CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

HAITI:
A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE 2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE IN
THE CONSERVATIVE AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in
Mass Communication
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May 2012
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and thank a number of people who made the completion of my thesis possible. First, I would like to thank my thesis committee Dr. Marcella De Veaux, Dr. Lori Baker-Schena, and Dr. Melissa A. Wall for their helpful recommendations and constructive criticism. A special thank you to my committee chair Dr. Melissa A. Wall, without whose guidance, patience and encouragement this project would not have been possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of my graduate school friends. This experience would not have been possible or bearable without so many of you by my side. Also, a special thank you to my two best friends, Lauren and Michelle. Through all the ups and downs, you two offered me never ending support.

Lastly, I’d like to thank my wonderful and supportive family. Your faith in me astounds me. Manuel, Lilia, and Horacio thank you for always encouraging me. Michie, thank you for always listening to me. Sergio, I couldn’t have made it this far without you.

To my parents, thank you for everything. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to pursue a higher education. I admire both you so much, for your selflessness and your generosity. Mom, thank you for never letting me lose faith even when I had lost all faith in myself Daddy, all I wanted to do was to make you proud and I hope you know that I recognize all the sacrifices you’ve made for me. Tener padres como ustedes es una bendición de Dios. Doy gracias a Dios todos los días por tenerlos que ustedes. Los quiero mucho.
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ABSTRACT

HAITI:
A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE 2010 HAITI EARTHQUAKE IN THE CONSERVATIVE AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA

By
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This study investigated the news coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake in the conservative media and mainstream media from January 12, 2010 to February 26, 2010. Through narrative analysis it was discovered that the conservative and mainstream news outlets created two similar narratives about Haiti. Both narratives were globally alike, but had different subsets, even though it was anticipated they would be completely different. The conservative news coverage revealed that the Washington Times, the National Review, and Reason Magazine created a narrative that depicted Haiti as a threat to the United States. The mainstream news coverage in the Washington Post and Time Magazine created a narrative that focused on sensationalizing the violence in Haiti as well as suggesting that the earthquake could be parlayed into something positive. The results revealed that the conservative media and the mainstream media narratives were both shaped by foreign policy and political government agendas. Furthermore, both media types portrayed Haitians through traditional stereotypical roles-- that of victims of circumstance or violent individuals.
Chapter 1

Introduction

At 4:53 p.m. local time on January 12, 2010, Haiti was shaken by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake. The island nation became completely paralyzed as the earthquake caused extreme panic and damage to the country’s infrastructure. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Haiti’s 2010 earthquake is among the 10 deadliest earthquakes since 1900. Over the years, the Caribbean nation has survived many natural disasters. In 2008 alone, the country experienced three hurricanes that led to heavy rains and floods. Nevertheless, Haitians were not prepared for the quake that left an estimated 200,000 dead and thousands of others injured.

Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world, was immediately placed in the international spotlight. In less than 24 hours, massive international relief efforts were started by the Red Cross, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, Doctors Without Borders, and other humanitarian agencies. In addition, the United States alone pledged $100 million dollars in quick aid relief and sent thousands of American troops as well. Two days after the quake, President Obama promised Haitians that they would not be forgotten and that during their greatest hour of need America would stand with them and support them (Kralev, 2010a). Haiti was inundated with not only aid, but supplies and volunteers. Thousands of people from different organizations as well as ordinary citizens became involved in helping Haiti. For many, this event was the first exposure they had to the island nation. Prior to the earthquake, Haiti was just another poverty-stricken country.

The national media attention Haiti received created exposure for a country that, for the most part, had been invisible to Western media. Previous coverage of Haiti
consisted of stories about the country’s unstable government and its multiple coups. When the story broke of tumbling buildings, starving Haitians, and orphaned children roaming the streets of the nation’s capital, Port-au-Prince, Haiti became international news. Due to new technology, videos and pictures were streamed onto news websites, blogs, and other media immediately. In a study conducted by The Pew Research Center, over 60% of Americans revealed that they were interested in the Haiti earthquake and that they followed news about the earthquake closely. In fact, the earthquake received more U.S. media coverage than the 2004 tsunami in India. Moreover, 70% of those polled disclosed that the earthquake was a popular topic to discuss with friends. The public attentiveness to Haiti further showed that 18% of people donated aid within the first week of the earthquake, while another 30% planned to do so.

Disaster coverage has been an area of study that has been researched extensively for the last 30 years. Previous studies show that emerging countries such as Haiti and India receive a vast amount of coverage when there is a disaster (Langton, 1991; Riffe, et al, 1994; Greenwood & Smith, 2007). The U.S. news media finds these events more newsworthy when there is a large number of deaths (Gaddy & Tanjong 1986; Simon 1997; Van Belle, 2000). It is not just mainstream media that are reporting on these disasters but also the conservative media. Shah’s (2009) recent research on the conservative news media revealed that they reported extensively on 2004’s Hurricane Katrina and produced a vast amount of commentary on the event.

The aim of this study is to answer the following questions 1) What was the main narrative that these conservative news outlets (the Washington Times, National Review Magazine, and Reason Magazine) constructed during the 2010 Haiti earthquake and how
did it compare to the narrative constructed by the mainstream press (*the Washington Post* and *Time Magazine*)? It also sought to answer the following sub-questions. How were Haitians portrayed during the 2010 Haiti earthquake in *the Washington Times*, *the Washington Post*, the *National Review Magazine*, *Reason Magazine*, and *Time Magazine*? How was Haiti depicted during the 2010 Haiti earthquake in *the Washington Times*, *the Washington Post*, the *National Review Magazine*, *Reason Magazine*, and *Time Magazine*?

**Significance**

While there has been substantial research on disaster coverage, many of these studies have primarily focused on elite newspapers in the mainstream media. This study will examine and compare how the conservative media and mainstream media portrayed and represented Haitians and Haiti during the 2010 earthquake. The mainstream media in this paper refers to news outlets that are disseminated widely through large distribution channels and are consumed by a mass audience. These mainstream news outlets deal with current events and reflect the current cultural climate. While, conservative news here is being referred to niche of news telling that is slanted towards a more conservative ‘right’ wing approach. The new sources used for this study considered themselves to be conservative news outlets, based either on self-identification or their perceived content. In the last two decades there has been significant growth in conservative media outlets (Viguerie & Franke, 2004; Jamieson & Cappella, 2008) and “given the success of Fox News, *the Wall Street Journal*, *the Washington Times*...and so on, no sensible person can dispute the existence of a conservative media” (Alterman, 2003, p. 9). The conservative
outlook has become so “extensive and influential” (p. 225) because it is “extremely well represented in every facet of the media.” (p. 11). For many, the conservative media is “now seemingly a permanent and defining feature of the media landscape” (Brock, 2004, p. 7). Thus, the U.S. conservative movement has not only created its own media institutions, but also established a conservative ideology that “skews the entire discourse towards the right” (Alterman, 2003, p. 225).

Further, what makes the conservative media outlets so important to examine is their sheer ability to determine “the shape and scope of our political agenda” (p. 11). In addition, what seems to make conservative establishment so effective is the echo chamber. The echo chamber “creates a common frame of reference and positive feedback loops for those who listen to, read and watch these media outlets” (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008, p.76). In other words, the conservative media employs the echo chamber as a method to reinforce their ideas and arguments. Therefore, by using a methodology such as narrative analysis, the researcher can analyze the ways in which the conservative narrative is similar or different from the mainstream one. In addition, since this a growing field of study, this research can be helpful in understanding how the conservative media reports on such events as disasters and developing countries such as Haiti, particularly because of the U.S. involvement with the country.

**Haiti’s Background**

On January 1, 1804 Haiti declared its independence from France. Haitians believed that would be the beginning of their independence from Western control and influence. Yet Farmer (2006) argues that Haiti has been unable to achieve democracy because of the continuous involvement of Western influence and imperialism. He adds
that Haiti has never been able to heal its “wounds of colonialism, racism, and inequality” (p. 63). In fact, Haiti has never been truly free from outside influences since its discovery by Christopher Columbus and has been repeatedly utilized by oppressors. For over a century, the United States has been Haiti’s biggest oppressor (Farmer, 2006).

In 1915, the U.S. invaded Haiti in an effort to restore order after Haitians overthrew their President and protested for better living conditions. According to Farmer, the United States’ mainstream press “applauded the occupation” (Farmer, 2006, p. 80), allowing the U.S. to stay in the country. It would be the beginning of a 19-year occupation, during which the U.S. created a more powerful Haitian military and a more pro-American stance (Chamberlain, 1995a). It was not until the United States established a military regime in Haiti that they left the Caribbean nation in 1934.

In 1957, Francois Duvalier, more commonly known as “Papa Doc,” won the presidential election. Some Haitians believed and hoped that he would bring change to the country. Instead, he was more brutal than his previous predecessors (Diederich & Burt, 1994). During his regime Haiti’s people were repressed, murdered, and brutalized (Chamberlain, 1995a).

Further, “Papa Doc” was a tyrant who supported U.S. interests, which earned him Washington’s support (Farmer, 2006). Trouillot (1995) adds that Papa Doc’s regime only created a bigger economic polarization between the elites and the poor. After his death in 1971, his son Jean-Claude Duvalier – known also as “Baby Doc” – took over the presidency. During his fifteen years of power, Baby Doc allowed the country to grow a bigger deficit (Trouillot, 1995). In 1984 out of desperation and hunger, slum dwellers looted food warehouses. Many Haitians began to riot and protest, marking the first time
in 25 years that citizens revolted openly against the Duvalier dictatorship (Chamberlain, 1995a). By the mid 1980s, Haiti was in a destitute state and relied heavily on aid from the United States. It was reported that U.S. was giving over 100 million dollars in aid annually (DeWind & Kinley, 1994). Some argue that the U.S. used its powerful economic status to control Haiti by removing or stalling aid to the country. The aid did not change the power structure in the corrupt Haitian government nor did it actually help the poorest Haitians who resided in rural areas (DeWind & Kinley, 1994).

The political instability only continued in Haiti as Baby Doc was forced into exile in 1986. Fearing a revolution, Haiti’s elite created a new temporary military junta, the National Government Council (CNG), which was supported by the American government (Chamberlain, 1995c). For the next three years, Haiti was ruled by General Namphy who was the head of the CNG. Namphy would continue the streak of violence that had plagued Haiti for years. In 1987, the CNG was set to preside over the first presidential elections in 30 years. The election ended in tragedy as many voters were murdered as protests erupted (Chamberlain, 1995b). Namphy cancelled all elections, creating an international outcry. Due to immense pressures, elections were held months later, and this time Haiti elected Leslie Manigat as its new president. Many critics viewed the election as a farce considering that less than 5% of the population voted (Chamberlain, 1995b). Manigat’s presidency was short-lived as he was forced into exile by Namphy. Namphy was later removed and replaced by Colonel Avril. Avril was supported by the United States and stayed in power until 1990. In 1990, the U.S. reportedly spent over $12 million dollars to supervise presidential elections in Haiti (Chamberlain, 1995c).
After much turmoil and bloodshed, 68% of the population elected its first democratic leader, Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 (Chamberlain, 1995d). Aristide, a former priest, was feared by the Haitian elites. Aristide gave a voice to Haitians who had long been forgotten by the government. During the Duvalier regime, Aristide became popular for his sermons, where he preached liberation theology. Aristide cited the military, the elites, and the U.S. as the main oppressors of Haiti (Wilentz, 1994). Nevertheless, when he won the 1991 election, the U.S. stated that it would stand by him (Chamberlain, 1995d).

