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METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN ANALYZING THE PERCEPTION
OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE MEDIA

Dr. S. Sebastian Periannan¹

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1. Introduction

Here, I am talking about the powerful intellectual and theoretical tools of communication in terms of media, religious minorities, perception, analysis and methodological issues. To our understanding, religious minority is any community, linguistic or religious, which is less than 50% of the entire state or nation's population.¹ These minorities are constantly under the spell of a privileged position or under terrible attacks and horrible threats through various channels; one of the main channels is the "media". If money can make many things, media can make everything. Increasingly the media have found themselves positioned at the heart of cultural, social, political and economic contexts. And these contexts both influence media performance and are influenced by it. Thus, media performance affects the perception of religions minorities. We face enormous methodological issues and challenges concerning what tools or procedures we must use to understand the perception of religious minorities in the media.

2. Stating the Problem

As a result of media production, texts, contexts, reception, perception, technology and effect on the audience.

- ⇒ Why there is communal conflict?
- ⇒ Why minorities are not understood correctly?
- ⇒ Why the minorities are presented in a stereotypical way in the media?
- ⇒ Does the representation of minorities promote positive or negative impact?

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It is all due to “ignorance” of each other and “label” of the deviance of media which continues as reinforcement of the definition of perception.²

Therefore the objectives are:

- To analyse the methodological issues on perception.
- To propose few strategies to promote a better perception of religious minorities.

Who are the people involved in the making of the perception?

The people involved in the making of the perception of religious minorities are the following:

- Media owners and practitioners
- Religious or faith communities and media users.
- Christian communicators: pastors, leaders, and theologians.
- Politicians, theoreticians and bureaucrats.

What is Perception?

Perception defined is a “direct recognition; an intelligent discernment.” (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, 1986).

We organize our social perception into comprehensive patterns. In that sense, each of us subscribes to our own implicit theory of personality. We assume that certain traits go together. When we hear that another person is warm, we’re likely to conclude that he/she is also honest and sensitive. Stereotypes are the result of implicit personality theories, which are no longer responsive to new data. The process of interpersonal perception takes more than a keen eye and a pure heart. Even a slow-motion instant replay doesn’t begin to sort out all that’s happening. Perception involves more than just the five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. At this root, perception is interpretation.

The factors that contribute to these varying perceptions are as follows:

- His or her own cultural conditioning, education and personal experiences structure each person’s perception of others. Adults teach children what they think are the critical dimensions to look for in other people.

- Sometimes, perception differs because of what we choose to observe and how we process what we’ve observed. It is not necessarily true that each one’s perception is based on observations of particular persons. Your observations may be totally dominated by what others told you about his person; or you may focus primarily on the situation or role relationships. Most people do not use the same yardstick to measure their parents; their friends, and strangers. (e.g., an aggressive child may be perceived differently at home by her/his parents than by a stranger when the child displays the same behaviour.
- Sometimes, we see only what we want to see or don’t see what may be obvious to others because of our own needs, desires, or temporary emotional states. This is a process known as selective perception.

Perceptions are formed through (a) personal experiences; (b) formal or non-formal education; (c) scientific or methodological inputs; (d) socio-economic, religio-cultural conditioning.

3. A Methodological Perspective in analysing the perception

First of all one has to identify the methodological issues in presenting the religious minorities. Then only we will know whether the presentation is “representation” or “misrepresentation” of religious minorities in the media. Any methodology involves a theoretical support from “theory”, a “research” process and a “statistical” analysis.

i) Theory and Research in analysing the perception

“We need the knowledge that only research can provide before we can develop adequate communication policies” (UNESCO, 1971)

Theoretical Perspectives

- a. empiricist stresses that reality is unitary and it can only be understood by empirical analytical enquiry.
- b. Interactionism sees social life as a process of interactions among individuals.
- c. Structural and functionalism: here perception is seen as everything that has a structure and function.
- d. Conflict or critical theories of Marx will look at perception as having clash. That is clash of civilization.

- e. Interpretative approach focuses on the reality of perception being interpreted by the author.
- f. Post-modernism and de-constructivist theories perception is incurred from subjectivity, language, discourse, semiotics and interpretation³.

Research Orientations in terms of media

	Structural	Behavioural	Cultural
<i>Main Aims:</i>	Describe composition: enumerate; relate to society	Explain & predict choices, reactions, effects	Understand meaning of content received and of use in the context
<i>Main Data:</i>	Social-demographic, media and time use.	Motives, Acts of choice, Reactions	Perceptions of meaning. Social and cultural context.
<i>Main Methods:</i>	Survey & Statistical analysis	Survey; experiment mental measurement	Ethnographic; Qualitative

Perceptions of the audience have often been influenced by negative views about mass media in general and have ranged from simple prejudice and snobbery to sophisticated exercises in media analysis.⁴

ii) Perception Process from the Communication standpoint

Source Perception	Content	Channels	Receivers' Perception	Effect
Media Owners Practitioners	On religious, faith practice	Mass Media	Target general audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Cognitive ◆ Affective ◆ Behavioural

Media owners and practitioners have their own perception while encoding the message of the content. Hence, the content plays a vital role in the whole analysis of perception. After receiving the message the target audience and the general public form their own perception on the content, which is about the religious minority in our discussion. Therefore, we need to profoundly understand the content.

iii) Methodological Issues arising from the context

- a) Media Text–Media Context: The media text has to be “read” through the perceptions of its audience, which constructs meanings and pleasures from the media texts offered. Media text and context are either intertwined or just apposed. Because the very process of media use and the way in which it unfolds in particular context are central objects of interest.⁵
- b) Cultural Text: Cultural text is the discussion and analysis of media text with the rise of cultural studies. Texts are ‘polysemic’ many potential meanings.
 - Intertextuality – Media texts are related to other texts.
 - Media texts are variably open or closed
 - Texts are realistic or fabulative
- c) Semiology - Signs: deals with signs and signification of language, which enkindles the perception. Perception through Signs
 - Meanings depend on a wider cultural and Linguistic frame of reference
 - Texts represent processes of signification
 - Meanings of texts are connotative, Denotative, Mythical.
- d) Information: Information is probably the capacity to reduce uncertainty, “information is thus defined by its opposite” (randomness or class). Perception from Information.
 - Transfer or exchange of information from sender to receiver.
 - Media texts are bodies of information.
 - Information quality, informativeness affects perception.
- e) Media performance: affects perception through media context, which includes issues of crime and violence in media, the representation of local and national issues. Media Performance affects perception.
 - Minorities are differently marginalized, ignored or stigmatised.
 - Ethnic minorities have tended to be in lower-status or dubious.
- f) Critical Perspectives: Critical perspectives effect the perception based on social class, gender ad ethnicity has probably been the most significant.⁶

Critical Perspectives effect the Perception

- Commercialisation.
- Critical approach on the politics of textuality.
- Typical mass media content embodies the inequalities
- Gender-based critique.

Perception at the Level of the following:

- Individuals
- Group
- Organisation/Institution
- National/International
- Global

iv) Factor's that influence the Perception through the Media

Distortion of truth and accuracy not only goes against the goal of communication, but also influences the perception on the wrong side. There is no point in discussing about the vested interest of political parties or fundamentalists including GO/NGOs. Domination occurs through cultural partiality resulting in creating insecurity, prejudices and biases in the minds of the audience. Commercial programs are needed but commercialization influences the perception towards materialism and consumerism.

Thus, the religious minorities are forced to face intolerance instead of tolerance through media, insecurity feeling despite the constitutional rights, violence and oppression instead of promoting and fostering dialogue and harmony.

Blumer's five Principles of Research

- i) Audience studies should be carried out in the direct empirical context of media use.
- ii) Reception should be understood against the background of individual and collective life histories.

- iii) Uses and effects should be seen in relationship to other influences.
- iv) Interpretation of meaning by audience precedes media effect.
- v) Media use should be related to the use of other communication technologies.⁷

4. Approaches needed to analyze the perception

For example, in the past we have been heavily relying on aggregate data such as GNP, population, literacy rates, and all kinds of census data that created mathematical models, which were partial explanations at best. "Survey, research, polling, conventional questionnaires, and above all, quantitative analysis of all sorts yielded valuable information on the descriptive nature of some of the pressing developmental questions but fell short of discovering and indeed mapping the functional and dysfunctional aspects of communication and development. The field of communication and development shied away from qualitative and experimental field research and isolated itself from some of the most useful anthropological and linguistic, as well as historical methods. As a result, the field of communication and development tended to emphasize the economic and political problems and when it came to sociological analysis, it was extremely colored with national and cultural biases arising from the nature of the discipline itself".⁸

- a) Content Analysis
- b) Media Analysis
- c) Audience Analysis
- d) Cultural approach
- e) Interpretative Approach

Methodological Approach

Quantitative	Qualitative
Fragmentary	Holistic
Systematic	Selective
Generalising	Specific illustrative
Manifest Meaning	Latent Meaning
Objective	Relative to audience ⁹

A. Content Analysis

- ⇒ To make inferences about the values, sentiments, intentions or ideologies of the sources or authors.
- ⇒ To infer group or societal values through the content
- ⇒ To evaluate the effects of communication on the audiences they reach.¹⁰

Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. Over the past decades, the symbols and messages contained in the mass media have become increasingly popular research topics. This method is used for example to help audience members evaluate how well local TV stations are complying with the children's Television Act. To monitor the subject matter of company publications, some labour unions now conduct this method to examine their images. We can use this method to know how the media treat social and political issues.

One of the advantages of content analysis is its potential to identify trends over long periods of time. Taylor and Bang (1997) while comparing media content to the "Real World" compared the portrayal of three minority groups in magazine ads with their incidence in the general population and found that Latino-Americans were the most under-represented groups in the US.

Another study shows the public perception of attorneys and the viewing of prime-time television programmes featuring lawyers and *signorelli*.

Content analysis has been used:

- To determine the importance of news topics
- To classify media content
- News coverage on agenda setting, on radio, TV and the newspaper.

The limitations are, that it cannot serve as a basis for making statements about the effects of context on our audience.

An Example: Mastro and Greenberg (2000) made a research on Racial minorities on TV. The Universe was fall, 1996, prime time broadcast TV programs. The samples were randomly constructed composite week for each broadcast network. The unit of analysis was the programme containing a minority characters in a prominent role.¹¹

B. Media Analysis

- ⇒ Distribution of the media will include such items as the circulation number for a magazine or newspaper etc.
- ⇒ Program exposure is the number of people exposed to the medium.
- ⇒ Program perception involves the number of people who perceived the program in question.
- ⇒ Behavioural response eg., buying action as a result of the placement of the specific advertisement.
- ⇒ Testing, copy and effect for the text or program itself. Usually advertisers put a great deal of time and money into copy testing.
- ⇒ Testing effects of communication after the event requires post-testing procedures.¹²

An Example: A study has been done on the "cultural values in contemporary Korean advertising:" with special reference to the images of the elderly. The sample of this study is made up of 375 magazine advertisements, randomly selected from October 2000 to September 2002. Every advertisement either targeting the elderly consumers or modelling the elderly models as the main characters in the sample was examined. All the examples have been produced by various Korean advertising agencies, have appeared in nationally circulated consumer magazines of South Korea and received mainly by the Korean audience. The sample contained advertisements of indigenous manufactured products as well as multinational or imported brands.¹³

C. Audience Research

This research can represent the voice of the audience or speak on its behalf, or as "public" of "civic" journalism. It highlights the audience control to audience autonomy, including the typologies of audience as

Target, as participants and as spectators. Jeusen and Rosengren (1990) distinguished fire traditions of audience research as follows:

- Effects, uses and gratifications
- Literary criticism, cultural studies and reception analysis.

Biocca reviews the audiences activity as follows:

- ⇒ selectivity
- ⇒ utilitarianism
- ⇒ Internationality
- ⇒ Resistance to influence
- ⇒ Involvement

Audience Analysis- must include the following into consideration:

- ⇒ One should know the audience stereotypes through survey and proper sampling.
- ⇒ Social background and milieu must be studied.
- ⇒ The researcher must find out the media related needs, personal states, preferences of the audience, habits of leisure time, and media use.
- ⇒ The audience had the awareness of the choices and specific use.¹³

D. Cultural Approach

I have purposely used one word by using “culture” to include qualitative research, participant observation and ethnography. Broadly they are all one and the same with a little different method to approach the phenomenon.

“It is harder to find any encamped methodologists solidly more “quantitative” methodologists... are using naturalistic and phenomenological approaches to complement tests and surveys and structured interviews. On the other side an increasing number of ethnographer’s and qualitative researchers are using pre-designed conceptual frameworks. Most people now see the world with more ecumenical eyes.”¹⁴

Cultural approach is flexible and rigorous. Although a basic set of questions is designed to start the project, the researcher can change question or ask follow up questions at any time.

Cultural approach uses participant observation as a technique. Here the researcher will take up residence in the community and detailed data are obtained by observations. The cultural approach researcher is concerned with more subjective understandings; involved with perceptions and interpretations.¹⁵

An example: (Walcott, 1994a) – This study examines the interview process for choosing a new principal. The author uses the ethnographic approach, and the data collection consists of documents, participant observation, and interviewing.¹⁶

E. Interpretative Approach

Mridula Menon in his book on “Development Communication and Media Debate” 1997 has devoted one full chapter on “News”; an interpretative analysis.

The purpose of interpretative inquiry is to search the subjective meanings and understanding in the world of lived experience.

The method used in this approach mainly interactive methods, sometimes interactions between researcher and subjects are needed to obtain meaningful data and insights into human behaviour. Methods used are interviews, participant observation, case study and grounded theory.¹⁶

5. Conclusion

Communal conflicts, clashes of civilization “labeled” freedom of expression and controlled stereotypical representation of religious minorities call for a methodological approach in creating new awareness through media presentation.

As a result of one-sided policies and biased media presentation, the perception of the people are influenced. This influence occurs through distortion of truth, vested interest, cultural domination, consumerism, insecurity and prejudices. When we analyze the perception we are

confronted with methodological issues such as fragmentary, selective, generalizing, latent meaning and questionable objectivity or doubtful relativity. In order to solve this problem which arises from the methodological issues the paper proposes few strategies such as content analysis, media analysis, audience analysis, cultural approach and interpretative approach.

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RELIGION, MEDIA AND REPRESENTATIONS

Dr. Joshva Raja*

Introduction

Communication is the basis of human relationship; we cannot imagine a society without it. From a ritual perspective, communication is defined in terms of 'sharing', 'participating', 'interacting', and 'exchanging' [Carey: 1989, 18]. Through communication, we participate in the process of constructing, sharing, and exchanging 'meanings'. These meanings reinforce and share our values, attitude and worldviews.

