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"Decentered and Multidetermined": Searching for better measurements of press freedom in conflict states like the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Introduction

In 1999, the newspaper *L'Avenir* reported that American companies had invested $2 billion into mineral mines in Chile and Brazil; however, as the minerals edge toward depletion, the author indicates these companies have looked to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and its mineral deposits. Because these companies saw President Kabila as an obstacle, they reportedly have aided "rebels" with fighting in Congo (Anonymous, 1999). This article illustrates what many say occurs frequently in African states: States lose influence as outsiders seek to manipulate the power relationship in their favor, which has a number of consequences including the exploitation of resources and political instability. Colonial as well as Cold War powers and international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have all played a role in shaping states across the continent. At the same time, international organizations and Western countries have invested heavily in Africa, both for strategic and development reasons. One example of this investment is Radio Okapi, which is a joint effort between the UN and the Swiss Foundation, Hirondelle. Development programs essentially work toward the reorganization of human life, particularly in political, economic, and cultural spheres. Many argue social engineering programs have caused more harm than good, putting many African states at a greater disadvantage than before. As the political and economic spheres are predominantly based on the neoliberal agenda, referred to throughout the paper as the American model, the role and function of the press typically follows suit because the press is often seen as a facilitator of development. These press freedom surveys are of particular interest as they emphasis elements of press freedom found principally in the American news media.

This fact leads to certain questions. What is the expected role and function of the press in the DRC? How do international organizations as well as Western nations involved in the DRC

help shape this function and role? Additionally, how do Congolese journalists conceptualize their role and the function of the press? This current paper is a critical discourse analysis of two of these influences and how they conceive of and might help shape the role and function of the press in DRC. A study of this type is more important than ever; DRC has been wracked by internal conflict, exploited for resources, and has experienced prolonged intervention by the UN. Not only are development programs subject to scrutiny due to their influence but they also promote change in the various spheres of human life. These changes in developing countries alarm many.

Many have touted the role of media in developing and stabilizing conflict states. The problem is that the standards for measuring press freedom impose certain values and assumptions about the role of media. The purpose of this critical discourse analysis is to better understand these values and assumptions by examining the surveys of Freedom House (FH), the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), and their assessment of Congolese media. Freedom House's Freedom of the Press survey and IREX's Media Sustainability Index (MSI) are regarded highly by the development community. Critical discourse analysis is imperative here, as this type of analysis places emphasis on power relationships. Van Dijk (1993) argued that the power inherent in these relationships involves both "action and cognition" (p. 254). Because power is "organized and institutionalized" (p. 255), these surveys provide insight into the cognitive structures of "press freedom" as defined by these organizations. Their examination underlines the need to understand the multiple influences at play within a developing country in conflict as well as what Garcia Canclini called the "constitutive structure of the articulation between the political and the cultural" (p. 262).

This study does not dispute the usefulness of these surveys; they provide a valuable comparative perspective. However, these measurements fail to help us understand the role of media as a stabilizing factor. Many also argue the ways in which progress is measured is complicit in Western hegemony. Theorists have long bemoaned the invasive nature of cultural exchanges, especially with respect to developing countries. These relationships are often conceptualized as methods by which stronger, more developed nations fleece lesser developed countries under the guise of humanitarian aid. However, Garcia Canclini's perspective of oblique power is more helpful here. Rather than viewing these relationships as vertical and bipolar, Garcia Canclini argues these relationships should be viewed as "decentered and multidetermined" (p. 258). Understanding every influence on media is not possible, but the insight offered by these surveys can elucidate important influences in how the press is expected to operate. They also offer insight into the discursive space surrounding journalistic practice. These standards should aim not at measuring how these countries map onto universal principles as much as they should measure what principles operate within DRC's developing media system. Most evaluation of press freedom reinforces these principles, thus continuing the hegemony of media operation. This study seeks to problematize this perspective in order to create a new direction for press evaluation.

World system and communication

Tunstall (2008) argues in his most recent book that American media dominance is in decline. While this might be the case, based on the idea that population plays a role in dominance, the structure of the international system is still perceived as asymmetrical by many, with the United States maintaining more than its fair share of resources. Emmanuel Wallerstein conceived of this international system as a world system, in which states participated in a world

economy. The division of labor in this system is extensive, and "economic tasks are not evenly distributed" (p. 349). He divided the system into three parts: core, periphery, and semiperiphery, according to influence and the distribution of resources. Galtung (1971) applied the same theoretical idea to communication. He argued the resultant relationships were a part of structural imperialism, where one nation dominated another. These countries were structured vertically, and the periphery in each of the system's parts is partitioned from one another. This partition helps reinforce the hegemony by disallowing those outside of the core from collaborating.

Applications to communication as well as growing influence of the United States following World War II led theorists to conceptualize the cultural interaction as a form of imperialism (Schiller, 1976; Mattelart & Dorfman, 1971/1975). However, theorists have changed their perspective on this interaction, arguing structure must be theorized along with agency (Kraidy, 2005; Garcia Canclini, 1995). Both Kraidy and Garcia Canclini have indicated many of these issues derive from development within postcolonial countries.