On September 30, 1991 after only eight months in office, a coup d’état against President Aristide took place in Haiti. The military coup led by Lt. General Cedras forced Aristide into exile. In the first two weeks alone it was reported that over one thousand Haitians were murdered and others tortured (Canham-Clyne, 1994). Those suspected of supporting Aristide or being against the coup went missing. Two days after the coup, the Organization of American States (OAS) along with the United States declared that the military junta was illegal and that Aristide needed to be restored to power (Ives, 1994). The OAS insisted that all nations comply with a trade and oil embargo until President Aristide returned to Haiti. Critics such as Chomsky, Farmer & Goodman (2004) argue that this new junta terrorized the country, but was continuously supported by the United States with foreign aid. While the U.S. initially supported the return of the president, it did not follow through with the trade embargo (Ives, 1994). In fact, much of the aid that was pouring into Haiti was used to buy military equipment. In addition, the CIA was clandestinely providing military training to Haiti’s right-wing military junta (Farmer, 2006).
For the next three years, Haiti was controlled by military rule. The junta created the Front pour l’Avancement et le Progrès Haitien (FRAPH) which acted as the new Haitian government. The FRAPH terrorized Haitians by using death squads and controlling all forms of media. In addition, thousands of Haitians were fleeing the country in boats and going to the United States (Canham-Clyne, 1994). Few refugees were granted asylum and most were returned to Haiti. By the summer of 1993, the United States, eager to ameliorate the deteriorating situation in Haiti, decided to hold a conference in New York with the United Nations, President Aristide and the de-facto Haitian government. Ives (1994) claims that this meeting was part of the U.S. “strategy to drive Aristide to surrender to Duvalierism and imperialism by striking a deal with the coup leaders and inviting foreign military invention” (p.68). Fear of Aristide coming back to Haiti initiated more brutal attacks on Haitians and many went missing. The U.S. remained on the sidelines until July 1994 when the United Nations granted support to a military intervention (Ives, 1994). By fall, the U.S. was in full control of Haiti, and, after four years, Aristide was restored to the presidency with the help of President Clinton.

Upon his return, Aristide was compelled to adopt a neo-liberal program that practically demolished “the remaining shreds of economic sovereignty” that Haiti had (Chomsky, Farmer, & Goodman, 2004, p.6). Prior to the 1991 coup, the United States accounted for more than 90% of foreign investment in the country. Farmer and Chomsky maintain that Haiti’s instability is because of the United States’ constant involvement in its economic and political affairs. Chomsky (2004) adds that the U.S. has repeatedly defended invading countries such as Haiti because they are “failed states” (Chomsky, Farmer, & Goodman, 2004, p. 2). For many, the coup had removed all democracy from
Haiti and allowed the U.S. to began a second occupation of the country.

More than five years later, Aristide was re-elected president of Haiti. Once again turmoil began to emerge when Aristide took office. There are various reports that two months after Aristide returned “influential Republicans worked to block or burden with conditions aid to the impoverished strife-torn Haiti” (Farmer, 2004, p. 17). Goodman & Goodman (2006) point out that over half of the population is living below the poverty line and that aid is relied on to feed many of these people. The lack of aid only made conditions worse. Goodman and Goodman assert it was nearly impossible for Aristide to govern Haiti as the situation grew dire (Goodman & Goodman, 2006). For many Haitians, history was repeating itself.

The 2004 coup in Haiti was not unexpected. The international community was well-informed that “well-armed ‘insurgents’ or ‘rebels,’ really mercenaries” were vandalizing and terrorizing Haiti (Winter, 2008, p. 4). Winter (2008) states that the collapse of the economy, enormous debt, and lack of foreign aid made Haiti vulnerable to the opposition. Goodman and Goodman (2006) assert it was the U.S. that orchestrated the entire plot to exile Aristide from Haiti and keep him prisoner in Bangui, Central African Republic. The United States denied any wrong doing. The U.S. government claimed that it helped Aristide escape Haiti, even though Aristide claimed he was kidnapped. Goodman suggests that the United States’ reaction to the 2004 coup showed how deeply embedded the country was in Haiti’s government. This time the United States openly declared that it supported the military coup even though it was led by known death squad leaders who had overthrown Aristide in the 1991 coup (Goodman & Goodman 2006). In an effort to restore democracy, the Bush administration supported the Chief Justice of the
Supreme Court Boniface Alexandre becoming the country’s leader. During his provisional time as president, thousands of Aristide supporters were imprisoned or tortured. Aristide never returned to finish his presidency. Instead, in 2006 after four failed attempts, Haiti elected Rene Preval as its new president. While Preval is its official leader, the role of the United States in the last decade has not diminished and the country continues to be a prominent presence in Haiti.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This section will review literature about the thesis’ theoretical approach and disaster news coverage. It will first discuss media theory and cultural studies. Then, it will examine related studies such as news coverage from emerging countries and disaster coverage from emerging countries. It will also explore the growth of conservative media in the United States and finally Haiti’s media coverage in the United States.

Media Theory

Cultural studies is not just one area or one theory but an interdisciplinary field that examines cultural process, products and texts. In fact the popularity of this critical field stems from its ability to bring combine ideas and methods. According to Turner (2003), this convergence has allowed scholars to understand “phenomena and relationships that were not accessible through existing disciplines” (p. 9).

While the field of cultural studies is wide, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) is often credited for its role in the development of the cultural study of media. The CCCS combined European theoretical models with an examination of popular culture (Turner, 2003). Prior to this, popular culture was mostly dismissed and ignored. For the CCCS, popular culture became a focus of study because it is a place where meaning is created and where the “everyday struggles between dominant and subordinate groups are fought, won and lost” (Procter, 2004, p. 11). Turner (2003) further adds that the work in British cultural studies has always “addressed itself to the
interrogation of society’s structures of domination” (Turner, 2003, p. 5). Procter (2004) argues that Stuart Hall has been one of the most influential thinkers in the field and helped other scholars see the politics of culture. Hall emphasizes examining power relationships and the naturalization of these relationships.

It is Hall’s work with ideology, race, and identity that has been particularly useful in exposing power relations that exist within society. Hall defines ideology as “those images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and ‘make sense’ of some aspect of social existence” (Hall, 1995a, p. 18). Hall argues that many of these ideological processes are unconscious. In addition, ideology is a part of everyday discourse because there is an intrinsic link between language and ideology (Hall, 1982). Thus, by thriving beneath the conscious, ideologies are naturalized and continue to proliferate in society.

Hall also identifies the role of the media as a crucial element in the diffusion of ideologies. He notes that media institutions are one of the most important areas of study since they are “sites for the production, reproduction and transformation of ideologies” (Hall, 1995a, p. 19). They are also responsible for constructing images, frames, and representations of the social world (Hall, 1995a).

In regards to race, Hall argues that the media not only defines race, but they are also the sites where “ideas are articulated, worked on and transformed and elaborated” (Hall, 1995b, p. 20). Hall asserts that there are still traces of racist ideologies. While old racism was overt, new racism or inferential racism relies on naturalized representations of what it is to be a minority. Much of racism is below the surface, showcasing itself through news, films, and television. Hall believes that people and things are given
meaning by how “we represent them – the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce” (Hall, 1997, p.3). For Hall, this is representational power. He insists that this power is not just economical or physical but also symbolic because it enables certain groups to define things or people in certain ways (Hall, 1997). In other words, media institutions exercise this symbolic power through popular culture and creating a consensus through hegemony that favors the powerful (Hall, 1982).

Related to Hall is the work of Edward Said. For Said, ideology is part of discourse and plays a vital part in his framework of Orientalism. Said (1994) defines Orientalism as a “style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 3). This ‘other’ is defined as non-western. The idea of the ‘other’ is constructed politically and culturally. Said argues that the Orient helped European cultures create and strengthen their identities particularly through colonization. Western powers are able to identify themselves as different by comparing themselves to one another. Therefore the West was able to rationalize itself as the strong parent who was “virtuous, mature, normal.” (p. 40), while insinuating that the ‘other’ is backward. The image of the ‘other’ is one that has a “limited vocabulary and imagery” (p. 60).

Orientalism and hegemony alter power relations. In the case of Orientalism, the West feels entitled to control the ‘other’ because of their supposed knowledge over them. The images then shown in the news media become political tools to justify U.S. involvement in non-western nations. Orientalism’s power also lies in the fact that it causes people to fear the exotic, wild other. One of the few ways to answer Americans’ fear of the “other” is by controlling the ‘other’ politically, which has happened in
numerous countries from Haiti to Iraq. The hegemonic power relies on certain groups dominating others and as Said argues Orientalism justifies and naturalizes this control.

**Emerging Countries’ News Coverage**

Over the last few decades, numerous studies have shown that the news reported by the Western press about developing nations is limited to certain subject topics such as famine, war, and disasters. These topics typically present a negative viewpoint about these nations. By the news focusing on these type of sensationalized stories, audiences begin to form distorted opinions about emerging nations.

**Limited World View**

As noted by Langton (1991), the mainstream press has been criticized for its distorted coverage of emerging countries. In his study, Langton examined the quantity and types of photographs used to depict emerging countries in *the New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, *the Chicago Tribune*, and *the Los Angeles Times*. His study revealed that about 40% of photographs used in these newspapers were about foreign nations. From these results, Langton decided that emerging countries were featured prominently in the mainstream news. However, the photographs that were used were all similar in nature in all four newspapers (Langton, 1991). Langton notes that most of the photographers were sensationalized and focused mainly on military and war. This evidence suggests that these four prestige newspapers frame developing countries as only crisis and conflict orientated. For Langton, this is a problem because readers are only seeing “sensational behavior” and may start to view it as normal (Langton, 1991). Further, Langton argues the results reveal that foreign counties are distorted by the
Western press.

Greenwood and Smith (2007) conducted a content analysis that compared Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs to Pictures of the Year International (POYi) from 1943 through 2003. The authors wanted to study how “visual themes and geographic areas” were represented in these photographs (p. 94). Greenwood and Smith’s results found that both POYi and Pulitzer Prize winning photographs mainly consisted of war and coups, followed by illustrations of poverty and other social problems (p. 89). For the POYi, Eastern Europe was the most popular geographic area to photograph, whereas Pulitzer Prize photographs focused mostly on Africa. Furthermore, photographs from Latin American regions also centered on natural disasters and conflicts. The authors determined that audiences were presented with a skewed image of the world. Audiences are encouraged to assume that only specific regions such as Africa and Latin America are “violent and conflict-ridden” (p. 94). Thus many of these poor countries only receive coverage when violent conflict or natural disasters are happening. Greenwood and Smith add that representations reinforce stereotypes about citizens from a certain region and the region itself. The only way to ameliorate the situation, Greenwood and Smith argue, is for these award winning photographs to frame more positive images and depict countries as being culturally diverse and interesting.

The treatment of these emerging nations by the media has often been described as imbalanced. Riffe and Shaw’s (1982) research investigated whether media critics and scholars have been accurate about how the Western press consistently focuses on “Third World conflict or upheavals to the exclusion of positive aspects of developing countries” (p. 617). Their content analysis examined the trends of foreign news coverage in the New
York Times and the Chicago Tribune for a period of ten years. The longitudinal study revealed that both newspapers published minimally reported stories that dealt with the importance of the Third World in politics. Riffe and Shaw (1982) also discovered that developing countries’ internal and international conflicts were the most prevalent topic in both newspapers. The Chicago Tribune, however, focused more on floods, fires, and other ‘bad news.’ Nevertheless, the newspapers did occasionally shed light on “positive aspects of Third World countries” (p. 624). Riffe and Shaw concluded that both newspapers wrote similar stories about the world that only helped “foster images of Third World nations as political systems rife with conflict” (p. 626).