Mass Communication is one such type in which the mass gets involved in sharing certain meanings. It is often mediated by mass media texts such as newspapers, magazines, books, television, and the radio. Such mass mediated texts play a major role in shaping our attitude, worldviews and also to some extent, our behavior by emphasizing, sharing, and repeating certain meanings. Through mass mediated texts, we come to know about those places we have never visited or been to before, and met people whom we have never seen. In this sense, mass media could enable us to develop a better understanding between individuals, communities, and nations. Mass media, on the other hand, can spur misunderstanding, ignorance and clashes between people, communities and nations.

Perhaps, any study on the relationship between mass mediated text, people and religion will be a complex one. There is a concern on our context that certain religious people are portrayed improperly in the mass media. In particular, the representation of the minority and their communities. In doing so, certain stereotypical images and concepts about religious minorities have been propagated by the media.

In effect, these contribute towards one religious community's ignorance about the other and incite confrontation and communal clashes between people. An example is the spread of violence in Gujarat after

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the Godhra incident. A reason for this was the use of provocative news and rumors printed in the regional newspapers and magazines.¹

Though not all of them use such provocative and communally-biased news reporting, some newspapers and magazines want to popularize their publications thereby, ignites misunderstanding among religious communities.

This paper will define what role the mass mediated texts (such as content of popular magazines) play in the clashes among religious communities. The content analysis is limited to two popular English magazines: the India Today and the Frontline. The paper's aim is to prove whether the text of these magazines during a particular period, shows an increase in labeling religious groups with stereotypical images. Besides this, 55 pastors and 45 teachers were interviewed to find out about their perceptions on other religious communities. Thereafter, interpretative conclusions will be developed that possibly can be tested in other mass mediated texts.

Theoretical Assumptions

Though the study's focus is mainly about the role of media in the Indian context, one cannot analyze it as an isolated process. In order to explain the communal clashes within the global context, some of the existing theories that explain these religious clashes from a global perspective will be highlighted. *Foreign Affairs* (1993) published Samuel Huntington's article, entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?"² His article generated discussions among many intellectual communities in which he wrote:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural...the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate the global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future" [Huntington, 1993, p.1]

For him, the evolution of conflicts began from the clashes among kings, emperors, and nations; later on, it moved to conflicts of ideologies (Communism and Liberal Democracy). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the conflict revolved between civilizations. He stated that the countries will group themselves in terms of their culture and civilizations rather than on the basis of their political or economic systems or of their ideological similarities.

He further identified seven major civilizations³ in the world: Sinic⁴, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic and Western, Latin American and African. He argued that the western civilizations ends, where Western Christianity ends; and where Islam and Orthodoxy begins [Huntington, 1996:p.159]. Huntington made an appealing thesis which was widely read and appreciated as a description of what was going on in the world. Among the civilizations he highlighted the clash between the Islam and the West. He argued:

The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the US Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world [Huntington 1996:p.217].

Though he recognizes the internal differences in some nations and cultures, his division of West and the rest, particularly of West versus Islam, has been criticized by many scholars. Neither the western nor the Islamic communities have a monolithic culture which Huntington seems to emphasize on. While he identifies Islam as a single cultural entity, he did not cite the West as Christianity. The main clash should have been between Western Christianity and Islam but rather he selected the word 'West' instead of 'Christianity'. These were some issues not addressed in his thesis.

Asghar Ali Engineer noted that the kind of applaud Huntington's dubious hypothesis like the clash of civilizations received in the western

world shows widespread prejudice against Islam since the period of crusades [Engineer 2001:16]. Chomski [2002:100-1] criticized the thesis by saying, “Huntington wanted (us) not to think about rich powers and corporations exploiting people, that cannot be the conflicts, but a clash of civilizations between the West, Islam and Confucianism”. Pointing out the support of the United States for the Saudi Arabian government, is an example.

Chomski argued that the main reason for this support is to ensure that the region’s wealth goes to the right people: not the people in the slums of Cairo, but those people in the executive suites of New York. For him, there is a clash with those who are adopting the preferential option for the poor, no matter who they are [Chomski 2002:101].

Though his examples of clashes between Catholic Churches and the US in Central America supports his emphasis on economic elements, he does the same generalization in relation to Islamic countries⁵. Hence, the clash between nations and religious communities is more than at cultural or economic level because the grouping of nations or communities cannot simply be explained using Huntington’s or Chomski’s theses. In a few contexts or incidents, their theses could have been true but in other contexts their theses are unapplicable.

Taking a different view, Tariq Ali [2001] in his book, ‘Clash of Fundamentalisms - Crusades, Jihads, and Modernity’, argues that the clash is between American hyper-patriotism which is interwoven with market fundamentalism and radical Islam. For Ali, Huntington’s thesis is a reductive nonsense. The fundamentalism political relationship between ‘civilizations’ is better characterized by terms like ‘inter-related’ and ‘imbricated’ than by the zero-sum notion connoted by ‘clash’ or ‘conflict’. For when different civilizations interact with each other, they do not necessarily end up in clashes and conflicts [Tariq Ali 2001:274]. In fact, in some interactions between the Western countries and Muslim countries, a closer cooperation and coordination among the nations rather than conflicts exists (such as that between Pakistan and the US in the war against terrorism). Even within so called western countries, there is no concrete agreement on the war on terrorism (German’s objections). In this sense, the Tariq Ali’s argument was right in his emphasis on the inter-relatedness of civilizations. It means that the relationship among cultures and nations is more complex than what Huntington classifies as the West and the rest.

While appreciating the argument as compellingly large, bold, even visionary, Edward Said [1997:1] differs in his article, ‘The Clash of Ignorance’, that Huntington did not have much time to spare for the internal dynamics and plurality of every civilization or even the interpretation of each culture. More so, a great deal of demagogy and downright ignorance are involved in presuming to speak for a whole religion or civilization. He explained that the huge complicated matters, i.e. identity and culture are simplified by Huntington; and liken to Popeye and Bluto— characters in a cartoon network program— “where both bash each other mercilessly, with one, the virtuous pugilist always getting the upper hand over his adversary”.

For Said, Huntington reduced ‘civilizations’ into what they are not: shut down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of myriad currents and counter-currents. Civilizations animate human history and helped different communities and nations to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing [Said 1994:2]. Though Huntington recognizes the plurality within civilizations, his explanation of the conflicts in terms of ‘the clash of civilizations’ seem to represent the misunderstanding of Islam or other cultures. No such homogenized western culture exists, while no single Islamic culture could be found among all Muslims. Having lived in the ‘West’ and having read about Islam through books, media and conferences, Huntington seemed to know Islam more than those who lived among Muslims.

‘Ignorance’ about other civilizations is a major problem of the world today. Most of us know other people and their cultures mainly through the media. We perceive other people through what we see, hear or read. We are often exposed to the negative news and information about ‘other religions or cultures’ through it. Sometimes, we believe in the information about others first, thus, those stereotypical images and meanings in the media, shape our perceptions and attitude towards other religions and cultures. The clashes begin in one’s mind, where the other is often misunderstood and mistaken as an enemy of one’s culture. A need for a systematic study on the problem whether people are ignorant about others and/or media contributes to such ignorance.

Research Study among a Group of Pastors and Teachers

Questionnaires were given to 55 pastors and 45 teachers who came to the Ecumenical Christian Center for a conference. The pastors represented different parts of India, while the latter were from different schools in Bangalore. The teachers came to participate in a program at the Bladwin Methodist Boys High school. (The Hindus-17; Christians-28). A discussion followed after the questionnaires were answered. The questions were about Muslims and Islam. All of them were non-Muslims. As one may see from the list below their answers to a few selected questions from my questionnaire show their ignorance about Muslims and Islam:

1. Words about Islam/Muslims that come to your mind immediately:

Terrorists	59
Jihad	93
Fundamentalist	74
Religious Fanatics	43
Osama Bin Laden	26
Kashmir	41

Other words such as Al-Qaeda (11), Pakistan (7) were also mentioned. Only three (two among Christian pastors and one among teachers) mentioned that they are peace loving people/faithful people.

2. How did you come to know about Muslims?

Through friends/relatives	12
Through personal contact	15
Through Media	62 (some mentioned all three)

3. Have you ever lived among Muslims?

No	78
Yes, for a while	04 (more than a year)
Yes, but for a short time	06
Unanswered	12

Majority of the pastors and teachers have not lived even for a year among Muslims or were in contact with Muslims for a long time. This shows that their understanding of Muslims and Islam is being shaped by the Media—particularly television, magazines and newspapers.

4. Do you agree that Islam promotes terrorism?

Yes, Agree	65
Disagree	07
Do not know	25
Do not know to answer	03

Many of them are convinced that Islam as a religion promotes terrorism. Some of their comments were interesting and shocking about the other religious communities. This shows that they know only the negative side of Islam which is often provided by the media in large scale.

5. Have you ever come across Muslims who were friendly?

Yes	14
No	47
Sometimes they are good	21

Even though some of them have come across good Muslims, they did not clarify the doubts about Islam or Muslims. This is one of the major constraints in dialogue.

6. Write a few words about our president Prof. Abdul Kalam and Mr. Mohammad Kaif (an Indian cricket player).

Good Muslims	11
Nationalists	03
True Indians	01
Talented	23
Exceptional Individuals	40

Many of them argued that these are exceptional individuals who have come out of their fundamentalist perspective. They have developed this information also from the media only.

7. Views about Pakistan

Supports terrorism in Kashmir	23
Islamic country	47 (Sharia -3)
Fundamentalism growing	17
Women are mistreated	12
In Proxy war with India	07
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The view about Islam and Muslims in India coincided with those words with which they tended to explain Pakistan. Many of them blamed Pakistan for Islamic insurgencies in India. Some of them even argued that Pakistan fund the terrorism not only Kashmir but throughout India.

8. Views about Islamic countries

Oil rich countries	37
Women asked cover their face	42
People are beaten/hanged publicly	31
Anti-West	24

A considerable majority from this selected group thought that their views about Muslims and Islam through the media were right. There was a struggle among them when asked to use those words from the first question and describe the well-known Indian Muslims. Not many of them have lived among Muslims but still were convinced that they knew about them. This assumption reflected an ignorance on the part of educated Christian pastors and teachers about Muslims and Islam. Many of them have arrived at these conclusions with the help of the media. This is not only true of Christians' ignorance about Muslims, but vice versa. Many Christian pastors and teachers are misinformed about Islam and Muslims—such misinformation was readily available through the media.

The above research clearly interprets that religious communities are ignorant about 'other communities'. The media shape their perceptions and attitude about others. In this sense, media contributes to the formation of certain perceptions of others and thus, augment ignorance about a particular religious community. One needs to analyze the content of a specific media as to how such limited views are disseminated through their texts. Selected are two popular English magazines that supposedly upholds standard and accurate reporting in India.

Analysis of the Magazines⁶

Having analyzed some people's awareness on 'others', the researcher would like to study how the content of a popular media might contribute towards such perception. Again, selected were two renowned magazines: the India Today⁷ (Circulation: 9,320,079/weekly; 15 million readers), and the Frontline⁸ (10 million readers). Both magazines are widely read among the English-reading, middle-class audience. As regards with the regional magazines and newspapers, a few scholars have studied these already.⁹ These publications often compete among themselves in providing provocative and offensive news items against minorities. These English newspapers were chosen because they were supposed to be neutral in their reporting about the minorities. Recently, they too began to report like regional magazines.¹⁰

In the market of news media, an event is reported only when it is negative, abnormal, and/or an unexpected event.¹¹ Religious activities are often reported when they have negative or unexpected characteristics.¹² News media should be seen as one of the sources of images, perceptions, and representations. Their mediated texts are polysemic in nature and are subject to a wider range of interpretations. Audiences are active decoders and thus, negotiate, subvert and reject the texts.

We need to recognize some of these assumptions before interpreting the outcome of the content study. India Today releases alternative issues every three years¹³, and Frontline every two years.¹⁴ The total number of issues from these magazines is 130. Total number of articles in India Today magazine is 3611, and in Frontline, 3016. Among 1132 articles in 2002, around 238 articles discussed religion/s in India Today.¹⁵ Even the number of pages for these articles have increased in reporting Hindu, Muslim, and other religious communities during these years.¹⁶ From the tables (T1 and T2) one can clearly identify that there is a sharp increase in reporting about religion in general, and Muslims in particular. This quantitative research is carried to show how the content of selected issues of these two magazines report religious communities, in specific, the minority religion: Islam.

Table T3. Islam/Muslims in 2002

No. of related to	Pak/Afgan/S.Arabia	Kashmir/terrorists/	Hindu vs. Islam	Terrorists/Jihad/extremists	Editorial/Political comments	Photos/Pictures
India Today	56	107	22	46	9	73
Frontline	87	69	17	21	6	42

The above table shows that large information about religion or Islam is available negatively to the public. They group Islamic countries together and focus on the problems in their countries, particularly in relation to the terrorist acts and disasters. Reported news about Kashmir were also often, in relation to separatists or terrorism. More so, Islam is often portrayed as against the Hindus; Islam and Muslims are often equated to Jihad, extremists and/or terrorists. Even the pictures taken were to prove the above stated points.

Table T4

India Today No. of Articles	Islam Vs. Hinduism	Terrorism (Islamic) Vs. Nationalism	Iconic clashes Colors (green vs. saffron)
1981	3	7	00
1992	14	21	08
2002	56	73	17

Table T5

Frontline No. of articles	Islam Vs. Hinduism	Terrorism (Islamic) Vs. Nationalism	Iconic clashes Pictures
1995	12	8	3
2002	71	79	17

These two magazines illustrate the slow development when presenting the religious confrontations as well as representation of Islam and Muslims over the years. Though the study has not been done systematically for a span of period, this gives a gist of the recent developments when it comes to presenting other religious faiths and people as terrorists which the magazines borrow from the Western media.

It is possible to interpret from the tables above that these magazines like any other news media, associate Islam to other Muslim countries, issues in Kashmir, and terrorist attacks elsewhere in the world. They also highlight the tension between Hindus and Islam without differentiating them.

Islam is often explained as a religion of terror, of sword, an enemy-and a religion of outsiders.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Muslims are portrayed as fundamentalists, uncivilized, anti-Indian and religious fanatics.¹⁸ Kashmir Muslims are shown as if they are trying to 'Islamicise' the state. The word, 'fundamentalists' is applied to all Muslims because they want 'to return' to their original faith. For magazines, it means men could divorce their wives without their consent-even if via email, post or telephone only (India Today, May 20, 2002); women should cover their head; the full application of Sharia Law wherever they are in majority (Frontline, September 14 - 27) and the like.

