The case of the United States, a country that was built on the foundation of immigrants, is an appropriate example of this today. The media can take advantage of already precarious sentiments towards certain immigrant groups, mixed with a lack of effective government control, resulting in and the consequences of these factors. This problem is two-fold: public opinion from the host country towards immigrants from particular areas can be negatively impacted by the amount and manner the media covers this issue. Likewise, the feelings that immigrants' home countries have towards host countries can be influenced negatively as the issue takes on international attention. A classic example is the current situation in the United States with illegal Mexican immigrants. The media can play a key role in the sentiments that people back in Mexico (or even other parts of Latin America, and around the world) have towards the United States, based upon what they hear in the media about the U.S. government is (or is not) handling the situation.

Similarly, McCombs and Shaw (1974), Ghanem (1997) and Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004) explain that the impact of media agenda-setting in the media-culture context can cause people to have certain opinions based upon what other countries are currently involved in. Bennett (1990), and Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004) suggest that the amount

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of international media coverage a country receives is often linked to the country's foreign policy and decision-making. Furthermore, the more globally recognized a country is for whatever reason, the more media attention they draw. For example, the more attention the media pays to certain countries, international conflicts or subject matter more than others, the more the public is prone to form opinions about those things in particular.

Propaganda in the media, as mentioned earlier, is an effective way to spread messages. For example, American media took part in the propaganda push during the Gulf War conflict by showing images of American women contrasted with veiled and Iraqi women, portraying American society as modern and progressive while sending the message that Arab society is backward and stagnant (Kellner 56). The media seems to downplay the diversity of outside ethnicities and societies or question other countries' place in the world to the point of persuading its audiences that their own country is dominant, which in turn points to a lack of tolerance for those that are different (Primo 186; Ferguson, Horan and Ferguson 158). This is even evident within countries themselves every time the media grabs hold of an intracultural conflict and endorses the side that is more likely to attract public support. To summarize, "the more negative coverage a nation receives, the more individuals will think negatively about that nation. The more positive media coverage a nation receives, the more individuals will think positively about the nation" (Wanta, Golan and Lee 369).

Public Opinion Post-Traveling Abroad

When considering how to overcome stereotypes and negative opinions that cross national borders, one possible solution to consider is studying and living abroad. The

United States, like many countries, is judged from inside its borders just as much as it is from the outside. One group of individuals judging the U.S. from within its borders is foreign students. "Open Doors," a statistical publication by the Institute of International Education, reported that there were roughly 623,805 international students studying in the United States during the 2007/2008 academic year, and approximately 241,791 American students studying abroad (Bhandari and Chow 2, 18). They also indicate that for the last three academic years (2005-2008), Asia was the leading region represented by the most foreign students studying in the United States, followed by Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and then Oceana (Bhandari and Chow 5). These statistics alone illustrate the need to be interculturally conscious and tolerant, and conscientious of how outsiders perceive our own country. This is especially important for the United States, given the country's global recognition, because students (both American and foreign) will take home with them their impressions and feelings from the time they spent abroad. Bhandari and Chow (2008) comment that while there was a 10% increase in the number of new international students coming to study in the United States, the nearly 620,000 international students in the U.S. during the 2007-2008 academic year "still only comprise 3.5% of the total U.S. higher education enrollment," which only emphasizes the fact that "there is considerable room for U.S. institutions to accommodate more international students at their campuses" (Bhandari and Chow 3).

Studying and living abroad are possible ways that cultural awareness and acceptance can be fostered. Although traveling or living abroad far from personal comfort zones can require a great degree of personal sacrifice from the comforts of home, it can also make the traveler more accepting of others. When travelers go abroad for

pragmatic reasons, the experience can be beneficial and rewarding. Stier, for example, comments on the advantages of university students studying abroad. He indicates that the business sector and the growth and stability of economies could benefit greatly from the knowledge and intercultural competencies that a person gleans from going abroad (Stier 2003: 83, 88; 2006: 2-4).

But not every experience abroad is a positive one. Some travelers return home with more misconceptions than what they may have left with, thus having an adverse effect. There are any number of reasons why this may occur: sickness, personal theft, difficulty with a new language, feelings of isolation, trouble with adjusting to new surroundings and practices, and so on. Most instances like these could be attributed to the fact that people simply have a hard time accepting that which they do not understand. A study conducted by Michael Paige and Gerald Fry of the University of Minnesota's Study Abroad for Global Engagement project (SAGE) surveyed roughly 6,400 graduates from 22 colleges from the last five decades showed that both long and short term study abroad experiences resulted in students being globally engaged (Fischer 2009; Maus 2009). While the study also concluded that the quality of the study abroad program contributed a great deal to the positive outcome of a student's abroad experience, the real determinant was the student's behavior and conduct throughout the experience: if they had a handful of minor negative experiences or meet a few people they didn't get along with very well, was the experience abroad a bad one? Are all people from the host country harsh and hard to get along with? While the answer is an obvious "no," people sometimes think otherwise. They come home with resentful feelings and attitudes, and pass their opinions on to others back home, providing one more reason why accurate and

worthwhile cross-cultural news coverage from the media is so important if positive

intercultural relations are to be promoted.

<p align="center">Chapter Conclusion</p>

In this chapter we defined mass media and public opinion, and we have also

examined various theories about the relationship between the two. More specifically, we

have discussed some of the ways that mass media can have on the political and social

realms of everyday life. We have taken note that the different facets of mass media can

be seen hard at work in the entertainment and advertising industries, in the business

sector, and even in religion. As discussed in this chapter, when people either have access

to only those media sources that are from their home countries, or only seek out those

sources that support their opinions, they become culturally inbred. Thus, stereotypes and

misconceptions spread not only through initial impressions that the media leaves on

people, but also through consequential ideologies and opinions that people form and

redistribute as a result of their interactions with one another. As suggested earlier in the

chapter, one possible way for people to break down these stereotypes altogether, is by

taking advantage of meaningful and productive opportunities in other countries that could

expose them to new cultures and ideas. Doing so increases the likelihood of intercultural

tolerance and understanding, and better relationships in the future.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The findings represented in this survey are the culmination of the opinions and

ideas from 447 university students from over fifty countries. The countries have been

organized into 5 "world regions": Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Asia, Latin

America, and the United States. In this chapter, I explain the purpose for including each

survey question, the methods used to obtain the data, and present the questions asked, so

readers may discern the strengths of the research, as well as its limitation.

Study Design

The data presented were obtained from online and in-person surveys of university

students. University students were targeted as survey participants primarily for two

reasons: (1) easy access to a diversity of students from across the US and around the

world, and (2) to focus on a specific population group whose surroundings would

facilitate the blending of cultures and encourage the mixing of ideas. While exclusively

using university students as research participants does not mean that their responses

represent their native population groups as a whole, their responses do offer a reasonable

base from which to draw conclusions to the thesis questions.

Several survey methods were used to gather the data for this study. Paper and online surveys were distributed to university students in the United States, Costa Rica and Mexico. The surveys were approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board prior to distribution. Students from the following universities participated:

- **Avila University** in Kansas City, MO (online survey)
- **Northeastern University** in Boston, MA (online survey)
- **Oklahoma State University** in Stillwater, OK (online survey)
- **Point Park University** in Pittsburgh, PA (online survey)
- **Universidad de las Américas** in Puebla, México (online survey)
- **University of Arizona** in Tucson, AZ (online survey)
- **Universidad de Costa Rica** in San José (paper survey)
- **Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla** in Puebla, México (online survey)

The surveys were entirely voluntary and anonymous. The main objective when recruiting participants was to have as culturally a diverse sample pool as possible. In order to achieve this, I randomly selected universities from different parts of the U.S., and selected 3 universities at which I had contacts (Oklahoma State University, University of Arizona and Point Park University). Universities were selected at random from a comprehensive list compiled by the University of Texas—Austin (www.utexas.edu/world/univ/state). I then randomly selected and contacted faculty members via email and explained to them the purpose for my contacting them and the purpose of survey. Those that agreed to help then contacted their students and asked for their voluntary participation.

Because of the large number of students surveyed, www.SurveyMonkey.com was used to manage respondents' responses, maintain their anonymity, and facilitate easy response collection. Those students who chose to participate accessed the survey via a

link created by SurveyMonkey.com that was emailed to them.

Other students were recruited through The Office of International Students and Scholars (ISS), the office at Oklahoma State University that serves the OSU international student population. Students are contacted on a weekly basis via the ISS listserv for updates and announcements. The current manager of the ISS Office, Mr. Timothy Huff assisted in distributing the survey to those students who were part of the listserv during the 2008-2009 academic year. The Study Abroad and National Student Exchange Office at Oklahoma State University also was instrumental in contacting students who might have been interested in participating in the survey.

Another group of students recruited for this survey was from Costa Rica. From May to June of 2008, I went to San Jose, Costa Rica to take classes and conduct research. I distributed a paper version of the survey to students with the help of two professors at the Universidad de Costa Rica. The number of Costa Rican respondents is notably higher than the other universities because the classes surveyed primarily had Costa Rican students (with the exception of 1 Guatemalan and 11 American students). The original paper survey consisted of 16 questions, whereas the online survey consisted of 22 (to see the paper-based questions, refer to the Appendices). The reason for the additional questions in the online survey was analyses of the Costa Rican survey demonstrated the need to ask more direct and detailed questions. The Costa Rican survey results were still used in the overall survey analyses, with obvious differences taken into consideration. These paper-based surveys were entered into SurveyMonkey.com by the investigator, who also translated the responses into English (see attached vita at the end of this thesis for investigator's translation/interpretation qualifications). Because some of the

questions in the two surveys were different, the paper survey questions were interpreted

and adapted to correspond with the online survey questions so that they could be included

in the overall results. For example, paper survey question #12 asked how the media

influenced the participants' feelings towards the *United States*, in particular. Similarly,

question #14 asked if there were any other issues that the U.S. was currently involved

with at the time that they wanted to comment about. Question #12 of the paper survey

was equated with questions #14 and #17 of the online survey, and paper survey question

#14 was reviewed by itself.

The survey response numbers for each university are as follows:

Avila University	13
Northeastern University	9
Oklahoma State University	290
Point Park University	9
Universidad de las Américas	2
University of Arizona	17
Universidad de Costa Rica	100
Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla	5

Because the theme of this thesis is how different forms of media influence how

people think of other countries politically and socially, respondents were asked opinion-

based questions, like their opinions about the War in Iraq. This issue, in particular, was

chosen primarily because of its international attention and because it was assumed that

everyone, everywhere, has had some media exposure to the conflict.

Survey Design

Because a diverse pool of respondents was desired, no requirements were set

except that students be enrolled in at least one university-level class. Participants' ages

ranged anywhere from 16 to 61, and years attending a university ranged from less than one year to more than four years. The online survey consisted of 22 questions with instructions on the first page, and was available in English and Spanish (see Appendices). For a survey to be included in the final results, respondents had to respond to at least 13 of the 22 questions (primarily because the bulk of the thesis topic was addressed in questions #8-#22). The first 6 questions of the survey pertained to specific demographic information (participants' age, sex, years of college attended, field of study, extracurricular activities and country of citizenship). The next set of questions dealt with what forms of media the participants used, how often they used them and what types of news items interested them. The remaining questions asked students to express their opinions about the relationship between the media and public opinion, and how they felt their living/studying abroad experiences have influenced their opinions about other countries.

The presentation and comparison of the survey results is divided into four world regions (Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Asia and Latin America), with the United States as a fifth comparison region. The purpose in doing so is to group countries that are similar geographically and politically and to compare their survey results with those of American students. Per the survey results, the world regions are comprised of these countries:

EUROPE: France, Germany, England/United Kingdom/Great Britain, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine

ASIA: China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Vietnam

LATIN AMERICA: Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haití, Honduras, México, Nicaragua and Venezuela

AFRICA AND
THE MIDDLE EAST: Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Kenya,
Mozambique, Nigeria, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South
Africa and Uganda

Survey responses were not altered in any way that would affect the respondents'

answers, except to correct grammatical and punctuation errors. Also, some country name

corrections were made for clarification and to facilitate tabulation purposes (e.g.,

"Korean" was changed to "South Korean").

The survey responses that were given in Spanish were translated into English by

the investigator. The numbering assigned to each response was assigned automatically

by SurveyMonkey.com. Some survey questions offered a choice from which participants

selected, while more than half of the survey questions were open-ended. The "open-

ended" responses interpreted, by the investigator, according to what the question asked.

Chapter IV

SURVEY

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the original paper survey was comprised of 16 questions, 7 of which were close-ended, and 9 were open-ended. The online survey consisted of 22 questions in all. Nine questions were close-ended questions, 12 were open-ended, and 1 question that was both open- and close-ended. The reason for the additional questions in the online survey was analyses of the Costa Rican survey demonstrated the need to ask more direct and detailed questions.

Although the survey directions stressed that it would be beneficial to the investigator if every question was answered, not all participants answered every question entirely (perhaps because of lack of time, interest, or ability to understand what was being asked).

In this chapter, I will explain and discuss the results of those responses that were kept.

Survey Questions and Explanations

To better understand the survey responses and observations, each survey question

will be briefly explained in greater detail.

QUESTION #1:   **"I am male/female."**
QUESTION #2:   **"My age is (for example, 21) or "prefer not to answer:"**

As the most basic, yet key, demographic questions, these were asked in order to

ascertain if these demographic factors affected how participants responded to the

opinion-based questions. Question #2 asked students to list their ages, which were then

categorized into age-ranges by the investigator.

QUESTION #3:   **"How many years have you been attending college?**

        A.   **less than 1 year**
        B.   **1-2 years**
        C.   **3-4 years**
        D.   **more than 4 years"**

QUESTION #4:   **"Please specify your field of study (i.e., History, Political Science) AND the degree type (for example, B.A., Masters, etc.):"**

QUESTION #5:   **"Do you participate in activities outside of school? Please select all that apply:**

        A.   **'I have a full or part-time job'**
        B.   **'I am involved with a local or sports team'**
        C.   **'I am involved with an organization (for example, through my community or church)'**
        D.   **'Other' (please specify:)"**

These questions were included in the survey to address the fact that the people we

associate with and the various social networks we participate in can influence the way we think and consequently, the way we perceive others. Question #3, in particular, was included to gauge how long a person has been attending a college/university because universities, and similar settings, can be quite significant in forming peoples' political opinions and social stances (Micheletti and Stoelle 466-472). The answer choices were given under the *general* assumption that a bachelor's degree takes 4 years to pursue, and any time beyond that is being spent in pursuit of an advanced degree ("advanced degree" meaning anything beyond an associates or bachelors degree). That is, however, just a general rule and not wholly applicable to every situation. The areas of study given in answer to question #4 were sorted between "hard" and "soft" sciences (for example, Political Science and Business were considered soft science fields, and nutrition and physics were considered hard).