Chaudhary (2001), however, argued that the West has been treated unfairly by critics who say that the Western world only writes about emerging countries when it has to do with war, famines, and other events. Chaudhary conducted a content analysis that compared the Washington Post and the Daily Times of Nigeria for a period of one week. The purpose of the research was to examine “the factor of cultural variability in international news” (p. 241). More specifically, he was interested to see if the U.S. media concentrated only on negative news of these emerging countries and if there was a positive and negative slant on stories. What he discovered was that both newspapers carried a small amount more of negative news than positive news. However, the Washington Post did give more coverage to ‘event stories’ such as disasters and accidents than the Daily Times of Nigeria (Chaudhary, 2001). Nevertheless, Chaudhary argues his research demonstrated that emerging nations and the western world have “shifted their focus from negative news to neutral news” (p. 250).
Number of Stories

According to Chang (1998), not all countries are created equal in the news. After conducting a five day case study during the World Trade Organization conference in Singapore, he found that core countries such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom received more coverage by Reuters. These core countries were able to “command more news attention than do other nations” (p. 22). Developing countries were deemed as less significant and had less coverage. Chang adds that being able to identify a country in the news shows that they are valuable and important to the international community. Many of these developing nations had a higher probability of being mentioned if they were in company of core nations (Chang, 1998). Emerging countries were rarely given a voice and had to go through several news filters before they received any coverage, showing that news coverage for certain countries is unbalanced.

Riffe et. al (1994) aimed to examine if coverage of international news in the New York Times had dwindled over a period of time. They conducted a longitudinal study that analyzed 22 years, 1969 through 1990, of international coverage in the Times. They discovered was the New York Times “clearly cut by half the number of foreign items it selects for publication” (p.77). The newspaper no longer utilized many foreign correspondents as well. The news items found on the newspaper focused on negative news. Many of the stories in the newspaper mainly dealt with emerging nations. The authors also found that while there are fewer foreign stories in the New York Times, the stories that are now featured are longer in length and concentrate more on major issues versus small pieces of news from the newswire.
Inter-media Agenda Setting

Golan’s (2006) content analysis examined how “newsworthiness of international events may result from an inter-media agenda-setting process” (p. 323). The author hypothesized that an inter-media agenda was a significant variable in international news selection process. From 1995 to 2000, the author analyzed news content from the New York Times and ABC, NBC, and CBC evening news programs. Golan’s research found many similarities between the New York Times and the three television news networks. The content analysis revealed that the New York Times and three networks focused on the same 15 countries. These 15 nations were repeatedly showcased as newsworthy, more so “than all other nations in the world combined” (p. 328). The author claims that television broadcasts were somewhat influenced by the New York Times. In addition, the research established how there is unbalanced coverage of international news. Riffe et. al (1994) added in their research that the New York Times concentrated heavily in certain areas of international news, which is supported by Golan’s findings. For Golan, news agencies are influencing each other, which shows that the type of news viewers and readers are receiving is just a limited portion of international news overall.

In their study, Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) examined how international news coverage constricted audiences’ opinion about foreign nations. They claimed that agenda setting could influence individuals and encourage them to evaluate certain countries in a more positive or negative light. Wanta et. al compared responses to a 1998 public opinion survey by the Chicago Council for Foreign Relations and media coverage from ABC, NBC, CBS, and CNN. The results revealed that the more negative coverage a nation
received, the more likely respondents were to see the nation in a more negative way (Wanta et. al, 2004). Wanta et. al also found a correlation that some countries had a great importance to respondents due to the increase of news coverage about that nation or vice versa. For example, “Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Poland, and Haiti were at the bottom of the public agenda” and were repeatedly ignored in TV news agenda (Wanta et al, 2004). Meanwhile, other countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada were listed as high priority in respondents’ minds and were repeatedly featured on the news agenda. The research showed that the amount of media coverage a nation receives can impact the way respondents feel about and view that country.

Golan’s (2008) study aimed to examine if American news outlets had a balanced coverage of Africa and all its nations. In other words, he wanted to investigate if Africa was newsworthy. From January 2002 through December 2004, he examined 878 stories from ABC, NBC, CBS, and CNN nightly news programs. His content analysis revealed that television networks focused on selected African nations. Out of the 54 countries in Africa, 22 of those “accounted for more than 90 percent of overall coverage” (p. 49). In addition, he discovered that the nations of Libya, South Africa, Egypt, and Liberia received the most coverage. Thus, the majority of African nations were ignored even though there were many newsworthy events going on such as the AIDS pandemic, famine, and ethnic cleansing (Golan, 2008). According to Golan these finding suggest that foreign policy dictates the amount of coverage certain nations receive from U.S. news outlets.
Emerging Countries Disaster Coverage

Disaster news coverage has grown widely, as natural disasters and man-made ones gain more media visibility. Disasters are considered non-routine news and receive immense amount of attention from the media. Further, readers’ interest in this topic has allowed it to flourish in the Western press.

Disaster News

Research conducted by Sood, Stockdale, and Rogers (1987) looked at how the media operated during natural disasters. They found that the news media utilized numerous strategies for covering disasters such as reassigning staff and relying on official sources. Whether it is an earthquake in the Caribbean or a flood in the United States, these events are popular to report and are typically incorporated in the news if they are defined as disasters by other officials. The research also revealed that disasters are assigned a news value. Factors such as death tolls and injuries, geographic area, and the severity of the disaster were all crucial in the amount of news coverage each one received (Sood et al, 1982). The researchers also argue that their study of five disasters showcased that the news embraces certain aspects of the disasters and those elements eventually become the main part of the news story (Sood et al, 1982).

Disaster Coverage in Emerging Countries

Adams’ (1986) analysis of news content from “ABC World News Tonight,” “CBS Evening News,” and “NBC Nightly News” revealed that not all foreign disasters
are covered equally. Adams initially hypothesized that the prominence of an international disaster on U.S. television news would reflect the magnitude of the disastrous event. He proposed that high death tolls would make the disaster more newsworthy. From January 1972 through June 1985, Adam studied 35 major disasters for a period of one month. Adams found that the severity of disasters did not correlate with the amount of coverage in the news. For example, in 1976 Guatemala had one of the worst earthquakes of the century where thousands died. Nevertheless, an earthquake in Italy where there were less than 1,000 deaths received almost the same amount of coverage. He also discovered that Asian and Latin American countries received the least amount of coverage even though they had more severe disasters than Western countries.

Adams also identified other factors in his research that determined why certain foreign disasters received more coverage than others. Aside from death tolls, the number of U.S. tourists and the proximity to New York City were compelling factors in how much coverage a country’s foreign disaster was given. Adams’ evidence suggests that victims from earthquakes, floods, and typhoons from emerging countries are not as valuable as those from the Western world.

By contrast, a study conducted by Gaddy and Tanjong (1986) concluded that the death rates in foreign disasters is the most significant variable in determining coverage in the media. After examining 100 Third World earthquakes in the western press, they saw that it is not the magnitude of the earthquake that “determines its newsworthiness but its human and physical consequences” (p. 110). They argue their study shows that media have no cultural favoritism or bias against emerging countries. The media just focus on events that are more newsworthy such as disasters where thousands are killed.
Building on Adams’ (1986) and Gaddy and Tanjong’s (1986) research, Van Belle (2000) examined the New York Times and network TV news coverage of foreign disasters and analyzed how certain variables could influence the amount of coverage. Focusing on a 32-year period, he examined 2,337 disasters outside of the United States. Van Belle divided his research into three portions. The first portion examined three variables: the distance from Washington D.C, the number of people killed in the disaster, and U.S. tourism. The other variables he examined were English as a main language, gross domestic product per capita, power, press freedom, and democracy. Van Belle’s research supported Gaddy and Tanjong's (1986) finding that the number of “people killed is unquestionably the most important independent variable” and makes the event newsworthy (p. 64). In addition, Van Belle discovered similarly to Adams (1986) that distance is important variable in disaster coverage. He also reported that countries with wealthier governments caused a disaster to be newsworthy for a shorter period of time (p. 65).

Media Visibility in the Western Press

Suryanarayan (2008) claims that natural disasters are one of the few ways that emerging nations enjoy visibility in the media. Unlike most media studies of international disasters, Suryanarayan’s research looked at the duration of coverage of the 2004 tsunami. Suryanarayan also investigated the prominence of stories about the tsunami between December 2004 through February 2005. She conducted a content analysis during a three month period, that examined three elite American newspapers, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and the Christian Science Monitor. Suryanarayan found
that the media searchlight concentrated on various countries that were affected by the tsunami for four weeks. Suryanarayan believed this was aided by the “tremendous visual impact, pictures, and television videos” of the disaster (Suryanarayan, 2008, p. 16). It was not until the fifth week that media outlets began to lessen their coverage of the tsunami.

Thus, Suryanarayan found that while major disasters set off “a chain of high visibility news content about some less covered Third-World countries” it rarely lasts. (Suryanarayan, 2008, p. 16). Similarly to Van Belle (2000), Suryanarayan found that the number of people killed in disasters influenced coverage. In her research, the largest number of people killed in the tsunami were in Indonesia and Sri Lanka (Suryanarayan, 2008). Therefore, Sri Lanka and Indonesia received the most prominence in all three newspapers. For Suryanarayan, the prominence of disaster coverage varied with each country affected by the tsunami. Suryanarayan argues the study highlighted how the media and public focus only on emerging countries through disaster coverage.

Simon (1997) proposed there was a connection between how much a television network covered international earthquakes and how much disaster relief aid they would receive. Taking an 18 year-sample from 1972 through 1990, he found a total of 22 international earthquakes. He examined footage from ABC, NBC, and CBS nightly news. Simon discovered that one of the major factors that determine news coverage is large death tolls (Gaddy & Tanjong, 1986; Van Belle, 2000). From these results, Simon found intentional earthquakes that received immense attention received much more aid. However, Simon did not examine which international earthquakes received the most coverage and which ones received the most relief aid. Still, this study reiterates the notion that disaster coverage is readily reported by the media especially when there are large
number of deaths.

Following up on a similar idea, Weberling (2009) researched the public response to the Pakistan earthquake in 2005 and the South Asian tsunami in 2004. Specifically, he analyzed how CNN, NBC Nightly News, and the New York Times coverage increased disaster relief. Weberling conducted his study using content analysis for the first two weeks of each disaster. He found that within a week of when the tsunami hit, there was more than enough aid, while the Pakistan earthquake had a small aid flow. Overall, Weberling found that tsunami victims “received an unprecedented outpouring of international aid” (Weberling, 2009, p. 40). Weberling found that CNN dedicated an immense amount of time covering and highlighting the tsunami. There were numerous reports dedicated to the victims and actual footage of reporters in these areas.

Weberling argued that the impact of the disaster played a large role in coverage and relief efforts. The tsunami was an “unprecedented event” that affected millions of people. It had a high death toll, whereas the Pakistan earthquake was “not as dramatic an event and its effects were not wide reaching” (Weberling, 2009, p. 42). Weberling claims that the tsunami’s large geographic area and far more devastating visual impact contributed to Americans’ large donations of aid to tsunami victims. Finally, Weberling adds that the first two weeks are the most vital when it comes to disasters and helping disaster victims since it is during that time media outlets are the most involved and zealous about the incident.
Emerging Nations Disaster Victims

Orgad (2008) conducted a study that analyzed how much agency was given to those who were involved in disasters and how they were depicted in news coverage. She specifically looked at “sufferers and helpers” of the October 2005 earthquake in South Asia and the July 2005 terror bombings in London (Orgad, 2008). Orgad picked eight of the leading UK daily newspapers and used discourse analysis to examine coverage. Orgad assumed that because of the proximity of the bombings to London that the London bombings would grant more agency to its victims. However, her research found that South Asia earthquake helpers were granted more agency. The Pakistani earthquake was to be “understood as manageable and treatable” (Orgad, 2008, p. 23). Thus, readers were less inclined to feel compassion or intervene in the crisis. Furthermore, Orgad states that coverage was tainted by “cultural favoritism” because the London bombing victims’ pain was presented as unbearable and as “of having no relief” (Orgad, 2008, p. 23). The London western victims were portrayed as more valuable. They were depicted as more dynamic, whereas Pakistani sufferers were primarily described as passive and helpless. Pakistani victims were shown as survivors who knew how to deal with these types of disasters. Therefore, readers were encouraged to deny the suffering of those who were not like them. Orgad concludes that media’s reporting on suffering needs to invite “readers to expand their horizons to acknowledge the humanity of people who are not like themselves” (Orgad, 2008, p. 26).