The importance of media within developing countries has been illustrated in places such as Kosovo and South Africa. However, the path to development is as unique as the state on that path. Development, however, fits into the larger processes of globalization, for it is through development that many of these countries have attempted to participate in the international system. The DRC is no exception; the country has experienced a myriad of problems on its path to development, many of which actually derive from globalization. Some agencies, such as USAID, have sought to stabilize the country and foster participation among Congolese, and these programs have had media components. However, theorists within communications literature describe these interactions with very different perspectives, cultural imperialism and hybridity.

Cultural Scenarios

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism attempts to describe the interaction as structural, insofar as the dominating countries have power to prey upon the developing countries. Theorists such as Schiller (1976) based their arguments on world-system theory; a relationship between the developed and developing countries only reinforced the existing social structure as well as the needs of the developed countries. Theorists such as Mattelart and Dorfman (1871/1976) sought to illustrate the distortion of self-image in the representations of American media, normalizing the stereotypes. In addition, this type of argument has lamented Westernization, or Americanization, as the spread of cultural values coupled with the destruction of indigenous cultures. This is especially pertinent with the expansion of American business and military power globally.

Concerns about dominance have circulated in communication theory for some time; "The strategy of the First World to prevent this from happening seems to be the same as in the economic field: control over the production, distribution, and consumption of news" (Galtung & Vincent, 1992, p. 21). Schiller used the world-system theory to explain the relationship between the West, particularly the United States, and the developing world. He described the domination as "cultural-informational" that resulted "in a cultural takeover" (p. 8). This type of domination would enable the United States to manage the "sphere of consciousness," and provide the physical infrastructure for physical control. More than that, as Mattelart and Dorfman indicate, domination also involved the representation of the developing world. "By forcing all peoples of the world into a vision of the dominant (national and international) classes, he (Disney) gives this vision coherency and justifies the social system on which it was based" (p. 54). The result from this was a distortion of self-image, almost a fun-house mirror with the West in complete control.

Cultural imperialism was also seen as synonymous with media imperialism. Fejes (1981) defines this as "the processes by which…maintain and expand systems of domination and dependence" (p. 281). Westernization, then, is a process by which "the West becomes a collection of values whose dominant feature is universality" (p. 32). It is this ideal of universality that states must meet to participate, often in the form of neoliberal policies that work toward a globalized economy. "The circulation of trade is the source of a 'mechanism' which is expansionist and unregulated" (LaTouche, 1996, p. 34). Thussu argues "the analysis of the explosion in international communication has been preoccupied mainly with the economic dimensions of globalization at the expense of cultural aspects of interactions between and among the world's people" (Thussu, 2006, p. 145). The influence, she argues, is often subversive, providing images of lifestyles, social relationships, and other values. The term Americanization has been adopted to explain this domination.

Van Eltern explains, "the term (Americanization) continues to play a central role in many descriptions and discussions of specific change processes in local settings outside the United States that are in some way related (or at least attributed) to American influence" (p. 1). While the presence of American companies upsets many, some theorists believe cultural imperialism ignores the reality concerning interaction.

The notion of Americanization has been tied to political interaction as well as economics; Stiglitz (2007) argues while many in the still developing world carry resentments toward the West, it has less to do with access to markets or the "spread of global knowledge" (p. 9). Rather, these countries face an asymmetrical relationship with the West, one that promotes materialism, robs countries of their sovereignty, failure of the promises to materialize, and finally globalization meaning the Americanization of economic policy and culture.

While communications theorists have moved beyond cultural imperialism to a more thick and complex view of these interactions, the terms Americanization and Westernization persist. Theorists have long argued communications and travel have taken down barriers, creating a world where "autonomy of each culture must be rethought" (Canclini, 1995, p. 241). The mixture of culture is problematic for many reasons, two of which are structure and agency. Understanding hybridity requires unpacking the power relationships at the local level, in addition to discerning adoption and adaptation of culture.

Globalization & Hybridity

Communications has moved away from these ideas of overt and absolute dominance. These processes of globalization include communications technology and human migration that have deterritorialized the world (Tomlinson, 199). Goods, services, and capital now flow freely around the world. The mediation and migration of culture have created the ability to create imaginary spaces and cultural identities (Appadurai, 1996); the world is now more interconnected and interdependent than ever before (Tomlinson, 1999). While the United States still exerts influence, the understanding of that influence in local spaces has changed. Hybridity offers the perspective to explore power structures and agency, much more than the cultural imperialist camp. Although some have explored the historical and thick aspects of hybridity through the global mélange, others have argued companies participate in glocalization, which gears global products to specific local consumers. Here the concern is power relationships in local, previously colonial spaces. Garcia Canclini (1995) describes the need to decenter the approach, exploring multidimensional interactions; Kraidy (2005) adds to these ideas his critical transculturalism.

Tomlinson (1991) argued that many of the ways in which cultural imperialism were conceptualized actually presented critical discourses of modernity. The changes presented by modernity, particularly through mediation and migration, have lifted the restrictions on social interaction that once exited (Appadurai, 1996). With this respect, the world has become interconnected and interdependent (Tomlinson, 1999). These interactions have increased hostilities among groups but have also provided the opportunity for groups to solidify their identity, as a reaction to globalization (Castells, 2004). These in-between theories provide a theoretical bridge, connecting ideas of power with those of social imagination. Through these theories, hybridity becomes a viable theoretical option.

