CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

exploring portrayals of the Majority World in local print media in the West of Ireland

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In January 2008, the Galway One World Centre (GOWC) and postgraduate students of the NUI Galway Philosophy department embarked on a joint project to ascertain how local print media in the West of Ireland portrays the Majority World. We hoped through this endeavour, by combining our distinct perspectives, we could arrive at a richer understanding of the diverse issues we would encounter. This booklet presents the result of that project.

The GOWC is a development education provider that operates in the West of Ireland. GOWC's aim is to empower people through education, direct action, networking, outreach and provision of resources to contribute towards the creation of a world where all people have equality of rights, opportunities and respect.

The Masters programme that facilitated this collaboration is called Ethics, Culture & Global Change. One component of this course is known as a service learning module. The aim of service learning is to bridge the gap between theory and practice and equip students with the necessary skills for bringing philosophical concepts to bear on contemporary issues. This reflective awareness gives an advantage when considering both complex ethical issues and the way in which one approaches practical problems. In short it fosters the ability to look at an issue or problem from different perspectives and to reflect on the merits or demerits of each viewpoint. It was felt that the respective skills and resources that each group could bring to the project would provide us with a broad framework and ensure a mutually beneficial outcome.

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Introduction

Why a review of local media's portrayal of the Majority World?

This paper explores the manner in which local print media in the West of Ireland portrays the Majority World. In order to establish the contemporary standard of reportage on Majority World issues we examined one month's output of local newspapers in the West of Ireland. The names of the papers, number of issues and number of articles examined are detailed in the methodology section. This introductory section will detail our motivation for carrying out this project.

Contemporary Ireland is a multicultural society and, as a result of this, there exists a necessity for intercultural dialogue. With increasingly diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups, mutual understanding between the persons who make up this nation is of the utmost importance. Local newspapers and the journalists who work for them can play a vital and vibrant role in fostering this intercultural communication.

In Ireland, as in most wealthy countries, our awareness of global issues is often largely provided by national and international media outlets. We are made aware of the symptoms of global inequality through our media's coverage of war, famine and humanitarian aid. Those of us who are dependant on the mainstream media for information might be forgiven for believing, for example, that even a diverse continent the size of Africa produces no works of art, technology or science. We could also easily overlook the huge and costly contributions Majority World countries have made to the economies of the wealthy countries.

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Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and charities operating in areas of the Majority World at times of crises often provide an 'expert' opinion to the media. In the case of Irish news reporting, the presence of and comments by Irish Agencies adds a local interest to an international story. This creates a situation where those in receipt of assistance may be unintentionally portrayed as passive recipients and those who provide aid act as spokespeople - a very different task.

In recent years, NGOs have been displaying increasing awareness of this problem, for example, in *Challenging Perspectives*, John Horgan from Trócaire takes issue with inaccurate media portrayals. Commenting on media coverage of Ethiopia, he states: *"The impression given is that of a country...brought to its knees by famine and unable to feed itself without outside aid… [t]he self-sufficiency of a large part of the Ethiopian population was not, in this context newsworthy".*[1] Motivation for seeking to redress inaccurate depictions of Majority World countries is not restricted to a whimsical quest for journalistic integrity - we run the risk of reinforcing damaging perceptions by depicting those from the Majority World as dependant or in need of our help. By focusing on this depiction, a dichotomy is formed between superior and inferior notions of living. In Ireland, some organisations have already taken themselves and the national media to task over the effects of this type of unbalanced reporting. Examples of proactive responses to this include codes of practice relating to the images used to raise funds for charities and aid agencies.[2]

... we run the risk of reinforcing damaging perceptions ...

The local newspaper has a significant role in Irish society and is relied on for various aspects of basic daily life. In fact, any newcomer to a locality will more than likely depend on the local newspaper to find accommodation, employment, educational opportunities and news of upcoming events. The population of Ireland at the last census in 2006 included 419,733 non-Irish people living in Ireland (as opposed to 224,261 in 2002)[3]. On account of this increase in migration/immigration to Ireland it is now more urgent than ever that we address any shortcomings that exist in local media in relation to this phenomenon.

Methodology

In carrying out this research we began from the standpoint that local media may not be subject to the same contingent factors as national media; for example the wars, famines and foreign affairs that populate the national print press are seldom given much coverage in local media. In regard to commercial constraints, local print media infrequently use reports purchased from news agencies. As will be seen first hand from journalists' responses to our questionnaire, the first prerequisite for every news piece is its 'localness' - its relevance to the area in which the paper is distributed. This research has tried to establish the context in which mentions of Majority World countries and of related issues occur in the local papers in our selected region.

... the first prerequisite for every news piece is its 'localness' ...

This piece of research was carried out in four phases. The first phase involved the gathering of empirical data. This consisted of examining seventeen local newspapers from various rural and urban areas in the West of Ireland over a one month period. Newspapers given out free of charge and those sold were both included. Between the 15th of January and the 15th of February 2008, we catalogued articles that contained references to the Majority World and examined them with the following questions:

- o What type of article is it? (For example: letters page, community diary, advertisement or newspiece)
- o What country did it concern?
- o What nationality was the person who wrote it?
- o What nationality were those quoted in the course of the article?
- o What did it report/advocate?
- o Who is photographed?
- o Is the nationality of those photographed indicated?

