'Cultures of Journalism' in Arabic- and English-language Newspapers within the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

This article examines the "cultures of journalism" at two newspapers in the United Arab Emirates, the Arabic-language Al Ittihad and English-language The National. Founded in 2008, the latter newspaper promised to bring Western-style journalism to the Middle East, so the analysis helps to examine whether it reached this goal. The author and an Arab-language researcher used a "frame analysis" to examine a sample month of coverage (April 2011) during the "Arab Spring." The researchers looked for examples of four main concepts based on Kovach and Rosenthiel's Principles of Journalism: Verification and commitment to truth-telling, holding those in power accountable, providing a space for public criticism and compromise, and comprehensive and proportional reporting. The analysis found that the English-language paper covered the news according to those principles far more than the Arabic-language outlet. But The National deviated from these principles when covering "sensitive" subjects such as actions taken by the nation's security forces. The author concludes with questions about how the different approaches of the English and Arab press may affect the audience's culture.

Keywords: Arab spring, Arab press, Arab media, journalism, censorship, self-censorship, United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, The National, Al Ittihad, principles of journalism, elements of journalism, frame analysis, cultures of journalism

Introduction

Although journalists adhere to some standard practices and conventions globally, specific influences define the practice of journalism within various nations. These include local and regional influences that are concerned with linguistic practices and ideological differences within a particular culture of journalism. Barbie Zelizer (2005) defines "culture of journalism" as "seeing journalism through a cultural lens [which] strategically and pronouncedly interrogates the articulated foundations for journalism and journalistic practice that may be taken for granted elsewhere in the academy" (Zelizer, 2005, 200). In this sense, to assume that journalism is a universal practice undermines the existence of varying complexities and influences that affect the daily practice of journalism in differing nation states.

So, despite there being a standard understanding of journalism practice across the globe through "an all-encompassing consensus among journalists toward a common understanding and cultural identity of journalism," there are, however, different "professional ideologies" which are articulated through journalism cultures (Hanitzsch, 2007, 368), and in turn reflect a variety of journalistic practices. Zelizer suggests that although there are arguments that support a universal culture of journalism, the "cultural lens" provides more complexity to this thesis; she argues:

[S]eeing journalism through a cultural lens creates and proceeds from its own strategic dissonance: despite the prevalence of arguments for journalism's universal nature, the culture of journalism presupposes that journalistic conventions, routines and practices are dynamic and contingent on situational and historical circumstance. It offers a view of journalism that is porous, relative, non-judgmental and flexible. (Zelizer, 2005, 211)

Taking Zelizer's argument into consideration, it is therefore problematic to assume there is a universal practice of journalism despite there being standard routines and conventions. Yet to what extent do these practices differ from one culture of journalism to another? And could cultures of journalism differ within the same nation due to linguistic or professional differences? These questions will be explored through the case studies in this paper of two newspapers operating in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

There are several newspapers which operate within Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), that reflect the city's diverse transient and permanent population. However, within this diverse media environment, this study questions whether a distinction exists in the "culture of journalism" between the Arabic and English newspapers operating within Abu Dhabi, which in turn would lead to differing approaches to news making. This paper looks into the English-language newspaper, *The National,* which caters to an English-speaking audience—including a large expatriate community, and the Arabic-language newspaper, *Al Ittihad,* which serves a local and expatriate Arabic-speaking readership. These newspapers have employed journalists from different countries of origin who have either come from or been trained in an Arab or Western culture of journalism. Through an analysis of a month's coverage during the period of the 2011 Arab Spring, this research attempts to identify the extent to which these two papers adhere to "universal" standards of practice as identified by Kovach and Rosensthiel's (2007) nine principles of journalism, in order to uncover any differing practices which could in turn reflect a unique culture of journalism for each newspaper given its linguistic and geographical specificities. First, however, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of the influences that shape the various cultures of journalism.