Among them, are the global mélange (Pieterse, 1995) and glocalization (Robertson, 1995). Pieterse describes "human integration belongs to a deep dynamic in which civilization centers are but the front stage of history against a backdrop of much older and ongoing intercultural traffic" (p. 25). The human body becomes the site of global human integration (p. 26). Robertson indicates when companies expand globally, they must ultimately gear their products to a more localized context. However, these perspectives do not account for relationships formed through colonialism and development.

Garcia Canclini (1995) describes the mixture of culture resulting from the collision of traditional and modern societies. As Garcia Canclini indicates these questions arise as the concept of modernity is brought into question. While he writes about Latin America, the ideas behind his exploration are valid for postcolonial states that have been subject to the development project, especially those countries that gained their independence following World War II. "Today we conceive of Latin America as a more complex articulation of traditions and modernities (diverse and unequal), a heterogenous continent consisting of countries in each of

which coexist multiple logics of development" (p. 9). He describes them as oblique powers that include the "cultural reorganization of power" (p. 258). Rather than conceiving of this mixture as "vertical and bipolar", it would be better to explore "sociopolitical relations" that are "decentered and multidimensional". Kraidy addresses both with what he calls critical transculturalism; his framework integrates both power relationships and agency. "This framework focuses on the links that communication processes create between power and meaning in the context of cultural transformation, and with the material and discursive consequences of these links" (p. 151). Exploring the both the expectations of the role and function of press as well as how Congolese journalists understand the role and function of the press enables exploration of this network of influence and how the Congolese negotiate the meaning.

If we examine the DRC's with respect to its accepted aid, we begin to see its state apparatus is simply a part of a larger network. Outside expectations, including aid packages, are tied to benchmarks, standards, and goals. This is especially true with aid for constructing media systems in developing nations. Media systems are an important component of a working government, and development communications literature demonstrates these connections.

Development and Globalization

Development meant social change, a reorganizing the various spheres of life. Initially development meant industrialization and the move from the traditional to a more modern society (Malkote & Steeves, 2001). While some aspects of development, such as development communications, have moved toward a more bottom-up, empowerment approach, many of the original development institutions have not. According to McMichael (2004), policies promulgated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as well as other international organizations, seek to open national markets for trade liberalization; the policies

required for less developed states often affects social programs such as education and health care. DRC is no different; however, its issues with development are not limited to structural adjustment policies or HIV/AIDS communication. DRC has been rife with internal conflict and other difficulties. While development communication is typically used to assess the benefits of communication within the current development paradigm, it is less adequate in explaining DRC's media development. It fails to account for cultural and historical contexts that exist in the country; it also fails to address issues brought about by globalization, postcolonialism, and resource exploitation. Rather, development should be viewed as one influence among many in the DRC's entry and participation in globalization processes.

Development in its early stages attempted to move countries toward modernity by instilling social change. This approach favored rational thought and science (Lerner, 1958), and viewed urbanization as a way to increase literacy rates. In fact, Lerner bases his justification on the approach by arguing, "The model evolved in the West is an historical fact" (p. 46). Individuals in lesser developed nations needed motivation to change, and mass media was seen as a way to do that. It was a "mobility multiplier" (p. 52). In addition, there was a "take-off" point when countries would realize modernity was the only path to freedom (Rastow, 1960), and many of the programs promoted by international organizations argued countries should use their comparative advantage to compete. Finally, more developed countries capitalized on their technological advances through helping countries extract resources, only to sell finished products back to these countries at higher prices. Programs such as structural adjustment required lesser developed countries to pare down budgets, to gear them for competition in the international system (McMichael, 2004).

McMichael describes development as “social engineering of emerging national societies”, arguing two elements were required. Newly developing states required a nation-state, which is territorially defined and characterized by a relationship between a government and its citizenry. It also required economic growth, measured by a quantifiable standard. Development was a “political and intellectual response to the condition of the world at the historic moment of decolonialization” (p. 2). McMichael argues development moved toward globalization as it was once a public project that has become increasingly privatized. Market rule has become the modus operandi, requiring states to restructure their policies and standards. It is also U.S.-centered, benefiting the United States and promoting free enterprise.

Beltran (1967) argued an important component of national development included communication. In fact, disputes arose in the 1970s over not only the flow of information but the control over cultural capital lesser developed countries required for national identity. The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) became a point of contention between the United States and the developing world, so much so the United States dropped out of UNESCO for a period of time. Many sought a fair and balanced flow of information, which would provide some access and control over representations, as well as cultural exchange. The United States argued for the free flow of information, which included an uninhibited flow of information, through private ownership under the guise of freedom of the press.