Below is a table listing the newspapers we examined:

Newspapers	Frequency	No. of Issues examined	No. of Articles found
Connemara View	Monthly	1	2
Galway Advertiser	Weekly	4	6
Galway City Tribune	Weekly	4	7
Galway First	Weekly	4	7
Galway Independent	Weekly	2	5
Leitrim Observer	Weekly	4	14
Roscommon Champion	Weekly	4	7
Roscommon Herald	Weekly	4	21
Sligo Champion	Weekly	4	24
Sligo Post	Weekly	1	3
Sligo Weekender	Weekly	4	21
Connacht Tribune	Weekly	4	7
Connaught Telegraph	Weekly	4	8
Mayo Echo	Weekly	4	5
Mayo News	Weekly	1	9
Tuam Herald	Weekly	3	4
Western People	Weekly	4	8

The second phase consisted of attributing to each article a status of *negative, positive* or *neutral* according to how we measured its portrayal of the Majority World. These portrayals were decided upon according to criteria we devised from the issues raised in our analysis. In order to demonstrate our criteria for classifying the articles, several of them are described below with an explanation of our reasons for their particular categorisation.

The third phase in our examination saw us highlight the prominent issues that we recognised during our research. We began by investigating the terms commonly used to describe what we referred to as the *Majority World* and why we recommend the exclusive use of the term *Majority World*. Of course, this is open to future re-evaluation but at the time of writing we believe this term to be the most accurate. We focused on the way in which, albeit subtly, the media shapes and influences our attitudes, how the use of particular terms can reinforce and perpetuate prejudice and how this in turn hinders integration in society. This led us to explore the complex, organic interplay between media and audience.

... how the use of particular terms can reinforce and perpetuate prejudice ...

The fourth and final phase of our research involved the drawing up of a questionnaire that focused on the issues raised by our examination of the articles. This was sent to journalists at all of the papers involved. The results of this questionnaire can be found in appendix A. In our conclusion we propose a number of recommendations that our personal response to these findings leads us to make.

The keywords we used to delineate our search for relevant articles included (but were not restricted to) the following: *names of countries, nationalities, ethnicities, religions, immigration, integration, race, development, charity, volunteering, peacekeeping, asylum, refugee, aid, health, festivals, culture, education new communities, third world, developing countries*, and *global south*.

It is necessary to note that we recognise the likelihood that a passive type of bias existed in our project. It is possible that articles were omitted that may have referred to persons or events from the Majority World due to the fact that they were not categorised as such. An article without mention of the nationality or background of its subject or theme can indicate that the writer perceives these topics as within the dominant cultural norm, not as something 'other' so to speak. For the purposes of this research, however, this creates the problem that by using the selected phrases to delineate our project we may be omitting examples of the reporting of Majority World voices and issues merely because they have not been treated differently. Notwithstanding this predicament, we are of the opinion that the month long survey that we have carried out is informative and provides an overall snapshot of current journalistic mores.

Section I

Evaluation:
Neutral / Negative / Positive Portrayals

Each article was evaluated according to how it portrayed the Majority World. These portrayals fall into three categories, which have been named *neutral portrayals, positive portrayals* and *negative portrayals*. They were deemed so under the following criteria:

o **Neutral** - An article was deemed neutral when the bare facts of the news item were presented, when the tone was impartial without negative or positive assumptions, in other words, with no apparent value judgements.

o **Positive** - An article was deemed positive when broad information was given, such as the background of the country mentioned, and when the focus of the article was not limited to negative information concerning the place. For a positive evaluation we required that the article was a balanced news item that was well researched with an engaged view of specific countries in the Majority World rather than a negative sense of 'otherness'. The fact that the subject of an article was a negative event or situation was not a factor in its classification as it was the manner in which it was reported that was under scrutiny.

o **Negative** - An article was deemed negative when the news item was presented in a vague manner, an example being charities advertising but not mentioning the countries involved, lumping countries together as being 'poor' and framing items in a way that disempowered the notion of the Majority World. Referring to the Majority World as the 'Third World' was also deemed negative (see section II - Terminology). In particular, it was found that many articles regarding charity and fundraising provided a negative portrayal of the Majority World or focused on the local aspect of the endeavour.

Depending on the purpose and size of the article, the information given about the country was judged in a certain way. For example, a small notice in a local notes section giving information concerning a fundraiser and mentioning the country involved was deemed neutral as the information was limited to the space given. Conversely, a one page article with photographs concerning fundraising, which gave little or no information on the country involved but rather focused on the fundraisers, was deemed to be negative.

The breakdown of the three types of portrayals can be seen in the chart below. It should be also noted that local newspapers often rely on press releases and charity events to provide the content of their newspaper. Needless to say, these particular charity mentions or press releases are not directly written by journalists. However, the content printed is ultimately the newspapers' responsibility.
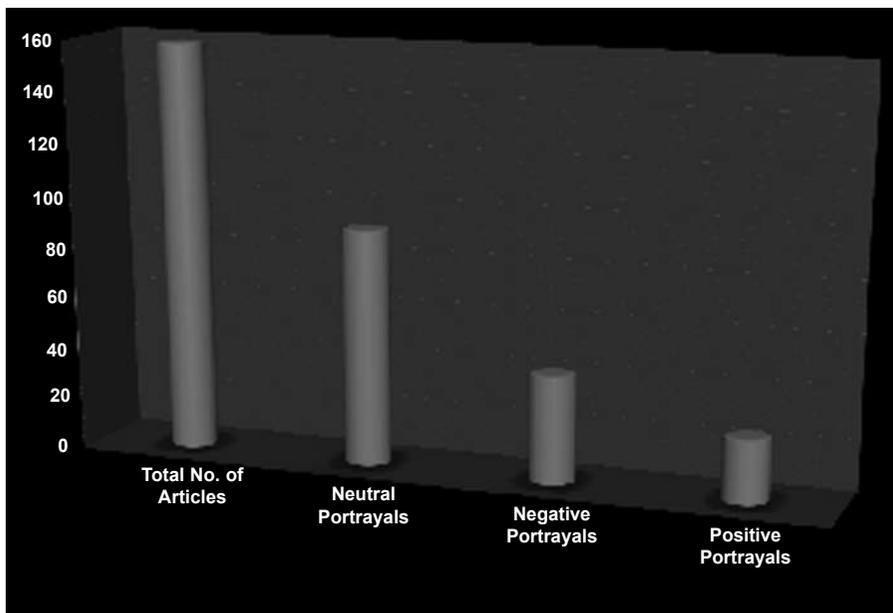
Breakdown of Neutral / Negative / Positive Portrayals