Cultures of Journalism and 'The National'

Cultures of journalism are shaped through various influences that come into play and in turn produce different media messages. Mark Deuze (2002) has conducted a comprehensive study on various news cultures around the word, where he investigated the cultures of journalism of Dutch, German, British, Australian and American journalists. Through a consideration of different national contexts, he regards national news cultures "as an intervening variable between people (cf. journalists, sources, or publics) and a given "objective" situation (cf. media events, organizations, infrastructures, and systems) through which citizens inform or are informed, can be seen as partly carried by the broadly defined and operationalized profile of media professionals within a given national context" (Deuze, 2002, 134). In this sense, Deuze argues that there are various factors that influence news cultures that include the journalists who work within that culture, the various kinds of storytelling, and their relation with sources and the

public (Deuze, 2002, 134). All these influences are articulated and connected through a national context, thus affecting the making of the news.

Such differences in news making could occur as a result of how journalists conceptualize their roles. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) identify the journalist's opinions and attitudes as having an influence on the media messages that he/she produces. They suggest that journalists" "personal attitudes may translate into selections that undermine the political legitimacy of the covered person or event" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, 264). In turn, they argue that the inclusion of the journalist's personal attitude relates to the role that the reporter sees him - or herself undertaking, "[w]hether journalists see their roles as interpreting what others do, disseminating information, or serving as an adversary of the powerful, these roles may determine how they define their jobs, the kinds of things they believe should be covered, and the ways in which they cover them" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, 264). The role that each journalist sees him- or herself doing can therefore be strongly tied the cultural identity of the journalist. Zelizer, accordingly, suggests that "[u]nlike the institution, which focuses on journalism's role in the large-scale rendering of power in society, the culture of journalism targets how journalistic practices, routines and conventions take on meaning internally for and among journalists" (Zelizer, 2005, 200). In this sense, journalists themselves therefore play a role in being "producers of culture." Zelizer expands on this further where she argues that "the culture of journalism sees journalists as being "in" a culture, viewing journalists not only as conveyors of information but also as producers of culture" (Zelizer, 2005, 200). Hence, the culture of the journalist is itself a significant influence in news making, where the journalist not only reflects the journalistic culture that he/she comes from but additionally plays a role in shaping the culture of journalism that he/she works in.

Michael Schudson (2005) has mapped "four approaches to the sociology of news" where he identifies the cultural approach, in addition to *economic, political* and *social*, as one of the frameworks to understanding news making. Schudson provides some interesting observations when looking into the cultural impacts of news, where he points out that typically journalists tend to "resonate to the same cultural moods their audiences share" (Shudson, 2005, 187), which in turn produces media message which the audiences can identify with and accommodate within

the boundaries of that cultures. Another factor that affects news making as a result of a culture of journalism is the "news judgment" (Shudson, 2005, 188) that journalists make in the selection of news. This fundamentally impacts the national news agenda, and in turn what constructs the overall social reality of a nation. Shudson also makes references to language as a point of particularity in relation to culture, since linguistic traditions play a role on the framing of news. One specific point that Shudson argues which is of interest to this study, is that:

Most research on the culture of news production takes it for granted that, at least within a given national tradition, there is one common news standard among journalists. This is one of the convenient simplifications of the sociology of journalism that merits critical attention, and might indeed be a point at which a lot of current assumptions about how journalism works begin to unravel. (Shudson, 2005, 190)

It is this particular point that this study aims to explore, since in order to uncover the various factors that inform the construction of meaning in *The National*, the English-language newspaper, and *Al Ittihad,* the Arabic-language newspaper, there is a need to assume that they could possibly operate within two different cultures of journalism despite them operating within the same national boundaries of the UAE. However in order to uncover the various factors that inform the construction of meaning in these two newspapers, there is a need to provide a brief background descriptions of both the history and the media environment of these two newspapers" operations.

The Media Environment in the UAE

The United Arab Emirates established itself as a nation in the early 1970s through the unification of seven tribal emirates on the Arabian Peninsula. The country has experienced tremendous growth fueled by its vast oil wealth and leadership intent on modernization and attracting Western investment. In 2010, the government estimated the country's population at 7.5 million, which is roughly double its population of a decade earlier (Wam News Agency, 2010). Foreign workers comprise the vast majority of UAE residents. Most observers estimate that Emiratis comprise only 10 to 20 percent of the population (Sambridge, 2009).