McPhail (2006) argues that developing countries had three primary objectives to NWICO. First, countries sought a more equitable flow of information; second, they desired the ability to create their own national identity; finally, they aimed for a “two-way information flow reflecting more accurately the aspirations and activities of less-developed nations” (pp. 12-13). “NWICO’s ultimate goal is a restructured system of media and telecommunication priorities in

order for LCDs to obtain greater influence over their media, information, economic, cultural, and political systems" (p. 13). UNESCO received criticism following its approval of a "balanced flow" for interfering with free market and the free flow of information. "Many Voices, One World", often referred to as McBride report, suggested news distortion should be taken more seriously. "In a complex world where communication is expanding rapidly, it (news distortion) may be unavoidable but should be understood" (p. 159). To accomplish this, structural changes were required, and journalistic responsibility was needed to present a more accurate and complete account of the world. The report also argued that the creation of a national mass media system was equally important, particularly in developing nations where national identity was important. Finally, cultural flows and the commercialization were addressed, as countries sought to protect their culture from the influx of Americanized media. Flows should not be the only argument when examining developing media systems.

The international organizations created to measure press freedom ultimately base their evaluations on American ideals. These organizations use "theoretical concepts" and other variables to measure freedom in not only civil society but other democratic institutions, as well (Becker, Vlad, & Nusser, 2007, p. 19). It is a legal environment that facilitates this process, putting the steps in place to build the path toward democratic governance (Price & Klug, 2000). Regulations are often needed to address issues such as content, performance obligations, licensing, and access (Raboy, 2003). Media regulations enable the public and serve as a form of negotiation "between the interests of the state, the broadcasting industries and civil society" (p. 1044).

These regulatory and legislative frameworks facilitate the exchange between government and its citizens. As Ojo (2003) indicates, it is the flow of information between the government

and citizenry that aid developing democracies, empowering citizens to respond to their government without fear. Tehranian (2002) supports this idea, arguing a democratic government "may be considered government sustained by dialogue: a practical way to optimize among competing interests and norms" (p. 72). Freedom is needed to lead to democratization, and it is an independent media system that enables that.

Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has changed hands and names since its independence in 1960 from Belgium. Its relationship with the former colonial master existed as a paternalistic "father knows best" relationship, and as Belgian rule grew more lax leading up to the uprising prior to independence, the Congolese began experimenting with political parties and newspapers. The struggle and grab for power occurred a few times following independence, usually through military coup, and only served the needs of those who gained power. The Congolese people have suffered greatly due to resource exploitation, internal strife, and authoritarianism. Since the United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC) began in 1999, the United Nations' Security Council has passed 14 separate resolutions aimed at curbing violence and bringing stability to the country (MONUC, 2008). The Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire, has suffered two successive civil wars since the 1990s. While the Congolese held elections in 2006, they were widely contested; fighting in the country has not ceased, despite repeated warnings from the United Nations Security Council. These present conditions can be understood through historical and political context.

According to Hargreaves (2006), Belgian rule in the Congo blended "the material interests of Belgian capitalism and the spiritual concerns of the Catholic Church", which suited the needs of colonial administrators (p. 190). They used Congolese traditionalism to justify their

methods for ruling, especially with respect to paternalism. Belgians ruled in Congo for 75 years, and ethnic and linguistic cleavages as well as its sheer size have caused problems in governance (Bustin, 1963). Prior to the uprising that helped the Congolese gain independence, the Belgians began to relax its regulations and policies in the colony; these changes motivated the Congolese. "While the Congolese were carefully experimenting with their organized strength, the Belgians were gradually tempting to integrate their few postwar reforms within the more or less undefined framework of a "Belgo-Congolese community" (Bustin, 1963). In early 1960, the Belgian government announced that it would give the Congo independence within the year (Hoffman, 1963).

By June, the new state appeared; however, the state and its people were ill-prepared for the task. According to Hoffman (1963), the United Nations' Operation in Congo was meant to facilitate the withdrawal of the Belgian army, discontinue foreign interference in the country, and stabilize the government. While stability finally arrived, it was corrupted. "From the beginning, foreign governments dispensed bribes to key political figures in the newly formed state" (Kabemba, 2006, p. 102). Subsequently, this led to a fragmentation of the state. During the first five years, the state existed without "a single, effective political authority to govern it" (p. 102). With the help of the United States government, Colonel Joseph Mobutu took control, governing with a centralized government. To the United States government, the Congo's expansive size and vast resources were seen as strategic, to hedge the Soviet Union's operations in Southern and Central Africa. In fact, "it was not only in the Congo that the exclusion of Soviet influence took priority over support for leaders elected by Africans" (Hargreaves, 2006, p. 227).