Before the specific results of our classification process, it is interesting to mention an article published in the Western People on 29/01/2008 that depicts the complexity involved in local papers reportage of global events. The article is entitled *"From Ballina to Islamabad"* and consists of a whole supplement in Western Extra. It is an article by journalist Keith Bourke on the Guardian's Declan Walsh who was working as a reporter in Pakistan. There are 14 photographs accompanying the article depicting various places the reporter has been and the people he has met. Though the reporter has experience of many countries, the focus of the article is on the fact that he is from Ballina, on his family who reside there, and how much danger he has been in because of his occupation. The most striking quote is when Mr. Walsh explains his reason for moving to Pakistan to cover stories. *"I loved Africa but western interest in the story was very fickle - Zimbabwe this week, Uganda the next, and so on. Pakistan is a far more complex story and outside interest far more intense. I've hardly had a day off in the past six months".* This is a telling quote highlighting that journalists' motivations for reporting in a particular place seem dependent on public interest and what sells a story (this circle of supply and demand is dealt with in greater detail in the final section of this booklet). The interest seems to centre on danger, bloodshed and poverty not on the ordinary similarities humans share. While it would be remiss to dismiss the occurrence of negative events in the Majority World, it is equally remiss not to balance reports by contextualising the extraordinary events through inclusion of the commonplace.

... the interest seems to centre on danger, bloodshed and poverty ...

In total ...

159	articles were found and examined
31	countries were mentioned
75	were news items
3	were court reports
5	were in relation to interculturalism
4	concerned sport

Neutral Portrayals

Although the articles we classified as *'neutral'* are less informative for our purposes than those we deemed either *'positive'* or *'negative'*, it is useful to describe one such article for comparative purposes. A *neutral portrayal* can be observed in an article that was published in The Mayo News on 5/2/2008. Under the heading *"Healthcare experts meet in Castlebar"*, we are informed of a meeting of the Caring International Research Collaborative (CIRC). The article is factual and informative, whilst being written in a neutral tone. A list of countries from which various academics and healthcare professionals will attend is provided. They include the Bahamas, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, England, Ireland, Italy, Philippines, Serbia, Switzerland, Tanzania and the USA. The nations from the Majority World are listed alongside Western nations without comment. In essence there is no distinction made between any of the countries listed or their likely contributions to the event. This provides a solid example of a neutral article.

Negative Portrayals

Four selected instances of articles where there was a negative portrayal of the Majority World are outlined here. The first negative portrayal that will be mentioned was published in the Connaught Telegraph on 30/01/2008. The article is titled *"Migrants pose a significant threat to jobs in the region"*. This article appears on the front page and quotes Councillor Michael Kilcoyne as saying of 'non-nationals': *"They employ their own people... I'm afraid that if the present situation continues Irish workers are going to be laid off...These non-national sub-contractors are making a packet".* It can be said that this kind of reporting perpetuates bad feeling towards immigrants. The last lines of the article are: *"Councillor Kilcoyne stressed that not all Irish sub-contractors are 'angels'. He said: 'There is also evidence of Irish contractors taking on these foreign sub-contractors and then not paying them properly'"*. Even though the above quote indicates that the councillor attempted to balance his remarks with a criticism of the practices of some Irish contractors, overall, the article portrays a negative view of non-Irish persons. This was reinforced by the fact that the article's title was a prominent headline on the front page of that edition of the paper and it gives no indication of an alternative view.

The second negative portrayal of the Majority World was found in an article describing the problem of illegal dumping which was published in the Sligo Champion on 30/01/2008. In it, the journalist is highlighting how terrible and unsightly illegal dumping is. It is reported that *"One man directly involved in the battle against illegal dumping is of the opinion that some places in Ireland now resemble Third World countries, there is so much illegal dumping"*. By making this comparison, the author is conveying a negative image of the Majority World. In addition to using the dated term of 'Third World' (see the terminology section for a justification of our opposition to the use of this term), the assumption is made that all countries lumped together under this term are littered, dirty and uncivilised and therefore misrepresents the reality of the Majority World.

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The third negative portrayal of the Majority World was published in the Sligo Post on 13/02/2008. This article consists of a full page spread, with a map of Africa highlighting Uganda and several photographs. It is entitled *"Sligo Teams compete in Uganda's Cup of Nations"*. At first glance, the article seems positive but further investigation leads to the opposite conclusion. It focuses on the Sligo county footballer Dara McGarty bringing football equipment to Uganda and organising tournaments for the children of St. Jude's Children's Home. As the article recounts the event, we are told the names of the team kits were *Sligo, Sligo Rovers, Sligo All-Stars, Sligo Rugby Club, Drogheda United, Boyle Basketball Club* and *DIT Bolton Street*. The following comment, found early in the article, is careless and trivialises serious matters with the use of an exclamation mark: *"After a few hours of vetting and organising (counting legs, arms etc. - the usual checks in war-torn Africa!) we had eight teams ready for off on the following day"*. This article like our other two negative examples illustrates how negative connotations discretely seep into readers' consciousness. Further to this example, each picture depicts the children involved as being from Sligo clubs, for example one caption reads: *"The Sligo keeper comes to gather the ball under close attention from Rovers"*. It is as if the Sligo identity is being imposed on the children and is superior to their natural, Ugandan identity.