Journalism in the United Arab Emirates fits within the parameters suggested by Kai Hafez who states that "Arab media systems are still far away from being institutionalized and well-protected democratic systems" (Hafez, 2008, 325). He notes that "[m]edia laws are often strict, putting severe constraints on journalists and media organizations" (Hafez, 2008, 325). On the press freedom index compiled by the American democracy advocacy foundation Freedom House, the United Arab Emirates sits firmly in the "not free" category. The organization makes its assessment by carefully examining "the legal environment for the media, political pressures that influence reporting, and economic factors that affect access to information" (Freedom House, 2010, para. 3). Censorship in the United Arab Emirates is similar to that in many other Arab countries. Media laws in the region provide little protection for the press, leaving journalists to err on the side of caution when reporting on sensitive subjects (Weinberg, 2008). However, some UAE newspapers "do show independence of the government in criticizing the work of various ministries, such as health, labor, and education" (Rugh, 2004, 68). The government or government officials own several television, radio, and newspaper outlets outright, while journalists at other private outlets understand which "red lines" in coverage they should not cross (Duffy, 2011a). Journalists who cross these lines can be fined or have their visa revoked.[1] The news outlets in the United Arab Emirates, while free from direct government control, tend to practice self-censorship because of these concerns. An editor with Dubai's *Gulf News* wrote that "that the ceiling of press freedom is low" because of the lack of protections for journalists and other factors (Rasheed, 2010, para. 5). The United Arab Emirates" foreign population further complicates these issues. While the government exercises control over the traditional media outlets, the Internet is relatively unfettered—particularly news reports from Western-based sources. Foreigners freely rely on the media from their homelands or any other nation via the Internet.

Al Ittihad (Arabic for "the union") is a government-owned paper launched shortly before in the formation of the United Arab Emirates. The newspaper serves as the official organ of the

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[1] The ruler of Dubai, Skeikh Mohammad bin Rashid al Maktoum, decreed in 2007 that he did not think journalists should go to jail for doing their jobs. The decree effectively ended the practice although the laws have never officially been rewritten.

federal government and rulers of the Abu Dhabi emirate. Although reliable circulation figures in the Middle East can be difficult to find, *Al Ittihad* is said to have a circulation of around 60,000 copies per issue (Rugh, 2004).

Amid this media landscape, the 2008 launch of *The National* newspaper in Abu Dhabi promised a different kind of newspaper for the Middle East—one that embraced Western-style journalism. The Emirati chairman of the Abu Dhabi Media Company, the government-owned firm that operates the newspaper, said *The National* "was born out of a vision that recognizes the key role that a free, professional and enlightened press plays in the national development process" (Jaafar, 2008, para. 3). The newspaper hired 200 Western journalists from respected outlets to cover the news in not only the United Arab Emirates, but also the region and the world. The editor-in-chief, the former editor of the British Daily Telegraph, said the paper would "provide quality, must-have reading: when we cover a story, we will own it, in the process creating a national conversation" (Editor, 2008, para. 4). The newspaper also promised to "help society evolve"—a progressive goal for an Arab media outlet (Timmons, 2008, para. 2). Many media leaders and government officials in the Middle East stress the need for the press to behave responsibly—few would argue that changing society should be part of their mission statement. The paper vowed to bring a new style of journalism to the Middle East—one that promised more criticism of the status quo, the traditional role of press throughout the world.

The creation of the newspaper helped Abu Dhabi's efforts to compete with its rival, the city of Dubai, which sits just 150 kilometers away in its own separate Emirate. The lack of a daily, English-language newspaper blemished Abu Dhabi's rapidly improving image. Prior to *The National*'s launch in 2008, only the Arabic-language, government-owned newspaper *Al Ittihad* served the UAE capital (Rugh, 2004). Since then, *The National* has appeared to achieve some of its aims. With its announced circulation of 60,000 copies per day, the paper looks like any major Western metropolitan daily with an impressive stable number of domestic and foreign reporters (Oxford Business Group, 2010). Given its government ownership and media environment, the question of whether *The National* truly offers its readers a different type of journalism to that of *Al Ittihad* and other Arab media outlets (and thereby operating with a

different "culture of journalism") remains unanswered. This study will shed some light on the nature of reporting of each of these two newspapers.