During Mobutu's reign, the state stopped providing services such as education, health, and infrastructure maintenance; the army terrorized the Congolese people. In fact, Mobutu used

scapegoating, stripping the Banyamulenge people of their citizenship, which ultimately led to the perception that the state held an ethnic bias (Rothchild, 2002). He also attempted to use references to "indigenous cultural values" to justify his policies (Deng, 2002). Most Western powers did not support Mobutu following the Cold War, and eventually the militias that were well armed by surrounding countries, such as Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola, overpowered his government and army. Militant Laurent Kabila, a "minor warlord", succeeded in the coup in 1996; however, the happiness was short lived as Kabila's government proved just as weak as Mobutu's government. Although Kabila succeeded in keeping the UN and other international organizations confined to specific parts of the country, he continued clandestine trading (Latham, Kassimir, & Callaghy, 2001). According to Kabema (2006), both Rwanda and Uganda were dissatisfied with Kabila because they had anticipated his support in exchange for his elevation to power. The dispute among the three countries eventually led to Africa's "first world war" (Latham, Kassimir, & Callaghy, 2001, p. 3). Kabila's lack of cooperation was not confined to his neighbors: He also refused to cooperate with International Monetary Fund and World Bank, in repaying the country's debts, installing structural adjustments, and the Lusaka Accords, which were meant to bring peace to the region. In 1998, Kabila was assassinated, and his son, Joseph, took command. "One thing that stands out…is the role of "external" forces in its unfolding, the way they intersect with "internal" forces, and the pluralization of the kinds of forces involved over time" (p. 3).

These forces, both external and internal, are drawn to the Congo for many reasons, one of which is resources. According to Raeymaeker (2002), fighting over DRC's resources created a "new political economy, in which national sovereignty and state boundaries have become almost completely irrelevant" (p. 5). The government is not "competent" enough to dissuade the

"(P)rivatised networks of individual army officials, local warlords, and international enterprises are orchestrating the plundering of the Congo for their personal benefit, and to finance their war" (p. 11). According to Refugees International (2003), the "human suffering" in Congo between 1999 and 2003 has been greater than in any armed conflict since World War II" (p. 1). Among its recommendations to the DRC was to establish the rule of law throughout the country, set aside self-serving interests to focus on the needs of the Congolese, and form a National Army to help demobilization armed groups and "child soldiers" (p. 2).

Attempts at cease fire have been futile, as states surrounding DRC have agendas of their own. According to Mbeme, henchmen from neighboring countries have succeeded in creating a "de facto partition" that has transformed the country into "an informal satrapy" (p. 74). "In the context of a policy reconstructing their own national states, the regimes of Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda are attempting to change the regional balance in accord with a three-dimensional logic" (Mbembe, 2002, p. 74). Throughout the continent, an awareness of the inability to care for both the human and economic security of their citizens, in addition to internal and external threats, has grown. This awareness includes the "inability of regional organizations to enforce the rules of interstate relations (Rothchild, 2002, p. 189). These issues have influenced the development of the African press.

Press

While the media system in DRC has been characterized as diverse (UNOPS/PACO, 2006), the road to this point was arduous. The press prior to independence covered Belgian issues, and were mostly owned by white settlers. Although proliferation of political newspapers cropped up in 1959, many failed to achieve longevity. The press in Africa has often veered away from the adversarial role, as the colonial and postcolonial legacies discouraged it. Since the

1930s, radio played a vital role in the Congo. However, when Mobutu took power, he used the medium to reinforce his ethnic policies, the doctrine of "authenticity" (Tunstall, 2008, p. 313).

As independence swept the continent, Africans had an uphill climb in the Western media. According to Ainslie (1966), African media were impoverished and dependent upon Western sources for news and information; this dependency was problematic in many ways, as both the quantity and quality of the news lacked. For example, Belgian paratroopers who landed in Stanleyville were met with resistance; the coverage described the Congolese as savage. Ainslie argues Western media typically covered these events with "racial hysteria" (p. 13). Gaining political independence did not necessarily include objective news coverage, and Africans had to "see not only the world outside, but his own continent and sometimes even his own country, through someone else's eyes" (p. 17). While still under Belgian rule, Congolese were subject to the "Trinity of Power": the colonial administration, big business, and the church (p. 120). The motto for Governor-General Pierre Ryckmans was to "(R)ule in order to serve…this is the sole excuse for conquest. It is also its complete justification" (p. 121). Although the Belgian Colonial administration had restrictions in place, 354 publications existed in 1958; nine of those were dailies. Many were run by settlers, and in some cases, these publications maintained close relationships with Belgian publications. Without a legislative body, the political press in Congo was seen as irregular. These publications typically served the social and political interests of the Belgian. As Belgian rule slowly relaxed many of its policies, including press regulation, political parties began to appear and political publications proliferated. However, following independence, Congolese publications were not much different than publications during Belgian's rule.

Interestingly, journalistic training at the University of Lovanium served two important functions. It provided prominence and professional experience for many of the Congolese leaders. Moreover, it provided "primitive forms of later national institutions" (Ainslie, 1963, pp. 124-125). At the time independence spread across Africa, the press was an important aspect of development. Sommerlad (1966) described the objective of the developing press as the dissemination of news and information, as the "first and basic function" in response to the "human desire…and right to know" (p. 55). Being informed, the African countries would inevitably move toward democracy. While he acknowledged journalism and professionalism were novelties in Africa, Sommerlad argued, "(W)ithin the next decade, the audience capable of reading a newspaper will increase spectacularly" (p. 175). The influences of the African press have been colonialism, Christianity, and "dynamic nationalism" (p. 25). "Political instability has created great problems in press development and some papers have been closed by official order" (p. 32).