A similar fourth article was to be found in The Connaught Tribune on 01/02/2008. The article is focusing on an upcoming Brazil/Ireland match and on the integration of the Brazilian community in Scoil Eoin primary school. (Notably, the journalist is Brazilian writer Daniela Gross De Almedia and this is stated in the sub-heading. Interestingly, we discovered in this research that a journalist's nationality is rarely blatantly printed.) The negative portrayal is summed up in teacher Mary Mellick's reported comments: *"For Mary Mellick, Pedro's choice to support Ireland demonstrates that the presence of the Brazilians in the school doesn't pose a risk to the Irish culture and that, in fact, after being here for a while, many students like Pedro can even 'start to feel more Irish than Brazilian'"*. Two negative aspects here are in the assumption that Brazilians could *"pose a risk to the Irish culture"* and, as in the previous article, the seeming need to neutralize other nationalities by imposing Irishness on them is evident in that students *"start to feel more Irish than Brazilian"*.

Positive Portrayals

In contrast to the last article, appearing in the same edition of the Connaught Tribune, an item entitled *"Secondary students also off to Croker"*, shows a positive portrayal of integration in terms of it being a mutually beneficial process. Teacher Mary Geraghty is interviewed: *"Geraghty also feels that the mix of the students brings benefits for all involved, being a 'great gain for the school'"*.

Another instance of a positive portrayal occurs in Rose Tuelo Brock's regular column in the Galway City Tribune. This weekly article has a sub heading entitled *"View of the World"* which reflects her style of presenting issues in terms of general humanity rather than seeing issues as specific to one area of the world. Each of the four articles which appeared in the editions of the Galway City Tribune finds a link between South Africa and the so-called developed world. This seems easily done but is unfortunately unusual as a sense of 'otherness' seems to grip many other writers. Brock, however, manages to speak of issues as diverse as exam pressure, refugees, gun crime due to racial hatred and power cuts in South Africa, whilst each time drawing parallels with the west. In doing so, the unrealistic gap between 'us' and the Majority World is lessened as it becomes clear that issues are not overly complex and that much common ground exists. Brock positively raises our awareness and inspires openness through the medium of her articles.

A third positive portrayal can be found in the 12/02/2008 edition of the Roscommon Herald. The article is entitled *"Intercultural strategy for county launched"*. It is a report on a strategy to *"accommodate cultural diversity in the county"*. The article is well researched and broad in scope, outlining the different cultural identities in Roscommon including Brazilians, Asians, East European and members of the Travelling community. There are several photographs of people at the event. The article acknowledges obstacles to integration such as fear but emphasises the importance of intercultural communication. This article is a positive representation of a diverse Ireland, the challenges faced and the necessary action that must be undertaken.

Charity ...

159	articles were found and examined
69	of these articles concerned charity
14	countries were mentioned exclusively in terms of charity
3	regions (South America, Central America and Africa) were mentioned exclusively in terms of charity
37	of these charity related articles concerned only the reporting of Irish people's charitable efforts
1	referred to the charity Concern
12	referred to the charity GOAL
18	referred to the charity Trócaire
1	referred to the charity Oxfam
5	referred to the charity Bothar

Questionnaire

Following the month long process we compiled a questionnaire and sent it to all of the newspapers that were subjects of our research. We felt it was necessary to get their perspective on some of the issues that had arisen. It was also essential that we understood the motivations and rationale behind the selection of content, what was deemed newsworthy and why? Unfortunately not all of the newspapers contacted responded. The responses of those that did are discussed here.

All respondents said that the positioning and length of an article depended on its topicality and newsworthiness. When asked what constitutes a newsworthy article the response, invariably, was that it has to be 'local'. No specific issues are prioritised as such though one respondent admitted that crime and politics do receive extensive coverage. It is only very rarely that national or international events receive attention. When they do they are usually placed in a local context, the global oil crisis, for example, would be newsworthy in that it directly and indirectly affects the local community.

Although answers to the questions concerning newsworthiness were fairly consistent, attitudes diverged on the issue of nationality. Asked whether nationality was relevant in reporting crime most respondents said it was not relevant. However, one respondent maintained that nationality, or more specifically ethnicity was relevant when providing a description of a criminal suspect. Another respondent felt that nationality was becoming increasingly relevant given the changing social make-up of the region. Two different respondents said origin was always mentioned. Interestingly, they both commented on this using the phrase *"whether [one is from] Portumna or Poland"*.

... the danger of drawing attention to a suspect's nationality ...

Asked whether nationality clouds or clarifies the particular issue in question, some said that it can clarify an issue, by explaining an 'attitude' or, less problematically, an ignorance of Irish law. One respondent said it was dependent on the issue, whilst another said it was dependent on the reader. Only one respondent commented on the danger of drawing attention to a suspect's nationality although they did not think it necessarily contributed to racism; they said they did make an effort to seek out positive stories about 'non-nationals' in the local community.