The Reporting of The National and Al Ittihad

This paper provides a study of the reporting of *The National* and *Al Ittihad* through a frame analysis, however different to conducting a frame analysis through issue-specific frames such as the "Arab Spring" or "the war on terror," the author opted to adopt a framing approach that was concerned with "framing as a process" (de Vreese, 2005, 51) of journalism practice. Claes H. de Vreese regards "framing as a process" through the "framing in the newsroom," which includes internal factors such as editorial policies and news values, in addition to external factors. Accordingly, this study uncovers the editorial policies and news values of each of the studied newspapers through an analysis of each paper's reporting against Kovach and Rosensthiel's (2007) nine principles of journalism, as we will go on to explain below. In turn, this will assist in uncovering the journalistic practices and attitudes in news reporting, thus revealing the nature of the "culture of journalism" through which these two newspapers operate within a national context.

The study of the reporting of *The National* and *Al Ittihad* was conducted through the analysis one month's coverage—April 2011, one of the most tumultuous months of the year's "Arab Spring." Although this is not a comprehensive sample, the data collected offered strong and repetitive patterns which arguably justify a representative sample. This sample month was a period of intense media interest due to the focus on the region's events. The author and an Arabic-speaking research assistant examined both the news and editorial sections of each newspaper separately, thus comparing the culture of journalism for each newspaper. The framing tools for analysis that were used were based on Tankard (2001) "who suggests a list of 11 framing mechanisms or focal points for identifying and measuring news frames" and which are: headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts, and concluding statements and paragraphs (de Vreese, 2005, 54).

Table 1: Nine principles of journalism

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
8. It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.

(Source: "The Elements of Journalism," by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenthiel)

The methodology was based on identifying particular frames through which an understanding of cultures of journalism would emerge. Accordingly, there was a need to find some clear "universal" journalism principles in order to identify variations to journalism practice by the two newspapers that would constitute a varied "culture of journalism." Kovach and Rosensthiel's (2007) nine principles of journalism, which are closely aligned with the practice of Western-style journalism, were found to be a suitable framework due to their "universal" principles of journalism practice. (See Table 1 for the complete principles.) The nine "Principles of Journalism" include commitments to truth and verification, loyalty to citizens, independence from powerful figures and institutions, space for public criticism and compromise, and comprehensive and proportional reporting. The principles also advocate an impartial method of reporting that values verification rather than assertion to create "a reliable version of events" (Kovach and Rosensthiel, 2007, 77). The newspaper reports were therefore examined to see whether these normative goals of journalism practice were adopted. The frames through which the articles were categorized were identified from four of Kovach and Rosensthiel's (2007) nine principles:

- *Truth and Verification*—Is it clear from the reporting that the newspaper is interested in verification and truth telling?

- *Independence from Powerful Figures and Institutions*—Do the journalists serve as independent monitors of power?

- *Public Criticism and Compromise*—Are the people interviewed allowed to offer criticism and debate issues?

- *Comprehensive and Proportional Reporting*—Do the reports offer a comprehensive review of the news, or do they highlight some elements while omitting others?

In carrying out the frame analysis, the researchers examined a paper copy of each issue of the newspaper for the sample month. They used the preceding four questions as a guide while recording detailed observations of each issues' news section. The researchers paid attention to Tankard's 11 focal points including headlines, photo captions, leads and sources. They highlighted instances that offered a reflection on one or more of the preceding four questions, thereby indicating the paper's commitment toward Kovach and Rosenthiel's conception of journalism.

The researchers found that the data studied often revolved around these four principles. The four frames, therefore, were found to be the main identifiers of a varied journalism practice in both *The National* and *Al Ittihad*, and in turn a different "culture of journalism."