It became difficult, as the media helped reinforce "enlightened despots" (Tunstall, 2008), for the press to take an adversarial role like the Western media (Barton, 1979). The only semblance of free and independent press existed in West Africa, where the press was the only press that maintained African ownership as well as its commitment to Africans. "The Africaness of the press of West Africa was never to change and has never done so, unlike almost all the other parts of Africa from the Sahara to the Cape" (p. 19). However, Barton argues in 1979 that freedom was more and more difficult to maintain in Africa, primarily due to the instability felt by the governments. "There is no government in Africa…that feels itself to be entirely secure; and the less secure it feels itself, the greater the strictures it puts on the press, for an independent press is the only instrument of possible dissent *it can get at*" (p. 274).

Enter development programs. As Kareithi (2005) argues, "While donor-driven democracy and governance programs in Africa represent a major shift…the desire to incorporate Africa into the global capitalist economy" (p. 10). The focus has typically been on "Western style communication", which is a weakness (p. 10). He argues that the Western model conceptualizes the media as "an independent institution" in civil society, rather than an integrated part (p. 11). African states require media systems that reinforce cooperation and community instead of individuality. After all, modernization theory emphasizes individuals as autonomous social units, separate from the overall communities in which they live.

In addition, considering the relationship between the media and the African state requires historical context (Nyamnjoh, 2005). The repressive tendencies of the states grew from the colonial past, and represent continuity in the approach to legislation and governance. Of course these issues present problems for journalists; it has created a culture of silence and complacency. The threats to free and independent press come not only from outside interests but also repressive regimes that serve the own interests while attempting to keep the interests of wealthy nations, international financial institutions and communication multinationals satiated. Given the struggle with outside interests, Nyamnjoh argues these governments only have control over their own people. But the growth of independent press is especially important to understand the role of the press in the growth of democracy in Africa (Ibelema, 2008). The problem of partisanship exceeds issues with ownership, and as of late, "much of the African press was subservient to political interests and, as such, could neither be a credible watchdog of the government nor an effective champion of social reform" (p. 11). The recent history of abuses of power and fraudulent political processes across the continent contributed to what Ibelema calls, "civic cynicism" (p. 11). This cynicism and confusion is illustrated as with few instances, both the press

and populations in many countries supported the military coups in Africa. The interaction between governments and military, in addition to its mineral resources, lend themselves to an uncertain future in a country that struggles to maintain its stability. Taking a critical approach to these relationships and expectations would elucidate the social space where structure and meaning occur.

Methodology and Analysis

As Garcia Canclini (1995) argues, hybridity is best explored as "decentered and multidetermined" phenomena. These are the conjunctions where Kraidy (2005) argued cultural transformations occur. So how are these transformations in media development, especially with respect to press freedom, measured? The answer to this question reveals the very important notions behind the hegemony of Western media, particularly American media. The following provides an explanation of critical discourse analysis, the primary assumptions and characteristics defined by these surveys, what is missing from these evaluations, and finally, why alternative methodologies should be considered when evaluating press performance in conflict states.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough, Graham, Lemke, and Wodak (2004) argue social science aims to not only identify and analyze the roots of social problems but the alleviation and resolution of them, as well. According to Van Dijk (1998), the nature of critical discourse analysis is political; it deals with dominance in relationships and by its nature is a form of activism. When employed, it examines particular aspects of social relations between groups. The analyst assumes those who have power possess privileged access; this access provides control over not only representations but the modes of producing representations. In that way, Van Dijk argues representations and

their modes of production are institutionalized. They have cognitive dimensions that permeate every aspect of life. Because these surveys are based on Western ideology about press operation, aspects that are important to Congolese media become obscured. The discourse analysis should make clear these aspects.

Both the Freedom House Freedom of the Press survey and IREX's Media Sustainability survey are examined in turn, with respect to historical, political, and cultural relationships, with focus on the media system in the DRC. The analysis included Freedom House's survey from 2002 to 2008, and IREX's 2008 survey. For a detailed summary of the methodology, both surveys are available at both Websites. Only brief overviews are provided here.

IREX's Media Sustainability Index

According to its website, IREX is "an international nonprofit organization" devoted to civic development, education, and independent media. It provides a number of different programs for media, to strengthen the flow of information to improve political, economic, and social issues. Its focus on media is on sustainability of media through advancement of professional and economic.

The Media Sustainability Index uses five objectives to measure sustainability. They include free speech, normative legal and social values designed to "protect and promote free speech and access to public information;" professional standards; diversity of news; business practices; and finally, trade and professional organizations. These survey questions measure the media from unsustainable to sustainable. Each objective has a number of indicators. Panelists are Congolese journalists who provide scores for each indicator based on their experience. A country's score can range from zero (unsustainable) to four (sustainable). The 2008 survey was the first in the country, and overall, the country scored low.

Freedom House Freedom of the Press Index

Its survey includes economic, political, and legal environments. The index uses a series of 23 questions to gather information from journalists. These questions are meant to provide a picture of the "enabling environment" in which these media operate. The economic environment provides information on media ownership; the legal environment examines the positive and negative aspects of the regulatory framework in the country; and finally, the political environment is designed to measure control or restrictions on the media. During the review process, ratings are assigned to each category, based on a set of indicators. The score can range from zero to 30 for free; 31 to 60 as partly free; and 61 to 100 for not free. All the surveys for the DRC rated its freedom as low.