In their study, Bulla & Borah (2006) compared visual framing in newspapers from three different countries on three continents to see how they visually portrayed the
first week of the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. By employing qualitative and quantitative content analysis, they examined all photographs from *the New York Times, the New York Post, the London Times, the Hindu,* and *the Times of India.* They were particularly interested in “what editors emphasized, excluded and elaborated” with the photographs they chose (Bulla & Borah, 2006, p. 15). For Bulla and Borah, the images of these two natural disasters generated horror for audiences all over the world, yet the media in the tsunami coverage had more visible depictions of death and destruction. Their research found that all five newspapers utilized different visual frames for their coverage. In the American newspapers, *the New York Times* and *the New York Post,* they showed “large, close-up pictures of victims and relatives in deplorable conditions and this was avoided in the Katrina coverage” (Bulla & Borah, 2006, p. 38).

In addition, dead bodies of tsunami victims were shot at close range and uncovered. Bulla & Borah stated that the U.S. media censored and restrained themselves with Hurricane Katrina victims because they wanted to respect the dead and not cause outrage, while victims of the tsunami were “unknown faces, far away from the U.S.” (Bulla & Borah, 2006, p. 38). Bulla and Borah also noted that in *the New York Times, the New York Post,* and *the London Times,* all western victims, survivors, and mourners were named, whereas non-Westerners were not. They believed this showed that “western media gives more importance to Westerners than people from the Third World” (Bulla & Borah, 2006, p. 40). Bulla and Borah concluded that images from these two disasters allowed readers to formulate their own ideas about victims.
Conservative News Media

In recent years, the conservative media has grown tremendously. From think tanks, to journals to television talk shows, conservative opinions and ideals are permeate through society. This conservative infiltration influences the national agenda and public policy. Thus, conservatives have created media sphere that is far-reaching.

Conservative Media

Viguerie & Franke (2004) claim that liberal mainstream media were the catalyst for conservatives to create their own media. In the last 40 years, conservatives have employed alternative media such as newsletters and magazines to spread their message. Now with the rise of the internet and cable television, they have been able to pervade all forms of media. The authors argue that during the 1950s and 1960s conservative were on the margins of the news. They argue that while most newspapers had a liberal ideology, conservative voices were only heard through opinion editorials. Thus, they started their own publications. Human Events and the National Review were among the first two conservative publications of this wave and would eventually inspire numerous new journals and blogs that are now part of the conservative movement. Further, many of these publications are “laboratories where a movement tests out news ideas and strategies” as well as “give you a peek at the issues you’ll hear about on TV next, and then out of the mouths of political candidates” (p. 256). Thus, the importance of conservative journals, blogs, and magazines has increased, immensely influencing the U.S national agenda.
Jamieson & Cappella (2008) note that “the conservative media have developed the capacity to wrap their audience in an insulating media enclave of information and opinion” (p. 4). They assert that the Republican party and the conservative media are involved in a feedback loop that helps support the conservative movement. In addition, through their examination of the most prominent conservative media outlets, particularly Rush Limbaugh’s radio show, two television shows on Fox News, and the Wall Street Journal editorial page, they found that conservative media marginalizes the mainstream media in order to minimize their effects (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). The conservative establishment claims that mainstream media are biased and are continuously trying to attack conservatives because of their ideals.

Furthermore, Jamieson & Cappella claim that what makes the conservative establishment so effective is the echo chamber. The echo chamber “creates a common frame of reference and positive feedback loops for those who listen to, read and watch these media outlets” (p. 76). In other words, the conservative media employs the echo chamber as a method to reinforce their ideas and arguments. This can be done through legitimizing other conservative sources and/or directly citing them (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). In the end, the echo chamber is one of the key reasons the conservative establishment has flourished and continues to do so.

Intermedia Agenda Setting

Shah’s (2009) study examined the ways conservative news media portrayed the African American victims of Hurricane Katrina who did not evacuate New Orleans when the hurricane struck. Shah reports that many of the poor black residents who stayed
behind were shown as having a lack of common sense. Shah analyzed editorials from the Chicago Tribune, the Arizona Republic, and the Dallas Morning News. In addition, he also examined twenty leading conservative magazines and leading conservative columnist’s websites. During his two-year study, he utilized textual analysis to tease “out latent cultural meaning embedded in texts” (p. 7).

Shah’s research revealed that the conservative media crafted black victims as inferior, a different breed from Caucasians. The language used to describe blacks presented them as a “non-human race” who were filled with flaws. They could not help but be immoral, violent, and irresponsible (Shah, 2009). Additionally, they were represented as unworthy victims. They did not deserve sympathy because they decided to stay in New Orleans after they were told to evacuate. The conservative media de-legitimized black residents and made them seem careless for putting themselves and others in danger. Finally, Shah asserts that his research revealed how the conservative news media used imagery and cultural symbols to maintain the status quo and perpetuate “racial hierarchy” that denies black victims “to little or no relief” (p. 13).

**Media Coverage of Haiti**

Haiti’s media visibility in the United States has been minimal compared to other countries. In fact, Haiti has been pertinent in the U.S. news cycle during times of political instability and natural disasters. Thus, the news coverage regarding Haiti has been limited and often supports stereotypical viewpoints about the country and its citizens.

In her study, Manoucheka (2005) analyzed the New York Times and compared how Cubans and Haitians were framed from January 1, 1994 through December 31,
2004. She found that both groups were framed negatively but Haitians much more than Cubans. The majority of stories concerning Haitians were about “natural disasters, politics, Haiti’s economy and U.S. involvement in Haiti” (p. 28). She argues that the two most dominant frames used by *the New York Times* portrayed Haitians as either criminals or victims. When shown as criminals, they were depicted as being untrustworthy, violent, and cunning. If they were not criminals, they were victims of poverty. Haitians were also showcased as being hopeless and living in slums. Manoucheka adds that when Haitians were portrayed as victims, they also lacked “agency, mostly in situations out of their control. This was most apparent in coverage of floods and hurricanes” (p. 34).

Manoucheka notes in comparison that Cubans were framed as having positive characteristics whether they were in Cuba or not. In addition, Cubans had more positive news frames than Haitians. Furthermore, Manoucheka believes her findings show that not all ethnic groups are treated equally in the media. Manoucheka’s study supported her notion that the coverage of these two groups was driven by ethnocentrism and foreign policy.

*Media Coverage 1991 Coup*

In a two-year analysis of the mainstream media, Orenstein (1993) found that the coverage of Haiti was “U.S.-centric” and unbalanced in American newspapers (p.104). She argued that the media relied heavily on official sources from the American government and military. For example, in *the New York Times* she discovered that over 35% of its sources were U.S. officials and another 10% were unknown diplomats. From September to December 1991, *the New York Times* rarely utilized Haitian sources. After
the 1991 coup, newspapers such as the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, and the Washington Post began to define Aristide in stereotypical fashion. She adds that they used “unbalanced epithets and adjectives” in their description of him (p.104). For Orenstein, this type of coverage showed that the United States disapproved of Aristide as president.

Both the Washington Post and the New York Times began to focus on coverage about Aristide and his alleged human right abuses during office after the coup. They minimally focused on how the de-facto government and the military were killing innocent civilians. Orenstein argues that the mainstream press did not report on how the U.S. disregarded the embargo placed on Haiti and stealthily continued to send aid to the military government that removed Aristide. The distorted coverage by the mainstream press against Haiti demonstrated to Orenstein that the U.S. media was supporting the State Department and foreign policy set by Washington.

Utilizing a Burkean analysis, Lule (1997) examined coverage of Haiti in the New York Times from 1991 through 1994. Lule argues that during the 1991 coup, misinformation was planted and spread across the international news community, especially within the United States. Furthermore, he found that Haiti was continuously portrayed as a “backward society whose religious, political and social customs rendered it a ‘ungovernable’” (p. 15). The 1991 coup was naturalized by the press. Lule condemned it as a “propaganda campaign against Aristide” headed by the CIA (p. 6).

It was not until President Clinton wanted to restore Aristide to power did the coverage of the coup change. Within months the military junta who took power during the coup was repeatedly de-legitimized, even though the junta had a relationship with the
United States. In addition, when the Clinton administration was ready to restore Aristide to power, *the New York Times* reported that he was the “legitimate ruler of Haiti” and he was wrongly removed from power and needed to return to Haiti as soon as possible.

Once Aristide did return to Haiti and “resisted U.S. economic and security policies,” the coverage changed (p. 13). Aristide was presented as a radical leader with flawed judgment who did not support democracy or capitalism. The only hope that Haiti had was for Aristide to finish his term and allow a different president to take command of Haiti. Lule claims that the media’s coverage was shaped by U.S. foreign policy. Thus, *the New York Times* coverage of Haiti’s 1991 coup was dominated by a U.S. government agenda.

**Media Coverage 2004 Coup**

As noted by Baumgartel (2007), Haiti had a tumultuous relationship with the U.S. that has been documented by the mainstream press. In her study, Baumgartel explored the way *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* represented the Haitian political landscape prior to the 2004 coup. Baumgartel identified seven key words that were repeatedly utilized by both newspapers when reporting about Haiti’s political landscape. For example, she found that force, gang, militant, and mob were consistently used when describing Aristide and his administration. Also *the New York Times* wrote more stories about the conflict and referred more to Aristide opponents than his supporters in their coverage compared to the Washington Post. Aristide supporters “were referred to with words that carry a value judgment, often a negative one” (p. 13). In other words, *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* portrayed Aristide as an inadequate leader and his
supporters as militants who wanted to stay in power. Finally, Baumgartel concludes by saying that her research supports the argument that mainstream press follows U.S. foreign policy.

Some observers argue that the 2004 coup in Haiti would have not been possible without the media (MacDonald, 2008). The media system in Haiti was subsidized by the U.S. and Canada. They created and “financed programs to ‘promote democracy’ and foster ‘professional journalism’ (p. 9). In reality these programs were utilized to create psychological warfare on Aristide and his government. The media was used to ‘fight’ Aristide. The stories that were reported and written “focused on publicizing alleged abuses under Aristide’s government” (p. 10). The rebellion that was covered by the privately owned radio stations were specifically chosen to cover all the demonstrations that went against Aristide. Many of these stations were owned by American supporters and they did their best to stop all commercial media organizations from promoting positive demonstrations about Aristide even though they were bigger in size. The international news community therefore mainly reported that Haitians were rebelling and were anti-Aristide. Macdonald argued that the U.S. and Canadian governments utilized the media development in Haiti as another method to control the country and stage the coup for Aristide.

Winter (2008) argues that when Aristide was removed from office, two distinct stories were reported about the incident. According to the U.S., Aristide resigned and asked for help from the United States embassy. Aristide claims he was deceived and taken out of the country against his will. The media focused on the United States’ version that Aristide had resigned and that riots and protests had surged after his departure
(Winter, 2008). The United States claimed that this was a victory for Haiti and that democracy was possible now. There was minimal coverage on Aristide’s allegations that he was forcefully removed. Instead, the news became focused on how Western powers were going to help Haiti restore peace and bring democracy to them (Winter, 2008). In 2005, Rene Preval was elected the new president of Haiti after the United States initiated a meeting with him allowing the U.S. involvement to continue in the country. Winter concludes that the 2004 coup was easily forgotten by the mainstream media because if examined closely, it would reveal the true role the United States had in it.
Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, narrative analysis will be described and defined as a methodology. In addition, the sampling method for this study will be explained as well as the coding sheet that was created for the data analysis. Finally, the research limitations that are present within this study will be discussed.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is a technique that examines how storytelling shapes a story and creates various readings. Narrative analysis focuses on how storylines are constructed and examines them critically. It is also a method that is utilized to explain and understand events and experiences. Foss (2004) argues that narrative criticism allows a researcher to investigate not only the narrative itself, but also its form and structure. Narrative analysis allows researchers to scrutinize the narrator, setting, characters, and themes. For example, narrative analysis can be used as a method to discover the effects of a particular narrative. Most importantly, narrative criticism can reveal how certain news frames are used repeatedly and preferred over others and how that can direct audiences to interpret an event in a particular way.