None of the newspapers had a specific journalist to cover Majority World issues although one respondent had a columnist on issues relating to the region's new communities. All the respondents bar one said that, apart from sport, their journalists are not assigned to cover any one particular area. Most of the respondents did not have any specific guidelines in place with regard to the terms used to refer to countries in the Majority World. One respondent said they referred to them as 'developing countries'. Another respondent had never heard the term Majority World.

... most of the respondents did not have any specific guidelines in place with regard to the terms used to refer to countries in the Majority World ...

When asked if their newspapers ever received criticism most replied they did although not regularly and not in relation to any consistent issue. One respondent said that criticism usually related to court reports. Another respondent suggested they never receive any criticism. None of the respondents had a regulated form of feedback other than letters to the editor, however, one respondent pointed out that as all of their journalists reside in the local community they *"obviously get feedback on the ground"*.

As local communities are becoming more diverse in terms of nationalities and cultures we wanted to know if local newspapers felt they reflected that diversity. Most respondents felt they did and maintained they treat everyone in their community the same and only allow coverage when it is warranted, regardless of who it relates to. One respondent felt they had not done enough, another respondent said that although they do not actively address any specific 'non-national' group it might be something they would consider in the future. Some of the respondents have taken initiatives to ensure news items are relevant for the new and wider community, features such as 'A Day in the Life' and 'New Neighbours'. One respondent said they avoid anything like an 'immigrants' corner' as it only serves to alienate people. Another respondent expressed the same sentiment in stronger terms saying, in their experience, immigrants want to be *"integrated not segregated"*.

Section II

Terminology

With the increasing number of ethnic, religious and cultural minorities in Ireland, mutual understanding and dialogue between all of the peoples who make up this nation is of the utmost importance. Local newspapers, and the journalists who work for them, could play a vital and vibrant role in fostering this intercultural communication.

... local newspapers ... could play a vital and vibrant role in fostering this intercultural communication ...

As was evident in the discussion of particular articles in the previous section the selection of which words and phrases one uses has an immense impact on the nature of this dialogue. If journalists are to play an active role in intercultural communication on this island, it is imperative that care is taken regarding what terms are applied to particular groups, and particular parts of the world. During the course of our research we encountered a number of terms that are collectively used to describe the less economically developed parts of the globe, for example, the *Third World*, the *Developing World*, and the *Global South*. The term *Third World* is perhaps the best known. Although the term is still used with regularity, it is an inappropriate designation.

The Third World

The idea of a 'Third' World emerged during the Cold War. The First World was taken to be 'the West' (i.e. the United States, Western Europe and their allies), whilst the Soviet Union and her allies came under the rubric of the 'Second World'. 'Third world' (*le tiers monde*) was coined by French population expert Alfred Sauvy. It referred to poor countries, especially in Latin America, Africa and Asia, which were aligned with neither the communist nor the capitalist blocs[4]. This term is clearly no longer relevant to the post-Cold War era. It has furthermore become synonymous with backwardness and failure, and so holds connotations of nations that are war-torn, famine afflicted and dependent on the 'Developed World' for aid. It is clearly an inappropriate term to discuss the representation in local media of people from countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which formerly came under the rubric of the *Third World*.

The Developing World

The term *Developing World* has emerged over the years as a replacement for *Third World*. However, this term too causes some difficulty. *Developing World* is an incredibly broad term that includes many countries at highly diverse levels of 'development'. Measuring levels of development is a contentious issue with the results dependent on what is considered 'development'. It is worth noting that visiting speakers at the GOWC, coming from many countries generally classed as 'developing', have employed the term 'overdeveloped' when describing the wealthiest countries in the world - this is no less arbitrary than quantifying the Majority World as the *Developing World*. Even in its conventional usage the word 'development' is problematic. In terms of economic development there is a huge difference between, for example, Brazil and North Korea, and yet they can both be referred to as being of the *Developing World*. Such a generalization is unfair, and masks the diversity of the nations it describes. Furthermore, to indicate that these nations are still 'developing' suggests that they are lesser players on the world stage, still some way from the maturity possessed by 'developed' nations.

The Global South

One term that has gained some measure of acceptance is the *Global South*. This designation arose from the fact that Asia, Latin America and Africa are indeed in the 'South' from a North American and European perspective. The vast North-South economic divide is one that has been commented on by economists for many years. However, this term again runs into difficulties in that it is not accurate; Australia, New Zealand and Japan, for example, are considered 'Western' or 'developed' nations, in spite of their location in the Southern Hemisphere. Thus *Global South* is not a wholly accurate term.

The Majority World

In this research paper we have decided to utilize the term *Majority World*. This term is the most accurate, the majority of the world's population does, in fact, live in those regions formerly called the *Third World*. It is also a term that is devoid of any derogatory meaning, having none of the suggestions of backwardness, poverty, etc. that are contained in the other expressions discussed here. In instances where it is necessary for journalists to refer collectively to the regions formerly known as the *Third World*, it is our recommendation that the term *Majority World* should be used.

Section III

Shaping & Reshaping Attitudes

The purpose of this research project has been to ascertain how, if at all, local media in the west of Ireland portrays the Majority World. The philosophical and ethical questions that arise from such a study principally concern the media's potential to influence people's attitudes, perpetuate prejudice and engender change. Do the media really shape people's attitudes or do they just reflect those attitudes prevalent in society? In assessing what events are newsworthy, are journalists in return influenced by the attitudes and preferences of their audience? Do the media, particularly local media, have a duty to give a voice to every element of society and not just those most numerous or dominant?

... undoubtedly the media influence our perception of the world ...