The analysis revealed that both English and Arabic journalists in the UAE are practicing a style of journalism in which they depart from the Western norms outlined by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) in several key ways. The following will outline how the reporting of the two newspapers differed in accordance with the four outlined principles of journalism.

1. Truth and Verification

One major difference between the English and Arabic press is the presentation of news. *The National* features many pages of new reports where the reporters and editors present information and address issues in a manner consistent with the principles of journalism—with the journalist conducting interviews, gathering information, and then delivering the news. The paper's editorial

pages take up the final two pages of the front section and usually just feature commentary on news reported elsewhere in the paper in an impartial manner. In contrast, *Al Ittihad*'s front news pages contained little news that adhered to such journalism principles as independence, verification, providing a public forum, and offering verified information rather than assertions. Much of the space in the front the newspaper is dedicated to pictures of the country's rulers and government press releases with the byline of the official government news agency. The paper only rarely reports the news from an impartial point of view. Instead, the articles in the front section often include opinions from the journalists and rarely contain quotes from those people involved in the news. The paper features four pages of editorial pages, *"Wijhat Nathar"* (Point of View), where the paper raises the most sensitive and critical issues. This difference in presenting the news represents a disparity in journalistic norms and, in turn, differences in how journalism is produced.

The English-language press provides some examples in which reporters demonstrate both an interest in verifying information and a commitment to truth telling. One *National* article covered gasoline shortages in some of the smaller Emirates in a manner that offered both verification and an attempt to discern the true nature of events. The reporter noted that the "a spokesman for the Dubai-based oil firm blamed "logistical problems" (Croucher, 2011, para. 2). The journalist then interviewed analysts who speculated (and were later proven correct) that the shortages related to a disagreement between Emirates over subsidies. He summarized: "The company has sustained heavy losses in recent years because it has to buy fuel at the international market price and sell it at a regulated, lower price" (para 11). By investigating the claims of the official spokesperson and adding context from other sources, the reporter showed a commitment to verification and truth telling. In comparison, *Al Ittihad* did not cover the gas shortage issue in a critical manner.

Al Ittihad showed less of a commitment to verification and truth telling. As mentioned earlier, the paper often runs pictures of government officials and press releases from the government news agency, WAM. *Al Ittihad* rarely offers a critical reaction to information supplied by the government and simply runs it without comment or seeking other opinions. Running a press release from a government agency without any additional reporting shows a lack

of commitment to Kovach and Rosentheil's principles regarding independently monitoring power and the practice of verifying information. In comparison, *The National* did not publish a press release verbatim during the sample period without at least some additional reporting, showing more of a commitment to the tenets of verification and truth telling. However, on "sensitive" issues (further discussion below), the paper added only the briefest of contextual elements from the government press releases.

2. Independence from Powerful Figures and Institutions

The National's coverage features examples in which it serves as an independent monitor of power. For instance, the paper included stories that highlight problems with the country's criminal justice system. One article detailed the case of a woman who went to the police to report a rape and then was held in prison for four months on prostitution charges (Ruiz, 2011). The reporter interviewed an official with an advocacy group who decried the police and court decisions in the case. The advocate told the reporter: "The suspects should be brought to justice and the travel agency or recruiter who brought the Filipina to Dubai should also be held accountable" (para. 13). Another article also points to an apparent travesty of justice, although the reporter simply reports the facts in objective fashion. The article starts: "A man who kidnapped a Filipina tourist, beat her, and threatened to rape and murder her was sentenced this morning to a suspended six months in prison" (Al Amir, 2011, para. 1). The journalist goes on to mention that his uncle took part in the crime but was not charged. While the journalist does not ask for any independent opinions about the quality of justice meted in the case, simply shedding light on the workings of the justice system helps provide a check on government authorities. Both of these articles represent a clear case of the press acting as an independent monitor of power. No articles were found in *Al Ittihad* in the sample studied covering this or similar issues in the court system.