Scholars such as Burke and Fischer believe that human beings rely on narratives in order to make sense of the world. Foss (2004) defines a narrative as a “way of ordering and presenting a view of the world through a description of a situation involving characters, actions, and setting” (p.400). Narratives are a part of not only novels, but also in films, songs, and the news. Many of these narratives give insight into a country’s
culture, values, and beliefs. Hanson (1999) argues many of the narratives that are presented in the news are distorted. He adds that narratives stress certain ideas and omit other important developments in order to follow a certain plot line (Hanson, 1999). By deconstructing the elements of a narrative, narrative analysis can reveal new and different meanings that have been ignored or skewed.

Narrative criticism depends greatly on the personal insights and interpretation from the researcher. Therefore, the technique is most effective when a researcher has an strong analysis because the data and analysis will be directly influenced by the researcher’s perspective. Narrative analysis is a useful technique because it can show the “power and constraints of news presentation” (Hanson, 1999, p. 2). It enables a researcher to understand the importance of a story.

According to Foss, narrative analysis is conducted in a four-step process. First, the critic must formulate a question and choose an artifact of study. The researcher must then select a unit of analysis such as a new story. Once the unit of analysis has been selected, there are various dimensions of the narrative that can be studied. However, the researcher must examine the narrative in its entirety first. Foss suggests critics examine the narrative’s setting, its characters, its narrator, and major themes. Further, the researcher can also examine the temporal relations, events, casual relations, and the role of the audience. Foss argues that examining the fundamental features of the narrative is vital to this technique because it allows the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative. Once there is a basic understanding of the narrative, the researcher must then select the most significant aspects of the story. This is the most crucial step in narrative analysis because the elements selected will “provide the clearest,
most coherent, and most insightful answer to the research question” (Foss, 2004, p. 405). The researcher can focus on the content or also in the elements of formatting and how the story is expressed (Foss, 2004). In other words, the researcher must select the most relevant parts of the narrative for his or her analysis. Furthermore, narrative analysis can provide deeper and richer findings, particularly against such methods such as quantitative content analysis (Hanson, 2004). In sum, narrative analysis is a useful technique because it can lead “to insights on the limitations of a particular story line” and the ways that world is simplified through narratives (Hanson, 1994, p. 8).

**Sampling**

This study aimed to examine the main narrative that *the Washington Times*, *National Review Magazine*, and *Reason Magazine* constructed to explain the 2010 Haiti earthquake and how it compared to the narrative constructed by *Time Magazine* and *the Washington Post*. All articles for analysis were selected from these five sources.

For many, *the Washington Times* is considered the leading conservative newspaper in the country. It is owned by the News World Communications, Inc. which supports its conservative outlook (Glaberson, 1994). From its conception in 1982 by Unification Church Reverend Sun Myung Moon, *the Washington Times* has been the voice of conservative readers (Glaberson, 1994). Some critics argue that the newspaper is a tabloid whose stories are embedded with a conservative slant (Glaberson, 1994; Parker 2009). Nevertheless, the Washington Times’ influence has grown over the last two decades. In 1994, the Washington-based newspaper started a national weekly edition and has an online edition as well. It now has a circulation of over 750,000 (Parker, 2009). The newspaper focuses on national and international issues. Its coverage of international
issues has caused significant controversy because of its conservative viewpoint (Parker, 2009). The newspaper has also become a training ground for young conservative journalists (Parker, 2009). For many conservatives, the Washington Times is the only newspaper that is not filtered with liberal ideology, and presents a fair and balanced outlook in the world.

In November of 1955, William F. Buckley Jr. founded the National Review. The National Review is credited for helping sustain the conservative movement and unifying conservatives in the 1950s and 1960s (Viguerie & Franke, 2004). Its impact was felt greatly felt by conservatives during that time who saw it as an “incubator of ideas, as a political Petri dish creating the recipe for a new political culture” (p. 257). The National Review is published bi-weekly and has a circulation of 180,000 (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2011). Its website, National Review Online (NRO), is the popular and attracts the largest audience compared to other conservative sites (Nielsen Company Data, 2011). NRO consist of blogs, videos, and other features not found in the print magazine. Both the print and online editions are popular and garner much attention from various political parties, not just conservatives. In sum, while the National Review was established over 55 years ago, it is still regarded as one of the most influential conservative magazines being published today.

Reason Magazine is a Libertarian conservative magazine with a circulation of 52,000 (Viguerie & Franke, 2004). Founded in 1968, it is one of the top five right wing ideological magazines (Viguerie & Franke, 2004). While the National Review is a conservative publication, Reason Magazine considers itself libertarian. The magazine is published monthly and has an online edition as well. The online version is updated daily.
and has a very strong presence. *Reason Magazine*’s philosophy – “free minds and free markets” – primarily focuses on politics as well as on news and culture (Reason.com, 2011). Reason Online is well-known for its Hit & Run blog which offers commentary on recent news. The site is updated daily and still carries much of its print edition on its online version.

In 1929, Briton Hadden and Henry Luce founded *Time*, one of the most successful magazines in history. *Time* was the first weekly news magazine in the United States and it focuses primarily on national and international news. *Time* has distinguished itself from other magazines by having a very peculiar style that features “outsized personalities, punchy narratives, colorful details” (Wilner, 2006). The stories in the magazines are presented in concise manner with moderate view points. *Time* has a weekly circulation of over 3 million (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2010) and is considered one of the most influential news magazines in the mainstream media.

*The Washington Post* is a Pulitzer-prize winning newspaper that was established in 1877 and owned by the Washington Post company. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulations, the newspaper has a weekly circulation of 1.5 million, making it the fifth largest newspaper in the country. *The Washington Post* is considered one of the country’s most elite and influential newspapers. It is widely recognized for its political coverage and has a strong influence in print and online media as well. In July 2008, its online website reached 8.9 million visitors, ranking third on neilsonwire’s top ten online newspaper sites. *The Washington Post* has long been considered a staple of the mainstream media.

All 115 used for this analysis were either selected from their respective websites
or from the ProQuest Database. ProQuest was utilized with the articles from the Washington Post and the Washington Times because they offered the most comprehensive archive of these publications. However, ProQuest was unable to be used for the rest of the sample because those publications do not appear in the database. Therefore, their home websites were used. Further, stories, blog postings and editorials were all part of the sample. However, if an article did not focus primarily on the earthquake or Haiti, it was removed from the sample.

For the ProQuest search, the search phrase used for each was ‘Haiti* and Earthquake.’ The time frame was narrowed from January 12, 2010 to February 26, 2010. A search of the database revealed that the Washington Times had 187 relevant articles. Out of the 187 articles, only 20% of those articles were sampled. All articles were numbered; employing a random sequence generator from the internet, 37 out of 187 articles were randomly selected and analyzed. The Washington Post had a total of 34 articles, but only 32 were relevant to the sample. The rest of the sample was selected from their respective websites, using the search term Haiti earthquake. On the National Review Online website, only 8 related articles were found and Reason Magazine Online also only had 15 articles. The Time Magazine search found 216 related articles, and out of those articles only 15% were selected to be in the study. Since the majority of the Time articles are longer in length than the rest of the sample, a smaller percentage was taken.

All articles were numbered and the 33 articles were selected by using a random sequence generator from the internet. All dates were narrowed by the use of Google search engine that all three websites employ so readers can find archived stories. In total 115 articles were used for this analysis.
Data Analysis

The articles for this analysis were read and coded according to the code sheet that was developed by the researcher. Foss (2004) believes that all stories contain a narrative and that narratives are constructed through a sequence of events. The code sheet allows a deeper analysis with specific categories to enable researchers to find the most significant patterns of the narrative and allows them to find the most relevant information so they can answer their research question. Other basic preliminary information such as the date, the name of the publication and the headline were also included. Finally, there were four major categories that were a part of the code sheet.

How Haiti was described is the first category of the code sheet. The primary setting of the narrative is Haiti and how Haiti is described is vital to this research. How the setting of Haiti was presented within the narrative can indicate to the reader how to view the events taking place there.

Another category is event, and the main event was the Haiti earthquake. How the earthquake was described can reveal ideological positions. By examining phrases and words, the tone of the story can be determined. Other information can be shown as well: Did the description of the earthquake change the narrative over time?

Characters was another critical category. The code sheet specified Haitians as characters, due to the fact that those affected by the earthquake were primarily Haitians. By looking at descriptions, these characters can be defined as flat or round. Did they have agency or were they passive? By analyzing phrases and words, the researcher can determine which characters were victims, survivors, heroes, or villains.

The final category in the code sheet is theme. What is the objective of the story’s
narrative? More specifically, is there a clear and concise theme? The theme is a vital component in narrative analysis because it illustrates how the setting, characters and events all work together to create one vision for the reader of the story.

Once each code sheet was filled in, each category was examined thoroughly. As Foss (2004) writes, the researcher must then “identify which of those features are of most significance” (p.405). In other words, the researcher must determine, which categories establish relationships and reveal patterns about the narrative. The goal of narrative analysis is to reveal the stories that are “all around us” (Hanson, 1999). Thus, the researcher identified through careful analysis what the main narrative that these three conservative newspapers told about the Haiti earthquake and how they compared to the mainstream narrative told by the mainstream press.

**Limitations**

Narrative analysis presents some of its own limitations. For example, not all stories are appropriate for this technique. Stories that are dramatic in nature with clear storylines and vivid characters are preferred. Further, while there is a vast conservative media sphere composed of magazines, radio shows, and television shows, this study focused specifically on *the Washington Times, Reason Magazine,* and *the National Review*. Therefore, other conservative forums could present different information and ideas than those collected in the current sample. Further, by using the ProQuest database for *the Washington Times* and *the Washington Post*, it is possible this may have resulted in a slightly different sample for these outlets than would have for the other three sources. Also, all stories examined were from the online editions of the magazines and
newspapers. The content could be potentially different from what is in the print version as well. In addition, the online editions prevented the researcher from knowing the placement of each story or photographs that may have accompanied it, which could have contributed to the research analysis. Finally, the conservative news sample had three news sources compared to the mainstream sample, due to Time’s magazine longer news stories, which prevented an equal number of news stories.
Chapter 4

Results

This study examined U.S. mainstream and conservative media, specifically the Washington Times, the National Review, Reason Magazine, the Washington Post, and Time Magazine’s coverage of the earthquake in Haiti.

After a thorough analysis, two related narratives emerged. The conservative news narrative suggested that Haiti was a country that needed to be contained to protect the U.S. On the other hand, the mainstream news narrative suggested that the earthquake was a catalyst for Haiti to finally be transformed.

Through the span of six weeks, these narratives gained more credibility and were naturalized and reinforced. The vivid descriptions about Haiti and Haitians were also critical in supporting these narratives. This analysis explores the different components of these narratives and how they helped frame either a conservative or mainstream perspective on the earthquake in Haiti.