Both these instruments are used to evaluate and measure press freedom globally. The instruments are based upon universal principles of press operation, as well as its role and function in political and economic life. A set of assumptions undergirds these instruments, and are explained in the next section.

Characteristics and assumptions

These surveys are predicated on certain assumptions, and each assumption touches a different sphere of life. These spheres include political, economic, legal, educational, and professional spheres. Some of these assumptions are explicit, as they are included in the indicators for both methodologies. Some, however, are not. They are values and principles that are believed to undergird the existence and operation of healthy media systems, based on what has worked in already developed and stable nations.

Political

While not stated explicitly in either methodology, both FH and IREX assume a certain role for media in society. If the role designated by both organizations involves providing information about politics, we can infer the goal is participation. We can then assume the aim is ultimately a democratic process accessible to voters. We can also assume that journalism serves a need in that type of political system. It also presupposes that the system is stable and viewed as legitimate. Legitimacy is important because without it, a government would fail to provide security and meet the needs of those. These final points are really important as countries like DRC faced frequent political upheavals and power struggles.

When the idea of political does appear, it appears specifically as an area of interest in the FH freedom of the press survey. In this respect, its end goal is a press free from government control, where journalists have access to information and are not censored. Additionally, it covers intimidation by the state or others. These aspects are found as elements in the MSI, too. They deal with free speech and are considered legal and social norms. These are important to note simply because the state has cracked down on journalists, and other actors, primarily including armed groups fighting for access to resources. Both the state and armed groups reportedly intimidate journalists. What the survey fails to note, however, is the necessity for a government to safeguard national security by restricting the press. While it is an unpopular notion, it has happened frequently in the United States. The clear and present danger doctrine is a case in point.

Legal/Regulatory

Like the political system, the legal system requires legitimacy and the ability to act judiciously. Both surveys actually deal with these directly. Others have indicated conflict states often have difficulty maintaining order and establishing the rule of law. The point is not to

criticize these surveys for looking at specific aspects. It does, however, seek to illustrate the elision of more important issues, such as national security. On the other hand, the legal system is seen as an important player in how the media functions. The legal system provides mechanisms to facilitate flow of information; these mechanisms include gaining access to information as well as providing licenses to manage the broadcast spectrum. The legal framework also provides protections for journalists from intervention and for civil laws for libel. Both FH and MSI note the lack of support for press freedom by the judiciary.

Free market

While subsidies and the idea of state-owned media are addressed, they are tied directly to the idea of sustainability and enablement. Here, the neoliberal agenda shines through, privileging private ownership. The focus on revenue, circulation, and ratings clearly illustrate this. Additionally, resources needed to engage in journalism are simply an evaluative tool. It provides no clues about who owns what, and how the media was acquired. However, the surveys do argue for greater transparency in ownership. There is also an indication that churches own a chunk of the media, and one simply has to assume those states are included in private ownership.

Both surveys address the economic environment. FH looks at the ability of the media environment to enable news organizations to begin and exist; the MSI regards business management as a portion of its analysis. Here, the focus is placed on the media's ability to operate independently of state support or subsidies. The DRC's economy, however, is not considered as a factor here.

Content

Content is focused on as the goal. The goals here are viable information provided by a variety of sources. In that respect, these surveys look at the production process and fail to

provide an accurate view of what is covered. Plurality is incredibly important, as indicated by the frequency it appears in the surveys. From these surveys, it becomes clear that while entertainment might be one type of content provided, but the expectation places an emphasis on news that can be used by citizens as a necessary part of political participation.

Professionalization

These are all issues that play out in discourse about American journalism. Throughout its history, American journalism has discussed professionalization of those in the industry. Again, these groups, ethical discussions, how people are educated are all predicated on how a given society arranges these relationships. These social arrangements are based on values and beliefs.

The MSI looks specifically at these. While FH addresses these anecdotally, they are not included in the survey questions. While it is viewed that skilled labor is required for a sustainable media, system, a great deal of ambiguity exists as to whether they are required for an enabling environment. With countries that might lack sufficient resources to meet the needs of those who wish to become journalists, then, it is difficult to surmise what journalists are expected to know and where they would acquire that knowledge.

What is missing?

While the surveys provide insight into how Congolese media operate according to Western standards, they fail to give context for why the system operates as it does. Here, four areas deserve greater attention. Much of the fighting in the Congo relates to the colonial era, both with respect to the system of administration and the artificial boundaries imposed on different groups. Additionally, not enough emphasis is placed on the political economy of the country. News organizations require capital, to buy equipment, to find skilled labor, and simply to operate. However, this process does not happen in a vacuum. It would also be helpful to

understand the content of the news, rather than the idealized role of media. Each of these areas - history, politics, economics, and the characteristics of news content - are important to paint a more complete picture.