From the examples and analysis above, one can recognize certain perceptions on Islam and the Muslims reported repetitively in the media. Muslims are considered to be a homogenous group whereas they are quite heterogeneous. Muslims are seen as if they support Pakistan cricket matches whereas Muhammad Kaif, an Indian Muslim played for India.¹⁹ They are seen as fanatics and fundamentalists in promoting their faith when many of us have not heard anything about Red Crescent. They mistreat women when they have accepted a number of rulings by Indian courts in relation to Talaq and women's rights.²⁰ They are exploiting Hindu's hospitality and patience.²¹ Though the magazines are careful in their reporting about minorities, in particular about Muslims, they began to tilt towards the practice of regional media.²²

From the above analysis, this researcher argues that there is ignorance on the part of some of the media practitioners while selecting words that describe Muslims and Islam (e.g. extremists, terrorists). Such an act of selection could be both intentional or an unintentional one. Also the content in the news media often tend to provide inaccurate ideas about Islam. An example is the link of some mosques to Muslim and militancy. At times, news media also generalizes isolated incidents into 'Islamophobia'. Chances are some of these representations which are

repeated in the news magazines could influence the perception of the public. Thus, such reports could contribute to the ignorance of other religious communities.

Even though these magazines claim to be objective in their report, the problem of negative stereotypical representation is yet to be solved. It is in the process of selecting, editing and confirming these representations that they contribute to the problem. Rather than blaming the media practitioners, this issue on ignorance on the religious communities in India must be addressed. The main task is to identify the core problem in the content of the news magazines that necessitates a culture of dialogue.

As already pointed out, 'returning to Islam' is seen as 'returning to fundamentalism', 'returning to the practices of cutting hands, shooting down women' and so forth. The problem here is whether the media practitioners are either unaware or refuses to acknowledge these issues.

Narendra Pani, a senior editor of Economic Times of India, reasons out that the media's reality is entirely different. Media critics cannot simply blame them for what is happening in the media; as competition and their survival depends on how far one captures the people's interest through their reports. It is clear that the media practitioners are aware of the differences between the Muslim communities and their representation of such communities. But because they face this reality in media, including their practices, they have to present the issues of Islam and Muslim communities this way. Nonetheless, this researcher contests that the journalists are insensible about the Muslims communities and their religious practices.

The second factor that contributes towards this stereotyping is media's fabrication of and tolerance for inaccurate ideas about Islam [Bassil Ake].²³ The ideas of war and violence have become related to the Islamic religion is a case in point. Media reflect some of the old concepts such as Islam was a "religion spread by the sword", meaning, the Muslims went from one end of the world to the other by forcing people to either convert or die. And worse, the media often fails to provide background information in support of some happenings they want to identify as terrorists' events. Another example are the suppositions such as Islam's discrimination against women and the harsh custom Islam requires of women. Edward Said states that:

The negative images of Islam are very much more prevalent than any others, and that such images correspond, not what Islam 'is'... but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be: Those sectors have the power and the will to propagate that particular image of Islam, and this image therefore, becomes more prevalent, more present, than all others (Muzafer I). The Indian news media often provide inaccurate perceptions of Islam and Muslim communities. My parents lived among Muslims for nearly five years and I grew up with Muslim friends.

Till today, I meet some of them. My own experience of Muslims is different from that of the news reports. Many of them are peace-loving people and are friendly to other religious people. They did not find any problem to accommodate a Christian family among them. I am not generalizing with my experience but I am arguing that as the Muslim communities vary and so their religious practices. In such case, how can the news media generalize from a single or from a few events about the Muslim communities.

Media Narratives and the Image of the Other

Many of our newspapers often print news items about terrorist attacks by Muslims in India. At the same time, India has nearly 200 million Muslims; the second largest number by country after Indonesia. Yet, we are not often told about the positive characteristics of Islam or given information about Muslim culture, except in a few special programs aired in the middle of the night. The majority of the Muslims in India are peace-loving people, though at times, offended by other religious fundamentalist forces. They contribute to the Indian society at large, support our country and play a major role in the development of the nation. This side of the story is not often covered by the news media and helps stir a negative stereotypical image of Islam in the minds of non-Muslims.

Secondly, these media narratives contribute not only to our worldview and attitude towards 'others' but contribute to the suspicion and fear of the 'other'. When the majority group is in power then fear increases among the minority, who feels powerless and therefore, reacts in a variety of ways. Though it is very difficult to establish a direct psychological relationship between the media narratives, images and attitude, it is likely that one side's view of the other becomes distorted and biased. When biased views are justified through individual cases, the fear is further justified. This leads to mutual mistrust, where any action

against the other provokes retaliation. The relationship between attitude and behavior is also a complex phenomenon. But in some contexts, the attitude towards 'others' being justified by one's own religious narrative, and reinforced by specific incidents, leads people to react in a similar way towards the 'others', whenever there is a problem between religious communities.

There are two issues being argued in the paragraphs above. Most of the media narratives are often exclusive in nature though inclusive characteristics are present just like religious narratives. The problem is not with the exclusive claims but with the image of 'others' in the narrative. Thus, when the narrative goes to the extreme of identifying the 'other' as an enemy, it creates an atmosphere of confrontation, which may lead to open conflict and so to war. It is essential to address this dilemma at its root level rather than eliminate a few individuals responsible for a particular incident. This researcher seriously questions the whole project of modernity which enables people to claim and produce objective statements about others. What the news reporters strongly believe in is that their media narratives are very close to the truth. Within the limitations of their practices, media editors argue that they try to be objective in their news. Here the problem lies with the general concepts such as that Muslims are a homogeneous and monolithic community. Just like any other religious followers, Muslims too have disputes and differences over their faith and so, no narrative can generalize their belief or their practices. It would be religio-centric if a news reporter being an outsider tends to generalize the understanding that he or she gets from a few incidents or from a few communities.

The news reporters' claim to hold an objective knowledge of the event or of a community is one among many other narratives. What they report is what they believe in. To some extent, they are biased with their own views of 'others'. If they knew that communities' diversity and issues, then their report will take a cautious approach towards stereotyping. If the report is one's own belief or a media institution's belief then the narrative cannot hold an absolute truth of the event or of the community. The gap between one's experience of the event and one's reporting should be understood well by the reporters. As communication critics, we are not asking for positive news all the time but expects at least news or

commentaries that would enable the communities understand each other. While we understand the demands of the media institution, where nothing can be changed radically, our students are encouraged-the future journalists, communication directors, editors and scholars-to consciously be aware of these issues. A balance must be upheld.

Establishing a 'Culture of Dialogue'²⁴

We need to move from a culture of violence and confrontation to a culture of dialogue and of reconciliation, where communities can exist together. Here, there is a responsibility for the Media practitioners as well for the audience. The communication training should include these issues and enable their trainees to become responsive to the issues at hand. There is a need to critically evaluate their own understanding, perception and manner of presentation in the media. Even if objective presentation is not possible at times, they need to let themselves stand corrected when the representation is too negative or biased. There is a need for each media to look at their content retrospectively.

The audience should also be attentive of such issues. This is what the department of communication is doing as a pioneer work in the schools. In Bangalore, we have started Media Education for school children with the help of NGO's, schools, teachers' associations and our own students. Last year, this network worked among eleven schools and all the participants of the program felt that media education should become part of the school curriculum in India. At this time of religious conflicts, media awareness is one of the ways to enable the audience, increase their knowledge on media representations. In order to deal with the issue of convergence of a religion and terrorism, we need to address this at various levels. There is a need to hold interactions between media critics, practitioners, and religious intellectuals in order to enable them to understand each other. The audience should be empowered through the media education program at school and at community levels. The journalism courses, communication studies and media technological trainings should not only include the media education course but also facilitate a hands-on experience for the students. In this manner, reconciliation between different communities may become a possible reality.

There are many ways of tackling this issue of representations in the media. It is essential to bring an awareness about the media's role in the context of conflicts. The word Islam comes from the Arabic root word 'Salama' which means peace. Islam is a religion of which is based upon achieving peace through the submission to the will of Allah. Let it be clear that this researcher is neither a Muslim nor a scholar on Islamic studies. I am trying to study the media's portrayal of Muslim communities and their religious faith and raise the concern that it is not properly represented. By bringing the imageries of Islam and terrorism together, the news media, may contribute to the suspicion of a minority religious followers in India.

Having identified the factors behind this problem, we, at the Department of Communication attempted to organize a seminar on the "perceptions of Islam in Media" for media practitioners i.e., journalists, reporters, editors, and scholars. Nearly 35 media industries were represented and communication scholars from 11 colleges attended in the media. Selected speakers were from different religions and represented the various media industries. They identified the present perceptions of Islam in media, the politics behind such perceptions and in what way we can address the issues at hand. Thereafter, we gathered statements in order to address the problem of such perceptions. Through this seminar we wanted to encourage the media practitioners to consider presenting positive perceptions of Islam in their own media.

Through interpersonal and group communication we can try to understand the other communities. For this, we need to create an atmosphere for the dialogue and interaction with others. To be able to know the 'other' we need to listen to them as individuals and groups. In villages, a community network can be established in order to bring a group of people together and discuss these issues so that an understanding of the other can be improved. A group of Muslims can talk to a group of Hindus so that a better picture can be established directly rather than having a negative stereotypical image of the other through the media. We have started similar group discussions in our college between our students and a few Muslims. We also had an experience of trilogue between Muslims, Hindus and Christians. It becomes essential to start direct grassroot level discussions among different religious and cultural groups so that a culture of dialogue and reconciliation can be established. Unless the grassroot discussions are held in small groups among different

religious communities, it is impossible to bring an understanding among them. The ignorance about the other will continue to exist in their minds. Such ignorance about the other will be reinforced and manipulated by the media from time to time. We must create small groups of dialogue from various religions in our own places so that ignorance could be altered and understanding about each other could be strengthened.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Dionne Bansa, 2002, *Peddling Hate: The Role of the Dominant Gujarati Language Media during the Genocidal Anti-Muslim Program was Chillingly Communal and Provocative*. August, *Frontline*, 2, pp.13-14.
- ² He defined civilization having the largest units of identity to which people adhere to: each unit consisting of groups of culturally compatible countries. Civilization is the highest cultural group that distinguishes it from other species.
- ³ Huntington adds the Russian Orthodox as a separate civilization.
- ⁴ Sinic describes the common culture of China and the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.
- ⁵ He refers to the Saudi Arabian country as the most extreme fundamentalist. For him, Saudi Arabian leaders treat women as awfully as they want and direct the money to the US.
- ⁶ Content Analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantifiable manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Kerlinger 1986- quoted in Barrie Gunter's book on Media Research Methods, London: Sage, 2000.)
- ⁷ Living Media India owns the India Today English Magazine. In English alone, the circulation is 4,170,505 (July-Dec 1998 Audit Bureau of Circulation figures) and is the highest read publication in India in any language. Including other regional language print, the total weekly circulation is 9,320,079 with a readership of over 15 million. www.indiatoday.com, 2003, January, 'About US' website, pp.1-12.
- ⁸ *Frontline* is published by The Hindu Media Group. They also publish the Hindu Newspaper.
- ⁹ Godwin Shiri, 2002, *Saffronisation of Mass Media: With Reference to Kannada Print Media*, Presented for the Refresher course at UTC, Bangalore. His study of popular magazines for one year revealed a few facts which are: the editorials praise glorious Hindu culture and history; most of the serial stories discuss about the Brahmin/Upper caste family background; using photos and pictures, the media communalize the innocent minds of people; the reports on Christians are provocative ones.
- ¹⁰ Dionne Bansa, 2002, *Peddling Hate: The Role of the Dominant Gujarati Language Media during the Genocidal Anti-Muslim Program was Chillingly Communal and Provocative*. August, *Frontline*, 2, pp.13-14. He analyzed regional magazines and newspapers and concluded that religion is often portrayed negatively, Islam in particular. He argues that the regional newspapers and magazines have been locked in a peculiar kind of competition. It is about which one can be more communal and provocative.
- ¹¹ Prabhat Patnaik, 2002, *Market, Moral and The Media*, *Frontline*, pp.128-134. The English-language media played a remarkable role in the coverage of the Gujarat carnage.
- ¹² The report about northeastern states are often reported when there are problems or disasters in those areas except the peace process in Nagaland. This is commonly practiced by the news media as an accepted practice. Among one year magazines in India Today and *Frontline*, nearly 90% of the articles about the North Eastern states are related to violent incidents or to HIV/AIDS or insurgencies.
- ¹³ In the religion section news about US Catholic church priests' scandal is reported under the title 'Church and a Crisis'-*Frontline*, April, 13-26, 2002, pp.131-132. This is the only report within the six months issues about a church which is also negative. I classify this under negative because there are a number of grand positive events and social services

- about the churches which are never noticed by the news reporters. Even popular events among Christians were not reported.
- ¹³ The selected years are 1981, 1992, and 2002. Total number of issues per year is 52. The total number of alternative issues is 26. Total number of issues for three years is 78 in India Today. These issues were selected alternatively to study the content in a random manner.
- ¹⁴ The selected years are 1995 and 2002. Total number of issues for each year is 26. Total number of issues for two years is 52. We do not have *Frontline* issues before 1995 and so I have selected only two years.
- ¹⁵ These are alternative issues only which means out of 52 issues I have selected only 26 issues.
- ¹⁶ In 2002, the 410 pages are given to religious/religious political matters out of a total 2423 pages whereas in 1995 only 130 pages are dealing with religious news or issues out of 2158 pages.
- ¹⁷ India Today January, 7, 2002. p.33. Islamism: the new enemy
India Today April 29, 2002. The Swords of Islam.
Frontline July 5, 2002. Freelance Jihadis
- ¹⁸ Muslims as 'Bloodied Brothers'; -India Today August 5, 2002.
Muslims as ISI agents and spies; Outsiders to go back – India Today June 3, 2002.
Prime Minister's statement "Wherever Muslims are, they don't want peace. They don't want to mix with others. They use terror as a weapon". Quoted by P Chidambaram (India Today April 29, 2002)
- ¹⁹ *Frontline* 2002 July 5- P116- Muslims will host their flag in the red fort
- ²⁰ India Today 2002 April 29 Honors Killing of Women; Male-Dominated Society to refer to Muslim communities. India Today 2002 May 20, *Talaq* is one of the most feared words in the lives of Muslim women.
- ²¹ India Today May 13, 2002, news about RSS' Prahnidhi Sabha in Bangalore -their statement is reported-Muslims to understand that their safety lay in the goodwill of the majority. No good will and no safety, the RSS explains unless Muslims respect, tolerate and cooperate with Hindus.
- ²² While making this generalization, I am aware that media are diverse (radio, television, newspaper, magazines). They are among other means of communication that might influence the mass audience. Other social institutions such as government and non-governmental institutions could also influence people's perceptions. Politicians can use other means and types of media to manipulate people. By talking account all these, one cannot blame media alone for the ignorance of the people even though there is a possible influence on the perceptions of others in the mind of religious communities.
- ²³ Bassil Akel, *Islam and the Western Media*, a paper presented in the conference on Understanding Islam 1998, AR WACC General Assembly Kuala Lumpur, pp.1-7.
- ²⁴ Def: A culture of dialogue is one in which people habitually gather together to explore their lives, their dreams and their differences. (Tom Atlee-Building Culture of Dialogue) Every facet of such culture would contribute to people learning together, building healthy relationships with each other and the natural world and co-creating better prospects for their shared future.