Additionally, the amount of time a person has to get the news can be somewhat dependent on the amount of *free* time they have, thus another reason why these three questions were asked.

QUESTION #6:   **"I am a CITIZEN of:**

        A.   **The United States**
        B.   **Other**
        (If not the US, please specify your country:)"

Students were asked to specify their country of citizenship, after which the investigator categorized their responses into world regions, based on similar geographic and political characteristics. These characteristics were determined with the use of the CIA World Factbook, available through the CIA homepage at www.cia.gov. The world

regions, along with the United States as a comparison region, are: Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America.

QUESTION #7: **"What forms of media do you use to get the news? Please select all that apply:**

> **A.**   **the Internet**
> **B.**   **the newspaper**
> **C.**   **the radio**
> **D.**   **news-related magazines**
> **E.**   **television**
> **F.**   **none of the above**
> **G.**   **'other' (please specify)"**

QUESTION #8: **"Please list the names of the newspapers, websites, and TV stations and programs you use as your news source(s):"**

QUESTION #9: **"Do you ever use news and media sources that are not of your home country, but other another country? If so, please list them:"**

These questions were included in the survey as indicator questions: the types of media (TV, radio, etc.) and the sources themselves (CNN, FOX, etc.) that people use are often determining factors in how they think politically and socially, since the media itself can be politically and socially slanted. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, Bruck (1992) discusses how different forms of media, specifically those that are not very reliable or credible sources of news, are very influential and highly sought after. In addition, it could be argued that the larger and more prominent the news source, the greater impact it will have on its audience. Similarly, certain media sources and programs are automatically equated with particular countries (like the BBC is to Great Britain, and FOX and CNN are to the United States), and therefore with specific political and social positions. This is an interesting point to consider when remembering that many large and

popular news sources have auxiliary stations or programs in other countries. While some

Latin American people may think, for example, that one of the main news sources,

Telemundo, is operated and presented by Latin American people, it is actually a

subsidiary of NBC Universal (a North America-based company)[2]. Thus, people are often

mistaken when they think that their news source choices is independent of any influence

from the Western World.

The first six answer choices in question #7 were provided under the assumption

that they are generally the most commonly used forms of media and sources of

information, versus other possible ones previously mentioned. Students were asked to

"select all [options] that apply," and so corresponding calculations may not equal 100%

for each answer choice. Questions #8 and #9 were asked to get a better understanding of

the actual news sources people use. Both were "open ended" questions, and students

were asked to list the source(s) they use the most. In the results section, readers will see

that only major news sources are listed for. Responses to question #9 were not

incorporated into a table, but were taken into account when conclusions were made.

QUESTION #10:   **"How many hours a day do you spend getting the news?**

         A.   **Less than an hour**
         B.   **1-2 hours**
         C.   **2-3 hours**
         D.   **more than three hours"**

This question was included to see how much time per day participants spent using

the media. People may spend very little time informing themselves with reliable

resources, or care little about staying up to date on important current events, yet they

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[2] Refer to www.nbcuni.com.

express resolute and strong opinions when asked about sensitive topics (like the U.S.'

involvement with the war in Iraq, for example; see survey question #15).

QUESTION #11: **"Are you interested in LOCAL, NATIONAL, or INTERNATIONAL politics, government or foreign affairs? Please list all that apply:"**

QUESTION #12: **"In the space provided, please list any other topics in the news that are of interest to you (FOR EXAMPLE, international business, health, etc.):"**

These questions were asked to learn what topics participants gravitate towards

when they use the media. Partly related to question #10, these two questions focus on

how the participants use their media-usage time. One assumption might be that the more

time a person spends using the media and news sources, the more informed they are, the

more they understand about current issues, and the more their time has been put to use.

An opposing assumption to this would be the more time a person spends using the media,

the more formed their opinions become to one side of an issue, and the more predisposed

they are.

Question #11 (like other subsequent survey questions) was organized on a

"marker" system to organize the responses for the classification purposes of the

investigator. They are as follows: L=local news, N=national, I=international, and

O=none. By "national" news, it was implied that these were from the home country of

the participants. "Local" news was interpreted the same as "national," but also those

local news items that pertained to the current U.S. locale where participants were living at

the time the survey was taken, if they were in the United States (such as a student from

Paris studying in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania).

QUESTION #13:   **"Do you feel that the news and media influence how you think of other people and other countries?**

        A.   **strongly agree**
        B.   **agree**
        C.   **disagree**
        D.   **strongly disagree**
        E.   **'no opinion/doesn't apply to me'"**

QUESTION #14:   **"How do you think different forms of media do or do not influence the way you think of other people from other countries, either in a positive or negative way? Please explain:"**

These two questions asked the participants to, first, state whether they felt the media influenced the way they perceived people from different countries, and to, second, to provide an explanation for their answer. Because the media can be a determinant of peoples' social and political perceptions of others, these questions were included to better understand the participants' opinions on the subject. Question #13 provided a list of answer choices for respondents to pick from, and question #14 asked them to explain. Since question #14 is short-answer type, the responses were graded on a "marker" scale of "negative, positive, neutral/indifferent" or "both." Some respondents did not entirely answer the question, and so they were clumped with the "skipped" total for the question. Some answers implied that the media could be influential either way depending on the way the media is presenting the issue and the way a person interprets it. Responses similar to this were labeled as "both," indicating that the media's influence can be either negative or positive, depending on the media's presentation of the issue, and the interpretation by its audience.

It is important to note here that all of the responses to question #14 (as with **all** of

the other opinion-based survey questions) were read carefully and numerous times so that

an honest and accurate decision could be made as to which category the responses fell

under. Also, many of the question # 14 responses seem to reflect the participants'

opinions about how the media influences *other* people, and not themselves (see

discussion on Davidson's "third-person effect"). These responses could be due in part,

however, to not carefully reading or understanding the question, and noting that it asked

how the media influences how *they* perceive people of other countries, and not wholly on

the third-person effect.

To illustrate how responses for question #14 were marked, consider the following

examples, taken from the survey results:

POSITIVE: Positive way for sure. I am more aware of what is happening around me and this will help me in my interactions with others.

NEGATIVE: Mostly in negative way. The reason is that so many bad things happen in a day that news is always full of bad news, rather than good news. In fact, if there is a good news somewhere, news agencies don't really care, so basically we can say that news is almost always bad news! Now when you hear bad things about somewhere, you either pity them, or simply ignore them. I guess both are somehow negative feelings.

BOTH: I believe it influences us in both positive and negative ways. By reporting the stories they choose too, they can manipulate how we view certain countries, cultures, and people.

NEUTRAL: Certain media is biased one way or the other and I believe that I can make up my own mind about my own beliefs.

QUESTION #15:   **"Do you agree with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq?**

        A.)   **I strongly agree**
        B.)   **I agree**
        C.)   **I disagree**
        D.)   **I strongly disagree**
        E.)   **I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me"**

QUESTION #16: **"Are there any other issues (national or international) that the United States is involved with that you would like to comment about? Please explain in the space provided:"**

As suggested earlier in the literature review, all countries and cultures are subject to the observations and assessments of others as portrayed through the media (Wanta, Golan and Lee 369, 375; Ferguson, Horan and Ferguson 158; Zaharopoulos 283-291). Question #15 was asked primarily because everyone knows about and has an opinion about America's in the War in Iraq, regardless of where they are from or what forms of media they use. It has been such a changeable and ongoing issue that it has drawn a great deal of mixed international attention. As with the previous question #13, question #15 included answer choices, but also asked the participants to offer an additional explanation for their choice.

Because each of the world regions' responses is compared against the responses from the United States, question #16 was asked to form a better understanding about how foreigners (as well as U.S. citizens) feel about America's role in other issues that are of international concern.

QUESTION #17: **"Do you think that the media addresses and presents information to the public correctly and fairly, or is somehow biased? Please explain your opinion:"**

Although this question resembles questions #13 and #14, this question was included to specifically ascertain how the participants feel about the way the media presents information to the general public, an not necessarily themselves. Moreover, this question is of interest because people sometimes think that others around them think as

they do (Ross 1977), or that the media persuades other people and that they themselves are somehow immune to its influences (Davidson 1983).

Question #17, responses were assigned a marker and placed into categories: B=biased, U=unbiased, T=both, and R=neutral/indifferent. A number of the respondents that said they believe that bias in the media cannot be helped, since it is difficult to present news from a totally unbiased standpoint. Regardless, these responses were assigned a "biased" marker (because the respondents also explicitly said "biased").

To better understand how question #17 responses were marked, consider the following examples taken from the survey:

BIASED: Media is and will be biased. In the US, the media usually supports the US position in the world affairs though sometimes it is not correct. The US media outlets should transmit world news too. In that way, Americans might be able to shape their opinions based on variety of sources.

NUETRAL: I think every source has its own bias depending on geography and what the people who view the source want to hear.

QUESTION #18:   **"Have you ever known any citizens from other countries? If so, how many (roughly), from which countries, and how well did you know them? Has knowing them influenced how you view their countries (either in a positive or negative way)? Please explain:"**

QUESTION #19:   **"Have you ever TRAVELED outside of your home country before? If so, what other countries have you been to, for how long, and what was your reason for traveling?"**

QUESTION #20:   **"Have you ever LIVED outside of your home country? If so, where have you lived, and for how long?"**

While these three questions might seem simple, broad or obvious in nature, they were included in the survey in order to determine any relationship between peoples' experiences abroad and their perceptions of other countries. In the literature review it

was discussed how experiences from traveling and living abroad can expose people to different cultures and new ways of viewing the world, and can even encourage intercultural tolerance. With this foundation, a person may (or may not) be more inclined to be more accepting of others, despite the media's influences.

These survey questions were all opinion based, and while *specific* or *exact* numbers and places were not tabulated, a general idea of both numbers and places in the responses were observed in order to categorize and draw general conclusions. Responses to question #18 were assigned a "Y" for "yes" or "O" for "no", according to the answers given. Specific markers were also assigned according to the explanations given to the other parts of the survey question (P=positive, N=negative, B=both, R=neutral/indifferent and those responses that did not sufficiently answer the question were clumped with the "skipped" number).

Students were allowed to list more than one reason for their travels in question #19. Responses were given either a "Y" for "yes", or "O" for" no", based upon their travel experience. They, too, were assigned markers (W=work/business-related reasons for traveling abroad, S=study/educational- related reasons for traveling abroad, V=recreation/tourism-related reasons for traveling abroad) according to the reasons the participants gave for traveling; each response to this question could have more than one marker. Those responses that gave no specification for travel reasons were not assigned a marker. Some respondents indicated their abroad experiences were "mission trips," presumably through their churches. These were grouped with the "business" (W) category. Question #19 in the paper survey did not specifically ask respondents to specify their travel purpose(s). However, some people did specify, and so all answers,

from the online and paper surveys, were factored into the final numbers for this question.

Lastly, question #20 consisted of "Y/O" assignations, and the indicated amount of time a person lived in another area was also taken into consideration.

It should also be noted here that the assumption is that all of the respondents were in the United States at the time they took the survey (with the exception of a handful of Latin American students), since the universities recruited to participate are all in the United States. However, some students said that they had never traveled or lived outside of their home country, nor know anyone not of their own country. Although not explicitly stated in any of the survey responses (with the exception of one), these answers might be due to the fact that some non-U.S. participants are studying under a distance learning-type program (taking classes from an American university while living in their home country).

Question #21, which asked "Please specify the university or college you are currently attending" was asked for the purpose of tracking which universities/colleges the participants were studying at, and did not play a significant part in answering the thesis questions.

QUESTION #22: **"Which of the following best describes you politically?**

        A.) **Extremely conservative**
        B.) **Conservative**
        C.) **Moderate**
        D.) **Liberal Extremely liberal**
        E.) **None of the above/other**
            If "other," please specify:"

This question was included to see how the participants classify themselves politically. Definitions for the above terms were not provided for the participants to refer

to because ideally they would have defined themselves with minimal outside influence

from the investigator. Some participants, however, did say that they did not understand

the above terms, and could therefore make no decision based upon the information

provided; this occurred mostly with the Asian respondents (as will be discussed later).

Chapter V

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss the combined results of the paper and online surveys. First, an overview of the participants will be discussed, followed by a review of the first six survey questions that deal with basic demographics. The remainder of the survey questions will be reviewed and discussed, by world region, as they pertain to the thesis questions (as outlined on page 7). We will conclude by reviewing key outcomes and comparing them across the different world regions to determine if people from different world regions tend to think similarly in regards to the media's influences on society's political and social perceptions, and the effects that experiences abroad can have on undoing some of the stereotypes that the media creates.

For organizational purposes, this chapter has been arranged in the following way:

I.   Overview of Demographics of the Surveyed World Regions

II.   Discussions of the Thesis and Survey Questions
        A. Explanation of Thesis Question I (questions II, III, IV to follow the
            subsequent pattern)

Thesis questions results, as they pertain to each world region

1. (beginning with Europe and continuing with Africa and the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and the United States)

    i. Results from corresponding survey questions
    ii. Trends and correlations
    iii. Conclusions

III.   Comparisons and Conclusions

Survey Results

I.   Demographics of the Surveyed World Regions

In all, four hundred and sixty-one people participated in the online and paper surveys. There were, however, 10 people that did not specify their country of citizenship and 4 Canadians participated, but their responses were not included in the final analysis.

One hundred and twelve people from Costa Rica, Guatemala and the United States completed the paper survey. These responses were manually entered into the online format, totaling 447 survey responses in all. As mentioned earlier, because the paper survey had fewer questions than the online version, modifications and special considerations were made in terms of the final numbers.

Setting the United States aside, Latin America yielded the highest number of responses, and Europe had the least representation (see Figure 1 below). Mexico, India, China, Costa Rica and Ethiopia were the countries with the highest representation.
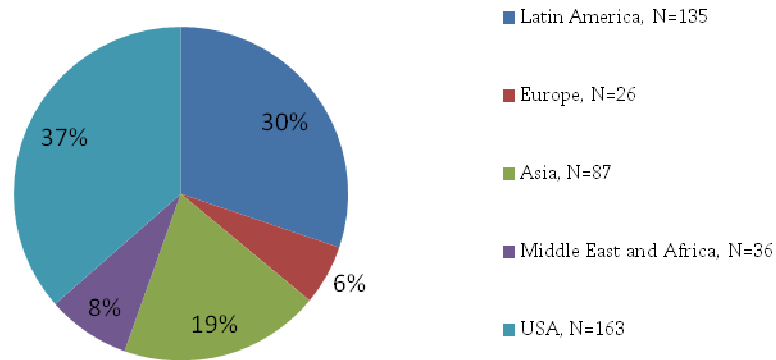
Figure 1

Table 1.1 shows the male/female breakdown for each world region and the United States. Overall, more women participated in the survey than men, although this occurred primarily in the United States and Latin America. The other regions were over-represented by men (with the exception of Europe; its male/female ratio was equally divided). Several factors might explain this: (1) the emphasis and availability of higher education in some parts if the world may still be something that is offered to men more than women; and/or (2) more of one sex received the link for the online survey and chose to participate (as may have been the case with the United States).