In fact, *Al Ittihad* did not regularly cover the court system during the sample month, while, in contrast, *The National* has a beat reporter who regularly covers court hearings. Court stories often involve sordid tales of Emiratis and expats accused of murder, violence, and vice

crimes such as drinking and prostitution. Names in crime stories are rarely used because of restrictive media laws (Duffy, 2010). The absence of a courts reporter during this period at *Al Ittihad* represents a notable absence in coverage.[2]

In other topic areas, *Al Ittihad* does take positions critical of those in power on occasion, but it does so in an oblique manner. One article describes how the UAE's students fare poorly in global comparisons and notes the existence of a communication problem in the education ministry between what the article describes as "those responsible and those in the field" (Alamodi, 2011). Despite this, the article remains a reflective opinion piece, which does not investigate the issue through interviewing. This type of journalism exemplifies the lack of a clear distinction between editorial writing and the type of reporting rooted in the gathering and verification of information. In addition, the journalist does not identify the personnel involved or attempt to interview department staff in order to obtain their response to these concerns. While the article does ascribe some accountability to those in power, the failure to name any officials or investigate further limits the effectiveness of this role.

While raising critical concerns about governance, *The National* also avoids specifically naming those officials in power—although it does name names more often than *Al Ittihad*. For instance, one article notes that authorities in the capital city of Abu Dhabi are apparently cutting down trees despite their apparent health (Thomas, 2011). One resident complained: "It's terrible what they're doing. Up until now, it's been mostly pruning, but to cut down an entire beautiful tree is unacceptable" (Thomas, 2011, para. 9). The article offers similar commentary from flummoxed Abu Dhabi residents but does not attempt either to identify who should be held accountable or to interview someone from the municipal government. (Indeed, the practice of interviewing of residents has not been detected in *Al Ittihad* at all.) Other reports that called for public accountability—including a collapse of a giant festival tent in a sandstorm, a drowning at a beach in Dubai, and broken air conditioners in bus shelters—failed to identify or interview officials in positions of authority. At times, the newspaper even allows unnamed government

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[2] Random checks of *Al Ittihad's* coverage in other months did find some, but not much, court and crime reporting. So, the complete lack of such reporting in April 2011 appears to be an aberration.

spokespeople to refuse to comment, meaning that the people hired to talk to the press avoid fulfilling their roles.

In some notable cases, reporters with *The National* do manage to monitor those in power via specific identification. One article details a dangerous traffic intersection in the northern Emirate of Ras al Khaimah that had caused several deaths (Zacharias, 2011). The reporter interviewed the official in charge of traffic in the northern emirate and allowed family members of people killed in the area to respond to his points. This type of public accountability occasionally appeared in other *National* articles but rarely in *Al Ittihad*.

3. Public Criticism and Compromise

Both papers aired issues critical of the government and businesses; however, certain limitations apply. In *The National*, journalists covered university teachers who were upset with hiring practices, residents unhappy with school spending allocation, and other issues mentioned earlier in the analysis. In *Al Ittihad*, articles discussed the problem of not granting citizenship to foreigners married to nationals, the shortage of Emiratis in certain professions, and the lack of healthy habits among the nation's youth. *Al Ittihad*'s journalists would often raise points of criticism but then answer these critiques by noting the actions already undertaken by the government. As mentioned earlier, *Al Ittihad* reporters would frequently address the issues themselves—simply referring obliquely to the concerns of affected parties—rather than finding someone affected and conducting an interview.

In contrast, *The National* did provide a vehicle for identified residents to raise issues publicly. For instance, one article describes a local university's decision to transfer employees to another region and then later new hire people to fill their vacated positions (Swan, 2011). The transferred employees became upset over what they perceived as a needless move and publicly voiced their frustrations. One employee who had already quit her job rather than move said, "I didn't think I could get any angrier than I already am at my former employer, but this advertisement is a very hard slap in the face" (para. 3). Some of the current employees were granted anonymity so that they could speak freely without fear of reprisals, and the university's

provost also explained the position of the school. In this sense, the paper provided a public platform for debate, allowing a space for public criticism and compromise. This type of coverage appeared occasionally in *The National*, giving those parties who were upset with the status quo a platform upon which to express their issues. Such instances of "public debate" were seen rarely in *Al Ittihad*, where journalists would more often raise issues on behalf of nameless parties.