PLAY AND RELIGION: INDICATION OF AN INTERCONNECTION

K.P. Aleaz*

As humans play, play gives rise to religion. The first section of this paper highlights this aspect. As the deities play, religion becomes play. The second section of this paper will focus on this. The paper assumes an interconnection between religion and play and attempts to establish that. While the first section of this paper examines the opinions of some religionists, sociologists and theologians, the second section focuses mainly on the deities of the different groupings within Hinduism.

1. Play as Religion, as Humans Play

Human person's physical, psychical, and spiritual well-being is dependent upon fantasy, celebration, and play, and without these extras the human person may shrivel and die. The sociologist Peter Berger suggests that it is precisely in these "extra" phenomena that one finds hints (rumors) of that "other" world of the divine. He argues that despite the reported death of supernatural in the second half of the twentieth century, there are phenomena that may be empirically measured that demonstrate the likelihood of God's continued good health points to five significant human phenomena which are "signals of transcendence." Of these five, two are those of play and the comic. According to Berger, in both of these typically human phenomena there is implied a vertical referent. In play, the human person steps out of the ordinary world and ordinary time and he/she denies his/her finite place in the world. Similarly Berger argues that a person's sense of humor reflects 'discrepancy, incongruity, incommensurability' it reflects 'the imprisonment of the human spirit in the world', while at the same time mocking that imprisonment.¹

The Dutch phenomenologist of religion, Gerardus Van Der Leeuw, has linked the concept of play to an understanding of religious phenomena. His widely read *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* contains an example of the use of the play metaphor in the interpretation of religion.²

This point comes out more profoundly in his study of the religious dimensions of works of art entitled *The Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*. Art has its own movement. Dance drama, pictorial arts, and music are a 'game' or a 'play' of humans. Human life has the nature of a game. Human in mortal pride can forget this and behave too seriously and that will be fatal. The meeting of God with the human person and the human person with God may have to be understood as holy play, *sacer ludus*. God is involved in movement. He/She came down to earth and we followed his/her movement; we, the bones in the dry valley of Ezekiel, regained life. The most ancient drama, the drama that rules the world, is the drama of the meeting of God and the human person. Every play is religious activity; it points beyond itself; downward; to the simple, ordinary rhythm of life; upward, to the highest forms of existence. Play is the prerequisite for those forms of existence which strive toward a communion with the other, and finally for a meeting with God.³

For some time now the positive relationship of play to cult has been recognized and it has even been suggested that all cult and cultic activities belong essentially to the sphere of play. Both play and cult take place in a world set apart, and in circumstances that separate them from an ordinary sphere. This similarity is particularly clear when play takes the form of a game and when cultic activity takes the form of a ritual or ceremony. In each case the act of separation from the ordinary world is quite formal and precise temporally and specially. Formally speaking, there is no distinction whatever between marking out a space for a sacred purpose and marking it out for the purposes of sheer play. The tennis-court cannot formally be distinguished from temple.⁴

Summing up the formal characteristic of play, Johan Huizinga says;

...We might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the play intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.⁵

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A sacred performance is played or performed within a playground that is literally 'staked out, and played moreover as a feast (i.e., in mirth and freedom). A sacred space, a temporarily real world of its own is created. But with the end of the sacred play its effect is not lost; rather it continues to shed its radiance on the ordinary world outside, order and prosperity for the whole community until the sacred play-season comes round again.⁶ The relation between a religious festival and play is very close. Both proclaim a standstill to ordinary life. In both mirth and joy dominate, though not necessarily, because the festival too can be serious. Both are limited as to time and place; both combine strict rules with genuine freedom. The two are most intimately related in dancing.⁷ In the religious dance for example, the primal person is a kangaroo and in our eyes he is playing a kangaroo.⁸ Ritual is sacred play indispensable for the well being of the community; it is always play in the sense Plato gave to it i.e., an action accomplishing itself outside and above the necessities and seriousness of everyday life. Plato conceived religion as play consecrated to the Deity, the highest goal of human endeavor. The ritual act, or an important part of it, will always remain within the play category, but in this seeming subordination the recognition of its holiness is not lost.⁹ It is in the form and function of play, that the human person's consciousness that he/she is embedded in a sacred order of things finds its first, highest, and holiest experience. The significance of a sacred act gradually permeates the playing. The primary thing is and remains play, while ritual grafts upon it step by step.¹⁰

Ritual and religion actually emerged very long ago in the human person's capacity for play. In tribal societies ritual is obviously loaded with play-acting and 'make believe.' The men carve the masks and then scare each other with them. The women, who know full well their husbands and brothers are behind the masks, scream in terror at them. In ritual cures a certain complicity of doctor and patient is obviously involved. In the hunt and fertility dances, the dancers 'become' the animals and clouds, but they know fully well that they are enacting these parts.¹¹ The human person is essentially festive and fanciful. To become fully human, the industrial and techno-centric human person must learn again to dance and dream. To quote Harvey Cox:

Our loss of the capacity for festivity and fantasy... has profound religious significance. The religious

man is one who grasps his own life within a larger historical and cosmic setting. He sees himself as part of a greater while, a longer story in which he plays a part. Song, ritual, and vision link a man to this story. They help him place himself somewhere between Eden and the Kingdom of God; they give him a past and a future. But without real festive occasions and without the nurture of fantasy man's spirit as well as his psyche shrinks. He becomes something less than a man, a gnat with neither origin nor destiny.¹²

According to him, prayer and faith are really forms of play. Therefore, it is pointless to lament the passing of a particular dated style of prayer or the disappearance of a narrow notion of faith.¹³ Both prayer and play are acts of disciplined fantasy as they travel beyond the world of fact. The four traditional forms of prayer, namely supplication, intercession, thanksgiving, and penitence, can be understood as a form of play. In the fantasy of prayer as supplication, a person has obtained something he/she longs for or has rid himself/herself of something he/she does not want. In both prayer and play is an exercise of ordered imagination. One of the forms of human play is pretending to be someone else. Intercessory prayer is a refinement of this kind of play as in it we identify with the person for whom we are praying. Prayer of thanksgiving expresses joy; in joy we sing, dance, clap our hands, embrace each other and as such they are expressions of play. Prayers of penitence also carry fantasy elements and therefore are integrally related to play. In it a new role is sought pretending to be in fact freed from the past.¹⁴

The themes of play, celebration, dance and festivity have been taken very seriously by many theologians and writers and that is encouraging.¹⁵ For Robert S. Deropp, the Master Game is the game of 'full consciousness' or 'real awakening' which Eastern mystics of Hinduism and Buddhism have long known about. The games religious people play vary as per the game's aims. The Master Game involves the taking of the best from all religions and freeing it from the traditional trappings.¹⁶ He says :

The basic idea underlying all the great religions is that man is asleep, that he lives amid dreams and delusions, that he cuts himself off from the universal consciousness (the only meaningful definition of God) to crawl into narrow shell of a personal ego. To emerge from this narrow shell, to regain union with the universal consciousness, to pass from the darkness of the ego-centered illusion into the light of the non-ego, this was the real aim of the Religion Game as defined by the great teachers, Jesus, Gautama, Krishna, Mahavira, Lao-tze and the Platonic Socrates. Among the Moslems this teaching was promulgated by the Sufis, who praised in their poems the delights or reunion with the Friend. To all these Players, it was obvious that the Religion Game as played by the paid priests, with its shabby confidence tricks, promises, threats, persecutions and killings, was merely a hideous travesty of the real game.¹⁷

David L. Miller has suggested that the concept of play which represents a newly emergent mythology in our times should bear the marks of four functions namely *aisthesis*, *poiesis*, *metamorphosis* and *therapeia*. The spiritual function of the concept of play may be characterized by the word *aisthesis* from which we get the word 'aesthetic'. This dimension of the life of play proclaims that non-seriousness is the highest seriousness. *Poiesis* indicates the natural-cosmic function of play and from this, we get the words 'poesy' and 'poetry'. This dimension may be expressed as fiction is the highest truth. *Metamorphosis* suggests the social-coherence function of play, where it can be said that 'change is the highest stability.' The psychological function of play is characterized by *therapeia* and from it we get the word, 'therapy.' This function of play suggests that 'purposelessness is the highest purpose.'¹⁸ This is parallel to the fourfold function of mythology; namely, it creates in the human person a sense of awe at those powers and circumstances that lie outside human control, enables to understand the natural world order better, gives a framework in which society is seen as coherent, and gives a way to understand the intricacies of the human psyche.¹⁹

John Huizinga,²⁰ Josef Peiper,²¹ and Roger Caillois²² are three scholars who indicate the importance of the spirit of play and the place of leisure in the creation and maintenance of culture. Civilization arises and unfolds in and as play. Genuine pure play is one of the main bases of civilization. Culture depends for its very existence on leisure. In Huizinga's view, the function of play reaches an apex of beauty before becoming smothered by techniques of production and the complexities of social organization as a civilization increases in technical organization. From the spirit of play, originates competition and contest. These are basic ingredients of social interaction. As civilization grows more 'serious,' however, the play element is accorded a secondary place and competition remains the primary initiating factor of social exchange as seen for example in stock market gambits. Pieper points to the element of contemplation as essential to civilization and to celebration as the essence of culture. He is critical of the over-activism of the contemporary world. Celebration becomes the basic context of the play spirit for him, as does competition for Huizinga. In worship, what happens is celebration. Leisure implies an attitude of calm, of being open to 'hearing' the meaning of the universe that surrounds one. Pieper feels that the person whose life and leisure finds its foundation in 'culture,' specifically in the divine *cultus*, will enjoy this quality. A person who celebrates is one with himself/herself as well as with the world. Caillois' sociological analysis of culture is based on a study of games humans play. Play is parallel to culture in the sense that what is expressed in play is no different from what is expressed in culture. The transition of a social group to civilization as such may imply and be characterized by a change in the type of game or play spirit which is given primacy.²³

2. Religion as Play, as the Deities Play

Lila is a Sanskrit noun meaning 'sport' or play. It has been the central term in the Hindu explanation of the idea that in the creating and governing of the world, God is moved not by need or necessity but by a free and joyous creativity that is integral to God's own nature. God's actions are not motivated. Since God forever possesses all, he/she has no wants or desires. The spontaneity and autonomy of God's actions are absolute. Ananda Coomaraswamy has indicated that the notion of divine 'playing' occurs repeatedly in the Rg Veda Samhita; there are twenty-eight occurrences of *krill*, to play, specially related *Soma* and *Agni*. *Chandogya*

Upanisad 8.12.2 mentions the disembodied *atman* as sporting.²⁴ The first use of *lila* as a theological term we find in the *Brahma Sutra of Badarayana* 2.1.32-33, where the author maintains that the Supreme Lord creates the world merely in play (*lilakaivalyam*): “(Creation is) not (possible for Brahman) on account of having a motive. But as in ordinary life, creation is mere sport (to Brahman.)”²⁵ Sankara, in his commentary on this, compares Brahman’s creative activity to breathing which goes on without reference to any extraneous purpose, merely following the law of its own nature.²⁶ God cannot have a motive or a need for creating the universe for God is all-sufficient. Another passage that speaks of Brahman creating the world in sport is found in *Manu-Smṛti* 1.80: ‘The creations and destructions (of the world) are numberless; sporting, as it were, Brahman repeats this again and again (kridanniva etat kurute paramesthi punah punah).’²⁷

The *Vaisnava* tradition beautifully portrays the creation of the world as the play of God. Visnu creates the world while lying asleep on the cosmic serpent Ananta (or Sesa) in the middle of the primordial ocean. While he is sleeping a lotus grows from his navel and Brahma is created, who in turn creates the world. Creation is pictured here as an effortless reflex of God. Visnu creates the entire universe while asleep. He dreams the universe into existence, as it were.²⁸ Visnu is pictured also as a sporting boy seen playing by himself without any anxiety in the universe bereft of creation. Then he begins to create the universe.²⁹ Both the image of the sleeping Visnu spinning the world into being from his dreams and the image of the solitary boy creating the world amid his play suggests a spontaneous creation. The world is brought into being as a result of reflex or overabundance.³⁰ The *avatars* of Visnu are central in the *Vaisnava* tradition. From time to time, Visnu incarnates himself. Or a part of himself, to eliminate *adharma* and establish *dharma* of the age. Visnu is here acting as the savior deity.

But it should be noted that the Puranas interpret the incarnations as the play of Visnu: ‘Like an actor acting on the stage, he assumed and renounced His different forms such as a Fish and others.’³¹ ‘Whenever there is waning of *Dharma* and waxing of sin, the Supreme Lord, Sri Hari incarnates himself. There is no reason for the birth and act of the Lord of the Universe, except for enjoying his own illusive powers.’³² Kṛṣṇa’s parents address him at his birth thus: ‘O Lord, verily we cannot conceive any other cause of thy birth, except in thy sportive humor; for thou art not attached to this Earth.’³³ Visnu became a boar to rescue the earth, when it was forcibly

taken beneath the primordial waters by the demon. But the *Matsya-purana* would say that Visnu became a boar simply to amuse himself: ‘Then the Lord manifested Himself as a boar that He might enjoy the playing in the waters.’³⁴ Kṛṣṇa, the popular *avatara* is pictured as an adolescent cowherd boy who sports endlessly with friends and lovers, while being the supreme manifestation of the divine. Therefore, play is clearly an activity considered appropriate to the gods. It conveys their otherness and their transcendence of the finite sphere by appearing motiveless and entirely free. Through play the gods reveal their nature as completely unconditioned as well as blissful and beautiful. The term *lila* is almost synonymous with divine activity generally, and with Kṛṣṇa’s activity particularly.³⁵

In the Saivite tradition, the creation of the world is also spontaneous and playful. Siva who is the King of dancers, brings about creation by means of dancing. Siva’s dance, of course, has majestic and ordered aspects about it. Nevertheless it has no calculation or premeditation. Creation is an incidental by-product of Siva’s dancing and not the result of premeditative, careful planning, or brooding. The spontaneity, lightness, and effortlessness of Siva’s dancing are quite clear in Saivite iconography. The bronze Nataraja from South India depicts a fluid grace as the kicking foot and bright smile clearly convey the sense of effortless, spontaneous actions.³⁶ Siva performs the dance in the heavenly hall of Cidambaram (or Tillai) at the center of the universe, while the assembly of gods look on. This dance was first revealed by Siva in the Taragam forest before the *rsis*, after their submission to Siva.³⁷ In the *Mahabharata* Siva is addressed as follows: ‘Thou art fond of dancing. Thou art he that is always engaged in dancing. Thou art he that causes others to dance.’³⁸

The universe is destroyed at the mere closing of Siva’s eyes and is recreated upon the mere opening of his third eye in the middle of his forehead. The impermanence of the world vis-à-vis Siva and its status as history or reflex is seen in the following story. Siva and Parvati were dallying on the slopes of the Himalayas. Parvati, in jest, placed her hands over Siva’s eyes. The whole universe was at once submerged in darkness and all activity was suspended. Sacrifices stopped and the gods became quiescent.