Containing Haiti

The Washington Times, the National Review, and Reason Magazine established a conservative narrative suggesting that due to Haiti’s corrupt political system and poor infrastructure, the country needed to be contained so as not to cause problems or endanger the United States. Haitians over the years had been portrayed as ill-equipped to handle their country as they continually depended on foreign aid, making them weak and unable to solve their own problems. Thus, conservative media emphasized that the U.S.
needed to make sure Haiti didn’t spiral out of control. It was also found that by saving Haiti, thousands of Haitians would not flee to America creating a wave of boat people. After other disasters, some Haitians had sought asylum in the United States and came across in rafts. Fearing massive migrations to the United States, the conservative narrative suggested that giving assistance to Haiti would keep Haitians in Haiti.

*Naturally Corrupt and Poor*

The coverage from the *Washington Times, the National Review* and *Reason Magazine* established early on that Haiti was a country in a destitute state. Haiti was described as an “impoverished island nation” (Kralev, 2010a, par. 2; Dickson, 2010, par.1) and one of “the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere” (Reich, 2010, par.1). While other conservative media articles noted that Haiti was “the neediest of nations in the Western Hemisphere” (Simmons, 2010, par.2; Walser, 2010, par.2), Haiti was frequently described as a “desperately poor place plagued by rampant corruption, bad government, and violence” (Chapman, 2010, par.1). One conservative article argued Haiti had a “culture of corruption” (Dickson, 2010, par.5). The repeated attention to Haiti’s economic status encouraged readers to view Haiti as a helpless nation that had no knowledge of how to govern itself. The coverage reported that Haiti’s government, even during the best of times, was “corrupt and ineffective” (Dickson, 2010, par.1; *The Washington Times*, 2010f, ¶3). By labeling Haiti poor and inefficient, the narrative created the idea that Haiti really did need U.S. intervention. The lack of political control in the country could create serious consequences for its neighbors, specifically the U.S., which could bring a surge of Haitian immigrants.
Further, the coverage perpetuated the idea that Haiti was ungovernable. For example, one conservative article described Haiti as being one of the “worst-governed nations” (Chapman, 2010, par.10) even without the presence of disaster. In addition, another conservative article noted that Haiti was a country with a “barely existing infrastructure and weak government” (Kralev, 2010f, par.6). It was described as a country with a “fragile economy” (Dickson, 2010, par.1) which had continuously suffered from “weak government institutions” (Dickson, 2010, par.4). The coverage also suggested that even during their greatest time in need the Haitian government was “AWOL” (*The Washington Times*, 2010g, par.1) and “filled with incompetence” (*The Washington Times*, 2010g, par.4).

In other conservative articles, Haiti was branded a “geopolitical oddball” (Cavanaugh, 2010, ¶ 1) that lacked basic health care, sanitation, and other necessities. One conservative media article wrote that any “law-bidding society that could afford, among other things, the expense of proper building codes” (Miller, 2010, par.1) would have not suffered the same immense damage that Haiti did during the earthquake. Another story wrote that a country “situated next to a geological fault line and in the middle of hurricane alley would have a well-developed set of building codes, but safety has never been a hallmark—or even an afterthought—of Haitian architecture” (*The Washington Times*, 2010a, par.2). The audience was never informed of the root causes of Haiti’s financial troubles or the role that other countries, especially the United States, played in Haiti’s finances. For example, one article described that the “roots of the country’s woes ran deep” (Dickson, 2010, ¶6), but never went into further detail. In other words, Haiti’s long-standing history with coups and dictatorships supported by the U.S.
were not discussed in the coverage even though Haiti’s government was blamed for the thousands of death following the earthquake. Furthermore, the coverage suggested that Americans could not fathom what it was to live in Haiti because “even in the best of times, the misery in Haiti is impossible for the average American who has never seen it to imagine” (Reich, 2010, par.1). Overall, the coverage presented Haiti as a country in shambles, a country that was the polar opposite of the United States. Thus, these conservative articles established a pattern that while Haiti had an official government, it was unqualified to take care of its country and citizens. Haiti’s immense poverty was seen as part of the people of Haiti’s own self-created weaknesses.

_Haiti as a Threatening and Chaotic Place_

Additionally, after the earthquake, Haiti was rendered an unsafe place. Conservative articles argued that Haiti needed to be stabilized as sporadic violence and looting took place after the quake. One article revealed that in an effort to prepare for any “crazed crowds,” the military responded by “erecting barriers between the needy and outside assistance” (Walker, 2010b, par.3). The conservative narrative suggested that these barriers were a necessity since “violence and looting have impeded rescue operations” (Kralev, 2010c, par.1). One conservative article reported that during a food aid air drop, “a mob-scene resulted and people were killed” (The Washington Times, 2010c, par.2). Another article wrote that U.N troops had to fire tear gas at “desperate Haitians crowding a food handout area outside of the wrecked presidential palace” (Kralev, 2010e, par.7).

Another story noted that “gunfire rang out and bands of machete-wielding young
men, their faces covered with bandanas roamed the streets” (Kralev, 2010c, par. 9).

The coverage suggested that Haiti’s culture was inherently violently. This idea helped to make a case for the United States to intervene in Haiti and dictate a plan for its future. One conservative article suggested that Haiti could not be left “to the care of machete-wielding gangs” (The Washington Times, 2010c, par. 2) and that there needed to be U.S. interference.

_Fear of Haitian Refugees_

Restoring order was imperative to the conservative narrative, because it would impede a large Haitian migration to the United States. Preying on the fears of Americans, one outlet specifically, _the National Review_, perpetuated the fear of boat people. For example, an article suggests that if the United States did not provide aid to Haiti, there could be a “flood of boat people” (Krikorian, 2010a, par. 3) or even “waves of boat people” (Krikorian, 2010b, par. 3). Readers were told that at any time there could be a “flow of Haitian on rafts or inner tubes” (Krikorian, 2010c, par. 1). The articles make clear that the earthquake was no justification for illegal immigrants to seek asylum because the U.S. was already helping them in Haiti. In fact, the coverage suggested that the U.S. was generous for not deporting “undocumented Haitians to an island devastated by a crippling quake” (Walker, 2010a, par. 1). Another article suggests that permanent amnesty should not be granted to “anyone ‘lucky’ enough to come from a country that suffers a natural (or even man-made) disaster” (Krikorian, 2010c, par. 2). By depicting Haitians as boat people, they were dehumanized as one indistinguishable group with no defining characteristics.
The conservative coverage also suggested that Haitians would want to migrate to the U.S. because of the streak of ‘bad luck’ that plagued Haiti. One article wrote that Haiti’s earthquake “was so deadly because Haiti is Haiti” and it had repeatedly had “awful luck” over the years (Goldberg, 2010, par.5). For example, it pointed out that even though the active fault line runs through Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the epicenter of the earthquake was in Port-au-Prince, as if the country was destined to be destroyed. Another conservative article added that “Port-au-Prince, for the infiniteenth time, just got unlucky” (Cavanaugh, 2010, par.3). Further, another article claimed that Haitians’ bleak conditions should not be blamed “on the people who happen to have been born Haitian. They inherited a world they didn’t make and have only minimal capacity to change. That’s their misfortune” (Chapman, 2010, par.12). The coverage presented Haitians as passive and unable to chart their own destinies. In other words, bad things just naturally happened in Haiti. Haitians had very little control over their lives. These clichéd assumptions of bad luck validated the conservative narrative that the earthquake had made Haiti one of the worst places to live and a good reason for some Haitians to want to flee Haiti.

The U.S. Stabilizes Haiti

The conservative coverage primarily focused on the significant role that the United States undertook during the crisis. Readers were informed how the U.S. deployed military troops to Haiti to survey the damage and help. One conservative article wrote that U.S. role primarily consisted of “getting supplies and boots on the ground as soon as possible” as well as “to maintain law and order” in Haiti (Simmons, 2010, par.10).
Another article described the U.S. relief efforts as filled “with compassion” and “justifiable pity for the suffering of Haitians” (The Washington Times, 2010a, par. 5). The coverage suggests that the U.S. presence in Haiti was to “spearhead earthquake rescue operations and stabilize” (Kralev, 2010b, par. ) the country. For example, one conservative media article describes how U.S. forces “began rescue efforts in the earthquake-stricken nation” (Pollowitz, 2010a, par. 1) and were “clearing transit routes” in order to get aid and supplies delivered to the country (Kralev, 2010b, par. 2).

Additionally, one article reported that thousands of Haitians were “buried or trapped in demolished schools, hospitals, and hillside shanties” (Kralev, 2010a, par. 2) and needed immediate aid. Thus, as one conservative media article noted “Americans’ swift determination saved lives” (Henning, 2010, par. 1) as rescue crews pulled survivors from piles of rubble. These sources emphasized the role of the U.S., but did not mention other countries which aided Haiti as well. Another article described the U.S.’ role as “heroic” (Henning, 2010, par. 1). In this way, Americans are efficient and effective in contrast with the passive Haitians, who simply wait for help.

The coverage also specified that the United States was the only one who could contain the situation after the earthquake in Haiti and ameliorate the suffering of Haitians. This ideology is part of the conservative view. An article describes the role of the United States as to “restore order” (The Washington Times, 2010f, par. 1). Other conservative media articles propose that the United States had a duty to intervene in Haiti, because “the U.S. military is the world’s humanitarian cavalry” (The Washington Times, 2010f, par. 2) and it prevented the crisis in Haiti from “becoming a much greater catastrophe” (The Washington Times, 2010f, par. 2). In addition, another conservative
media source suggests that U.S. is generous and selfless when it comes to Haiti, because “even when money’s tight, Americans can be counted on to lend a hand in the midst of a disaster” (Richardson, 2010b, par.1). The writer notes that millions of dollars were pledged towards Haiti even though Americans currently found “themselves mired in an economic recession” (Richardson, 2010b, par.3). The positive portrayals of the U.S. military and Americans are key ingredients in the construction of the conservative narrative.

_Haiti’s Need for Economic Discipline_

As the weeks progressed, the conservative narrative transitioned and started to focus on Haiti’s reconstruction not only externally but internally as well. Haiti’s culture was implicitly blamed repeatedly for the lack of development in the country. For instance, one conservative media article suggests that what Haiti needs is “economic development and a culture that can support such development” (Sirico, 2010, par.11). Another article claims that Haiti’s culture and history has made Haiti believe that “they’re entitled to be impoverished” (Goldberg, 2010, par. 4). The coverage also suggested that Haitian culture had no “general sense of entrepreneurship and enterprise” and is “resistant to entrepreneurship” (Sico, 2010, par.7). Another article added that tyranny was a “condition that is all too familiar to most Haitians” (The *Washington Times*, 2010g, par.4) and is deeply rooted in Haitian culture. Furthermore, an additional article noted Haiti’s culture was living in the past with old customs, ideas, and “voodoo.” One article claimed that Haiti would never escape its “grinding poverty until it abandons much of its culture” (Goldberg, 2010, par.6). In other words, the conservative coverage
suggests that if Haitian culture could be transformed and “if Haitians behaved differently” (Derbyshire, 2010, par. 6), Haiti could be a better place.

Therefore, the conservative narrative suggests that it is necessary for the U.S. and other western countries to “map out the country’s recovery” (Kralev, 2010d, par. 1). Otherwise, Haiti could “experience a catastrophe ten times worse than the one they are currently enduring” (Derbyshire, 2010, par. 6).

The conservative coverage stressed that once Haiti was stabilized, things were going to change for the country. One conservative media article noted that once “the dead are buried, the wounded and sick healed, and the rubble cleared, it’s time for some tough love” (Goldberg, 2010a, par. 11) for Haitians. Another article added this tough love would be giving less aid to Haiti, because “foreign overload is a good recipe for keeping it [Haiti] dependent on international assistance for years” (Sanders, 2010a, par. 3). One conservative media article suggests that the earthquake should not be another reason for Haiti to become “more dependent on foreign charity” (Reich, 2010, par. 4).