Undoubtedly the media influence our perception of the world. A large quantity of our information concerning the outside world is garnered from the media - including both newspapers and television. We rely on the media to keep us informed and, to an extent, we trust that their selection of newsworthy events provides us with an accurate picture of global society. We seldom reflect on the fact that journalists and editors must be selective with what they report; a report that included every aspect of an event and attempted to encompass the event in its entirety without any comment would be akin to a map the same size as its territory and useless to the reader.[5]

Likewise any effort to provide a reader with a conclusive account of all the events shaping our world in any given day would be equally fruitless and arguably impossible. However, it is the necessity of selectivity in journalism coupled with society's relative dependence on the media for information that makes the media's influence on its audience an ethical issue.

As Karen Sanders argues, in selecting newsworthy items and in giving the news, *"journalists arbitrate, frame and amplify events and issues. They help create the map by which ... we situate our fears, desires and aspirations … Journalists sketch in the contours of our moral landscape. They contribute to the business of telling us who we are, interpreting the world for us, making it intelligible"*.[6] We do not need the media to act as a moral compass but it is often in the context of media inspired debate that our moral compass is trained. As this is so, we rely on these mediators of information to police their own prejudice and be as impartial as possible.

Given that the media has a role in shaping our attitudes, it is important to recognise the subtlety with which it does so. A particular publication, article or journalist will not drastically alter our perception of the world overnight. A world in which the media could instigate such dramatic change would be a world in which true consistency of thought was impossible. It is rather the subtle and often unintentional ways in which media influence our opinions that are so significant when considering negative portrayals of the Majority World. Damien Kiberd argues that issues of refugees and racism are relatively new to Irish journalists. *"We have much to learn about the potentially dangerous nuances of language in this situation, about being aware that a careless phrase, a sensational headline, an insufficiently checked source can reinforce prejudice…"*.[7]

> *... the subtle and often unintentional ways in which media influence our opinions ...*

Although the way events are framed in the media does influence our attitudes, we must also realise that the way in which a journalist frames an event is influenced by the expectations of what those attitudes will be. When we are reading a text there must be an initial guess as to the meaning and structure of the whole text within which any sentence can be understood. This is what philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer calls *"anticipation of meaning"* and is determined by the beliefs and values we hold and the expectations we have of what the text will be.[8] We have prejudices (prejudgements) and our interpretation is inevitably informed by these prejudices. The way in which we interpret is shaped by our cultural background or *'cultural horizon'*.

Similarly, when deciding what events and indeed what aspects of events already chosen are newsworthy, the journalist must make an initial guess as to the events' significance in terms of the broader context. *"The journalist will be aware of past, current and (anticipated) future events that compete for coverage and in relationship to which the given event may be placed as part*

of a totality".[9] Having chosen an event because it is deemed newsworthy, the journalist will emphasise the features of the event that seem most relevant to its anticipated place in the developing situation. On the other hand, in identifying what it is that constitutes a newsworthy event, a journalist will also make an initial guess regarding his/her audience. Part of what will make the event newsworthy will be its relevance to the audience's cultural background. The event will be, although not exclusively (and only where possible) framed in terms of its potential effects on the journalist's audience. Features of a given event will then be emphasised because of their perceived relevance to the anticipated audience. What arises here is an interactive relationship between the media and the audience.

... what will make the event newsworthy will be its relevance to the audience ...

Though the media certainly influence and shape people's attitudes, the audience's attitudes also come into play in shaping the media's approach to news. The media concerns itself with the public interest or *"what the public is interested in"*. Andrew Belsey argues what the public is interested in is not a fixed, immutable fact of nature. *"The appetite is rather, and largely, constructed by the very media that feed it, in a glorious circle of supply creating demand and demand creating supply"*.[10]

Whether or not the media is obliged to give a voice to all elements of society is contingent on whether we see the media as having a political role in informing individuals, ignorance being a key inhibition to autonomous action, or merely as an apolitical element of the consumer economy concerned only with the satisfaction of market values.[11] If one takes the latter approach then the danger is that in a pluralistic and diverse society, news is reduced to the lowest common denominator and there is no obligation on the media to give voice to minority elements within society. If one takes the former approach then the media has a moral responsibility not just to reflect attitudes in society but to challenge them, to bring people face to face with their prejudice and contribute to the moral growth of society. As we have seen, a journalist may be influenced by his/her own cultural background and the cultural background of the audience, but this background need not be fixed. One may be prejudiced by a particular set of beliefs and values but these beliefs and values are not static. *"In so far as a text fails to correspond to the meaning that the reader attributes to it in anticipation, it acts as a stimulus to the reader to question (and indeed recognise) their prejudice"*.[12]

Section III

Media & Integration

From the outset it is necessary to acknowledge that, as part of the complex interplay of people and technology collectively known as 'the media', newspapers certainly aid the process of the creation of identity and how people interact within a society. As Anthony Giddens has written: *"Mediated experience, since the first experience of writing has long influenced both self-identity and the basic organisation of social relations"*.[13] We live in an increasingly globalised world economically, culturally and, in a more limited sense, politically. *"It is in many ways a single world, having a unitary framework of experience … yet at the same time one which creates new forms of fragmentation and dispersal"*.[13] Through globalised 'mediated experience' such as newspapers, we have the potential to achieve greater tolerance between the world's many cultures and traditions. There is, however, also the possibility for greater discord.

... newspapers certainly aid the process of the creation of identity ...