Europeans accounted for 6% of the surveyed population, and the male—female ratio was evenly split. Students from Africa and Middle Easter made up 8% of the total survey respondents (refer to Figure 1), and the majority of them were male (see Table

1.1). One reason for this may be that opportunities for higher education may still only be available to men, due to societal norms and cultural beliefs that restrict more women from having such opportunities. Asian participants made up roughly 19% of the overall surveyed population (refer to Figure 1 on the previous page) and slightly more than half of them were male.

Americans and Latin Americans made up 37% and 30% of the surveyed respondents, respectively; women outnumbered men in both regions.

Table 1.1: Sex of Respondents by World Region

Question #1	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL% of responses
Male	38	29	47	13	52	179	40%
Female	97	7	39	13	110	266	60%
TOTAL	135	36	86	26	162	455	100%
Skipped	0	0	1	0	1	2	(99.6% response rate)

The average age range of respondents was between 20-23 years old. This average was carried, however, mostly by the United States, Latin American and Europe (refer to Table 1.2). The "Africa and the Middle East" and "Asia" world regions' average ages were between 24-26 and 30-33 years old. One possible explanation for this difference could be that people from the latter two world regions are currently in the United States pursuing graduate studies.

Table 1.2: "My age is…"

Question #2	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of responses
16-19	46	3	1	1	33	84	19%
20-24	40	4	26	12	92	174	40%
25-29	23	12	35	2	15	87	20%
30-34	6	10	13	8	10	47	11%
35-39	4	1	8	2	2	17	4%
40-44	5	2	2	1	4	14	3%

45-49	6	1	0	0	2	9	2%
50-54	3	0	0	0	1	4	1%
55-59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
60+	1	0	0	0	0	1	0%
TOTAL	134	33	85	26	159	437	100%
Skipped	1	3	2	0	4	10	(97.8% response rate)

Table 1.3 indicates the majority of the participants (35%) were in their fourth year

of study, or beyond. This is consistent across world regions, with the exception of the

United States, where the majority of the participants (26%) are in their first or second

year. Table 1.4 shows that most people were pursuing a degree in a social sciences

discipline (such as Journalism, English, and International Business, to name a few), with

the exception of the Asian and Middle Eastern world regions. Academic disciplines have

the effect of mixing people with different types of backgrounds, but they can also restrict

it; generally, the more specialized and advanced a person's academic career becomes, the

more they are constricted to associate with peers with the same academic endeavors.

Table 1.3: "How many years have you been attending college?"

Question #3	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	Total % of question responses
<1 yr.	34	9	12	2	20	77	17%
1-2 yrs.	27	8	21	3	42	101	23%
3-4 yrs.	27	2	19	6	61	115	26%
4> yrs.	45	17	34	15	40	151	34%
TOTAL	133	36	86	26	163	444	100%
Skipped	2	0	1	0	0	3	(99.3% response rate)

Table 1.4: "Please specify your field of study (i.e., History, Political Science) AND
degree type (for example, B.A., Masters, etc.)"

Question #4	Latin	Africa/	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of

	America	Middle East					responses
Social Sciences	104	12	33	14	109	272	62%
Hard Sciences	19	21	45	11	43	139	32%
Both	6	0	0	0	6	12	3%
Major Field of Study Unspecified	2	3	7	0	4	16	4%
TOTAL	131	36	85	25	162	439	100%
Skipped	4	0	2	1	1	8	(98.2% response rate)

Most of the respondents indicated they "have a full- or part-time job" and/or were "involved with an organization" through their community, church, etc. (refer to Table 1.5). Both of these categories involve a great deal of interaction with people, thus fostering a mixture and exchange of ideas and opinions. The question results show that the participants interacted with a mixture of people from different social networks. Many, in turn, considered these social networks and interactions as sources of information (this point will be covered in more detail in discussions about survey question #7).

Table 1.5: "Do you participate in activities outside of school?"

Question #5	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of indications
A. "I have a full or part time job"	53	15	37	14	108	227	44%
B. "I am involved with a local or school sports team"	20	1	2	5	21	49	9%
C. "I am involved with an organization (for example, through my community or church)"	35	13	35	8	93	184	35%
D. "Other"	15	4	11	5	26	61	12%
TOTAL # of indications	123	33	85	32	248	521	100%
TOTAL # of *people* that responded to question	93	30	73	24	158	378	n/a
Skipped or said "no"	42	6	14	2	5	69	(85% response

							rate)

The remainder of the survey questions (#7-#22) will be reviewed in the following

sections.

II.   Discussions of the Thesis and Survey Questions

A.   **THESIS QUESTION I:**   *How does mass media influence how people think politically and socially about other countries? How frequently do people use various media sources, and what are the main media sources that people seek out?*

The media can influence its audiences in ways that can affect how people of

different countries and backgrounds perceive and interact with one another. This, in

return, can largely impact political and social relationships between nations, because of

the stereotypes and biases the media invokes. Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14 and 17 from

the survey will be used to answer this thesis question.

1.   Thesis Question Results

    i.   Results from Corresponding Survey Questions

<u>Survey Question #7</u>
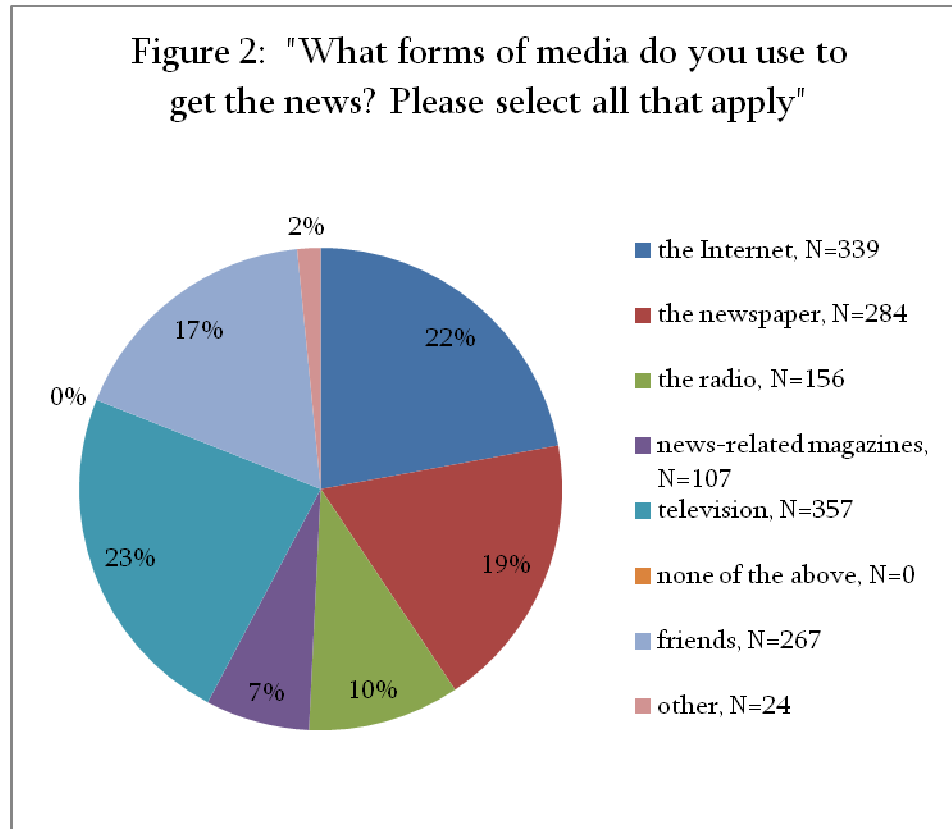
Figure 2

All of the **European** participants said they primarily used the Internet, but the newspaper, television, and friends were also popularly used forms of media (as reflected in Figure 2 above; a breakdown of all forms of media used per world region can be found in Table 5.1 in the Appendices). All of the **African and Middle Eastern** respondents answered the question. Of these, all indicated they used the Internet, 89% used the television, 64% used newspapers and 75% chose their friends as information sources. The least used forms of media by this region were the radio (19%) and news-related magazines (28%). All of the **Asian** and **American** participants indicated the Internet was their preferred media source, and most said they used the TV, newspapers, and friends, as well.

Unlike the previous world regions, **Latin American** participants used the

television more than any other form of media (more specifically, the Internet). The

Internet was still used by a large majority (71%), as were newspapers (71%) and friends

(47%). One possible explanation for the high TV usage by this world region is that

almost all of the other foreign students took the survey while in the United States, where

Internet access is readily available and relatively inexpensive. Internet rates are still very

costly in some parts of the world (like Costa Rica), as are reliable computers. The

Internet may not be a widely accessible or practical media source in Latin American, and

other parts of the world, where that might also be the case.

Survey Questions #8 and #9

Table 2.1: "Please list the names of the newspapers, websites, and TV stations and
programs you use as your news source(s)"

Question #8	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of indications
BBC	1	17	16	8	24	66	13%
CNN	20	28	53	12	93	206	41%
NPR	1	1	6	3	23	34	7%
FOX	6	7	13	1	38	65	13%
CBS	1	0	2	0	9	12	2%
NBC	3	9	15	2	54	83	16%
ABC	3	3	7	0	27	40	8%
TOTAL	35	65	112	26	268	506	100%
Skipped	n/a	1	2	0	12	15	(97% response rate)

All of the **European** participants responded to the above questions, and most said

they used CNN and the BBC as primary news sources (see Table 2.1). Similar to the

Europeans, most of the **African and Middle Eastern** participants said they used the

BBC and CNN. It should be noted that a sizeable number did not limit themselves to

mainstream media sources, but also used local resources, like their school's newspaper. The concern here is the quality of the source. Discrediting these small papers is not the objective here, however. These papers' access to complete information from all sides of a story can be very skewed. Likewise, because of the environment they stem from (the university setting), their young writers may be prone to voicing strong and overly-biased opinions, or not enough. Then again, that practice is not entirely different from what often occurs in larger and more popular mass media sources.

The **Asian** respondents followed suit of the previous two regions, and most said they used CNN and the BBC as their primary news sources. A considerable number also used NBC and FOX and their affiliates, and their school paper (refer to Table 2.1). Yahoo! and Google were also very popular sources, both of which would not restrict the students to just local and national U.S. news and current events.

Questions #8 and #9 were not part of the paper survey distributed in Costa Rica, therefore, only the online responses will be discussed. Nevertheless, most of the other 35 **Latin American** participants said they preferred using CNN and Yahoo!, and Latin America-based sources, like Telemundo and Univisión (Telemundo is owned by NBC Universal, and Univisión is based out of the United States).

About 93% of the **Americans** used CNN and news-related magazines (such as the Economist and the New York Times) as their foremost preferred types of news sources. Because NBC, ABC and FOX are American-based and more popular, they were also the Americans' preferred sources, and not the BBC, as was the case with the other world regions.

Table 2.2: "How many hours a day do you spend getting the news?"

Question #10	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of responses
less than one hour	51	9	43	15	91	209	47%
1-2 hours	68	19	34	10	55	186	42%
2-3 hours	10	5	7	0	14	36	8%
more than three hours	4	2	2	1	2	11	2%
TOTAL	133	35	86	26	162	442	100%
Skipped	2	1	1	0	1	5	(98.9% response rate)

As discussed in the literature review, the time a person spends consuming news can have a bearing on how well informed he or she is of other cultures and issues outside (and inside) of his or her own country.

Overall, the majority of the respondents from all world regions spent no more than an hour getting the news. Most of the participating **Europeans** and **African and Europeans** spent 2 hours or less a day getting the news. All but one **Asian** responded to the question, and most spent less than an hour a day; only about 10% spent 2 or more hours. Almost all of the **Latin American** participants responded, and most (about 89%) said they spent two hours or less a day getting the news. Of those, 51% spent between 1 and 2 hours a day. Similarly, all but two of the **Americans** responded to the question (~99%). More than half (56%) spent less than an hour, and 34% said between 1 and 2 hours.

Survey Questions #13 and #14

Table 2.3: "Do you feel that the news and media influence how you think of other people and other countries?"

Question #13	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of responses
Strongly agree	28	12	25	11	38	114	26%
Agree	75	16	39	10	94	234	53%
Disagree	22	3	13	4	22	64	14%
Strongly agree	2	0	2	1	5	10	2%
No opinion/ Doesn't apply to me	7	5	6	0	4	22	5%
TOTAL	134	36	85	26	163	444	100%
Skipped	1	0	2	0	0	3	(99.3% response rate)

Table 2.4: "How do you think different forms of media do or do not influence the way you think of other people from other countries, either in a positive or negative way?"

Question #14	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	% of total question responses
Negative	43	6	12	8	49	118	32%
Positive	9	3	5	1	3	21	6%
Neutral/ Indifferent	36	10	21	6	29	102	27%
Both	38	7	26	7	50	128	35%
TOTAL	126	26	64	22	131	369	100%
Skipped or N/A	9	10	23	4	32	78	(82.6% response rate)

Most of the **European** (81%) participants either "strongly agree" or "agree" that

the media influenced opinions about people from other countries, while 19% said they

"disagree" or "strongly disagree." Eighty-five percent of the **Europeans** also responded

to question #14, and 36% of them commented that the media negatively influenced how

they thought of other countries, while another 36% agreed that it influenced them in both

a positive and negative way. Some of the Europeans reflected similar sentiments as the

comments below:

NEGATIVE: I believe a GOOD newspaper, or a GOOD news channel can convey a
reality-based but non-stereotypical message about other people. Problem

is there are very few of those sources.

NEUTRAL: Certain media is biased one way or the other and I believe that I can make up my own mind about my own beliefs.

BOTH: Yes, might be positive or negative way. Depends who represent news: some countries may have strong influence on what people think about foreign countries and people within it.

The majority of the **African and Middle Eastern** respondents (about 77%) "agree" or "strongly agree" the media somehow influences their opinions of other people and countries, while only 8% disagree; 15%, however, chose the "no opinion/doesn't apply to me" option. Seventy-two percent of the African and Middle Eastern students responded to opinion-based question #14 (Table 2.4). The majority said they were "neutral/indifferent" and did not clarify how the media impacted their cross-cultural perceptions. One "neutral" comment, by a student from Nigeria, stated that "you cannot judge a book by its cover. I can't judge everyone because of what I read in the news." Another participant, from Ethiopia, wisely said that "everyone has some beliefs that no one can easily change. I wouldn't change my opinions just because CNN or MSNBC tell me they are wrong." Nevertheless, 23% from the Africa and Middle East world region responded "negative," about 12% said "positive," and 27% said "both".