4. Comprehensive and Proportional Reporting

While both papers covered many sensitive and important issues for the United Arab Emirates, their reporting often fell short of comprehensive coverage that truly reflected all parts of a particular issue. For instance, *The National*'s coverage of the regional unrest often proved quite comprehensive. The paper even offered staff-written reports from inside Syria throughout 2011 that provided information about the brutal crackdown in that country. However, the coverage of the Arab Spring did became muted or self-censored when dealing with one nearby political ally—Bahrain. In general, the coverage of Bahrain in both *The National* and *Al Ittihad* was less extensive than the coverage of the other Arab countries dealing with unrest.

Coverage of the United Arab Emirates's arrest of five human rights activists appeared similarly muted. *The National* only reported on two of the arrests until the government officially acknowledged all five. In contrast, many international outlets as well as the Dubai tabloid newspaper, *7Days,* widely reported the arrests (Duffy, 2011a). Indeed, *Al Ittihad* surprisingly never published an impartial news story about the arrests, although the editorial pages referred to them. The decision to not publish news of the arrests as they happened reveals the papers' avoidance of the commitment to offer readers a comprehensive picture of events.

Another interesting divergence between the papers concerned the use of the front-page main photo. Nearly every day in April, *The National* featured a picture from the upheaval in one of the many Arab countries in the region. In contrast, *Al Ittihad* editors only chose to use a picture of the Arab Spring on two days during the sample month. The other days in April featured front-page photos of the country's president Shiekh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan instead.

News coverage of business interests is another area where comprehensive coverage appears to be lacking.[3] *The National* reported on the closure of a roller coaster at Abu Dhabi's Ferrari World amusement park. The article is decidedly one-sided, simply announcing that the coaster and two other rides would be closed indefinitely (National Staff, 2011). The article neither interviewed any disappointed amusement park patrons nor asked any officials about the cause or length of the shutdown. The coverage, while far from comprehensive, still exceeded *Al Ittihad,* whose editors chose to ignore the story. Of note, both articles from *The National* called out here for their lack of comprehensive coverage did not carry a reporter's byline. The absence may indicate reluctance on the part of journalists at the paper to have their names attached to subpar reporting.

Different Cultures of Journalism?

This analysis leads to several interesting conclusions, especially in terms of the nature of the "culture of journalism" for both the Arabic and English newspapers in the UAE. The newspapers vary greatly in their approach to journalism, with *The National* providing coverage far closer to the ideal outlined by Kovach and Rosensthiel's (2007) "principles of journalism." The analysis also reveals that the differing presentation of news could lead to differing "ideologies" amongst each newspaper's respective readers, which is regarded as "the manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual group or culture" (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 47). The differing style of journalism of the two papers could therefore offer several subtle disparities in the way each paper's readers react to issues.

In the English-language reporting, journalists generally acted as impartial observers who sought information and presented what they found. They usually gathered information from sources—residents, government officials, and experts—to create a news report on an issue. However, the Arabic-language reporting featured a dearth of this type of journalism. Much of the "news" was simply photos of events with the country's leadership and unaltered press releases

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[3] This observation applies only to business coverage in the news section. The analysis did not evaluate the business section.

from the government. The few journalist-written news stories tended to be summaries of issues with no quotes from people offering individual perspectives. Instead, the journalists summarized their take on the issues and offered their *own* opinions—practicing a journalism of assertion rather than verification. This reveals a differing "culture of journalism" practiced by each paper which falls in line with Zelizer's (2005) argument discussed at the start of this paper on journalists becoming "producers of culture." In this way, journalists are taking part in shaping the culture of journalism they work in. So when, for example, the journalists writing in the Arabic newspaper tended to offer their own opinion—and which was more than often hard to distinguish from facts—it can be deduced that the journalist sees him or herself as contributors to the media message itself rather then merely conveyers of information. This echoes what Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue where the journalist's personal attitude relates to the role that the reporter sees himself or herself undertaking. The Arabic-language press featured twice as many opinion pages where writers would often address news items—including news not covered anywhere else in the paper. *The National* rarely ran an editorial about a subject that was not covered in an impartial manner somewhere else. This distinct difference between impartial reporting and "assertion journalism" produces a different media message altogether by each of the newspapers, thus reflecting a different "culture of journalism."