It could be argued that journalists have a responsibility to present integration in a positive way, in order to aid intercultural exchange for mutual benefit. This position is served both by every journalist's position as a member of a given society and by their enhanced opportunity to disseminate their perspectives due to their occupation. This affirmative, proactive approach to the notion of journalistic responsibility may not actually be necessary. Within the limits of their careers' constraints it is interesting to ask in what way journalists and newspapers can address the issue of integration? With regard to representations of different cultural groups within a society it has been argued that *"… the currently fashionable approach to multiculturalism is not underpinned by the notion of distinctive voices but rather by the concept of positive/negative representations"*.[15] If this ethos were to be applied to the realm of journalism, difficulties would arise in the failure to present authentic voices in the pursuit of a particular agenda. Presentation of authentic voices could, to an extent, remove the need for affirmative action by journalists. This particular issue is one that has often concerned media analysts as the two opinions discussed below will demonstrate.

Kiberd has written, *"… recent Irish political history does suggest that the intervention of various journalists - particularly … in the political arena - has had an important impact on the course of current affairs"*.[16] However he adds, *"… it seems to me that the iconoclasts of the modern age - many of whom occupy comfortable and highly paid positions in the media - have no particular vision to offer the ordinary citizen"*.[17]

In *What are Journalists For*? Jay Rosen responds: *"What do journalists stand for? They uphold the public's right to know, a spirit of openness and honesty in the conduct of public business … Beyond that, standing up for things is best left to others. Journalists do not join the parade because their job is to report on the parade"*.[18]

One might argue that by being a human being, one has an ethical responsibility on many occasions, as a member of society, to join the parade. A famous controversy that arose around a photograph taken by Kevin Carter in 1994 illustrates this exact issue. He won the Pulitzer Prize for the image in the same year. The photograph is of a Sudanese child who is barely alive, bent down on the ground trying to make his/her way to drinking water. A vulture, eager for carrion, preys closely in the background waiting for the child to die so that he can feed on him/her. Two months

... does one's ethical duty differ in relation to one's occupation ...

after receiving the Pulitzer, Carter died of carbon-monoxide poisoning, a suicide at 33 years of age. This incident raises a question: does one's ethical duty differ in relation to one's occupation? In such a context, is it enough to merely *'report on the parade'*? As human beings are we not of the parade?

Conclusions *and* Recommendations

In this booklet, based on our readings of local print media in the West of Ireland, we endeavoured to unearth the journalistic procedures inherent in local media's portrayal of the Majority World. We felt it was important to examine the subtle way in which print media shapes, reinforces and perpetuates attitudes prevalent in society. We have seen above that a careless exclamation mark can change the tone of an article from respectful to flippant and how the use of a common phrase such as *Third World* can form the tiny building blocks that become the foundation stones of prejudice. Through the questionnaire and interviewing several journalists, we came to the conclusion that, although the emphasis is on the 'local', what was lacking was an understanding of what the local community has become. Some respondents emphasised that their newspaper employed a Polish correspondent, illustrating an awareness of a new emergent locale, while simultaneously missing the point of a question about the Majority World.

... as the constitution of the local evolves it is imperative that the media evolves with it ...

It is clear that the media is a powerful force in forming and reflecting our social norms and attitudes. Majority World issues have concerned the media for many years. We must recognize that the media is a valuable tool which has the potential for being instrumental in engendering social change be it positive or negative. Local media in the West of Ireland now has an opportunity to draw from the rich resource of diverse cultural traditions present in the region. Local media aims to report on local life and relevant issues - as the constitution of the local evolves it is imperative that the media evolves with it.

It has been our ambition from the very outset of this project to stimulate discussion and enlighten ourselves and others, to this end we offer four recommendations.

- o It is our considered opinion that the term *Majority World* would be preferable with regard to the description of the regions previously referred to as the *Third World, Developing World* and *Global South*; as stated above this is subject to future re-evaluation.

- o We believe that when a journalist covers a charity event, more information and details about the country/region to which the aid is being donated should be provided. Too often articles which report on charity events, place a huge emphasis on the people raising funds and the manner in which they are raised, but do not provide adequate information about the places these funds are going to.

- o In order to adequately reflect the diverse nature of modern Irish localities, it is our view that local print media have the opportunity to take initiatives on issues of inclusion and integration. In an increasingly multicultural society the idea of 'local' takes on new meaning and local newspapers are well placed to engage with the local community in its entire diversity.

- o We feel local newspapers should undertake their own process of re-evaluation with regard to, among other issues, portrayals of the Majority World. As we have outlined in this booklet, a willingness to confront, recognise and revise one's preconceptions deepens one's understanding of the world. Although this is not the prerogative of journalists alone, it is important that they recognise the role they play in shaping and reshaping attitudes.

Afterthoughts

Galway One World Centre

We are indebted to our researchers for the painstaking work they carried out on this project. We hope that their paper's journey from the practical to the philosophical will serve to provoke thought on some of the issues involved in the business of reflecting and reporting on communities at a local level.

The report from this research has not, at any stage, indicated to us that there is an intentional bias that leads to inaccurate reporting of Majority World issues on the part of local journalists. Rather, it demonstrated to us that context has changed. The common denominator that journalists veer towards writing for no longer represents (if in fact it ever did) the existing communities. There certainly has been an increase in diversity over the last years. However, it's important to note that Ireland has always been a diverse country though this diversity was rarely acknowledged or publicly highlighted.

Among the pertinent issues that this research highlighted for us, one is that the constraints or contingent factors which frame national or international media coverage are not replicated exactly at local level. It would seem to us that due to the priority given to the 'localness' of any particular story in the local newspapers that they have an as yet untapped potential to present 'authentic voices' that denote the presence of diverse opinions and backgrounds in their districts.