Ninety-seven percent of the **Asian** participants answered, and most of them either "agree" or "strongly agree" that the media influenced how they perceived foreigners (Table 2.3). Of those that answered question #13, 81% of them responded to question #14. Thirty percent reflected a "neutral/indifferent" view, but 32% noted the media had a negative effect on either their own opinions about foreigners, or how they think other people are influenced (see Table 2.4). One student from Taiwan thought the media can

be both negatively and positively influential and that "everywhere has good things and bad things". Another student, from India, pointed out that the media "selectively feeds the people with the news they want to learn. Also people tend to stick with one channel which matches with their ideology and thereby reinforcing their beliefs, which makes their thinking limited and narrow."

More than half (56%) of the **Latin American** respondents said they "agree" the media was very influential in shaping their opinions about others. Similar to the previous world regions, however, some of the respondents did not comment on how the media influenced them personally, but instead how it influences other people (consistent with Davidson, 1983). Accordingly, most of them believed the news had a negative impact on public opinions of others, and particularly towards Americans. One student from Costa Rica commented that "most of the time they [the media] influence in a negative way [towards the US] and they give an image of Americans as rich and egotistical people." Another student, from Brazil, thought that "a country may have a poor side and a rich side. If [the] TV goes there and only shows the poor side you will be thinking that's a real poor country. It's a pretty simple example, but it works in all different matters." At the same time, although many people agreed the media was influential overall, they were "neutral/indifferent" in how they thought it influenced them personally. A Mexican participant had neutral feelings about the media's influence on his personal perceptions, and said "most media sources don't really influence the way I think of other people. Media sources can sometimes be biased and are infamous for misleading and misinforming the public. Therefore, they are not a good source of information to form perceptions of others."

All 163 **Americans** answered question #13, and 81% said the media was

influential in forming their perceptions, and only 17% "disagree" or "strongly disagree"

(see Table 2.3). Additionally, most of the Americans thought the media influenced them

(and/or others) either in a negative way, or in both a positive and negative way. One

person stated she was "not really aware of what is happening in other countries, so I feel

that I may get a biased opinion from the news about what is happening, but that opinion

may be better than nothing." Similarly, another participant admitted that "I do not have a

positive view on Middle Eastern countries, because of the news. I clearly have no idea

what's going on over there. So all my ideas are based on what I hear." However, some

of the "neutral/indifferent" opinions reflected that of this person, who commented "I take

the news with a grain of salt. I take what they tell me, then do my own research and form

my own opinions." In the same vein, one person made a positive observation and

expressed:

> I see many newscasters and stations presenting negative news about a lot of
> countries, and I think surely it couldn't be that bad. Everything seems to be so
> exaggerated that I don't really believe the newscasters when it comes to foreign
> affairs. I normally read online from a lot of different sources to figure out what is
> really going on. I think the media's seeming bias kind of makes me disbelieve
> them and think better of the other countries. I think the media tends to look down
> on other countries and tries to instill a superiority complex in Americans, which is
> an absurd idea.

In all, the consensus amongst survey participants was either that (1) the media

gave negative impressions of other countries, or (2) that they were both a positive and

negative influences. Furthermore, many that responded "both" negative and positive

pointed out that the media will be influential regardless, and that the responsibility lies

with the public to correctly interpret what the media broadcasts.

Survey Question #17

Table 2.5: "Do you think the media addresses and presents information to the public correctly and fairly, or is somehow biased?"

Question #17	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL # of respondents	TOTAL% of respondents
Biased	67	25	47	14	123	276	75%
Unbiased	6	0	5	1	4	16	4%
Both	17	2	4	2	12	37	10%
Neutral/Indifferent	23	2	4	3	10	42	11%
TOTAL	113	29	60	20	149	371	100%
Skipped or N/A	22	7	27	6	14	76	(83% response rate)

"Biased" was the predominant opinion about the media amongst respondents of all the world regions (Table 2.5). Most of the foreigners directed their comments towards American media, in particular. Many felt it was biased compared to other media sources in the world. Several **European** respondents said American media, in particular, was extremely biased, incomplete, partial to American ideologies, and offered its audiences a limited spectrum from which to obtain reliable. One citizen from the United Kingdom observed that "American news is extremely biased, when compared to other news sources. Maybe it's because I've grown up listening to the BBC World Service and my parents are willing to discuss politics, but I find the way that the U.S. presents its news is more centered on sensationalism and how it 'sells'." An **African and Middle Eastern** participant from Kenya made an interesting point. He said "sometimes it's biased and ends up misreporting facts, and to some extent I think it's for commercial purposes." Another person, from **Latin America** (Mexico), thought "these media are owned by corporations, which have a strong influence on what type of news to emphasize or conceal."

What is very interesting about the **Asians'** comments is that several said the media was biased because it supports the government, or because the government controls the media. One person from China thought "every media is reflecting the government's thoughts and encouraging their nations. In this case, some news could be explained as positive for their own countries and negatively explain other countries." Another student, from India, expressed concerns about bias in the media, particularly in the United States. She said:

> Without a doubt, the media is biased. The U.S. media shows the American public only what it wants the public to see. The media does not represent the true story or pictures from around the world. They provide the American public with a very ethnocentric version of the news leaving out everything that is contradictory or not in accordance with American principles of governance. Thanks to education, things are changing and more Americans are beginning to question their government. Change is now in the offing.

These students' concerns are valid, but are not restricted to the United States alone. The media often reinforces a sense of nationalism within any country, promoting national identity and superiority, especially in times of prosperity. However, some of the American participants shared similar sentiments as the previous world regions. One young woman studying in Costa Rica admitted "I think the media portrays the U.S. negatively. Good news never comes out. It makes me embarrassed to be American when I'm out of the country." Another American in Costa Rica explained that "while I've been living here I hear lots of opinions about the United States, but I think people that have been to the U.S. understand better the differences between the people and the government."

Almost all of the foreign respondents felt the media was biased, and most of their comments were directed at American media. Their opinions against American

media, in all likelihood, stem from the fact that American media was readily accessible; American-based CNN, by way of television, was the highest-used media source amongst all of the world regions. Other sources (like local TV and radio stations, news-based magazines) were used by all regions, especially Internet sources. Regardless of the source and the method, however, the majority of the survey respondents only spent less than an hour a day getting the news.

ii.   TRENDS AND CORRELATIONS

SURVEY QUESTIONS #7 AND #10

Question #7 ("What forms of media do you use to get he news?") and question #10 ("How many hours a day do you spend a day getting the news?") were cross-tabulated for the purpose of observing any relationship between the amount of time respondents put into informing themselves versus their preferred method(s). Without a doubt, major and minor news outlets alike overexert themselves to get their information and ideas out by the quickest methods possible for their audiences. For many people, the most time spent getting the news about current events in around our communities is done on the Internet between classes, or when they catch a few minutes of the evening report on TV between dinner with the family and getting ready for another busy day. But how effective are "quick snippets"? For smaller, less involved events, a few minutes are all that are needed to be fully informed. But with larger issues that concern not only ourselves, but our world neighbors at large, a few minutes are not really ample enough time to be sufficiently knowledgeable. A few minutes are, however, enough time to be under-informed and more likely to form lopsided opinions. Because of the busy lives

people lead, it is expected that the results from this section will show that most of the respondents used media methods that were convenient, and for very little time per day.

To review, the **Europeans** favored the Internet, TV, newspapers and friends as their information sources, and most spent less than one hour a day getting the news (Table 2.6). Television users' (65%) time spent getting the news was fairly evenly split between "less than one hour" and "between 1-2 hours." Newspaper users (54%) spent between 1-2 hours a day getting the news. Fifty-eight percent said they spent less than an hour each day getting the news, and 67% of that group said they used "friends" as a media source.

Table 2.6: Hours spent getting the news and forms of media used—EUROPE

Questions #7 and # 10—EUROPE	A.) less than an hour	B.) 1-2 hours	C.) 2-3 hours	D.) more than three hours	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	15	10	0	1	26	100%
B.) the newspaper	4	9	0	1	14	54%
C.) the radio	2	6	0	1	9	35%
D.) news-related magazines	3	2	0	1	6	23%
E.) television	8	8	0	1	17	65%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	10	3	0	1	0	100%
H.) other	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Answered questions	15	10	0	1	26	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	0	(100% response rate)

Table 2.7 below shows the majority of the **African and Middle Eastern** participants used the media for 2 hours or less a day, and that they preferred the Internet, newspaper, TV, and friends as their information sources. Twenty-six percent of these

69

spent less than an hour a day, and favored the same sources.

Table 2.7: Hours spent getting the news and forms of media used—
AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Questions #7 and #10—AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST	A.) less than an hour	B.) 1-2 hours	C.) 2-3 hours	D.) more than three hours	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	9	19	5	2	35	100.0%
B.) the newspaper	5	12	5	1	23	66%
C.) the radio	1	4	2	0	7	20%
D.) news-related magazines	1	5	2	1	9	26%
E.) television	8	16	5	2	31	89%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	7	13	4	2	26	74%
H.) other	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Answered questions	9	19	5	2	35	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	1	(97.2% response rate)

The internet, newspaper, television, and friends were used the most by the **Asian**
respondents. Correlating trends indicate that 50% of them spent less than half an hour
each day getting the news, and 40% used media sources for about 1 to 2 two hours a day
(Table 2.8).

Table 2.8: Hours spent getting the news and forms of media used—ASIA

Questions #7 and #10—ASIA	A.) less than an hour	B.) 1-2 hours	C.) 2-3 hours	D.) more than three hours	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	43	34	7	2	86	100%
B.) the newspaper	24	14	5	1	44	51%
C.) the radio	7	8	3	0	18	21%
D.) news-related magazines	11	7	3	0	21	24%

E.) television	29	26	7	2	64	74%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	29	18	5	1	53	62%
H.) other	0	0	1	0	1	1%
Answered questions	43	34	7	2	86	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	1	(99% response rate)

As discussed in the previous section, most of the **Latin American** participants spent either 1 and 2 hours a day or less than an hour a day getting the news, and most indicated they used the television, newspapers, friends, and the Internet to do so (as Table 2.9 indicate).

Table 2.9: Hours spent getting the news and forms of media used—LATIN AMERICA

Questions #7 and #10—LATIN AMERICA	A.) less than an hour	B.) 1-2 hours	C.) 2-3 hours	D.) more than three hours	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	30	52	8	4	94	71%
B.) the newspaper	29	53	10	2	94	71%
C.) the radio	14	21	5	2	42	32%
D.) news-related magazines	7	12	2	3	24	18%
E.) television	40	63	9	4	116	87%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	29	28	4	2	63	47%
H.) other	9	4	1	0	14	11%
Answered questions	51	68	10	4	133	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	2	(98.5% response rate)

The majority of the **Americans** (56%) spent less than an hour a day getting the news, and they generally sought information via the Internet, the television, and their friends. Those people that spent between 1 and 2 hours getting the news (34%) also

indicated they preferred to use the Internet, TV and friends, as well.

Table 2.10: Hours spent getting the news and forms of media used—USA

Questions #7 and #10—USA	A.) less than an hour	B.) 1-2 hours	C.) 2-3 hours	D.) more than three hours	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	83	54	14	2	153	94%
B.) the newspaper	56	40	8	2	106	65%
C.) the radio	30	39	10	1	80	49%
D.) news-related magazines	19	19	6	2	46	28%
E.) television	66	46	10	2	124	77%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
G.) friends	63	35	9	1	108	67%
H.) other	6	3	0	0	9	6%
Answered questions	91	55	14	2	162	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	1	(99.4% response rate)

SURVEY QUESTIONS #7 AND #13

This section will investigate possible relationships between "forms of media used" (survey question #7), and how influential people think the media can be (survey question #13), because as discussed in the literature review, different forms of media can greatly influence cross-cultural perceptions. This crosstab was included to see if there were any relationships between certain media outlets people used, and how they felt about them.

As Table 2.11 indicates, those **Europeans** that mostly used popular media sources (the Internet, friends, television, and the newspaper) also indicated they either "agree" or "strongly agree" that the media influenced how they perceived other people.

Table 2.11: Forms of media used and the media's influence—EUROPE

Questions #7 and #13—EUROPE	A.) strongly agree	B.) agree	C.) disagree	D.) strongly disagree	E.) no opinion/does not apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	11	10	4	1	0	26	100%
B.) the newspaper	4	7	2	1	0	14	54%
C.) the radio	4	4	0	1	0	9	35%
D.) news-related magazines	3	2	1	0	0	6	23%
E.) television	5	8	3	1	0	17	65%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	0	7	3	0	0	14	54%
H.) other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Answered questions	11	10	4	1	0	26	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	0	(100% response rate)

Table 2.12 shows us that most of the **African and Middle Easterners** favored the

Internet, newspaper and television, and most agreed the media influenced how their

cross-cultural perceptions of others.

Table 2.12: Forms of media used and the media's influence—
AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Questions #7 and #13—AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST	A.) strongly agree	B.) agree	C.) disagree	D.) strongly disagree	E.) no opinion/does not apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	12	16	3	0	5	36	100%
B.) the newspaper	8	10	3	0	2	23	64%
C.) the radio	2	2	1	0	2	7	19%
D.) news-related magazines	2	6	0	0	2	10	28%
E.) television	10	15	3	0	4	32	89%
G.) friends	9	12	2	0	4	27	75%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
H.) other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Answered questions	12	16	3	0	5	36	100%

Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	0	(100% response rate)

Of the **Asian** participants that chose "agree" or "strongly agree" (almost 75%),

most of them used the Internet, television, friends, and newspapers to get their

information about others.

Table 2.13: Forms of media used and the media's influence—ASIA

Questions #7 and #13— ASIA	A.) strongly agree	B.) agree	C.) disagree	D.) strongly disagree	E.) no opinion/does not apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	25	39	13	2	6	85	100%
B.) the newspaper	13	23	5	0	3	44	52%
C.) the radio	5	9	3	0	1	18	21%
D.) news-related magazines	9	8	2	0	2	21	25%
E.) television	19	28	11	2	4	64	75%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	19	25	6	0	3	53	62%
H.) other	0	1	0	0	0	1	1%
Answered questions	25	39	13	2	6	85	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	2	(97.7% response rate)

The **Latin American** cross-tabbed responses indicate that most "agree" that the

media was influential in shaping their perceptions of other countries, and most of these

same respondents used the television as their primary media outlet (91%), followed by

the newspaper (72%) and the Internet (69%).