Thereupon, Siva's third eye appeared and the universe was restored to life.³⁹ Siva is playful to the extent of madness. He laughs, sings and dances in ecstasy, and plays on a number of musical instruments. He leaps, gapes and weeps and make others weep. He speaks like a mad man or a drunkard, as also in sweet voice.⁴⁰ Siva's palace was pictured as really beautiful where he retired with Parvati shortly after their marriage and where they began to play dice.⁴¹ Siva is capable of vigorous, violent dance entitled *tandava* dance, while killing a demon. He dances, arms and legs whirling but his face is calm. In the midst of much strife, the deity remains eternally unmoved.⁴² Summarizing his research in Saivism, Bettina Baumer reduces the various aspects of *lila* or *krida* to two basic meanings:

(1) play as an explosion of bliss, wonder, freedom, and unlimited fullness; (2) acting as concealment of the real nature, as creation of appearance (*asbhasa*), having its phases of creation, withdrawal, etc. Both aspects apply equally to the great Artist (*kavi*), the creator of the three worlds, who is simultaneously engaged in the drama of creation and resting in his own blissful nature.⁴³

In the celebration of the Goddess as Durga, we are familiar with the reading of the *Candi*, that portion of the *Markandeya Purana* known more properly as the *Devimahatmya*. It tells us about the *lilas* of the Goddess, her exploits, and extols her as the great power of the universe. It occupies a pivotal position in the development of the Goddess tradition.⁴⁴ It draws together various 'goddess' traditions, picturing the many goddesses as but forms of the One. It establishes this One as powerful creator, preserver, and destroyer who is at par with, if not greater than, the great Visnu and Siva. It has pictured the ambivalent nature of the goddess. This nature is the dominant theme in the hymns the gods sing in praise of her after she saved them from disaster by killing their enemies. She is hailed as the Great Illusion and the Great Knowledge (*mahamaya* and *mahavidya*). She is the Great Goddess and the Great Demon (*asuri*). She is modesty and shame, terrible and gentle. She both bewitches the world and liberates it.⁴⁵ Her battles are cosmic in their effect. In a unique way the universe is her body. She takes the form of the world at its creation. She is the primordial

prakrti characterized by the three *gunas*. She subsists in the form of the world as earth and water. She constitutes all living beings and has the nature of the universe, which she upholds, by supporting the world so that when the rain comes the vegetation grows out of her own body, so that she is known as *sakambari*.⁴⁶ The Bengali poet, eighteenth century, Ramprasad Sen, sings about her *lilas* as these.⁴⁷ The Great Goddess is divine display embodied. Her immense, yet apparently aimless energy, is *maya* itself, and so she is frequently called Mahamaya. She is both illusive and tangible. She is unpredictable, difficult to know, but easy to serve. She is relative as she is identified with flux and movement. But she is the Absolute relative. She is the essence of the flitting *lila* of the gods.⁴⁸ Sri Ramakrsna often spoke of the dual aspect of the divine as the *nitya* and the *lila*. *Nitya* is the Absolute. The relative aspect of the divine, its manifestation as *sakti* or the Goddess, he called *lila*. To Sri Ramakrishna, *lila* was the appropriate term to express the movement and ambiguity of the phenomenal world and the Goddess definitely belonged to this realm of *lila*.⁴⁹ It was the inexplicable aspect of the Mother Goddess that he used to call as *lila*. The Goddess in her grandeur surpasses human comprehension. Sri Ramakrishna sings one of the songs of Ramprasad thus:

Naked she roams the world, slaying Her demon foes,
Or stands erect on Shiva's breast;
Her feet upon Her Husband's form!
What a strange wife she makes!
My mother's play, declares Prasad, shatters
all rules and laws.⁵⁰

Our understanding of the Mother Goddess as Mahamaya takes us to the concept of *maya*, a central theme of Hinduism that further illustrates the *lila* of the deities. Though *maya* may have been interpreted in post-Sankarite literature to mean creation as illusion, Sankara in his writings has not suggested such a meaning. For him, creation is relatively real and the projection of creation as a parallel, absolute to the One Absolute is the only possible illusion we may have.⁵¹ *Maya* represents the power of the Absolute and derivatively the power of the deities. In the Rg Veda, *maya* means the supernatural power or ability of deities to change form,

to create, or to bestow blessings, for example, to cause rain. It meant the wonderful skill of the gods.⁵² As a vehicle of the gods' display, as their means of revealing themselves, *maya* can be understood as the *lila* of the gods. *Maya* is their means of creating and sustaining the phenomenal world and *maya* is always mysterious, unpredictable, and bewitching. The spiritual seeker is perfected when he learns to accept the world of flux of *maya* as the play of God, when he/she learns to join in the play of God.⁵³ Mircea Eliade connects *maya* with play and writes:

To tear the veil of *maya* and pierce the secret of the cosmic illusion amounts primarily to understanding its character as 'play'-that is to say free, spontaneous activity of the divine-and consequently to imitating the divine action and attaining liberty. The paradox of Indian thought is that the idea of liberty is so concealed by the idea of *maya*- that is of illusion and slavery- that it takes a long detour to find it.⁵⁴

Rabindranath Tagore has beautifully explained that by means of *maya* God creates a galaxy of forms out of himself/herself, which causes an artificial division and the appearances of diversity within his/her essential unity. He/she creates a pageant, a circle of things. He/she delights in playing a game of hide-and-seek in creating diversity from unity and resolving diversity back into unity. It is a game, a joke, and humans are a part of this game. Liberation is terms of learning how to play the game or laugh at the joke.⁵⁵

Of course, *Lila* is much more than a theological concept. It is also a kind of religious drama that is found throughout India, especially in the North.⁵⁶ Such performative *lilas* usually dramatizes the lives and actions of incarnate gods and have much in common with devotional and artistic notions of *lila*. They involve the living presence of gods upon the stage. These gods temporarily inhabit the bodies of the 'actors' who 'play' their part. Therefore going to see a *lila* often involves the enrichment of one's own religious experience. But one problem is, those who have written about *lila* as performance usually have not been much concerned with its theological aspects, while those who have written about the

theology of *lila* usually have ignored its performative dimensions. The Harvard University Conference of 1989, therefore, was an attempt to unite the theological and anthropological approaches to *lila*.⁵⁷ For the South India Vaisnavas, namely Srivaisnavas, ritual drama is not *lila*, but *utsava* (festive celebration). The image incarnation of Visnu at the most important temple is called the 'Lord of the Sacred Stage' (*Sriranganathan*) and he enjoys the songs and dances performed on this stage 'stage,' depicting his glorious deeds and his loving care for his devotees. In the Krsna *lila* of Brindavan and the surrounding Braj region, the theology of Krsna's playful activity and the liturgical dramas about Krsna and his companions are fully integrated. Also *lila* performances in many cases are attempts to escape from the restrictions of social *dharma* in a way that changes, levels out, or reverses the usual social status of the participants and provides them with some psychological relief from social structures that are felt to be confining or oppressive. *Lila Kirtan* of Bengal Vaisnava Bhakti is an example of this. It has made important contributions to the democratization of Bengal society from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Performed for an audience, a principal singer, together with a troupe of supporting singers and drummers, renders a story in song, dramatic gesture, and dance representing an aspect of the life of Krsna or Caitanya. But the same democratization cannot be noticed as a result of the *Ramlila* of Banaras which was male dominated and is distinctly lower class. The *Pandav lila* found in the Himalayan region Garhwal, on the other hand, is dominated by the Rajputs. It is a traditional local drama in which the *Mahabharanta* is represented in citation, dance, and drama by amateur performers for an audience of fellow villagers and guests.⁵⁸

The life of Hindu saints, again, can be conceived as a play. For example, there are aspects of Lord Caitanya's peculiar style of devotion to Krsna that bear important similarities to play. His devotion transcended the realm of cause and effect as he did not care for fruits. His devotion was an end itself, an intrinsically satisfying activity that proceeded spontaneously. Like Krsna, his life was ornamental rather than functional or purposive. The aimlessness, frenzy, and flamboyance of his life were adornments in the ordinary world.⁵⁹ Because of these unusual characteristics such as extreme beauty, ecstasy, frenzy, dancing and singing, and the seeming uselessness of his life, Caitanya's entire biography is referred to as *paly (lila)* in Bengal Vaisnavism. The *Caitanya-caritamrta*,

the famous biography of Caiknva by Krsnadasa Kaviraja, is divided into three parts: the *Adi*, *Madhya* and *Antya lilas*, the early, middle and late playings.⁶⁰ When Sri Ramakrishna was a child, he played with his mother, the goddess Kali. His example teaches us that we should approach the divine without guile, openly, in wonder and with the simple faith of a child. In human relationships with the divine, we are free to behave without premeditation, spontaneously, and unceremoniously. In such a relationship all things are given and received and we need not strive after anything. We become free to play and enjoy the love of the deity and return that love. We can revel in divine love, celebrating it in ecstasy, singing, dancing, and playing. Sri Ramakrishna's life was such a celebration.⁶¹

Here we should note that religious traditions other than Hinduism also regard play both as divine activity and as a soteriologically efficacious activity for the human person. In Greek mythology, we see Zeus playing with a ball and Apollo, his son, playing among the gods.⁶² In a *Fragment of Heraclitus*, the world is interpreted as child's play. For Philo of Alexandria, the divine Logos goes circling in his round without any particular aim. For Plotinus, the phenomenal world is God's playground.⁶³ Dionysus is the clearest example of the divine player in Greek mythology. Like Kali, he is at once terrifying, sublime, and completely unpredictable. Like Krsna, he is an intoxicated and intoxicating god who maddens women with the sound of his flute. In Sufi mysticism, there is the image of God creating the world out of a bliss that intoxicates and then reveling madly in it. For example, the *Gulshan* I Raz of the 14th century Sufi Sa'd Ud Din Mahmud Shabistari provides such a picture.⁶⁴ Jalalyddin Rumi could sing: "I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds are one; One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call. I am intoxicated with Love's cup, the two worlds have passed out of my ken; I have no business save carousal and revelry."⁶⁵

In the gods of Mahayana Buddhism, the *bodhisattvas*, we can identify playfulness. The *bodhisattva* has postponed entrance into *nirvana* until all sentient beings are also freed. He/she is still in the world but completely unattached to it. For him/her the personal phenomenal world is a comedy in which he/she has elected to play a role. *Zen Sadhana* again is a play, beyond all "purposes." In Zen and other Asian religious traditions the ways of liberation makes it very clear that life is not going anywhere,

because it is already *there*. Life is playing.⁶⁶ In the Taoist concept of the Way we also can identify a playful spirit. In the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao-Tzu it is written: 'The model of the Tao is spontaneity.' In Taoism the school of Pure Conversation emphasized the importance of behaving openly and spontaneously like a child. In his/her freedom the Taoist sage does not know desire or necessity. He/she is a 'windfloating' spirit.⁶⁷

Conclusion:

It is in the form and function play, that the human person's consciousness that he/she is embedded in a sacred order of things finds its first, highest and holiest expression. Ritual and religion actually emerged very long ago in the human capacity for play. Play is a signal of transcendence because in it a human steps out of the ordinary world and ordinary time and denies his/her finite place in the world. But mind you, the Master Game is the game of 'full consciousness' or 'real awakening; and not the Religion Game played by the paid priests.

Lila (sport or play) is the central term in the Hindu explanation of the idea that God in creating and governing the world is moved not by need or necessity, but by a free and joyous creativity that is spontaneous, autonomous, and integral to God's own nature. God's creativity follows the law of God's own nature. Creation as the play of God, on the one hand, is an explosion of bliss, wonder, freedom and unlimited fullness. On the other hand, it is an act of concealment of the real nature of God as creation has its phrases of creation, withdrawal, and the like.

If so, playing along with God becomes life. God starts the play, with God as the starting point and then proceeds to creation. Humans, on the other hand, start the play in creation and then proceed to God. Both meet in play. The connecting link is play.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1969), pp.72-75, 86-87.
- ² Gerardus Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation. A Study in Phenomenology*, 2 volumes (1938, rev.ed., New York, 1963, reprint Gloucester, MA, 1967).
- ³ Gerardus Van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, trans., By D. F. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), pp.86, 111-112.
- ⁴ J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955), pp.19-20.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.21-22.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.25.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.25-27.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.17-18.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.1-27.
- ¹² Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Gools. A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p.14.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 149.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.147-148.
- ¹⁵ cf. Alan Watts, *Beyond Theology, The Art of Godmanship* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964); Hugo Rahner S. J., *Man at Play*, trans from the German by Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967); Josef Pieper., *In Tune with the World. A Theory of Festivity*, trans. By Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965); William F. Lynch, S. J., *Christ and Apollo: The Dimension of Literary Imagination* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960); *Images of Hope: Imagination as healer of the Hopeless* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1965); Sister Corita Kent, *Footnotes and Headlines: A Play and Pray Book* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967); Sam Keen, *Apology for Wonder* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Walter Harrelson, *From Fertility Cult to Worship* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969); Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. By Ada Lane (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969); David L. Miller, *Gods and Games. Toward a Theology of Play* (New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1970); Robert S. De Ropp, *The Master Game: Pathways to Higher Consciousness Beyond the Drug Experience* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968).
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- ²⁴ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Lila," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 61 (1941): 99.
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- ²⁶ Sankara, *Brahma Sutra Bhasya*, 2. 1.33.
- ²⁷ G. Buhler, trans., *The Laws of Manu* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidars, 1967), p.22.
- ²⁸ *Bhagavata-Purana*, 1.3.1-5; *Matsya-Purana*, 167.1-25,31; 168.14-15.
- ²⁹ *The Visnu Purana*, 1.2.18; *Matsya-Purana*,167.31; 168.14-15.
- ³⁰ Alan Watts, *op cit.*, p. 25; David R. Kinsley, *The Divine Player (A Study of Krsna Lila)* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), pp.2-3.
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- ³² *Bhagavata-Purana*,10.24.56.
- ³³ *Bhagavata-Purana*, 10.2.39.
- ³⁴ *Matsya-Purana*, 248.64.
- ³⁵ David R. Kinsely, *op. cit.*, John Stratton Hawley, *At Play with Krishna: Pilgrimage Dramas from Brindavan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); *Krishna, the Butter Thief* (Princeton: University Press, 1983); Kenneth E. Bryant, *Poems to the Child-God: Structures and Strategies in the Poetry of Surdas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); David L. Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Raganuga Bhakti Sadhana* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); *Journey Through the Twelve Forests: An Encounter with Krishna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Norvin Hein, *The Miracle Plays of Mathura* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); "A Revolution in Krsnism: The Cult of Gopala," *History of Religions*, 25,3 (1986):296-317; "Lila," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 8, ed. By Mircea Eliade, et.al. (New York: Macmillan, 1987),550-554; Clifford G. Hospital, "Krsna and the Theology of Play," *Studies in Religion*, 6,3 (1997):285-291; "Lila in the Bhagavata Purana," *Purana*, 22, 1 (1980): 7-8; Vasudha Narayanan, "The Realm of Play and the Sacred Stage," in *The Gods of Play. Lila in South Asia*, ed. William S. Sax (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 177-203.
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⁶⁰ cf. Krsnadasa Kaviraja, *Sri Sri Caitanya-caritamrta*, 6 vols., 2nd ed., trans. by Nagendra Kumar Ray (Calcutta: Nagendra Kumar Ray, 1959).