History

The importance of colonial history cannot be ignored. The media system began as a way for colonists to communicate. Following independence, the elites took over. A more accurate historical context is needed. It should be kept in mind that the American colonies were much different than colonies around the world. These differences should also be considered. The American experiment, including government and media system, was derived from much different circumstances than African colonies. The DRC, given its intertwining historical roots with the Belgians, should be explored more as a condition that greatly affects communication. Developed countries have rarely been subject to international organizations' policies and programs, such as the UN or the IMF, nor have they required structural adjustments as of late.

Actual account of politics

It is not enough to know the political disjunctures. Understanding needs to reach back prior to the colonial era. The political process should be explored with the ownership of media in mind, as well. What is it to be free in the DRC? What influences shape political life for all Congolese? From the conclusions of both FH and MSI surveys, we can surmise the political system is not necessarily stable. The government lacks legitimacy beyond a certain scope, and has consistently fought with armed groups for quite some time. Additionally, the role of the UN as well as other groups would be helpful. It might merely be sufficient to account for free elections in countries like the DRC; however, extra steps are needed to understand what factors destabilize the country and hinder political legitimacy. The press is a stabilizing factor, but it is

only one factor and should be taken together with those factors. For an example in which both organizations (FH and IREX) have provided an in-depth picture of conflict in a destabilized state, see the reports on Kosovo.

Economics

Understanding about politics is best coupled with an understanding of a functioning economy. Whether the economy is liberalized or not, these require political decisions and greatly affect the DRC's citizens. A broader glimpse into the health of the national economy as well as international inventions is necessary. The DRC has fought with armed groups over resources for a while. Although most anecdotal descriptions of these relationships describe fighting as ethnically related, it is more probable these tensions arise from fighting over resources, land, and control.

Moreover, we need to understand the dynamics of capital and labor. Given the power dynamics present within the country, we need to understand the economic system within the country as well as those who have the capital to begin new organizations. Particular attention should be paid to connections to former colonial powers and church interests. How much is owned by former colonial powers? What economic policies affect economic growth, and therefore the operation of media? Separating the media from the rest of the economy only serves to compare or contrast these elements among different systems. To understand fully the implications of press operation, we must take that media system and place it into the larger context of national economy.

What does the news contain?

We need to understand the actual content of the media. Some, such as Frere (2007), argue that the press has served to further divide the Congolese. These have been complaints in other

conflict states, like Kosovo. But we have no real understanding of what the content is or what form it takes. These surveys address the structure of the system that should exist, if it were free, able, and sustainable. They fail to address what kinds of content best serve the purpose of this type of system, especially in a conflict state like the DRC. Here, we can abandon evaluative statements such as good or bad content. We simply need to understand what exists and its role in the social, political, and economic environment.

Why the methodology should change?

The methodology that takes up the responsibility for helping us understand the media in conflict states such as DRC should ameliorate aspects that hinder growth and the health of the country. A study that seeks to delve into the cultural context to provide insight like this takes time and resources but enables us to see across cultural lines. Multi-sited ethnography offers a great deal of promise in this respect because it "takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize the distinction between lifeworld and system" (Marcus, 1998, p. 80). According to Kraidy and Murphy (2008), contrasting culture enables us to focus on "cultural overlaps rather than structural universalism" (p. 336). Comparing conflict states to other developed states might provide us with data that are standardized; however, they do not provide glimpses into how the press operates in a destabilized state. Rather, contrasting conflict states with each other could yield more fruitful results. As Kraidy and Murphy indicate, borrowing from Geertz, culture is a "context," a "symbolic action" that researchers must experience (p. 338).

Conclusion/Future paths

This study sought to understand how two Western organizations evaluate press freedom, specifically in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The DRC has suffered periods of instability,

resulting in international intervention. While these issues are sketched out in the results provided by these organizations, these surveys fail to account for the role of media in the DRC and its political and economic tribulations. The critical analysis here illustrates that these survey methodologies are based on assumed universal, normative perspectives about press operation.

While methodologies like these enable us to gather standardized data about many media systems, they are not sufficient to help us understand how media works in countries like the DRC, which have suffered and struggled to develop into an autonomous nation-state. This study is not an extensive analysis by any means; however, it does seek to open a dialogue about creating more inclusive, in-depth research about the power relationships and dynamics of non-Western countries. Research does exist but more is needed to challenge hegemonic notions of how social institutions should operate, especially when political participation is at stake. After all, many would argue the American press system leaves a great deal to be desired when used to gauge political participation among Americans.

Additionally, accepting these surveys as the ideal for press operation reinforces the horizontal perspective derived from the cultural imperialism paradigm. We should understand many influences shape cultural production. In that vein, these surveys are considered among those influences. But by using multi-sited ethnography, we can understand the DRC's media system much differently. We remove the DRC from the horizontal perspective, giving the media system its own space. This space has its own determinants, its own influences, and its own life outside of the international system. Providing a grounded view of media opens access for Congolese journalists to imagine their own media system, and gives media scholars the baseline data that is truly rooted in the political, social, and economic realities of the Congolese. Moreover, research such as this places media in the constellation of other social relationships,

rather than giving it absolute privilege. This direction takes us down a new path, one that realizes the dream not of the end of history but the beginning of new ways to imagine political, social, and economic freedom. Comparing conflict states can bring better insight, so that the press might operate as a stabilizing, egalitarian force.

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