Table 2.14: Forms of media used and the media's influence—LATIN AMERICA

Questions #7 and #13— LATIN AMERICA	A.) strongly agree	B.) agree	C.) disagree	D.) strongly disagree	E.) no opinion/does not apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent

	A.)	B.)	C.)	D.)	E.)	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	20	52	18	1	4	95	71%
B.) the newspaper	20	54	16	1	4	95	71%
C.) the radio	7	27	7	1	0	42	31%
D.) news-related magazines	8	12	3	1	0	24	18%
E.) television	24	68	18	2	5	117	87%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	15	34	8	2	5	64	48%
H.) other	3	7	2	0	2	14	10%
Answered questions	28	75	22	2	7	134	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	1	(99.3 response ate)

The **Americans'** responses show the strongest correlation lies with those people that used the Internet, newspapers and friends as information sources with those that "agree" that the media influenced how they perceived other countries (see Table 2.15 below). However, the relationship between those same information sources decreased when crossed with those that "strongly agree."

Table 2.15: Forms of media used and the media's influence—USA

Questions #7 and #13—USA	A.) strongly agree	B.) agree	C.) disagree	D.) strongly disagree	E.) no opinion/does not apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) the Internet	36	88	21	5	4	154	95%
B.) the newspaper	24	62	14	5	2	107	66%
C.) the radio	22	44	11	2	1	80	49%
D.) news-related magazines	12	25	4	4	1	46	28%
E.) television	27	71	19	4	4	125	77%
F.) none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
G.) friends	26	69	9	3	2	109	67%
H.) other	3	5	0	1	0	9	6%
Answered questions	38	94	22	5	4	163	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	0	(100% response rate)

iii.   To summarize, all of the world regions favored CNN and/or its affiliates as news

sources. FOX and some of its affiliates also received high numbers from some of the

regions, as did Yahoo! (mostly by way of the Internet, television, and their friends), of

which nearly everyone agreed these sources to be biased in some way.

"Less than an hour a day" was the average time spent getting the news. It is no

surprise, then, that 79% of the participants agreed, in some way, that the media negatively

influenced their own and/or opinions about other countries. It can be concluded,

therefore, that "less than an hour a day" has proven to be an insufficient amount of time

in order to form relatively unbiased and open opinions. Moreover, our friends, and other

associations, can be useful sources, but can also prove to add to our biased

predispositions of others, as the survey results have demonstrated.

These results coincide with Bruck's (1992) argument about quick and semi-

reliable sources of news. The respondents' preferred information sources are not

necessarily wholly unreliable, but because these responses indicated that they are used for

generally short periods of time, the *quality* of the acquired information is questionable.

B.   **THESIS QUESTION II—***Do people that tend to be interested in only local
       news or that spend little time informing themselves of the news still voice strong
       opinions about critical issues, like the war in Iraq?*

This opinion-based question was examined for several reasons. Specifically, (1)

because the United States is one of the world's most globally recognized countries and its

political actions are watched closely by many others, and (2) because it is an issue that

almost anyone from any part of the world has heard about, and has some sort of opinion

to offer. However, it was not investigated for the purpose of instigating tension with the participants or readers of this thesis, nor to insinuate any opinions on the part of the investigator.

This thesis question will be examined using survey questions 10, 11, 12, 15 16 and 22.

i.   SURVEY QUESTIONS #10-#12

Table 3.1: "Are you interested in local, national, or international politics, government or foreign affairs?"

Question #11	Latin America	Africa/Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL # of respondents	TOTAL% of respondents
Local	43	17	26	11	90	187	21%
National	113	25	46	20	131	335	37%
International	104	32	60	23	127	346	39%
None	4	1	13	2	4	24	3%
TOTAL # of *indications*	264	75	145	56	352	892	100%
TOTAL # of *responses*	131	34	76	26	154	421	---
Skipped or N/A	4	2	11	0	9	26	(94.2% response rate)

To review, most of the participating **Europeans** spent either "less than an hour a day" getting the news, or "between 1 and two hours"; very few said they spent more than three hours (see Table 2.2). Most were interested in national and international politics and issues (Table 3.1). Some of the news items that were of interest to them at the time of the survey were business, the economy and.

Ninety-seven percent of the **African and Middle Eastern** participants answered, and the majority of them (roughly 54%) spent about 1-2 hours a day on average getting

the news, 26% spent less than one hour a day, and 20% said they spent greater than two

hours a day (see Table 2.2). Most concerned themselves with national and international

politics and affairs. Some of the more popular topics that were of interest to this group

were business, international and national economic concerns, and sports.

As indicated earlier on page 58, 99% of the **Asians** answered question #10, and

50% indicated they spent less than an hour a day informing themselves of news items.

Another 40% spent between 1 to 2 hours, and 10% spent more than two hours a day

(Table 2.2). Like the previous world regions, most people were interested in national and

international issue. In answer to question #12, some of the topics of interest listed were

politics, business and science.

Thirty-eight percent of the **Latin Americans** spent less than an hour a day, and

another 51% spent between 1 and 2 hours a day getting the news. Their responses to

questions #11 and #12 show that most cared about national and international concerns,

and some of the more popular topics specified were the economy, music and.

To review, about 99% of the **American** participants answered question #10 (see

Table 2.2). Roughly 56% said they spent less than an hour a day using the news, and

34% said between 1 and 2 hours. As Table 3.1 indicates, most of them took an interest in

national and international politics, but also music, health and medicine.

SURVEY QUESTIONS #15 AND #16

Table 3.2: "Do you agree with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq?"

Question #15	Latin America	Africa/Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of responses
Strongly agree	1	3	6	0	11	21	5%
Agree	7	4	10	0	35	56	13%
Disagree	89	8	12	13	48	170	40%

Strongly disagree	22	11	28	10	46	117	27%
No opinion/ doesn't apply to me	13	8	23	1	18	63	15%
TOTAL	132	34	79	24	158	427	100%
Skipped	3	2	8	2	5	20	(95.5% response rate)

Ninety-two percent of **European** participants answered the question, and 96% disagreed with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq (Table 3.2). Most of the comments made reflect the sentiments of this student from the United Kingdom: "I believe the US went into Iraq for all the wrong reasons. Yes 9/11 was a tragedy, but the US went into Iraq for political reasons." Half of the Europeans answered question #16, which asked: "Are there any other issues (national or international) that the United States is involved in that you would like to comment about?" A number of them expressed interest in the U.S.' connection with global economics and its action/inaction on environmental issues. One comment in particular, made by a German respondent, had the following to say about biased media:

> The financial crisis is a big issue in my home country as it hurts our economy, but seeing the media coverage here in America sometimes makes me angry because it seems that Americans don't even realize the international consequences of their actions. They are discussing the high costs of the bailout and the negative effects on their economy, and they don't even know that other countries have to pay an even higher price to rescue their economies. America's actions sometimes reflect no feeling for an international responsibility.

Ninety-four percent of the **African and Middle Eastern** participants answered question #15. Fifty-six percent said they either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the Iraqi war, while only 20% either "agree" or "strongly agree." However, 23% said that they do not have an opinion on the subject. Most of the comments made are similar to that of a Saudi Arabian participant who thought "the U.S. would have been better off handling issues inside the borders since there have been so many of them." There were,

however, those that agreed with the U.S.' initial presence in Iraq, but felt that the Americans have now been there far too long. Nevertheless, a few agreed with the U.S.' decision to invade. One person, from Egypt, felt the "USA did the right thing by helping the Iraqis get rid of Saddam who was not fair to his people and to the surrounding countries. And personally I hope [the] USA and other fair countries help the rest of the unstable spots of the world to gain peace and balance."

Question #15 was answered by all but eight of the **Asian** participants (about 91% overall). Fifty percent responded they either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war. An Indian participant said that "sometimes being a 'superpower' does not mean poking your nose." On the other hand, a South Korean student stated "I am politically conservative and believe Bush administration did the right thing. Thus I do not have any negative opinion toward America's action in [the] war in Iraq." However, 29% of the Asians were indifferent and said they had no opinion. One reason to explain why so many of them answered this way could be because the conflict has not really involved Asian at all; it has almost strictly been between the United States and the Middle East, with support (and disapproval) for both sides coming from Europe and Latin America. Similarly, few Asians listed other issues that the U.S. was currently involved with that were of concern to them. For those that did, some of the topics that were of concern to them were.

The majority of the **Latin Americans** (84%) disagreed/strongly disagreed with the Iraqi war. Many of the comments were very strong against the United States, not only for the current war, but for other issues (like the environment and free trade agreements with Latin America). Most of the attitudes reflected this one, made by a

student from Mexico, who said "I believe the United States do not have any right to make war against a country under the pretext of 'terrorism' in order to get control over the oil produced in that country." Costa Rican participants, in particular, had some interesting opinions. A large portion of them vehemently said that not only were they against the war in Iraq, but that they opposed war in general. However, Costa Rica does not have a national military, but only supports a police force. One young respondent remarked "every country is responsible for its actions and they shouldn't permit that other, 'more powerful,' countries interfere with them, especially if they have ulterior motives (economic)." Many of these Latin American participants were also critical towards the United States' involvement with the war (and other issues, such as the environment and NAFTA) also said that they were studying English.

Similar to the other world regions, most of the Americans (67%) were in disagreement with the Iraqi war and the U.S.' involvement. Many of the comments that disagreed/strongly disagreed mirror these two comments:

> I felt before the war that it would only serve to increase the number of people in the Middle East who dislike us, which seemed to be the wrong way to go about fighting terrorism. Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with Al-Qaeda.

> I think it sounded good on paper, but so many things have just gone too far. I think a lot of times we have good intentions that end up becoming corrupted.

Another 29% said they either "agree" or "strongly agree;" and 11% said they did not have an opinion on the subject. One person, in particular, supported the war and suggested that the worldwide criticism against the U.S. is not entirely deserved:

> I believe that anyone who has a problem with the way our government functions needs to run for president. It bothers me when people try and blame Bush for our involvement in the war, when any intelligent person knows that Congress has so much more power than the president. They passed with a majority vote for our involvement in Iraq, and while it is questionable now if that was the best decision,

it has already happened. I don't think anybody but the president and Congress know what REALLY goes on behind the scenes, so I think it is unfair for people to judge where judgment is not appropriate.

Table 3.3: "Which of the following describes you politically?"

Question #22	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL	TOTAL % of responses
Extremely conservative	0	0	0	2	2	4	1%
Conservative	5	4	8	2	22	41	13%
Moderate	11	18	23	6	54	112	37%
Liberal	14	8	27	8	43	100	33%
Extremely liberal	0	0	5	3	12	20	6%
None of the above/other	2	4	14	3	8	31	10%
TOTAL	32	34	77	24	141	308	100%
Skipped	3	2	10	2	22	39	(88.8% response rate)

Almost 90% of the survey respondents answered this question, however, the Costa Ricans were not included in the figures listed in Table 3.3 because this question was not part of the paper survey. Regardless, most of the **Latin American** respondents classified themselves as either "liberal" or "moderate." Ninety-two percent of the **Europeans** answered the question. Of those, about 46% indicated that they were either "liberal" or "extremely liberal" in their political views, 25% said "moderate," and 16% classified themselves as "conservative" or "extremely conservative." The majority (~53%) of the **African and Middle Eastern** respondents viewed themselves as "moderate" in their political thinking. About 89% of the total **Asians** responded to the question, and most of them (roughly 71%) categorized themselves "liberal" or "moderate". However, about 20% chose "none of the above/other" as their answer

choice; some of these responses indicted that they did not understand the meaning of the answer choices. Most of the **American** respondents (~77%) classified as moderates or liberals, as well, and only 17% said to be conservatives.

ii.   TRENDS AND CORRELATIONS

<u>SURVEY QUESTIONS #10 AND #15</u>

The main purpose of comparing "How many hours a day do you spend getting the news?" and "Are you interested in local, national or international news" with "Do you agree with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq?" was to examine any explanations for the opinions the respondents had about the U.S. and the Iraqi war. As has been discussed earlier, the amount of time a person spends getting the news can directly determine how well-informed they are about current affairs, as can their overall interest in such issues. Sometimes people devote very little time to being well-informed of major events, yet many have a lot to say when asked for their opinion.

The crossed-tabbed results from these questions show that most of the **European** respondents either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the U.S. involvement in the Iraqi war. These same respondents spent less than an hour a day getting the news (see Table 3.4 below).

Table 3.4: Hours spent getting the news and the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war—EUROPE

Questions #10 and #15—EUROPE	A.) I strongly	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly	E.) I don't have an	Response Count	Response Percent

	agree			disagree	opinion/doesn't apply to me		
A.) less than an hour	0	0	7	7	0	14	58%
B.) 1-2 hours	0	0	5	3	1	9	38%
D.) more than three hours	0	0	1	0	0	1	4%
C.) 2-3 hours	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Answered questions	0	0	13	10	1	24	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	2	(92.3% response rate)

As far as the **Africa and Middle East** world region is concerned, we can see that the dividing lines between agreeing/disagreeing with the U.S. and the Iraqi war, regardless of how much time is spent getting the news, were finer than Europe's (as demonstrated by Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Hours spent getting the news and the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war—
AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Questions #10 and #15—AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) less than an hour	0	1	2	4	2	9	27%
B.) 1-2 hours	3	3	4	4	4	18	55%
C.) 2-3 hours	0	0	1	2	1	4	12%
D.) more than three hours	0	0	1	1	0	2	6%
Answered both questions	3	4	8	11	7	33	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	3	(91.7% response rate)

A few more **Asian** participants skipped question #15 than from the other world regions did. But regardless, we see that most of them disagreed with the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war and most spent less than an hour a day getting the news (see

Table 2.2). There is a particularly interesting correlation between those that answered "I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me" and "hours spent getting the news." The majority of them said they spend no more than two hours a day getting the news. As discussed in brief in the previous section, this is probably due to their overall lack of interest in the Iraqi war, and not in a lack of international issues in general.

Table 3.6: Hours spent getting the news and the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war—ASIA

Questions #10 and #15—ASIA	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) less than an hour	3	8	6	14	10	41	52%
B.) 1-2 hours	2	0	6	10	11	29	37%
C.) 2-3 hours	1	2	0	2	1	6	8%
D.) more than three hours	0	0	0	1	1	2	3%
Answered questions	6	10	12	27	23	78	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	9	(89.7% response rate)

When cross-tabbed, the **Latin American** responses show most of the respondents either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war and spent between 1 and 2 hours a day getting the news. Moreover, this world regions' opposition to the war is based on the fact that these people spent more time spent getting the news than some of the previous world regions.