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⁶³ Hugo Rahner, S. J., *op cit.*, pp.14-17.

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JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTION OF ETHICS WITH REFERENCE TO TEHELKA.COM

Dr. J. Josephine¹ and P. Srivalli²

The main function of the Media within a democratic society is to keep the public informed. Media plays a vital role in the smooth functioning of democracy by being the "eyes and ears" of the citizens (Cohen et al., 1997). Sometimes Media take up the role of watchdog of the society by exposing corruption and discrepancies in the system. Journalists sometimes conduct undercover investigations to expose corruptions at high level.

Tehelka, a web portal, conducted an investigation on Arms deals in defence, code named Operation Westend¹. This investigation had mixed responses from the Media. While some media was appreciative of what Tehelka has done others were critical about the methods used for investigation.

Some of the methods used by Tehelka were controversial:

1. Using hidden camera
2. Using deception
3. Use of Commercial sex workers

Not only the methods but the motive was also questioned. While some looked at Tehelka as a web portal crying for notice with its big eye catching exposures, others questioned the finance for this big investigation.

This study tries to find out what is the journalists' perception of Tehelka? Given an opportunity will they carry out an investigation like Tehelka did? What is the ethical orientation of journalists who support Tehelka?

Ethical Theories

What is ethical would depend upon a person's ethical orientation. While some believe that we should follow rules strictly and never break them, others believe that what is ethical is that which results in the best

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consequences. Among the various ethical orientations, this study takes into account Deontology, Consequential ethics and Situation ethics.

Deontology

Deontologists are sometimes referred to as “non-consequentialists” because of their emphasis on acting on principle or according to certain universal moral duties without regard to the good or bad consequences of their actions (Day, 1999).

The most famous deontologist is Kant. He proposed the Categorical Imperative theory based on moral rules that should be universally applied and that respect the dignity of people. According to deontology prohibitions against certain kind of behavior is applied even if the consequences are good. Rather than focus on the ends, the theory focuses on the means. It emphasizes commitment to principles and motives for an action. Deontology does not approve of foul means to achieve beneficial ends. According to Kant, people should always be treated with respect and as ends unto themselves, never as a means to an end. That is the ends do not justify the means.

Because of their emphasis of rules and commitment to duty, deontology is absolutist, admitting no exceptions. Day (1999) points out that under a duty-based approach to ethical decision making reporters would not be justified in using deception. Some even consider this absolutist approach as unrealistic and even as a threat to freedom of press.

Deontology has some advantages. Concrete rules that provide few exceptions take some of the pressure of moral agents to predict the consequences of their action. There is a duty to adhere to the rules irrespective of consequences. There is more predictability in deontological approach that one who strictly adheres to it is likely to be regarded as truthful person.

The problem with deontology is when conflict exists between two equally plausible rules. Day (1999) argues that moral duties cannot be separated from consequences of fulfilling those obligations. For example, the reason that the duty to tell truth is a fundamental rule is that truth telling produces

good consequences for the society. Even Kant despite his condemnations of consequential reasoning sometimes acknowledges the link between universal moral duties and the positive consequences of carrying out those ethical responsibilities.

According to deontology using of deception is unethical. Even if these actions are done for a greater good it is wrong according to deontology. Lying and deception are important topics for Kant, who believed we should universally accept the directive “do not lie” (Englehardt et al., 2002).

Consequential Theory

Day (1999) points out that consequences based approach to ethics is termed as consequential ethics or *teleological*. It is derived from the Greek word “telos” meaning end or goal. Here ethically correct decisions are the one that produces the best consequences.

Consequentialist do not ask whether a particular action is right or wrong but whether it leads to positive results. Consequential ethics usually include all ethical theories that base the rightness of actions or the moral value of individual traits, on the ends or goals they promote or bring about, as in hedonism or utilitarianism.

Consequentialism gives priority to the good over the right. The right is separately defined as that which maximizes the good. Consequentialist is more flexible than duty-based approaches and allows greater latitude in prescribing solutions for difficult situations. Consequentialism also provide a clear cut procedure for confronting moral choices through listing the alternatives, evaluating their possible consequences and analyzing each action on its impact on the people involved.

Consequentialism is objected on the ground that it depends too much on unknown results and the predictive powers of the individual. In all ethical situations it may not be possible to predict the consequences and also it may not be possible to identify all the people involved in moral situation and the impact of the action on them.

Despite these objections consequentialism is a valuable tool in moral reasoning, because it does force us to think of the impact of the consequences of our actions on others. It provides rational means from coming out of the confusion resulting from two obliging duties.

Theories such as utilitarianism, egoism, hedonism, fall under the broad category of consequential ethics. These ethical theories are based on good consequences for whom and what are good consequences. For Utilitarianists, good consequences are those that provide greatest good for the greatest number. For egoists, the good consequences are those that are good for the individual moral agent and for hedonists good consequences are those that provide pleasure for the individual moral agent. Utilitarian approach is the approach used in this study.

Situation Ethics

A less extreme view than relativism is held by those who believe in certain moral principles, such as telling the truth, but are willing to deviate depending upon the situation. Situationists decide on a case by case basis whether it is expedient to deviate from a particular moral rule. George Fletcher's approach to "Situation Ethics" is that in any situation it is right to do whatever is most loving, whether or not that required the breaking of a traditional moral rule or not.

Professor Bret Bradley points out "it appears that situation ethics has an unsettling ability to justify a number of diverse situations. It is not difficult to see how situation ethics can be used to rationalize, either consciously or unconsciously, decisions and actions that stem from selfish and evasive origins."

Situation ethics here can be seen as a complex ethical orientation. So generally a person may prefer to follow rules but depending upon the situation may break rules or bend them. While making ethical decision is not a simple linear process, they are made based on the situation. So what is right in a situation may not be right in another. So each particular situation is unique and decisions cannot be based upon some moral rule or even weighing the consequence. Situationists believe that in the world of constant flux the only real values are those that meet the needs of the moment. For this study this particular approach of situation at ethics is used rather than George Fletcher's approach.

Theory	Consequential	Deontology	Situation Ethics
Moral Reasoning	Ethically correct decisions are the one that produces the best consequences.	acting on principle or according to certain universal moral duties without regard to the good or bad consequences of their actions	Depends upon the situation Case by case
Sample expression	The end justifies the means	Do your duty irrespective of consequences	Action is good or bad depending upon the situation
Key terms	Consequences	Duty, Motives, Universal rules	Situation
Key figures	Mill	Kant	Fletcher
Criticism	Unpredictability of consequences	Conflicting duties	Relativist, anything can be defended
Approaches relevant to Media Ethics	Justification for using Deception and questionable means by journalists.	Emphasize on Universal values and adherence to Code of ethics	Bending of ethical rules depending upon the situation.

Table 1 Ethical Orientation

Studies on Journalistic Ethics

Cummins (1999) points out that the people's right to know and press rights to gather and publish information remain dominant justifications for controversial media activities. Yet, the power of the media to set the agenda for public discourse warrants a careful analysis of these rights, their corresponding responsibilities, and their moral limits. He points out moral justification of limits on right to know and press freedom based on traditional ethics theories and media impact on public discourse.

Singletary et al. (1990) study revealed that most of the journalists and mass communication students were "mainstream" ethicists whose ethical concerns centered on credibility, their personal sense of morality, the public's need to know, and the standards of their field and their employer. However a small number of respondents in each of the two samples seemed motivated by knowledge as power and were mildly unconcerned about knowledge of ethics. They were willing to use their work in a punitive way.

Wulfemeyer (1990) study showed that ethical codes provide clear standards for employees improving ethical standards. But, these codes may also inhibit flexibility. Some news directors say it is acceptable to accept free tickets and to go undercover for stories, but it is not acceptable to pay sources for news.

Craign (2000) examined ethical themes and language in thirty-one broadcast and print stories on genetic testing by major news organizations in 1995 and 1996. Concerns about consequences, especially avoidance of harm, were prominent in most stories; ethical duties received less attention. This shows that journalists are more concerned about consequences than adherence to ethical duties.

Voakes (1997) proposes that several social factors can act simultaneously to influence any given decision by a journalist, and that a "hierarchy of influences" assigns relative value to each of the influences. The influences are individual, small group, organization, competition, occupation, extramedia, and law. There appears to be no single source of ethical guidance; in many cases different influences emerge as powerful under different circumstances. But of the seven proposed influences, five showed consistent strength in predicting the decision the journalist makes. The individual influence was the weakest of the seven, despite its prominent strength in the literature. The overall strength of the organizational and small-group influences suggests company-level strategies for media policy-makers who wish to increase journalists' ethical awareness. Overall, the study seems to challenge a traditional assumption that in ethical dilemmas journalists are autonomous moral agents, acting on the basis of their own values alone.

Williams (1995) study pointed out that consequentialist forms of reasoning were dominant among television journalists. Non-consequentialist thinking was also demonstrated and the nature of ethical reasoning was highly individualized.

Voakes (1997) study on Public perceptions of journalists' ethical motivations revealed starkly different conceptions of journalistic ethics. He found that public seemed to believe that journalists' ethics are guided primarily by their occupational norms and competitive pressures, whereas the journalists themselves cited organizational policies, the relevant law, and their own individual reasoning as the primary influences of their ethical decision making. Journalists and public respondents showed surprisingly high agreement, however, on the unacceptability of specific, ethically controversial actions.

Hypotheses

This study tests the following hypothesis

1. Higher the degree of Consequentialism greater the support for Tehelka
2. Greater the degree of Deontology lesser the support for Tehelka

Method

A questionnaire that included a five-point Likert-scale responses ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree" was administered to collect data. Journalists took on average 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire.

Sample

A sample of 137 journalists working in various media in Chennai was selected for the survey. The age of the respondents ranged from 22 to 64 years. The mean age is 36.52 years and the standard deviation is 10.47 years. In this sample, 74% are men and 26% are women journalists. Here 70% of journalists are Hindu, 11% are Christians, 5% are Muslims, and 6% belong to other religion. Nearly 10% of the journalists refused to answer this question. The experience of journalists ranged from less than one year to 38 years. Nearly 5% of journalists had one year or less of experience. The mean experience is 12.096 and standard deviation 9.464.

Of the respondents, 72% worked in a newspaper, while 16% worked for TV and 7% worked in magazine and 5% worked for a website. Of the sample, 54% of journalists are English language journalists, 42% are Tamil journalists and 4% are other language journalists.

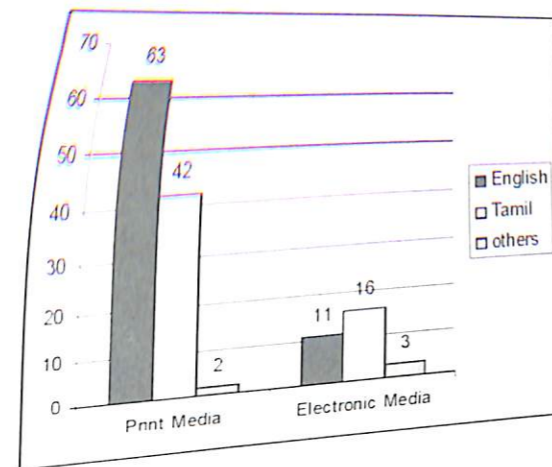


Figure 1. Type and Language of Medium

Of the respondents, 29% of journalists are graduates, 28% of journalists are Post Graduates, 21% of journalists have done a post graduate course in Journalism or Communication, while 13% of journalists have done a post graduate course and a diploma in Journalism or Communication. 7% of journalists are graduates who have done a diploma in Journalism. While 2% refused to answer, one journalist in the sample has done only his SSLC.

Of the respondents, 72% journalists believe that ethical issues should be dealt case by case in comparison to 21% of journalists who believe that there is need for written code of ethics. Nearly 25% of journalists said that their organization has a written code of ethics, 54% said that their organization did not have a written code of ethics or did not know whether their organization had a written code of ethics or not. Nearly 6% of journalists did not answer the question. Even among journalists working in an organization there was contradiction whether their organization had a written code of ethics. While some said that their organization had a written code of ethics, others said that their organization did not have written code of ethics.

Nearly 56% of journalists said that their organization has an unwritten code of ethics, 23% said that their organization did not have unwritten guidelines and 17% did not know whether their organization had an unwritten code of ethics or not. Nearly 5% of journalists did not answer the question. Nearly 52% of journalists are members of a professional organization like Press club, while 47% are not member of any professional organization.

Ethical Challenges

Nearly 30% of journalists said that they faced ethical challenges rarely or never, while 23% faced ethical challenges always or often, and 46% faced ethical challenges sometimes.

To the question how important is ethics to your professional life, 64% said very important, 31% said important, 4% said somewhat important, only 1% said that ethics is not important.

1. Attitude towards Tehelka

Nearly 65% of respondents said that they approved of what Tehelka has done while 15% of the respondents said that they did not approve of what Tehelka has done, while nearly 20% are not sure whether to approve or disapprove of Tehelka.

To the question on whether they would carry out an investigation like Tehelka did, if given an opportunity and resources, 59% of respondents said yes, 26% said no, and 15% said not sure.

A crosstab between these two variables revealed that 81% of those who approved of what Tehelka did also said they would carry out such an investigation, 8% said they will not carry out such an investigation, while 11% are not sure if they would carry out such an investigation.

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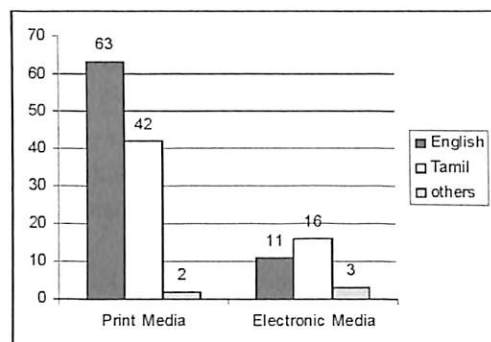


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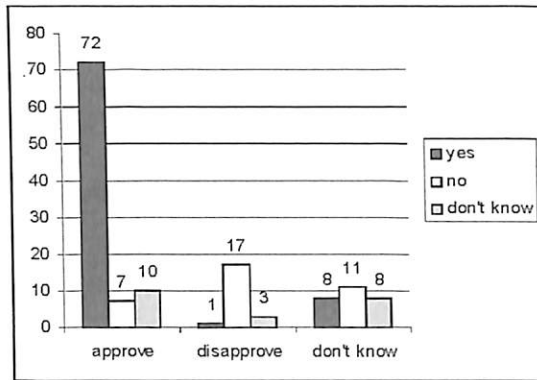


Figure 2, Approve or Disapprove of Tehelka and Carry out an investigation like Tehelka did.