Moreover, the conservative coverage emphasized that the U.S. was not using the earthquake as a pretext to “take over Haiti” (The Washington Times, 2010c, par. 1). In fact, a conservative article added that U.S troops should stay in Haiti only temporarily before the mission became an “open-ended operation, [and] a burden on the (military) force” (The Washington Times, 2010f, par. 8). Thus, the conservative coverage suggested the U.S. was merely interested in reducing Haiti’s need for aid and rebuilding into a stronger country.

However, before Haitians could rebuild their country, foreign agencies including the U.S. needed to “discuss Haiti’s reconstruction and long-term stabilization efforts”
(Kralev, 2010b, par. 20). One conservative article wrote that it was necessary for developed nations to “impose discipline and common sense” on Haiti (The Washington Times, 2010, par. 26). One article writes that having U.S. input in the rebuilding process is practical since it would introduce American culture, culture that “not only expects hard work, but teaches the unskilled how to work hard” (Goldberg, 2010a, par. 8). Further, since there is “no question that our (U.S.) society is superior to Haiti’s in almost everything” (Chapman, 2010, ¶ 4), U.S. contribution was crucial to the reconstruction of Haiti. Furthermore, foreign involvement in Haiti would lay down a plan to help Haitians “step up to rebuild the country” (Sanders, 2010b, par. 4). This type of reporting suggests that Haiti and Haitians should have no say in how the country is reconstructed. The coverage perpetuated the idea that U.S.’s guidance was needed for Haiti to be rebuilt and have a new thriving country. Moreover, the solution is less government control and more reliance on the free market.

**Haiti in Ruins**

*Time Magazine* and the *Washington Post’s* narratives differed from the conservative news coverage by focusing their reporting on the graphic details of how Haiti was destroyed by the earthquake and how Haitians were suffering. The large death toll and the country’s destitution were the focus as in the initial reports of the earthquake. This level of detail in the coverage was sensational and appeared to be intended to attract a broader audience that might have no interest in the story. In addition, these stories seemed to rely on long-standing stereotypical portrayals of irrational and violent behavior associated with black people. Afterwards, the mainstream narrative
optimistically encouraged readers to see the potential for change in Haiti, which provided a simplistic ending for the complicated story of the earthquake.

A Devastated Haiti

The mainstream narrative structure put quite a bit of attention on the devastation that the Haiti earthquake caused in Port-au-Prince. For example, one mainstream story reported that wandering in Haiti after the earthquake was “to be lost inside in a walking nightmare” (Nachtwey, 2010, para.1). Another article revealed all that was left from the disaster was “pancaked buildings, the sickly-sweet smell of rotting human flesh, the lingering terror of aftershocks, the stupefaction of survivors” (Ghosh, 2010a, para.1). The narrative suggested that after “the quake came the flood” (Fitzpatrick, 2010, para.1). Since as one article claimed the “quake will make things unimaginably worse” (Elliot, 2010, para.10) because even on its “best day Haiti is a public-health disaster” (Elliot, 2010, para.8).

Echoing part of the conservative narrative, the coverage also suggested that the damage caused by the earthquake had been so devastating because of Haiti’s lack of development. One mainstream article noted that Haitians have “always lived in a society constructed along a narrow ledge on a precipice above the abyss” (Nachtwey, 2010, para.2). Further, the coverage implied, that widespread poverty in the country has lead to “cramped living quarters left even more vulnerable by substandard construction work” (Thomas, 2010b, para.1). One article reported that “structures collapsed like houses of cards” (Elliot, 2010, para.6). Another mainstream article wrote that during the half-a-minute quake “virtually every building in the city” (Padgett, 2010a, para.5) collapsed because of the “flimsy concrete buildings” (Padgett, 2010a, para.3) of the
capital did not withstand the powerful quake. Another article reported that “poorly constructed shantytowns and other buildings had crumbled in huge clouds of dust” (Branigin & Shear, 2010, para.6), leaving thousands of Haitians homeless. Now many Haitians had to seek shelter in “parks, stadiums and playgrounds” (Wilson & Booth, 2010b, para.4). Others had to move to urban refugee camps and start living in “tent cities” (Wilson & Booth, 2010b, para.10). These descriptions seemed geared to evoke strong emotions from readers.

Furthermore, the mainstream coverage suggested to readers that Haiti was part of a “primitive network” (Sheridan, Branigin, & Wilson, 2010a,para.19) because it lacked proper sanitation and building codes, and it lacked the equipment to “shift rubble and shore up buildings” and save people who were scrambling to escape “with their bare hands” (Elliot, 2010,para.10) out of the rubble as they were “caked in the flour-white dust of crushed plaster and cement” (Sheridan, Branigin, & Wilson, 2010a,para.3). Therefore, the explicit imagery in these stories defined Haiti as a primitive country. The coverage begins as sympathetic towards the great loss and destruction of Haiti, but ends up reinforcing stereotypes of what it means to be an emerging country. The lack of development in Haiti is directly cited as a reason for the immense damage in the island nation. While conservative news media directly connect this to a lack of commitment to capitalism, mainstream news suggests that Haiti is simply incapable of functioning as a modern state.

Poverty and Terrifying Violence

Various mainstream articles report that Haiti’s government has had years of
political strife. One article suggested that all of Haiti’s political turmoil had left it a “volatile nation with battered roads, a weak public health system and a landscape of slums” (Sheridan, Branigin, & Wilson, 2010a, para. 5). One article reported that even years after the removal of its last dictator the country still suffers from “severe poverty despite billions of dollars in annual international aid” (Wilson, 2010a, para. 6). One article deemed Haiti as “one of the most chaotic countries on Earth” (Booth, 2010a, para. 1). Another article noted that it was a country that had “remained stuck in a cycle of poverty and despair” (Kessler, 2010, para. 7). Unable to break the cycle there was nothing but “adversity and misfortune” (Kouchner, 2010, para. 1) another reported. Further, another article reported that Haiti was “barely functioning and its record was checkered even before the earthquake” (Slevin, 2010a, para. 9) struck. Labeling Haiti as a “economic and security nightmare” (Gentile, 2010, para. 1) suggested to readers that Haiti had little control over its country and citizens before the disaster even happened.

What solidify this idea further was the numerous stories written about the lack of Haitian leadership even after the quake. Following the earthquake Haiti’s government is described as “all but collapsed” and whose “feeble economy has been crushed” (Sheridan, Ruane, & Slevin, 2010c, para. 6). Another article suggested that the once “immoveable white pillars of Haiti’s presidential palace are strewn across the street” a symbol of the “power of the Haitian state, which is itself in ruins” (Grillo, 2010b, para. 1).

Rene Preval, the former president of Haiti, did not escape unscathed by the coverage. For example, one article suggested that the Haitian government is “led by a diffident president” who has been so overwhelmed that he has been “largely invisible since the earthquake throttled the country” (Wilson, 2010a, para. 1). Another mainstream
news article argued that due to its ineffectiveness, the government could not control its own people after the quake because it didn’t “command enough respect” (Wilentz, 2010, para.4).

The mainstream narrative also focused its reporting on Haitian gangs, which were depicted as part of the uncontrollable, frightening violence due to the country’s inability to govern itself. One article noted that Haiti had always been “vulnerable to gang law during emergencies” (Padgett, 2010a, para.6). According to one article, Haiti over the years had become “fertile soil for seething gangbangers” (Padgett, 2010a, para.4). Moreover, the coverage stressed that the lawlessness in Port-au-Prince allowed “Haiti’s murderous gangs” to return and “haunt the streets” (Grillo, 2010b, para.4). In addition, one article noted that these “criminal bands” and “human rats” were dangerous because they thrived on chaos and suffering (Padgett, 2010a, para.3). The coverage suggested these Haitian gangs were also more violent than typical gangs because they were “militia-style gangs” (Padgett, 2010b, para.3) with a political nature. Moreover, the coverage suggested that Haitian criminals function on wild, animalistic primal urges, and that makes them even more dangerous than ordinary criminals.

Furthermore, articles reported that it was not just lawless criminals running rampant, but also Haitians citizens. One article suggested that only thing left to do was to wait and see if Haitians’ desperation would burst into “furious disorder” (Padgett, 2010b, para.5). One mainstream article suggested that as Haitian’s frustration increased, sparks of “sporadic violence among the hungry and desperate” broke out (Grillo, 2010b, para.5). Another story reported that scattered looting made the city unsafe as “crowds often rush into any store or building that looked like it might have supplies” (Grillo, 2010b, para.4).
Additionally, one article reported how rifle shots and gunshots were echoing through “the rubble-strewn streets like firecrackers during Carnival” (Grillo15, 2010c, para.1). The consistent reporting on the violence in Haiti portrayed Haitians as naturally violent and aggressive. In other words, Haitians had a tendency to be violent as if it was part of their natural disposition.

*Haitian Victims as Objects*

In the mainstream coverage there were graphic descriptions when it came to depicting Haitian victims and those who lost their lives in the earthquake. For example, days after the quake those who survived the quake were described as “bloodied and dazed” (Sheridan, Branigin, & Wilson, 2010a, para.3) as they roamed the streets. Survivors were depicted as moving slowly, as they were “shell-shocked and scared for life” (Netwon-Small, 2010b, para3). Other survivors were reported as laying helplessly in “medical courtyards with amputated limbs and open wounds” (Booth, 2010a, para.18). Another article reported that “a woman wrapped in a sheet printed with dragon cartoons, a naked baby boy covered with flies” (Sheridan, Booth, & Roig-Franzia, 2010b, para.3) were openly laying on the street waiting for help. While other articles noted that mutilated and dead bodies were “clogging” up the streets (Sheridan, Ruane, & Slevin, 2010c,par. 7) and “piling up” on street corners and street curbs (Ghosh, 2010a,para.3; Sheridan, Booth, & Roig-Franzia, 2010e,para.5; Grillo, 2010a,para.2).

Furthermore, as dead bodies “piled up” on streets, dump trucks and bulldozers scoured Port-au-Prince so they could excavate and scoop up bodies, before unloading their “cargo of corpses” into unmarked graves, ditches, and landfills (Ghosh, 2010c,para.
Many of these bodies were described as being partially exposed, with “body parts sticking out at grotesque angles” (Ghosh, 2010c, para. 8; Netwon-Small, 2010a, para. 5). Another article reported that as bodies were tipped into ditches “arms flail, heads snap back and forth and flesh scrapes against gravel making a sawing sound” (Ghosh, 2010c, para. 1). There was an unusual level of details in how these victims were depicted in the mainstream news media. The use of phrases like “piling,” “stacking,” “scooping,” and “clogging” dehumanized the victims to readers.

Also, due to the numerous number of deaths, one article reported that “a thick fog, the stench of death curdles the air in the streets” (Grillo, 2010a, para. 1) of Port-au-Prince. Port-au-Prince is continually illustrated as a post-apocalyptic town filled with an “intensifying stench of corpses” (Achenbach, 2010, para. 7). Another source reported that the “the smell of rotting flesh” (Ghosh, 2010b, para. 4) and decomposition of bodies only grew stronger in the subsequent weeks. The “scent of decay” (Walsh, Netwon-Small, & Padgett, 2010b, para. 1) was so powerful that survivors held “limes to their noses to block the stench” (Sheridan, Booth, & Roig-Franzia, 2010b, para. 5). The mainstream’s explicit coverage of destruction and death in Haiti created a vivid image that Haiti was in pieces, and also sensationalized coverage to the extent that Haitians seemed less human.