In turn, the study has identified different approaches by each newspaper to citizen engagement. For example, the Arabic press' lack of quotes from residents also creates a unique perspective, where residents have little reason to have an opinion or be engaged regarding government decisions when they never read quotes from average citizens like themselves. While the Western journalists routinely interview the "man on the street" to gauge public opinion, this technique never appeared in *Al Ittihad* during the sample month. The absence of citizens' quotes may have a dramatic affect on public engagement in political life. The government recently held an election for members of the Federal National Council, a deliberative body that airs issues for national discussion, and has stated publicly its desire to see the country's residents more involved in issues facing the country. Dr. Anwar Gargash, the government minister in charge of the election, said: "It is not enough to remain as bystanders on the national debate but to be actively engaged" (Duffy, 2011b, para. 10). The newspaper's failure to provide room for average

comment and criticism appears to work against the government's broad goal at increased participation. In this sense, the Arabic journalism is failing to offer "a forum for public criticism and compromise," one of the aforementioned principles of journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007), rather it appears that *Al Ittihad* tended to work within its cultural and political contexts of operation that is reflected in its journalistic practice.

This was also often found in the practice of journalism found in both the English and Arabic newspapers in regards to journalists operating to "serve as an independent monitor of power" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). While the outlets do regularly cover issues regarding the government and business, they often do so obliquely. For instance, the newspapers will raise issues about government agencies, but then fail to point out exactly who is in charge or seek a response from an official. In some cases, the newspapers even quote public relations officials from the agency without offering their name. Business coverage often seemed to fail to meet the standards of independent monitoring of power. Articles about problems with businesses such as Blackberry and Ferrari World tended to gloss over troubles. This finding is in keeping with other commentary that leadership frowns upon tough business reporting because it could hurt the economy of the UAE (Potter, 2010). Both English and Arabic journalists appear reluctant to cover business news with the same vigor as their Western counterparts. In this example, there were similarities between both cultures of journalism due to them operating with the same national context. The issue of power is one that places a strong influence on the practice of journalism, and is one that would gain considerable effect within a national context on all media platforms operating within its borders.

Speaking of power, both newspapers failed to adequately cover the arrests of its own citizens during the "Arab Spring." The details of the arrests were quite murky and the government didn't official acknowledge them until more than a week after the first detention. A news media operating in a free environment would have seen many opportunities for daily stories on the arrests—family, friends, and co-workers could have been interviewed and government officials could be routinely questioned for updates. Instead, both media outlets remained quiet except when public officials or the state news agency made a statement. Yes, *The National* has in some ways delivered its promised new type of journalism to the Middle East. But

this familiar style of journalism—failing to report on the questionable actions of the security forces—is all too familiar in the Arab world.

Despite overarching influences of power within a national context over all forms of "cultures of journalism," differences were detected between *Al Ittihad* and *The National*, as discussed above, thus providing notably differing cultures of journalism. Overall, this study set out to ascertain whether a distinction in journalistic practice between the Arabic and English newspapers within Abu Dhabi existed and, in turn, determine whether a difference (if one existed) could lead to a distinction in the "culture of journalism" of each newspaper. The goal was to better understand the underpinnings of each newspaper's journalistic culture operating within the same national media environment. In accord with these questions, this study found that both *The National* and *Al Ittihad* adopt differing journalistic cultures, due to linguistic and cultural influences. In turn, this paper sees that "cultures of journalism" not only exist from one country to another but also remain valid with the same national context, and in turn reveal a more complex and contextual journalism environment. This analysis could lead to many opportunities for future study in also other contexts to see if there are correlations between the findings of this study and other "cultures of journalism" operating within the same nation state.

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