The reason for those who approved of what Tehelka did, but did not want to carry out such an investigation could be the controversy surrounding Tehelka's investigation. Also one journalist had pointed out that such an investigation would need boldness that is lacking in other journalists. The reason for those who approve of what Tehelka did and are willing to carry out such an investigation could be because of the name and fame the investigation would give them also with the motive of exposing corruption at high levels - the ideal of every journalists.

Even among those who approve of what Tehelka did 78% feel that Tehelka should have made available unedited tapes for public viewing. And 55% feel that Tehelka's investigation is an attempt for publicity. Nearly 35% feel that it is shameful to use sex workers for investigation, 34% feel that Tehelka's use of sex workers for the investigation is wrong. These could be some of the reasons why these journalists who may overall approve of what Tehelka did still may have objections to individual methods, so did not want to carry out such an investigation.

Nearly 81% of those who said that they disapprove of what Tehelka did said that they would get involved in such an investigation and 14% are not sure. Only one respondent said that though he disapproved of what Tehelka did he would like to carry out such an investigation.

Among those who said that they are not sure whether to approve or disapprove of what Tehelka did, 30% said that they would carry out such an investigation. 40% said no and 30% said they are not sure. That is overall those who are not sure whether to approve or disapprove of Tehelka's investigation did not want to carry out such an investigation.

When the variable Tehelka's investigation is unethical recoded into a categorical variable, it shows that 50% of journalists thought what Tehelka did is ethical, 19% unethical and 30% neutral.

General Ethical Orientation

A principal component factor analyses with Varimax rotation was performed on the scale on general ethical orientation with a view to extract factors. It was made sure that the Eigen values are kept at 1.00. Only factor loading equal to or more than .45 are considered valid to include variables within extracted factor.

The factor analysis resulted in three factors as expected. The first factor measures the dimension of Situational Ethics. Hence it is called Situational Ethics. Table 2 gives the variables that are included in this factor.

Name of the variable	Factor Loadings
Since there are no values that can be eternal, the only real values are those that meet the needs of the moment.	.854
Nothing is static and nothing is everlasting, at any moment one must be ready to meet the change in the environment by a necessary change in one's moral views	.767
The solution to almost any human problem should be based on the situation at the time, not on some general moral rule	.716

Table 2. Factor, Situation Ethics

The second factor consists of variables measuring the dimension Deontology. Hence it is called Deontology. Table 3 gives the details of the variables.

Name of the variable	Factor Loadings
I will never break an ethical rule, even if the results are beneficial	.834
Consequences are not always predictable. So while resolving a problem its better to stick to moral rules	.767
In deciding ethical questions, one should refer to certain universal truths about right and wrong which never change	.776

Table 3. Factor, Deontology

The third factor consists of variables measuring the dimension Consequentialism. Hence it is called Consequentialism. Table 4 gives the details of the variables.

Name of the variable	Factor Loadings
There is nothing wrong in sacrificing individuals for greater good of the nation	.843
You can do a small wrong for greater good	.817
I will not hesitate to do something wrong, if it results in something good.	.693

Table 4. Factor, Consequentialism

A Pearson correlation between these factors revealed that Situational and Consequential ethics ($r=0.517$, $p=.01$) positively correlate with each other. Both situational ($r=-0.374$, $p=.01$) and consequential ethics ($r=-0.305$, $p=.01$) negatively correlate with deontology. That is journalists who are consequential in their ethical orientation also showed an inclination to situation ethics, but journalists who are deontological in their orientation did not support of consequentialism or situation ethics.

This is because some of the concepts of situational ethics and Consequentialism overlap while they are clearly distinct from deontology. That is a person who believes that ethics should be strictly followed according to rules will not usually think of giving concession based on the situation or consequence for the action. Deontology does not allow for breaking or bending of rules based upon the situation. So journalists taking deontological ethical position will not give concession to actions based on the Situation or consequence of the action.

Journalists' Perception of Tehelka

Various factor analyses are performed on the scale on Journalists' perception of Tehelka with a view to extract factors. The variables that measured a dimension are keyed in to extract a single factor measuring the dimension. It was made sure that the Eigen values are kept at 1.00. Only factor loading equal to or more than .45 are considered valid to include variables within extracted factor.

The first factor measures the dimension of overall perception of Tehelka's investigation method. Hence it is called General Perception of Tehelka. Table 5 gives the variables that are included in this factor.

Name of the variable	Factor Loadings
Our country needs more of Tehelka kind of investigation	.907
Thelka's attempt to fight against the system is courageous	.850
Extraordinary circumstances such as these need extraordinary methods	.824
Thelka's investigation is credible	.782

Table 5. Factor, General Perception of Tehelka (Negative scoring was done while entering the data to make sure that a greater score meant positive attitude towards Tehelka)

The second factor consists of variables measuring the dimension use of hidden camera by Tehelka. Hence it is called Use of Hidden Camera. Table 6 gives the details of the variables.

Name of the variable	Factor Loadings
Tehelka should not have used hidden cameras	.898
Use of hidden cameras is invasion of privacy	.896

Table 6. Factor, Use of Hidden camera

The third factor consists of variables measuring the dimension use of sex workers for Tehelka's investigation. Hence it is called Use of Sex Workers. Table 7 gives the details of the variables.

Name of the variable	Factor Loadings
Using commercial sex workers for the investigation is wrong	.932
It's a shame to use commercial sex workers for journalism	.903
Use of Commercial sex workers was necessary to trap the corrupt people	.872

Table 7. Factor, Use of Sex Workers

The fourth factor consists of variables measuring the dimension motive for Tehelka's investigation. Hence it is called Motive. Table 8 gives the details of the variables.

Name of the variable	Factor Loadings
Tehelka's investigation is an attempt to target specific individuals like the then defence minister	.932
Tehelka's motive in conducting this investigation is questionable	.872

Table 8. Factor, Motive

The factor deontology negatively correlated with General ethical perception of Tehelka ($r=-0.268$, $p=.01$), Use of hidden cameras ($r=-0.318$, $p=.01$), Use of sex workers ($r=-0.354$, $p=.01$), Motive for the investigation ($r=-0.279$, $p=.01$).

The study shows that those who are deontological in their ethical orientation scored low on their general perception of Tehelka, use of hidden camera, use of sex workers and motive. It reveals that these journalists did not approve of Tehelka on the whole, both the methods used and the motive. Deontologists make ethical decisions based upon the ethical rules that they feel should never be broken. They feel that Tehelka has broken the ethical rules. Journalists who are deontological in their ethical orientation have a low perception of Tehelka. Overall they feel what Tehelka done is not ethical. They object to both the methods and motive of Tehelka. Deontologists believe in following moral rules. Tehelka has clearly broken the moral rules by using deception, using hidden camera and sex workers. Deontologists believe that ends do not justify the mean. The methods and motives are very important for deontologist. As deontologists it is natural for these journalists to be unfavorable of Tehelka. Deontology does not approve of foul means to achieve beneficial ends (Day, 1999).

Factors positively correlating with Consequentialism are General ethical perception of Tehelka ($r=0.406$, $p=.01$), Use of hidden cameras ($r=0.291$, $p=.01$), Use of sex workers ($r=0.423$, $p=.01$) and Motive for the investigation ($r=0.307$, $p=.01$)

Consequentialists take ethical decisions based upon the consequence of their actions. They weigh the consequences of the actions and take the action that results in best consequences. They do not mind breaking rules as long as the results are beneficial. They believe that the ends justify the means. This study shows that consequential journalists support Tehelka. These journalists believe that though Tehelka has broken clear ethical rules it has done it for the purpose of greater good. Consequentialists have a positive opinion on Tehelka. They feel that Tehelka's use of hidden camera and sex workers is justifiable as it is done with the greater purpose of revealing corruption in defence. As Craign (2000) has pointed out in his study journalists are more concerned about consequences than adherence to ethical duties.

The factor situation ethics positively correlated with General ethical perception of Tehelka ($r=0.349$, $p=.01$) Use of hidden cameras ($r=0.192$, $p=.05$) Use of sex workers ($r=0.243$, $p=.05$)

Situational journalists also have a positive opinion on Tehelka. They approve of the methods used by Tehelka. They believe that decisions should be based upon the situation. So maybe they think that given the circumstances what Tehelka done is justifiable. As situational journalists believe that each situation is unique and what is right or wrong would depend upon the situation rather than general ethical rules. These journalists also approve of Tehelka's use of hidden camera and sex workers. They do not object to the use of controversial methods because they believe that given the circumstances Tehelka's use of these methods are justifiable.

The variable "Tehelka's investigation is unethical" was converted into a categorical variable Tehelka Ethics. Journalists who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement are grouped as Investigation Unethical (n=26), those who neither agreed or disagreed as neutral (n=41), those who strongly disagreed or disagreed as Ethical (n=68)

A post hoc tukey test was done with the variable Tehelka Ethics and other factors

1. Ethical Orientation factors

- a) *Deontology* $F(2,127)=3.274$, $p=.041$. A post hoc Tukey test was performed to see if any group was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=3.889$) had a significantly greater mean on the factor deontology than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical ($M=3.338$).

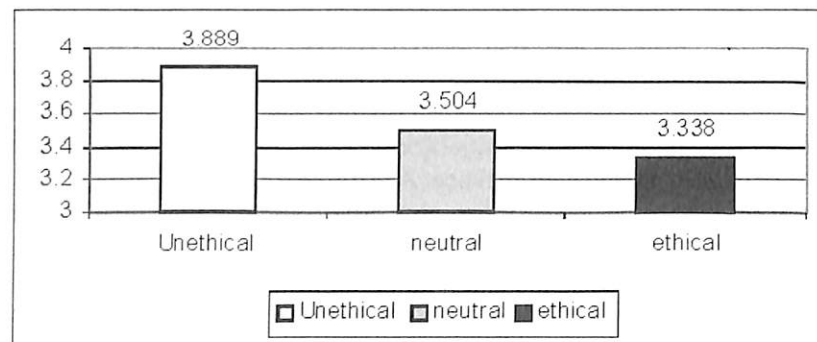


Figure 3, Tehelka Ethics and Deontology

- b) *Situation ethics* $F(2,131)=4.019$, $p=.02$. A post hoc Tukey test was performed to see if any group was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical ($M=3.657$) had a significantly greater mean on the factor situation ethics than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=3.093$).

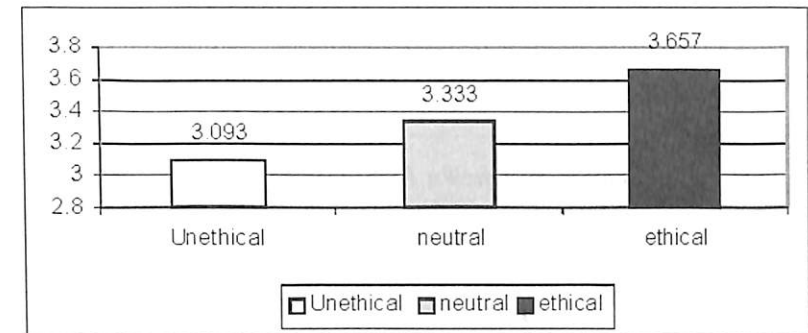


Figure 4, Tehelka Ethics and Situation Ethics

Journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical are deontological in their ethical orientation. Journalists with deontological ethical orientation feel that Tehelka's investigation is unethical. Deontologists believe in adhering to rules strictly and breaking rules based upon the consequence of the action is not acceptable to them. These journalists believe that Tehelka's investigation is not credible as it has used objectionable methods. They also feel that our country does not need more investigation like Tehelka did. These journalists also feel that Tehelka investigation is not courageous as it has clearly broken ethical rules.

Conversely, journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical had a greater score on factor Situation Ethics. This shows that journalists who are Situational in their ethical orientation feel what Tehelka has done is ethical. Based upon the circumstance surrounding the action situationist decide what is right or wrong. To them though the means may be objectionable, given the circumstances they feel the actions of Tehelka

are ethical. They feel given the extraordinary circumstances of exposing corruption in defence it is acceptable for Tehelka to use extraordinary methods. They also feel that our country needs more of Tehelka kind of investigation. Situation journalists who feel Tehelka's investigation is ethical also feel it is credible. These journalists believe that Tehelka's investigation is courageous. Situation journalists feel that given the extraordinary circumstance what Tehelka did is credible and our country needs more of these kinds of investigations. As Cummins (1999) points out that the people's right to know and press rights to gather and publish information remains dominant justifications for controversial media activities.

2. Perception of Tehelka

- a) *General Perception of Tehelka* $F(2,128)=28.235, p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was performed to see if any group is significantly different from the other. The test revealed that journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical ($M=4.280$) had a significantly greater mean on the factor General Perception of Tehelka than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=2.967$) and those who are neutral about Tehelka (3.555). Also journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is neutral (3.555) had a significantly greater mean on the factor General Perception of Tehelka than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=2.967$).

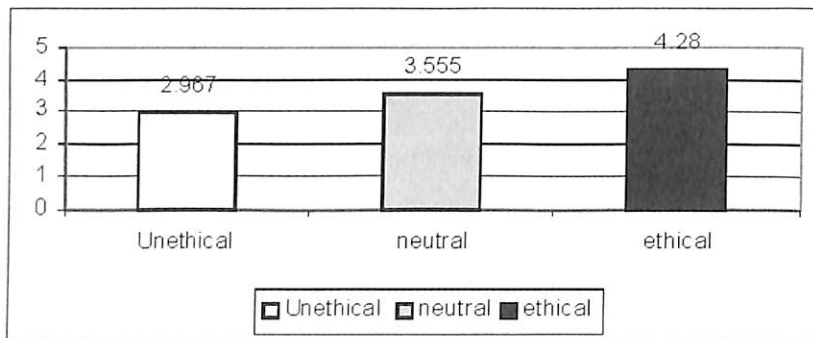


Figure 5, Tehelka Ethics and General Perception of Tehelka

- b) *Use of Hidden camera* $F(2,130)=16.889, p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was performed to see if any group was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical ($M=3.888$) had a significantly greater mean on the factor Use of Hidden Camera than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=2.480$) and those who are neutral about Tehelka (3.256). Also journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is neutral (3.256) had a significantly greater mean on the factor Use of Hidden Camera than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=2.480$).