In addition, all media coverage was repeatedly denied access to the wreckage and victims at the Hotel Montana and Christopher Hotel, both of which were home to foreigners, aid workers, and diplomats (Booth, 2010d, para. 3; Lynch, 2010, para. 1). In other words, there was a divide in how foreign victims and Haitians victims were discussed in the mainstream narrative.
U.S. Restoring Order

The mainstream narrative suggested that after the earthquake, Haiti needed U.S. help and aid. For example, one article wrote that “like doctors working on a dying patient, foreign governments labored to establish a kind of life-support that would bring back Haiti” (Sheridan, Ruane, & Slevin, 2010c, para. 2). Another article revealed that the island nation was in such a critical state the U.S. deployed troops to “help restore order and far from resenting the intervention, many Haitians were anxious for the American colossus to arrive” (Grillo, 2010b, para. 1). The need for outside help was a necessity since the “quake caused an instant brain drain” in the Haitian government (Wilentz, 2010, para. 4). Further, the coverage went on to report that as Haitians became more fearful and hungry, there were “calls for Washington to take the direct reins of Haiti” (Grillo, 2010b, para. 3). In fact, one article suggested the deployment of over 10,000 American soldiers was “a welcome relief to the overstretched U.N. and Haitian security forces” (Newton-Small, 2010b, para. 8). Therefore, the main coverage suggested that the role of the United States was a critical component in helping Haiti maintain control of the country.

These two mainstream sources also suggested that U.S. was the only country in the world that had “the muscle to quickly make a difference” in Haiti (Thompson, 2010b, para. 3). The American troops were the only ones able to stabilize Haiti with its “strength of firepower and efficiency behind them” (Wilentz, 2010, para. 4). One story reported that troops were surprised that once on the ground, “Haitians didn’t require a show of force, just the knowledge that someone was in charge” (Gerson, 2010, para. 3). This suggests
that Haitians were not as violent as earlier coverage suggested because if they were, American troops would have met with more resistance and violence themselves. It appeared that Haitians could behave, but they needed someone to assert control over them. The coverage also suggested that American soldiers were crucial in food distribution as they prevented Haitians from “pushing, shoving and occasional melees that may have severely hampered” aid deliveries (Slevin, 2010a, para.16). In addition, the U.S. troops provided much-needed security to aid workers and Haitians (Thompson, 2010a, para.6). In the mainstream coverage, the U.S. intervention in Haiti was portrayed as a mission to restore control. In other words, the coverage aimed to change the perception that the U.S. was invading Haiti. Instead, it was altruistically helping and giving Haitians much needed structure in a time of mayhem.

Optimism for the Future

The Washington Post and Time Magazine coverage insisted that Haiti’s tragedy could lead to Haiti rebuilding itself into a better country. One mainstream article reported that the earthquake would not only cause the Haitian government to rebuild its capital, but mend “those complicated ties between Haiti and the rest of the world” (Cauvin, 2010, para.8). Another article added Haiti could finally “break out of the economic basement” (Walsh, Netwon-Small, & Padgett, 2010b, para.11) as it rebuilds its country and economy. The coverage suggested that Haiti needs a “lasting, practical and political reconstruction that would ward off the demons of the past” (Kouchner, 2010,para.3).

One article reported that this was possible because for the first time Haiti had “everything at its disposal to finally achieve its transformation into a country of the
future” (Koucher, 2010, para.2). Another mainstream article noted that since all the “symbols of political power in a country synonymous with corruption” (Nachtwey, 2010, para.6) had been erased with the quake a new and ‘better Haiti’ could be created. Furthermore, one article suggested that a “richer Haiti would be a safer Haiti” (Walsh, Netwon-Small, & Padgett, 2010b, para.11) and the earthquake had allowed this to happen. Thus, the earthquake was portrayed as a catalyst for Haiti to be able to change itself by allowing outside forces to direct it. These claims were quite optimistic and are unlikely to be met, thus setting up a future narrative that would blame Haitians again for failing to establish a thriving, politically stable and economically sound country, and not living up to expectations.

Summary of Results

The story elements presented within the conservative and mainstream coverage of the Haiti present two related narratives, which suggest that the differences between them are not all that great. The Washington Times, The National Review, and Reason Magazine created a narrative that depicted Haiti as a threat to the U.S. Coverage implied that Haitians could create an imminent immigration threat as many Haitian “boat people” typically came to the U.S. after natural disasters. The Washington Post and Time Magazine narrative focused on sensationalizing the violence in Haiti. The narrative suggested that the earthquake in Haiti, while a tragedy, could easily be parlayed into positive change in Haiti.

Both narratives were shaped by foreign policy and political agendas. The conservative narrative gained momentum as the “feedback loop” between the three sources became evident in their coverage. They reported a similar narrative about the
threat Haiti posed to the U.S. and suggested that the U.S. contain the situation as best as they could. The mainstream coverage suggested that U.S was helping Haiti, whose situation was depicted in detail not generally seen when describing other populations in similar situations. Further, the portrayal of Haitians in both narratives were stereotypical. Haitians were either presented as being prone to violence or victims of circumstance that could not escape their dire situation.

The subtle differences between the narratives related primarily to their endings. The mainstream narrative concluded with the idea that Haiti’s tragedy could transform Haiti into a new country. In addition, the mainstream coverage believed that it was in the U.S.’s best interest to help Haiti not only financially, but also with military support. On the other hand, the conservative narrative ending was focused on the U.S. removing itself from Haiti and limiting aid and troops. Nevertheless these endings subscribe to either a conservative or mainstream framework that indirectly supports specific ideological standpoints.

Moreover, what these results indicate is that there is very little difference between the conservative and mainstream media. The conservative media has grown immensely over the last decade. Conservative sources have repeatedly argued that they are marginalized and underrepresented in the mainstream media. What these results suggest is that the conservative and mainstream media reporting is much more similar than previously assumed. Furthermore, this suggest that there is not much variation in the news and that for the most part the news is conservative in its own reporting and not as liberal as other media outlets argue it is.

Overall, the coverage of Haiti was typical of disaster coverage. Prior to the
earthquake, Haiti was rarely in the media spotlight and it only became newsworthy because of the immense destruction in the country and the large number of deaths. In addition, the proximity of Haiti to the U.S. and prior involvement with the country all made the story about the earthquake more newsworthy.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

The coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake was similar to previous news reporting of disasters. Countries such as Haiti are rarely part of the news cycle unless they are involved in natural disasters or other political turmoil. After the quake, Haiti received a great amount of media visibility. The tremendous amount of damage that Port-au-Prince sustained and the significant number of injuries and deaths made the earthquake newsworthy. It was not just the mainstream press that was reporting on the disaster in Haiti, but also the ever-growing conservative media as well. Conservative and mainstream audiences alike were subjected to numerous stories about the earthquake, each one putting Haiti and Haitians under direct scrutiny. At the end of a six-week period, the conservative and mainstream coverage produced two similar narratives that indirectly supported specific ideological standpoints.

Political Agendas and Foreign Policy

This study revealed that the conservative media and the mainstream media examined in this study subscribed to a pro-U.S. government agenda. Both of these narratives agreed that Haiti needed help after the quake and that the U.S. military forces could assist in returning peace to the island nation. The U.S. government made it clear that it was intent in assisting Haiti with aid and military support. There was little deviation from the conservative and mainstream sources when it came to reporting that the U.S. was needed in Haiti. Where these two narratives differed, though, was in the
extent of the role that the U.S. would have long-term in Haiti.

The conservative narrative represented a conservative ideology that government’s involvement should be brief and limited, giving Haitians a chance to be “entrepreneurial” in meeting their country’s needs. Among the three conservative sources, *the National Review* and *the Washington Times* were the most vocal in restricting the U.S. participation in Haiti, reflecting their ideological belief in a limited government role in the U.S. Conservative news sources explained that long-term U.S. commitment to Haiti would not only harm Haitians, but also Americans. The narrative suggested that while it was humane to help Haiti after the quake, it was not compassionate to keep donating aid to Haiti or provide lasting military support to the country. In addition, it was made implicitly clear that the U.S. and other western countries needed to secure Haiti. It needed to outline and create a plan that would remodel the country and then leave it to fix itself.

On the other hand, the mainstream coverage was much more invested in helping Haiti long-term and more in line with the current government policy. From the two news sources, the *Washington Post* suggested that the travesty in Haiti created a need for military support from the U.S. *Time Magazine’s* in-depth reporting was also supportive of the foreign intervention, even though it commented on the tumultuous relationship that the U.S. had with Haiti in the past. Therefore, the mainstream narrative nurtured the possibility of Haiti changing and creating a true partnership with its neighboring countries, especially the United States. In summary, from the very beginning of the quake the political stance in the United States has been to support Haiti, and the mainstream coverage unconsciously followed that political agenda with their reporting.
Stereotypes

Haiti’s limited media visibility has caused it to become a nation that is recognized for very few things, such as being poverty-stricken and politically unstable. Both of these narratives suggested to audiences that Haiti’s poverty was the cause for much of its troubles along with poor governance. Due to lack of leadership and simply having no economic sustainability, Haiti was depicted as one of the least capable countries for handling a natural disaster.

The overall coverage from the mainstream media was sensationalized. Countries such as Haiti are depicted as the inevitable settings for tragedy. When natural disasters occur there, the news media find them newsworthy. The media spotlight rarely lasts however, as other countries soon take attention away as another disaster hits.

One of the major stereotypes seen in the conservative coverage was the portrayal of Haitians as potential boat people. The coverage attempted to scare readers into fearing a Haitian migration to the United States. Haitian victims were said to be wanting to flee Haiti because of the bad luck associated with country. While all three news outlets covered the immigration status of Haitians, the National Review and Reason Magazine voiced their opinions about Haitian immigration much more loudly. These findings suggest that conservative journals and magazines projected their anti-immigrant agenda onto the coverage of the Haitian earthquake with little evidence to support their claims.

In this study, the mainstream coverage depicted Haitians as either victims or violent offenders. Time Magazine in general paid much more attention to how the wounded were laying on empty streets with bandages across their bodies. Both of these sources described graphic images that allowed readers to see Haitians as hopeless
victims. Being portrayed as desperate victims, Haitians had a limited and passive role in the mainstream new stories. They had no agency over themselves or their situation.

In addition, if Haitians were not represented as victims then they were portrayed as violent offenders who tended to be violent by nature. Readers were alerted that militia-gang members roamed the street with guns and that they were taking advantage of the chaos in Port-au-Prince by setting fires and robbing people. Also, vulnerable victims were becoming so needy that many turned to looting stores. These clichéd stereotypes of Haitians as criminals suggested that poverty and violence are ingrained in Haitian culture. By naturalizing these violent tendencies, fear of the “other” is reinforced in the mainstream narrative. In summary, the mainstream media’s grim depictions did not allow Haitians to be seen as dynamic characters in their stories. Instead, they were one-dimensional characters who were either violent criminals or victims of a disaster beyond their control.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on how the conservative media and mainstream media created two distinct narratives in their reporting of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. It is possible that future research could examine coverage of not just one earthquake but other natural disasters. With this study in particular, research could differ by examining just the conservative media and how they specifically reported on the earthquake. For example, the researcher could study a greater range of conservative media by including an assortment of blogs, journals, websites, and newspapers in his or her study. Future research could also compare and contrast how emerging countries and western country
victims are portrayed differently in disasters in the conservative media. Furthermore, researchers could also explore the media coverage of the Haiti earthquake in the U.S. versus European media outlets.
Bibliography


End Press.


20 (1), 1-17.


Appendix A

Code Sheet

1) Article Number:

2) Publication Date:

3) Name of Publication:

4) Headline:

5) What words or phrases are used to describe the Haiti earthquake?

6) How is Haiti described within the story?

7) How are Haitians presented within the story? What specific phrases or words are used?

8) What overall theme is expressed within the story’s narrative?
Appendix B

List of all news stories

Achenbach, J. (2010, January 18). The Earth Shook to Open People’s Eyes’ to Needy Haiti; A Nation Gains Visibility. Some wonder how long world’s interest will last.


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