Table 3.7: Hours spent getting the news and the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war—LATIN AMERICA

Questions #10 and #15—LATIN AMERICA	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent

	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) less than an hour	1	3	26	14	6	50	38%
B.) 1-2 hours	0	4	51	7	5	67	52%
C.) 2-3 hours	0	0	9	1	0	10	8%
D.) more than three hours	0	0	3	0	0	3	2%
Answered questions	1	7	89	22	11	130	100%
Skipped one or both questions						5	(96.3% response rate)

Comparisons from the **Americans'** responses to "How many hours a day do you spend getting the news?" and "Do you agree with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq?" denote a strong relationship between those that either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with the U.S.' participation and "less than an hour a day" spent getting the news.

Table 3.8: Hours spent getting the news and the U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war—USA

Survey questions #10 and #15—USA	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) less than an hour	8	22	27	18	14	89	57%
B.) 1-2 hours	3	10	18	19	3	53	34%
C.) 2-3 hours	0	3	3	6	1	13	8%
D.) more than three hours	0	0	0	2	0	2	1%
Answered questions	11	35	48	45	18	157	
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	6	(96.3% response rate)

<u>SURVEY QUESTIONS #15 AND #22</u>

Question #22 ("Which of the following best describes you politically?") was

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compared against "Do you agree with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq?" for the purpose of comparing peoples' varying political backgrounds with their support for an almost globally delicate topics, like the Iraqi war. As previously discussed, the terms "liberal," "moderate" and "conservative" are usually defined differently depending on the part of the world you are in. However, so as not to influence the survey takers, these terms were not defined in any way.

The greater majority of the **European** and **African and Middle Eastern** participants that answered the two questions disagreed with the war and were either "liberal" or moderate" in their political thinking (refer to Tables 3.9 and 3.10, respectively).

Table 3.9: The U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war and personal political thinking—EUROPE

Questions #15 and #22-EUROPE	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) Extremely conservative	0	0	1	1	0	2	8.5%
B.) Conservative	0	0	0	1	1	2	8.5%
C.) Moderate	0	0	3	3	0	6	26%
D.) Liberal	0	0	5	3	0	8	35%
E.) Extremely liberal	0	0	2	0	0	2	9%
F.) None of the above/other	0	0	1	2	0	3	13%
Answered both questions	0	0	12	10	1	23	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	3	(88.5% response rate)

Table 3.10: The U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war and personal political thinking—AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Questions #15 and #22— AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) Extremely conservative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
B.) Conservative	0	0	1	2	1	4	12%
C.) Moderate	1	1	5	7	4	18	53%
D.) Liberal	1	2	2	2	1	8	23%
E.) Extremely liberal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
F.) None of the above/other	1	1	0	0	2	4	12%
Answered questions	3	4	8	11	8	34	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	2	(94.4% response rate)

Referring to Table 3.11, about 89% of the **Asian** respondents answered both questions. The greater majority disagreed (35%) with the war and indicated they were "liberal," however, an almost equal percentage (30%) did not have an opinion either way. Most of these respondents classified themselves as "moderates," liberal," or "none of the above/other."

Table 3.11: The U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war and personal political thinking— ASIA

Questions #15 and #22— ASIA	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) Extremely conservative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
B.) Conservative	1	2	1	1	3	8	10%
C.) Moderate	4	2	4	7	6	23	30%
D.) Liberal	1	3	4	13	6	27	35%
E.) Extremely liberal	0	0	0	2	3	5	7%
F.) None of the above/other	0	3	2	4	5	14	18%
Answered questions	6	10	11	27	23	77	100%
Skipped one or both	--	--	--	--	--	10	(88.5%

questions							response rate)

Because question #22 ("Which of the following best describes you politically?") was not included in the paper version, only those **Latin American** responses from the online participants were used to conclude the following.

Most of the Latin Americans described themselves as "liberals," and also said they "strongly disagree" with the United States' involvement war in Iraq (refer to Table 3.12). All but seven of the overall Latin American participants were in the United States at the time they took the survey, and so their opinions may have been based not only on the media sources they listed in question #8, but also on their own personal observations during their time in the U.S.

Table 3.12: The U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war and personal political thinking—
LATIN AMERICA

Questions #15 and #22— LATIN AMERICA	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) Extremely conservative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
B.) Conservative	0	0	1	1	3	5	16%
C.) Moderate	1	1	3	4	2	11	34%
D.) Liberal	0	1	2	10	1	14	44%
E.) Extremely liberal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
F.) None of the above/other	0	0	1	0	1	2	6%
Answered questions	1	2	7	15	7	32	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	3	(91.4% response rate)

Much like the participants before them, most of the **Americans** identified themselves as "moderate" or "liberal" and most either strongly disagreed with the United

States' involvement in the Iraqi war. However, most of those that agreed with the war also classified themselves as moderates (or as conservatives).

Table 3.13: The U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war and personal political thinking—USA

Questions #15 and #22—USA	A.) I strongly agree	B.) I agree	C.) I disagree	D.) I strongly disagree	E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me	Response Count	Response Percent
A.) Extremely conservative	1	1	0	0	0	2	1%
B.) Conservative	5	11	2	0	3	21	15%
C.) Moderate	2	15	20	6	11	54	38%
D.) Liberal	0	3	14	24	2	43	31%
E.) Extremely liberal	1	0	2	9	0	12	9%
F.) None of the above/other	1	2	1	3	1	8	6%
Answered questions	10	32	39	42	17	140	100%
Skipped one or both questions	--	--	--	--	--	23	(85.9% response rate)

iii.   After reviewing questions 10, 11, 12, 15, 16 and 22, we can see that the majority of the survey participants spent less than a half hour a day getting the news, but that when they did, they favored either national or international politically-related news items. Comments to question #12 also show that many were curious about economic, health and fine arts-related topics. A large portion of these respondents also voiced concern over other topics like the environment and immigration, and how large countries, like the United States, deal with these issues.

The U.S.' involvement in the Iraqi war was opposed by most of the participants, regardless of their home world region. Of the nearly three hundred people non-American people that took the survey, almost two hundred took it while studying in the United

States. The exact amount of time, per respondent, spent in the U.S. at the time the survey was taken is not known. But regardless, it seems that the time they spent getting the news greatly impacted them in a negative way towards the United States, and specifically towards the government and its stances on certain issues (like the Iraqi war, the environment, and the global economy).

C.   **THESIS QUESTION III:**   *Do peoples' experiences from living and studying abroad or knowing people from other countries breakdown or reinforce stereotypes that people have of those not of their own country?*

The purpose for investigating this question was to see how peoples' perceptions of other countries and cultures are impacted by their experiences from living and studying abroad, or from knowing foreigners that have come to their home country. Going abroad, for educational, touristic or business-related reasons in particular, are effective ways of exposing a person to new cultures and ideas that are different than what they are familiar with. However, the purpose in travelling abroad, as well as the length of time, are key indicators of how well-exposed to news cultures and ideas a person is. For example, good opinions can be formed from going to different places for pleasure, but the trips are usually short and typically only expose a person to parts of the foreign country that are tailored specifically to tourism; very little can be seen and understood of the country's everyday life. To examine these ideas more closely, survey questions 18, 19 and 20 will be discussed in the next section.

<u>SURVEY QUESTIONS #18-#20</u>

Table 4.1: "Have you ever known any citizens from other countries? If so, how many (roughly), from which countries, and how well did you know them? Has knowing them influenced how you view their countries (either in a positive

Question #18	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL # of respondents	TOTAL % of respondents
Yes	113	27	54	22	135	351	93%
No	13	2	4	0	9	28	7%
TOTAL	126	29	58	22	144	379	100%
Skipped	9	7	29	4	19	68	(84.8% response rate)
Positive	46	13	24	10	61	154	44%
Negative	4	2	0	1	5	12	3%
Neutral/Indifferent	20	5	11	6	21	63	18%
Both	16	1	10	1	13	41	12%
Effect of knowing foreigners not specified	27	6	9	2	35	79	23%
TOTAL	126	29	58	22	144	379	100%
Skipped	9	4	29	4	19	65	(84.8% response rate)

Table 4.2: “Have you ever TRAVELED outside of your home country before? If so, what other countries have you been to, for how long, and what was your reason for traveling?”

Question #19	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL # of respondents	TOTAL % of respondents
Yes, have travelled	86	31	61	22	121	321	72%
No, haven't travelled	44	2	4	0	29	79	18%
TOTAL	130	33	65	22	150	400	100%
Skipped	5	3	22	4	13	47	(89.5% response rate)
Recreation	25	13	32	14	84	168	41%
Business	7	10	9	4	18	48	12%
Study	13	12	30	6	44	105	26%
Purpose for travel not specified	54	7	8	7	12	88	22%
TOTAL	99	42	79	31	158	409	100%

Roughly 85% of the total survey respondents replied to the question “Have you ever known any citizens from other countries?” As a reminder, respondents were

allowed to list more than one "reason for travel" in question #19.

Eighty-five percent of the **European** participants answered, and all stated they knew people from other countries. Of those, only one person indicated that their knowing others left them with a negative impression, whereas half said that knowing others has influenced them in a positive way; 30% said "neutral/indifferent". The next question, "Have you ever traveled outside of your home country before? If so, what other countries have you been to, for how long, and what was your reason for traveling?" was answered by about 85% of the Europeans. All said that they have traveled, but 7 people did not specify the reasons for their travels. Of those that did, 45% of their travels were for recreation/tourism purposes, 13% said for business reasons, and 19% of their travels educational purposes. Eighty-five percent of the participants also answered question #20 ("Have you ever LIVED outside of your home country? If so, where have you lived, and for how long?"), and they all indicated that they have lived outside of their home country. Some of the places they have are the United States and other parts of Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and usually for an average of a few years.

About 81% of the **African and Middle Eastern** participants answered the question, "Have you ever known any citizens from other countries?," 93% of which said "yes." Of those, about 48% said that their knowing foreigners has been a positive experience, 19% were neutral/indifferent in their responses, 4% said both positive and negative, and only 7% said negative. Twenty-two percent, however, did not specify the reason for their answer, but merely answered that they know people from other countries. To the question, "Have you ever traveled outside of your home country before?" 92% responded. Of those responses, 17% did not specify the purpose for their traveling

abroad, but the remainder gave the following as their reasons: 31% have travelled for recreation/tourism purposes, 24% for business, and 28% for study/educational reasons. Question #20 received 31 responses (86%), 77% of which said that they have lived in other countries. The majority of these respondents have lived mostly in other parts of Africa and the Middle East and the United States.

About 67% of the **Asian** respondent population answered the question, "Have you ever known any citizens from other countries?" Ninety-three percent said "yes," and their overall impressions are as follows: 44% said that knowing foreigners has been a positive experience, 0% said negative, 19% said both positive and negative, 20% were indifferent either way, and 17% did not specify. About three-fourths of the participants replied to "Have you ever traveled outside of your home country before?". Ninety-four percent reported that they have. Of those, 11% said that their travels were for business, 41% for recreation/tourism, and 38% for study/educational purposes; 10% did not specify. Sixty-two of the eighty-seven Asian participants (71%) responded to question #20, which asked if they had ever lived in other countries. All but 6 people said that had lived elsewhere, and most indicated that they have lived primarily in the United States and other parts of Asia; a few people, however, indicated having lived in Europe and Canada.

To the question, "Have you ever known any citizens from other countries?," 93% of the **Latin Americans** replied, and 90% said they had. Forty-one percent had positive experiences, and only 3% indicated their encounters left them with negative impressions, Fourteen percent said their experiences had been both positive and negative, and 18% were indifferent in their opinions. In regards to question #19, it was not explicitly asked

of the students that were given the paper survey to specify *why* they had been abroad, and so this was taken into consideration in the conclusions. Nevertheless, many of the Costa Ricans said they had traveled to other Latin American countries, and even parts of Europe. Many students that had and had not been abroad acknowledged knowing exchange students from the United States. In all, 96% of the Latin Americans answered question #19, and 66% said that they had been abroad. The majority indicated having traveled for recreational/tourism purposes, some had traveled for educational reasons, and very few traveled for business. Of those that were asked whether or not they had lived in another country, most said they have lived in the U.S., other parts of Latin America, and Europe.

About 89% of the **American** participants indicated having known foreigners, and 45% said their acquaintances had been positive ones, only 4% were negative, 10% said both positive and negative, and 15% were neutral/or said that their acquaintances did not influence their opinions of other countries. There was, however, 26% that did not specify how their associations with foreigners have influences their opinions. Ninety-two percent of the Americans answered question #19, "Have you ever traveled outside of your home country before?". A small percentage (8%) skipped the question, possible because they have **not** been abroad or are planning on it, and therefore, did not answer the question. Apart from this group, 53% of the Americans' travels were for tourism/recreation, 11% for business, and 28% for education. Unlike most of the other world regions, the majority of the Americans indicated they *have* not lived in another country. Of those that have, most of lived in all of the other world regions. Several people that said they have not lived abroad said they plan on doing so in the future.

iii.   To review, the cross-comparisons for **Europe** indicate that most of them felt that their knowing foreigners has influenced their opinions in a positive way. Most of their experiences abroad were for touristic purposes, and therefore it might be argued that their positive feelings about foreigners are debatable, because their time spent abroad was short (compared to the time a person spends when he/she goes for educational reasons). However, all of them indicated having also lived abroad. It should also be noted here that, although some of the European participants did not indicate that they have traveled for educational reasons, it can be assumed that most of them have, since this survey was distributed to universities in the United States (with the exception of Costa Rica; no Europeans were surveyed there). However, many of the European respondents were also indifferent in their feelings about their traveling/living experiences abroad, or how knowing foreigners, have influenced their opinions about them.

General responses from the **Africa and Middle East** world region indicate that most of their feelings towards foreigners, as a result from traveling and/or living abroad, were positive. However, their reasons for travelling were mostly for recreational and/or educational reasons. The latter of the two adds an element of exposure that tourism does not: while it is true that many foreign students have opportunities to travel and sightsee during their stay in the host country, their principal social setting will be the university and everything that encompasses university life (classes, school clubs, parties, possible work opportunities, etc.). These participants' "positive opinions," therefore, partly stem from social interactions such as these.

The **Asians'** responses for all three questions yield slightly different findings,

mostly because 33% skipped #18 ("Have you ever known any citizens from other countries?"), 25% skipped #19 ("Have you ever traveled outside of your home country before?"), and 26% skipped #20 "Have you ever LIVED outside of your home country? If so, where have you lived, and for how long?"). Nevertheless, most of those that have been abroad have had favorable experiences, and think highly well of the places they have been to and the people they have met. Much like the Africans and Middle Easterners, the Asians have been abroad mostly for educational and recreational purposes, again suggesting that their "positive opinions" about others are based on more than just touristic experiences.

For the **Latin Americans** that indicated they had been abroad, most felt their opinions of those they had met and they places they had been were positive ones. The majority, however, had travelled for touristic purposes. There were, however, a substantial portion of the Latin Americans that indicated they had never been abroad (34%), but had mostly positive associations with people from other countries whom they had met through school and/or work.