Secondly it has been described how a factor in the misrepresentation of Majority World issues is the use of outdated or ill considered terminology - this is easily rectified by journalists and we hope that those who read this booklet will attempt to do so.

At an early stage in this project it became evident to us at the GOWC that there were many countries which, in the course of the month's observation, were only mentioned in the papers in terms of charity. So then the third observation we make is that the charities that are active in providing aid to Majority World countries may, through their publicizing of fundraising activities in local media, be contributing to disseminating a damaging homogenized perception of Majority World peoples as dependants. This is particularly inaccurate, damaging and disrespectful now, when so many people from Majority World countries are here contributing to our society. We challenge both journalists and the charities themselves to take note of the context in which their articles appear.

Local media in the West of Ireland now have an opportunity to draw from the rich resource of diverse cultural traditions present in the region. Local media aims to report on local life and relevant issues; as the constitution of the local evolves, it is imperative that the media evolves with it.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Following the month long process we compiled the following questionnaire and we sent it to all of the newspapers that were subjects of our research. Unfortunately not all of the Newspapers replied to our survey but out of the replies we did receive we have compiled these responses to the questionnaire:

Q.1

In terms of layout, how is the positioning and length of an article decided upon?

Lead articles are selected according to their newsworthiness, the number of people that they will affect, their local relevance, how much detail is available, how recent they are, the typographical requirements of the layout of the newspaper and the availability of photographs.

Q.2

What are the main factors you consider when deciding if an item is newsworthy?

All items must be current and have relevance to local readership. They may be selected in terms of what is interesting, educational, has entertainment value and topicality. The location of the events being reported is also important as they must cover a good spread of locations within the newspaper's area.

Q.3

What news issues are prioritised for your newspaper?

The list of responses to this included - Stories with local relevance, continuations of stories broken in earlier issues, crime, politics, health, roads. Two of our respondents detailed how they occasionally take action on particular campaigns such as positive local developments or opposition to negative ones.

Q.4

Must each item relate specifically to local news?

All the surveyed papers said that there must be a local element to justify coverage of events outside the locality

Q.5

Is nationality equally relevant in all topics or some more so than others? For example, is nationality seen as relevant when reporting crime?

All papers said that nationality is irrelevant to reporting of crime but that they always mention where any person being accused is from - either a location in Ireland or the nationality of non - Irish.

Q.6

Do you feel the inclusion of someone's nationality clarifies or clouds the issue in question? Please elaborate.

The responses to this included the specific mention of the necessity of detailing distinguishing ethnic features such as race, colour and physical features in articles that seek to enlist the help of the public in finding suspects. The other factors are as answered above to Q. 4

Q.7

Does your paper have specific guidelines with regard to the terms used to refer to countries which exist in the majority world?

None of the respondents had such guidelines.

Q.8

Is each journalist assigned to a particular area that your newspaper covers?

With the exception of sport, journalists working with the newspapers in question cover a wide variety of events and are not assigned to any one topic in particular.

Q.9

Is there a specific journalist to cover events in relation to the majority world?

None of our respondents employed specific journalist to cover events in relation to the majority world.

Q.10

What training, if any, do the employees at your company receive regarding journalistic ethics?

The Respondents noted the following sources of training and or guidance in this respect

- The code of conduct of the National Union of Journalists.
- Press Council guidelines
- The ethics components of the various third level courses undertaken by some journalist.
- The employees of the newspapers that are part of the Thomas Crosbie Holdings group also mentioned training received in house which related to slander and libel laws rather than ethics.

Q.11

If possible, could you provide us with the breakdown of journalists at your company in relation to their nationality?

All Journalists working in the papers that responded except one are Irish. The one exception is a polish correspondent. Several papers that did not respond to the questionnaire have columnists from other countries including Brazil, South Africa, and Poland.

Q. 12

Does your newspaper receive any negative criticism and, if so, is it in relation to a consistent issue?

All said yes-none specified a particular issue but mentioned that criticism was frequent for political issues.

Q.13

Is there a regulating form of feedback besides letters to the editor?

All respondents noted that they received criticism, mostly through letters to the editor or phoned in complaints. None had set up an alternative source of feedback.

Q.14

Local communities are becoming more diverse in terms of nationalities and cultures. Do you feel your newspaper reflects this development and how so?

Our respondents listed their reporting of cultural events such as Diwali, that they had run several feature articles on the various 'communities' now in the West of Ireland. They also listed the inclusion of articles on and by the various groups now present here, two were mentioned - 'New Neighbours' and 'Day in the Life'.

Q.15

Has your newspaper taken any initiatives to ensure that news items are relevant for the new & wider community?

A number of respondents said they had columnists from different countries but no formal initiative had been taken. One respondent said they avoided any particular section devoted to immigrants as it would further alienate them. Respondents said they were constantly on the look out for new stories that appealed as broad a base as possible

Appendix B

Figures

NO. OF TIMES MENTIONED	COUNTRY MENTIONED
21	Brazil
15	Kenya
11	South Africa
11	Tanzania
6	Zambia
6	Uganda
6	El Salvador
6	Nigeria
4	Rwanda
4	Somalia
3	Sudan
3	Indonesia
2	China
2	India
2	Malawi
2	Ethiopia
2	Palestine
1	Mozambique
1	Iraq
1	Argentina
1	Chad
1	Vietnam
1	Egypt
1	Ghana
1	Cameroon
1	Kuwait
1	Sierra Leone
1	Liberia
1	Congo
1	Zimbabwe

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