There were 12 **American** respondents that were studying/living abroad at the time the surveys were distributed, and all but 1 were female. Conversely, the American male/female numbers of those that have been abroad for other reasons seem to be more equal. Two possible explanations for this difference could be that (1) women tend to take more advantage of study abroad experiences or, (2) simply fewer male students studying abroad at the time received and responded to the survey. Nevertheless, 45% of the Americans that have travelled said their experiences abroad have been positive ones. There were however, about 26% that did not specify how their experiences abroad have

impacted their cross-cultural opinions, and another 15% were indifferent. However, 53% of the Americans' travels overseas were for tourism and recreation. This supports the comment made earlier that only there is only so much of a foreign country is seen by a tourist, and it is usually not enough to form a more inclusive opinion about the country.

In all, a substantial portion of the overall survey participants responded to questions #18-#20 about whether or not they have travelled to or lived in other countries, or have known people from other countries, and how these experiences have shaped their opinions of others. Most of those that have been abroad, or that have at least associated with foreigners while in their home country, have had positive experiences. However, because a small portion of the Latin American participants had never traveled to the United States, most of the information and opinions they have about the U.S. comes from the media, which may or may not have been favorable towards the United States as the time the surveys were distributed.

What is interesting about the results is that most of the travelling abroad by the Americans, Europeans and Latin Americans participants was for tourism, whereas most of the other participants surveyed have travelled almost as much for educational purposes. Maybe the difference is that some areas can afford to travel for pleasure versus other parts of the world. Or, perhaps, some cultures place greater emphasis on going abroad to improve one's education and career potential. Both of these reasons point not so much to a difference in levels of economic freedom, but more so towards a difference in what different cultures esteem as "priorities". It is no surprise, in previous survey questions, many of the foreign surveyed participants had strong things to say about American media, the U.S.' involvement with the Iraqi war, or America in general:

their interactions with Americans have been in mostly non-touristic settings, and so they,

therefore, have had opportunities to spend ample amounts of time in the United States

that have possibly allowed them to form the opinions about American politics and

society. At the same time, however, if they had previously strong beliefs prior to their

arrival, these may play a larger role in opinion-forming than their time abroad.

The general conclusion can be made, therefore, that while the media is very

influential in how people think of others, experiences abroad can help in significantly

breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions that the media forms. To emphasize the

thoughts of one respondent from Venezuela:

> My husband is North American. It has been great to have this passport to USA
> culture and it has influenced my life positively by enriching my knowledge in
> different areas of my life but most that all as a person. I also have friends from
> different countries from Middle East to Latin America, and my conclusion at the
> end is that there is no good or bad, just different. The way I view other countries
> is that they may have a different culture and that is that; it is not "good" or "bad",
> and there is no "wrong".

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

Survey Conclusions

To review, this survey and study addressed the following questions:

1.   How does mass media influence how people think politically and socially about other countries? How frequently do people use various media sources, and what are the main media sources that people seek out?

2.   Do people that tend to be interested in only local news or that spend little time informing themselves of the news still voice strong opinions about critical issues, like the war in Iraq?

3.   Do peoples' experiences from living and studying abroad or knowing people from other countries breakdown or reinforce stereotypes that people have of those not of their own country?

These questions were asked to specifically investigate theories about the media's influences on social and political relations between countries, and to also to determine the effectiveness that travelling abroad can have on breaking-down and or/reinforcing political and social stereotypes. The data collected for this study supported some of the existing theories, as discussed in the literature review, but also yielded some interesting insights.

This study showed that there is a correlation between the time people spent getting the news, the types of news they were interested in, and their opinions about key current events, such as the war in Iraq. The survey results showed that regardless of their home world regions, most of the respondents indicated they used the media for an hour or less a day, and that they were mostly interested in national and/or international affairs.

The majority of those people that spent less than an hour a day getting the news were not in agreement with the war and Iraq, or the U.S.' involvement. There was, however, a large portion of people from some regions (like Latin American and Asia) that spent 1-2 hours a day getting the news, and also disagreed with the war. It could almost be argued that the opinions of those people that spent more time getting the news a day are more credible, but not necessarily if the sources were overly biased and not very credible themselves. The survey results also showed that most people tended to use the Internet, the television, and their friends as their preferred news sources, all of which they acknowledged are often times biased sources of information. Furthermore, the majority of the students, regardless of their time spent getting the news or their news piece interests, agreed that the media was biased in how it relayed information to the public; however, most said that the news did not influence their opinions of other countries in a negative way. Interestingly, many of those foreign students that took the survey while in the United States felt the American media was extremely biased in favor of American ideologies and failed to offer its audiences a more neutral approach. These observations suggest that regardless of the time a person spends getting the news or what their personal news preferences are, they still voice strong opinions about current events. This study reiterated the fact that we, as a general public, tend to devote little time to getting the news either because we are so busy, or simply because we are not that interested. The concern with this, however, is that for many of us, we form our opinions about others based on quick "snippets" of news, most times which is hardly enough to justify impartial opinions.

Most of the foreign respondents from this survey were between the ages of 20 and

29, as were most of the Americans, suggesting that the older one gets, the less likely he/she are to go abroad (for whatever reason). And the sooner positive impressions are formed during formative years, the better. There are countless study abroad and overseas service and work opportunities for university students to take advantage of while in school that would not only benefit the student in his/her future endeavors, but also result in the person seeing his/her world from a different viewpoint being a little more accepting and tolerant of others' ideas and beliefs that he/she are not accustomed to. For example, the fact that a large portion of the Latin Americans have never traveled to the United suggests that most of their opinions were based upon the second-hand information they get from the news about the U.S. and the war, and not from first-hand information from having spent time in the United States. Furthermore, three of the five world regions (Latin America, Europe, and the United States) indicated that their main purpose for traveling abroad was for recreational/touristic purposes, and yet many of their comments were amongst some of the strongest and more critical ones concerning cross-cultural perceptions. This observation keeps with the argument made earlier that it is very difficult to get an accurate appraisal of a host country when one is only seeing it from the commercial side. However, most of the participants said that the personal associations they had with those from other countries, like the United States, have left positive impressions upon them, suggesting that their own associations were just as impressionable as the media was in forming their opinions of others.

In conclusion, most of the participants acknowledged that the news was biased and influential, and although they indicated at one part of the survey that the media did not influence their perceptions of others in a negative way, some of their responses to

other portions of the survey suggest otherwise. On the other hand, those that said they have travelled to other countries said their associations with foreigners or their own experiences abroad have been positive and helpful in breaking down the stereotypes that the media forms about other countries and cultures.

Review of Research Constraints

There were two principal obstacles that arose during that arose during the research and writing processes. First, the issue of the two versions of the survey. It was not feasible to conduct the online survey while I was in Costa Rica. As mentioned before, Costa Rica is one of the many countries in the world where access to reliable and affordable Internet (and computers) are a little harder to come by than in countries like the United States. These resources are even in short supply at the universities, which is where the paper survey was distributed. The other problem with the paper survey is the matter of its having fewer questions than the online version. Possible survey questions were discussed between the investigator and thesis adviser, but it was not until the paper survey had been distributed that the additional questions in the online version were thought of.

The second major constraint was the matter of the amount of skipped questions. Because the survey was not restricted to strictly native English speakers, it was understood well in advance that some participants might have slight language-barrier problems. A Spanish version was created to rectify that potential problem for the Latin American participants, which it did. The African and Middle Eastern and Asian participants were the ones that exhibited the greatest difficulty, because so many of them

skipped too many questions for their surveys to be considered part of the final survey results, compared to the other world regions. Consequentially, a number of potential responses were deleted and not included in these world regions' final numbers because they were not complete enough to be considered usable in the results at all.

Another obstacle, though not as interfering as the first two, was that some world regions were far less represented than others. It is likely that some world regions were more represented at the surveyed universities, and so more of them participated. The investigator had no prior knowledge of how many participants, from each world region, the overall survey results were going to yield.

Recommendations for the Future and Concluding Remarks

This study specifically targeted university students not to limit the diversity of potential participants, but rather to take advantage of the cultural and political diversities that can generally be found at universities. Doing so also allowed for a broad age-range of participants. However, just because a person attends a higher-education institution does not necessarily mean that they are well-informed. Some future related research could be conducted to ascertain how different population groups (e.g., blue collar factory workers vs. white collar corporate executives, or high school students that have studied abroad, and those that haven't) might respond to similar questions as the ones that were asked in this study. Likewise, more could be done to learn of the contrasting opinions between foreigners that are currently here in the US, with those that have never been, and their firsthand experiences and opinions differ from those foreigners that have never been to the U.S., and whose information is secondhand.

Interesting findings could come from future studies that surveyed people just after a presidential election season. Most of the surveys to this study were taken right before the 2008 U.S. presidential election, and a lot of respondents commented that the election was of interest to them because of the United States' global influence. The media plays such an integral and influential role during events such as this because of its mediating role between the people and the politics (Dagenais 1992). The public can also, however, influence the media, in what stories and events they focus on and how they present them back to the public. The media-public relationship is often times dictated by the current public opinion vibe: whatever is thought to be popular with the public is amplified by mass media. As mentioned on page 6, such was the case during the last presidential election. Public opinion for Barack Obama was at times stronger than it was for John McCain, and certain media sources were thought to have played too big of a role in Obama's popularity. For a person to be well-informed is not entirely sufficient enough to filter out the biased information they get from the media. Rather, being capable of discerning what news accounts to believe and keeping an open mind play a major part. In the case of the United States, public opinion from its own citizens is not the only opinion it should make a point of listening to. Being one of the world's greatest social and political influences comes with a great deal of responsibility to set a high journalistic standard that we can be proud of, for what we broadcast is so often loud enough for all to hear.

It could be argued that to some degree, the media's actions, miscommunications, misinterpretations and subsequent political dissatisfaction have most certainly resulted in the perpetuation of domestic and international conflicts. Perhaps dissatisfaction with

modern journalism and the media is not confined to just the public opinion of the media

consumer. Journalists and media producers, too, may be dissatisfied with the course the

media has been taking over past few decades. There is too much going on in the world,

and too many varying opinions, to give a completely unbiased report. It is ultimately the

responsibility of each of us to decide what to believe from the media and how it will

affect their relationships with those that are different. To do this, we need to *not* look at

"what the journalist says or does, but…at what is done or said" (Dagenais 132).

Modern mass media and journalism have made great strides worldwide. There is

much to be proud of, but there is also a great deal to reevaluate and correct. Tom

Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, put it perfectly when he

said: "With so many media players and gatekeepers today…the best each organization

can do is try to improve its own credibility" (Healy 2005).

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APPENDICES

PAPER SURVEY

Cuestionario

Direcciones: Elija por favor la opción para cada pregunta que se aplique lo mejor posible a usted En algunas preguntas no se proporciona una opción de respuesta, sino se deben completar con su propia respuesta. Si usted tiene preguntas, por favor pregunte a la investigadora. Aunque no se requiere que usted conteste a todas las preguntas, será beneficioso para la investigadora si usted lo hace. ¡Gracias por su participación!

Encierre con un círculo su respuesta:

1.) Sexo: hombre   mujer

2.) Mi edad es: _____   o prefiero no contestar _____

3.) ¿Cuántos años ha asistido a la universidad?

> A.) menos que 1 año
> B.) 1-2 años
> C.) 3-4 años
> D.) más que 4 años

4.) Especifique por favor su campo del estudio:

5.) ¿Participa usted en actividades fuera de la escuela? Puede elegir varias opciones

> A.) "tengo un trabajo completo o de medio tiempo"
> B.) "participo en un equipo de deportes (un equipo local o en la universidad)"
> C.) "participo en una organización (por ejemplo, con la universidad, mi comunidad, iglesia, etc.)"
> D.) "otro" (especifique, por favor):

6.) Soy un ciudadano de:
> A.)Costa Rica
> B.) Estados Unidos
> C.) otro (especifique por favor:)

7.) ¿Cual medio de comunicación es el que utiliza para informarse de las noticias? Encerrar en un círculo todas las que utiliza.

A.) Internet	B.) El periódico
C.) la radio	D.) Boletines, folletos, etc
E.) televisión	F.) ninguno de los anteriores
G.) amigos	H.) otro(especifique por favor:)

8.) ¿Cuántas horas al día usted dedica para informarse?

9.) ¿Está usted interesado en la política **local, nacional o internacional**, el gobierno o los asuntos extranjeros?

               Internacional   Nacional   Local

10.) En el espacio proporcionó, satisface la lista cualquier otro asunto en las noticias que son de interés a usted:

11.) ¿Usted piensa que las noticias y los medios de comunicación influyen en su forma de pensar acerca de las personas y otros países?

               A.) estoy de acuerdo fuertemente
               B.) estoy de acuerdo
               C.) yo discrepo
               D.) yo discrepo fuertemente
               E.) no tengo ninguna opinión/no se aplica a mi

*Si quisiera decir algo más concerniente a esto, hágalo aquí:

12.) Las noticias y los medios de comunicación influyen positiva o negativamente en su manera de pensar acerca de los Estados Unidos. Explique

13.) Usted esta de acuerdo con la participación de los Estados Unidos en la guerra de Irak?
Si su opinión es positiva o negativa, explique por favor en el espacio facilicitado:

14.) Hay otros temas internacionales en que los Estados Unidos está implicado que quiera comentar

15.) ¿Usted ha conocido a ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos antes? ¿Si es así cuántos, y cómo influyeron ellos en su opinión sobre los Estados Unidos? Explique por favor en el espacio facilicitado.

16.) ¿Usted ha viajado fuera de su país? ¿Adonde, y por cuánto tiempo?

Thesis Survey

You must be enrolled in at least ONE college level course to participate, and you can only participate once. Please choose the option(s) for each question that best applies to you. Some questions are not provided with an answer choice, but require you to fill in your own answer. ***If possible, please answer all parts to each question.*** If you have any questions, please email the investigator (ericapr@okstate.edu). Although it is not required that you answer all of the questions, it will be VERY beneficial for the investigator if you do. The investigator thanks you for being honest in your answers.

Thank you for your participation!

1. I am:

☐ I am: male

☐ female

2. "My age is" (for example, 21) or "prefer not to answer"

[   ]

"My age is" (for example, 21) or "prefer not to answer"

3. How many years have you been attending college?

☐ How many years have you been attending college?   A.) less than 1 year

☐ B.) 1-2 years

☐ C.) 3-4 years

☐ D.) more than 4 years

4. Please specify your field of study (i.e., History, Political Science) AND degree type (for example, B.A., Masters, etc.):

[   ]

Please specify your field of study (i.e., History, Political Science) AND degree type (for example, B.A., Masters, etc.):

5. Do you participate in activities outside of school? Please select all that apply:

☐ Do you participate in activities outside of school? Please select all that apply: A. "I have a full or part time job"

☐ C. "I am involved with an organization (for example, through my community or church)"

☐ B. "I am involved with a local or school sports team"

☐ D. "Other"

(If "other", please specify):

6. I am a CITIZEN of:

○ I am a CITIZEN of: A.) The United States

○ B.) Other

(If not the US, please specify your country:)

7. What forms of media do you use to get the news? Please select all that apply:

☐ What forms of media do you use to get the news? Please select all that apply: A.) the Internet

☐ D.) news-related magazines

☐ G.) friends

☐ H.) other

☐ E.) television

☐ B.) the newspaper

☐ F.) none of the above

☐ C.) the radio

If "other", please specify

8. Please list the names of the newspapers, websites, and TV stations and programs you use as your news source(s).

Please list the names of the newspapers, websites, and TV stations and programs you use as your news source(s).

9. Do you ever use news and media sources that are not of your home country, but of another country? If so, please list them:

[text box]

Do you ever use news and media sources that are not of your home country, but of another country? If so, please list them:

10. How many hours a day do you spend getting the news?

☐ How many hours a day do you spend getting the news?   A.) less than an hour

☐ B.) 1-2 hours

☐ C.) 2-3 hours

☐ D.) more than three hours

11. Are you interested in LOCAL, NATIONAL, or INTERNATIONAL politics, government or foreign affairs? Please list all that apply:

[text box]

Are you interested in LOCAL, NATIONAL, or INTERNATIONAL politics, government or foreign affairs? Please list all that apply:

12. In the space provided, please list any other topics in the news that are of interest to you (FOR EXAMPLE, international business, health, etc.):

[text box]

In the space provided, please list any other topics in the news that are of interest to you (FOR EXAMPLE, international business, health, etc.):

13. Do you feel that the news and media influence how you think of other people and other countries?

☐ Do you feel that the news and media influence how you think of other people and other countries?   A.) strongly agree

☐ B.) agree

☐ C.) disagree

☐ D.) strongly disagree

◻ E.) no opinion/does not apply to me

14. How do you think different forms of media do or do not influence the way you think of other people from other countries, either in a positive or negative way? Please explain:

[text box]

How do you think different forms of media do or do not influence the way you think of other people from other countries, either in a positive or negative way? Please explain:
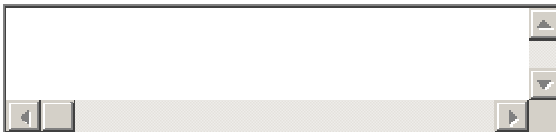
15. Do you agree with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq?

◻ Do you agree with the United States' involvement with the war in Iraq?   A.) I strongly agree

◻ B.) I agree

◻ C.) I disagree

◻ D.) I strongly disagree

◻ E.) I don't have an opinion/doesn't apply to me

Please explain your answer: [text box]

16. Are there any other issues (national or international) that the United States is involved in that you would like to comment about? Please explain in the space provided:

[text box]

Are there any other issues (national or international) that the United States is involved in that you would like to comment about? Please explain in the space provided:

17. Do you think that the media addresses and presents information to the public correctly and fairly, or is somehow biased? Please explain your opinion:

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Do you think that the media addresses and presents information to the public correctly and fairly, or is somehow biased? Please explain your opinion:

18. Have you have ever known any citizens from other countries? If so, how many (roughly), from which countries, and how well did you know them? Has knowing them influenced how you view their countries (either in a positive or negative way)? Please explain:

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Have you have ever known any citizens from other countries? If so, how many (roughly), from which countries, and how well did you know them? Has knowing them influenced how you view their countries (either in a positive or negative way)? Please explain:

19. Have you ever TRAVELED outside of your home country before? If so, what other countries have you been to, for how long, and what was your reason for traveling?

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Have you ever TRAVELED outside of your home country before? If so, what other countries have you been to, for how long, and what was your reason for traveling?

20. Have you ever LIVED outside of your home country? If so, where have you lived, and for how long?

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Have you ever LIVED outside of your home country? If so, where have you lived, and for how long?

21. Please specify the university or college that you are currently attending:

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22. Which of the following best describes you politically?

- ☐ Which of the following best describes you politically?   A.) Extremely conservative
- ☐ B.) Conservative
- ☐ C.) Moderate
- ☐ D.) Liberal
- ☐ E.) Extremely liberal
- ☐ F.) None of the above/other

If other, please specify: [_____]

Table 5.1: "What forms of media do you use to get the news? Please select all that apply"

Question #7	Latin America	Africa/ Middle East	Asia	Europe	USA	TOTAL # of users per form of media	overall % of usage per ALL response combinations [=total #of *questions* respondents/total # of *indicated* uses]	% of frequency usage for each form of media [=overall # of users per media type/total # of respondents]
the Internet	96	36	87	26	154	339	22%	76%
the newspaper	96	23	44	14	107	284	19%	64%
the radio	42	7	18	9	80	156	10%	35%
news-related magazines	24	10	21	6	46	107	7%	24%
television	118	32	65	17	125	357	23%	80%
none of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
friends	64	27	53	14	109	267	17%	60%
other	14	0	1	0	9	24	2%	5%
TOTAL # of indicated uses of media	454	135	289	86	630	1534	100%	n/a
TOTAL # of respondents per world region	135	36	87	26	163	447	100%	n/a
Skipped	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	(100% response rate)	n/a

Proyecto De Propuesta Informado Del Consentimiento

Escuela de estudios internacionales
Erica Roberts
ericapr@osktate.edu

Título De Proyecto: Investigaciones y análisis de las influencias de los medios en percepciones sociales y políticas entre americana latina y los estados unidos

Investigador: Erica Roberts, estudiante de la ciencia Masters en la escuela de estudios internacionales (School of International Studies), La Universidad de Oklahoma State

Propósito: El propósito principal de la investigación es incorporar las opiniones de las personas universitarias en un proyecto de tesis. La investigadora le está pidiendo participar en este estudio porque usted pertenece a esta categoría. La investigadora está buscando específicamente las respuestas a las siguientes preguntas 1.) ¿Qué formas de medios de comunicación utiliza la gente joven? y 2.) ¿Cómo los diversos medios de comunicación influyen en la gente joven de América latina y los Estados Unidos en cuanto como perciben uno al otro socialmente y políticamente?

Procedimientos: La investigadora esta pidiendo participar en una encuesta informal o en un informe. En ambos, le preguntará acerca de qué formas de medios de comunicación (por ejemplo, el Internet, los periódicos, la televisión) usted utiliza generalmente para informarse sobre las noticias políticas referentes a los Estados Unidos o Costa Rica (o Latina América en general). Si el español es su primer idioma, las entrevistas y los informes serán conducidos en español, o en inglés para los que lo hablan. Su participación no debe exceder los diez minutos cada uno.

Los estudios/ informes serán conducidos con papel convencional. Las preguntas le pedirán elegir la mejor opción que se aplica a usted. También habrá espacio disponible donde usted puede hacer comentarios adicionales.

Las entrevistas consistirán en las mismas preguntas que el informe, con la excepción del hecho que usted tendrá una mayor oportunidad de compartir su opinión. A menos que usted no este de acuerdo, las entrevistas serán registradas para los propósitos de esta.

Riesgos de la participación: No hay riesgos anticipados asociados a participar. Además, no hay riesgos sabidos asociados a este proyecto que son mayores que ésos encontrados normalmente en la vida diaria.

Ventajas: No hay ventajas o remuneración asociada a participar en este breve proyecto de investigación. Sin embargo, si usted quisiera una copia del producto final donde

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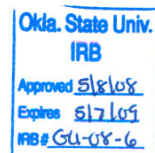
sus respuestas serán utilizadas, usted puede entrar en contacto con la investigadora (al email: ericapr@okstate.edu) después de mayo del 2009 (la fecha anticipada de la terminación de la tesis).

Confidencialidad: Todas las respuestas de los informes y las entrevistas son anónimas y no serán asociadas a usted personalmente ahora ni después de su participación. Durante el curso de la investigación y la tesis, sus respuestas serán privadas y confidenciales, y solamente accesibles a la investigadora. Serán cifradas numéricamente, para coordinar las respuestas de papel del examen con los de las entrevistas verbales. Después de que la investigación este completa, los consejeros de la investigadora posiblemente puedan tener acceso. Después de la terminación de la tesis, cualquier persona puede tener acceso a los resultados de la investigación, pero guardando su anonimato. Los datos de la investigación serán guardados por la investigadora en un envase, cerrado con llave. Los datos serán divulgados e incorporados en el proyecto final de la tesis. La información anónima que usted proporcionará será guardada por la investigadora hasta que el proyecto final sea completo.

Remuneración: No se ofrecerá ninguna remuneración para la participación en el estudio de la investigación. La participación es puramente voluntaria.

Contactos: Si usted tiene preguntas, puede contactarse con a la investigadora (Erica Roberts) por el email (ericapr@osktate.edu), o a la consejera académica de Erica, la Dr. Patricia Hipsher (patty.hipsher@okstate.edu).

Si usted tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como voluntario de esta investigación, usted puede contactarse con Dr. Shiela Kennison, IRB Chair, Cordell North, Stillwater, OK, USA 74078, or irb@okstate.edu.

Los Derechos Del Participante: Su participación en este proyecto de investigación es puramente voluntaria, al igual que si decide no continuar con la entrevista. Después de la participación, si usted decide que usted no desea que sus respuestas y opiniones sean incluidas en la tesis final, notificarlo a Erica Roberts cuanto antes.

Consentimiento: "Yo, el/la participante, entiendo perfectamente lo anteriormente leído y doy fe que se me a entregado una copia de lo anterior"

"Yo, la investigadora, certifico que he explicado personalmente este documento al participante, y he entregado una copia de la forma del consentimiento al participante."

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Informed Consent
Erica Roberts
School of International Studies
ericapr@osktate.edu

Project Title: Inquiries and Analyses of Media Influences on Social and Political
Perceptions between Latin American and the United States

Investigator: Erica Roberts, Master of Science student in the School of International
Studies, Oklahoma State University

Purpose: The main purpose of the intended research is to incorporate the opinions of
college-age persons through informal interviews and a survey into a thesis
project. You are being asked to participate in this survey because you fall under
the category of a college-age person. The researcher is specifically seeking
information pertaining to: 1.) what forms of media to young people tend to use?
and 2.) how do different forms of media influence young people of Latin
America and the United States and how they perceive one another socially and
politically?

Procedures: You will be asked to participate in either/both an informal interview or short
survey. In both, you will be asked questions about what forms of media (for
example, the Internet, newspapers, television) you generally use to obtain news
about political issues concerning the United States/Costa Rica. If you are a
native Spanish-speaker, the interviews and surveys will be conducted in
Spanish, and in English for native English-speakers. Participation in the survey
and interview should not exceed ten minutes each.

The surveys will be conducted either through surveymonkey.com or through
the conventional paper survey. In the survey questions, you will be asked to
choose the best choice that applies to you. There will also be space available
where you can make extra comments.

The interviews will consist of the same questions as the survey, with the
exception that you will have a greater opportunity to share your opinion more.
Unless you say otherwise, the interviews will be tape recorded for accuracy
purposes.

Risks of Participation: There are no anticipated risks associated with participating.
Furthermore, there are no known risks associated with this project which are
greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: There are no benefits or compensation associated with participating in this
brief research project. However, if you would like a copy of the final product
where your answers will be used, you may contact the investigator (via email:

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ericapr@okstate.edu) after May 2009 (the anticipated completion date of thesis).

Confidentiality: All answers to the surveys and interviews are anonymous and will not be associated with you personally at anytime during after your participation. During the course of research, your answers are private and confidential, and will only accessible to the investigator, and will be coded numerically, so as to coordinate paper survey answers with those of the verbal interviews. After the research is complete, the investigator's advisors may possibly have access. After completion of the thesis, any and all persons will have access to the research results. No risks associated with maintaining confidentiality are anticipated.

      The research data will be kept by the investigator in a locked container. The data will be reported and incorporated into the final thesis project. The anonymous information that you will be providing will be kept by the investigator until the final project is complete.

Compensation: No compensation will be offered for participation on the research study. Participation is purely voluntary.

Contacts: If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the investigator (Erica Roberts) by email at ericapr@osktate.edu, or the investigator's primary academic advisor, Dr. Patricia Hipsher at patty.hipsher@okstate.edu.

      If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shiela Kennison, IRB Chair, Cordell North, Stillwater, OK, USA 74078, or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights: Participation in this research project is purely voluntary, as is discontinuation in the project. After participation, if you decide that you do not want your answers and opinions included in the final thesis project, please notify Erica Roberts as soon as possible.

Consent: "I, the participant, have read and fully understand the consent form. By participating I give my consent. A copy of the consent form has been given to me."

    "I, the investigator, certify that I have personally explained this document to the participant, and have provided a copy of the consent form per the participant's request."

2

VITA

Erica Roberts Crownover

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: INQUIRIES AND ANALYSIS OF MEDIA INFLUENCES ON CROSS-
CULTURAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

Major Field: International Studies

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Mesa, Arizona, On May 23, 1983.

Education: Graduated early from Upper St. Clair High School, Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania in December 2000; received Bachelors of Arts degree in
Anthropology and Spanish from the University of Arizona, Tucson,
Arizona in December 2003. Completed the requirements for the Master
of Science in International Studies at Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2009.

Experience: Graduate assistant at Oklahoma State University from August
2007 to May 2009; employed as a contract interpreter/translator for
Catholic Diocese (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) and *Career*Tech (Stillwater,
Oklahoma); full-time service missionary for the LDS Church from
December 2004-June 2006 in Santiago, Chile.

Name: Erica Roberts Crownover   Date of Degree: May, 2009

Institution: Oklahoma State University   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: INQUIRIES AND ANALYSES OF MASS MEDIA INFLUENCES ON
                CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

Pages in Study: 124   Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: International Studies

Scope and Method of Study: This thesis investigates the various implications that mass
        media has on social perceptions and political relations between nations, and the
        effects that traveling abroad can have cross-cultural relationships. These topics
        are discussed and compared against current theories and arguments, as well
        against this study's survey results from over four hundred university students
        from over 50 countries.

Findings and Conclusions: The findings suggest that the time a person spends getting the
        news, as well as the sources, are very influential in how we perceive those not of
        our home countries. The findings suggest that American media, in particular, is
        very biased especially in regards to coverage of sensitive current events, like the
        war in Iraq. Furthermore, the study shows that worthwhile travels abroad are
        beneficial in breaking-down cross-cultural stereotypes that biased media creates.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Patricia Hipsher