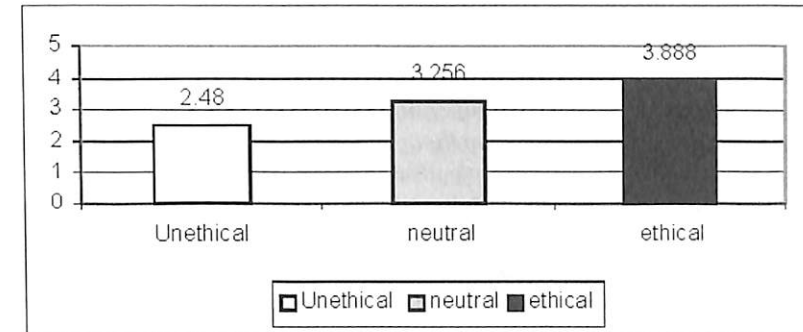


Figure 6, Tehelka Ethics and Hidden camera

- c) *Use of Sex workers* $F(2,127)=12.121, p=.000$. A post hoc Tukey test was performed to see if any group was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical ($M=3.219$) had a significantly greater mean on the factor use of sex workers than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=1.920$). Also journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is neutral (2.748) had a significantly greater mean on the factor use of sex workers than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=1.920$).

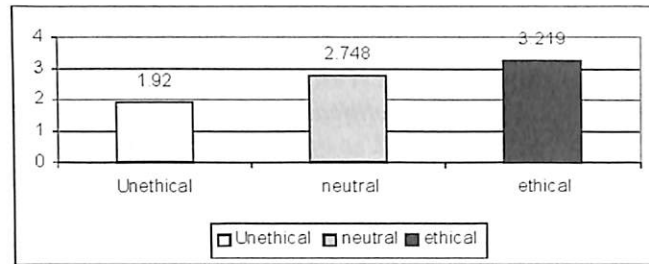


Figure 7, Tehelka Ethics and use of Sex workers

- d) *Motive* $F(2,129)=23.249, p=.000$. *Apost hoc Tukey test was performed to see if any group was significantly different from the other. The test revealed that journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical ($M=3.608$) had a significantly greater mean on the factor motive than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=2.288$) and those who are neutral about Tehelka (2.841). Also journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is neutral (2.841) had a significantly greater mean on the factor use of sex workers than those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical ($M=2.288$).*

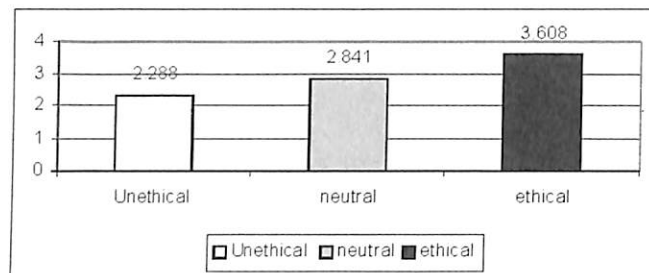


Figure 8, Tehelka Ethics and Motive

Journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical feel that our country needs more of Tehelka kind of investigation. They feel that Tehelka's investigation is credible and courageous. Journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical also feel that Tehelka's use of hidden camera is justifiable. These journalists also feel that Tehelka had to use sex workers to expose corruption. They feel that Tehelka's use of sex workers is not wrong. They feel that given the circumstance it was necessary for Tehelka to use sex workers. These journalists also feel that Tehelka did not have any ulterior motive. It did not conduct the investigation as was alleged with the motive of targeting then Defence Minister, George Fernandes. These journalists also feel that the motive for Tehelka's investigation is not questionable.

Those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical feel that Tehelka's investigation is not credible and not courageous. They also feel that our country does not need investigations like Tehelka did. Those who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical also objected to the use of hidden camera, they feel that Tehelka's use of hidden camera is invasion of privacy. They feel that Tehelka's use of sex workers is wrong and it is shameful of journalists to use sex workers. They also feel it is unnecessary to use sex workers for the investigation. These journalists also feel that Tehelka's motive is questionable.

Conclusion

This study was done to find out the following:

1. What is the Journalists perception of Tehelka?

Nearly 65% of journalists approved of what Tehelka has done while 15% disapproved of what Tehelka has done, while nearly 20% are not sure whether to approve or disapprove of Tehelka's sting operation.

This study shows that 50% of journalists thought what Tehelka did is ethical, 19% unethical and 30% neutral.

Journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is ethical also had a favorable attitude towards Tehelka overall. They also feel that Tehelka use of hidden camera and sex workers is justifiable. They believed that Tehelka's motive is not questionable.

Journalists who thought Tehelka's investigation is unethical had a negative attitude towards Tehelka. They also objected to the use of hidden cameras and sex workers. They questioned the motive of Tehelka in conducting such an investigation.

2. *Given an opportunity will they carry out an investigation like Tehelka did?*

To the question on whether they would carry out an investigation like Tehelka did, if given an opportunity and resources, 59% of respondents said yes, 26% said no, and 15% said not sure.

3. *What is the ethical orientation of journalists who supported Tehelka?*

Journalists with Consequential and Situational ethical orientation support Tehelka, while journalists with Deontological ethical orientation disapprove of what Tehelka has done.

The study tested the following hypotheses:

1. Higher the degree of Consequentialism greater the support for Tehelka
2. Greater the degree of Deontology lesser the support for Tehelka

The study shows that both the hypotheses are supported. Consequentialism positively correlates with positive attitude towards Tehelka, while Deontology negatively correlates with positive attitude towards. So higher the degree of Consequentialism greater the support for Tehelka and conversely greater the degree of deontology lesser the support for Tehelka.

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ENDNOTES

¹Thelka is a web portal that came into public notice because of its exposure of cricket match fixing Scandal. Tehelka came into limelight with its Operation Westend in March, 2001.

Thelka conducted an investigation on arms deals in defence. Tehelka's journalists posed as arms dealers and secretly videotaped Army officials taking bribes. It exposed corruption in defence sector. After nearly seven months of investigation Tehelka released its videotape in a press conference. The videotape was released in many news channels and the transcript of the tape was available in the Tehelka.com's website. Then ruling party leaders Bangaru Laxman and Jaya Jaitely were shown taking money on the video. There were allegations against the then Defence Minister, George Fernandes. Immediately after the tapes were released George Fernandes and Bangaru Laxman resigned. Later George Fernandes again became the Defence Minister. Tehelka used hidden cameras, deception, bribery and commercial sex workers to bring about this expose.

COMMUNICATION, RELIGIOUS AND ATTITUDINAL FACTORS
IN THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY PLANNING METHODS AMONG
MARRIED CATHOLIC COUPLES*
IN LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA

*Frances Kimberly Rosario Baraoidan & Julienne Valente Bariuan**

Abstract

The study determined the relationship of communication, religious and attitudinal factors with the practice of family planning methods among married Catholic couples aged 20 to 35 in Los Baños, Laguna. A one-shot survey was used to determine the respondents' practice of family planning methods as well as the communication, religious, and attitudinal factors which may affect this.

It was found that the respondents were mostly information seekers with regard to family planning information. Most respondents also exhibit an average to high level of knowledge about Catholic teachings on family planning methods. However, most respondents were mostly neutral toward the accordance of family planning methods to Catholic teachings. A significant number even believed that family planning methods are in accordance to Catholic teachings. Many believed that the methods do not lead to extra- and pre-marital sex. Moreover, it was found that most of the respondents exhibit a positive attitude towards the use of family planning methods although a significant number were still undecided about the issue.

Most of the respondents have tried, are currently using and plan to use family planning methods. Withdrawal is favored among the male respondents while the rhythm method and pills is favored among the females. Less than one-fourth of the respondents are not using family planning methods at all.

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Using the Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel Statistics, only two relationships were found to be significant: 1) the respondents' communication behavior and the type of family planning method they are currently using; and 2) the respondents' belief on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings and their frequency of practice.

1. Introduction

The religious controversy over acceptable means of birth control has always been attached to the issue of addressing the population problem. This is because the Church's stand on family planning and contraception has been seen to influence people's approval and adoption of the family planning methods endorsed by governments. In a study made by Diokno (1971), results showed that among those who disapproved of family planning methods, 46.7% are Catholics. Furthermore, it was found that one of the reasons for disapproval was fear of God.

Other factors were also found to influence approval and adoption of family planning methods. The same study by Diokno (1971) showed that mass media exposure and personal communication were consistently but not significantly related to knowledge, approval, and adoption of family planning methods. A later study by the same author (1978) identified some factors that are related to the continuance of family planning methods among husbands. It was found that education, religion, level of living, family planning experience, medical effects, and media availability and use are the factors that significantly affect continuance.

This study looked into the relationship between communication, religious and attitudinal factors, and the practice of family planning methods among married Catholic couples in Los Baños, Laguna. The three factors were considered because previous studies have shown that these may affect the practice of family planning methods.

2. Review of the Catholic Church's View on Family Planning Methods

Traditionally, Filipinos believe that the more children there are the more blessings a family was supposed to have. The Filipino rural folk

consider a large family as an asset; children are free labor, insurance and "grasiya ng Diyos" (grace of God). Thus, control of pregnancy is considered to be a sin (Proceedings of the Family Planning Workshop, 1965).

Family planning for the Catholic Church does not only focus on the spacing and limiting of the number of children. It includes all aspects of family life. Msgr. James Contreras, a priest based in St. Therese of the Child Jesus Parish in Los Baños, explains that the Church and the government have very contrasting views of what family planning is all about. The government equates family planning with contraception, and this is what most people have come to know. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, views the limitation of children as only one aspect of family planning.

Msgr. Contreras emphasizes that family planning includes an important component – responsible parenthood. Responsible parenthood is defined using several viewpoints. In terms of the biological aspect, responsible parenthood is knowing and respecting each other's bodily functions. Thus, responsible parenthood is the authority of reason and will over instinct or passion. In the physical, economic, psychological and social aspects, responsible parenthood is the decision to raise a family or to avoid a new birth for valid reasons. Most importantly, responsible parenthood is the recognition of both husband and wife of their duties toward God, toward themselves, toward the family, and toward society (Humanae Vitae, 1968).

It is highly emphasized that the fundamental purpose of marriage and the conjugal act is the begetting and educating of children (Humanae Vitae, 1968). The conjugal act has two meanings: unitive and procreative. The unitive meaning is the expression of love between husband and wife through the mutual giving of one's whole self to each other. The procreative meaning, on the other hand, is the expression of mutual love, in the desire of creating a new life (Latorre, 1994).

2.1 The Church's Argument on Contraception

For the Catholic Church, contraception is any action done to prevent the union of egg and sperm. Withdrawal and all artificial and surgical methods are considered contraceptives (Latorre, 1994).

The Catholic Church says that it is immoral to practice contraception because it goes against the natural moral law with regard to the use of sex. Contraception, as viewed by the Catholic Church, violates the natural moral law because it violates the fundamental purpose of marriage and the conjugal act. It goes against the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act. It frustrates the unitive meaning because one "lies" by saying that "I am giving myself completely to you," while at the same time, the person is keeping back his or her paternity or maternity. It frustrates the procreative meaning by directly preventing conception (Latorre, 1994).

Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter, *Humanae Vitae*, clearly states the acceptable and unacceptable means of birth control for the Catholic Church. Directly willed and procured abortion and sterilization were pointed as illicit ways of regulating birth. In addition, Pope Paul VI stated that contraception would make way for conjugal infidelity and general lowering of morality. Men may eventually lose respect for women because they may come to a point of considering women as just a means of selfish enjoyment and no longer their respected and beloved companion (Humanae Vitae, 1968).

2.2 The Only Acceptable Family Planning Method

It should be made clear that the Catholic Church is not against limitation of family size. The Church advocates the use of the natural family planning method. This is the only method acceptable to the Catholic Church because it does not violate the natural moral law. It does not interfere with the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act because it does not directly prevent the union of the egg and the sperm. Life is not destroyed and natural processes are not interrupted because fertilization does not take place because nature prevents it by not allowing pregnancy at certain times (Heymeyer as cited by Hodann, 1936).

3. Objectives

This study sought to determine the relationship of communication, religious and attitudinal factors with the practice of family planning methods among married Catholic couples in Los Baños.

Specifically, it aimed to determine:

1. the type of communication behavior they exhibit in acquiring information about family planning;
2. their communication sources on family planning;
3. their level of knowledge about Catholic teachings on family planning methods;
4. their beliefs on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings;
5. their attitude toward family planning methods; and
6. the type of family planning methods they use, their frequency of practice, and their extent of practice.

4. Methodology

A list of 432 Catholic couples aged 20 to 35, who were married in the top three parishes in Los Baños (Parish of Immaculate Conception, San Antonio de Padua Catholic Church, and St. Therese of the Child Jesus Parish) during the last three years (2000-2002), was constructed with the help of the Office of the Local Civil Registrar of Los Baños. The 20 to 35 age range was considered because according to *Family Planning* (no date), a couple may have a child if the woman falls into that age range. A proportionate stratified sampling of 10% was employed thus coming up with 44 randomly sampled couple-respondents (88 individual respondents all in all).

A one-shot survey was used to determine the respondents' practice of family planning methods as well as the communication, religious, and attitudinal factors which may affect this. Specifically, the questions were designed to elicit the respondents' communication behavior with regards to family planning information; communication sources for family planning information; level of knowledge about Catholic teachings on family planning methods; beliefs on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings; attitude toward family planning methods; type of family planning methods tried, currently using and are planning to use; extent of their practice; and the frequency of practice. Two sets of survey questionnaires were prepared – one for the husband and one for the wife. The couple-respondents were treated as individuals so that their individual communication behavior and sources, level of knowledge, beliefs and

attitudes can be determined. Moreover, the questions on the type of family planning methods being used are different for males and females.

House visits were done for data collection. Before asking the couples to answer the questionnaire, the study's objectives were explained first. After which the questionnaires were handed out and waited for until the respondents were through answering. If a couple-respondent was unavailable for interview, they were visited again the next day. If still unavailable, they were replaced by randomly selecting another couple from the list. The results of the study were analyzed using descriptive analysis and Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel Statistics. To determine the communication behavior of the respondents, the researcher developed a scoring system (see Appendix).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Respondents Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The household size of the couple-respondents mostly ranged from three to five, meaning that most of the couples have one to three children (40.9%, 20.5% and 27.3% respectively). Most of them earned less than P10,000 monthly (61.4%) and have been married for a period ranging from more than 24 months to 3 years (65.9%). Individually, most of the respondents finished up to high school (47.7%) while another 47.7% obtained a college degree. Almost half of the total individual respondents were between 31 to 35 years old (46.6%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents socio-demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Household size (n=44)		
2	3	6.8
3	18	40.9
4	9	20.5
5	12	27.3
6	1	2.3
7	0	0
8	1	2.3
Total	44	100
Combined monthly family income (n=44)		
Less than 10,000	27	61.4
10,000 – 15,000	6	13.6
16,000 – 20,000	6	13.6
21,000 – 25,000	5	11.4
26,000 – 30,000	0	0
More than 30,000	0	0
Total	44	100
Number of months/years married (n=44)		
< 12 mths – 1 yr	9	20.5
> 12 mths – 2 yrs	6	13.6
> 24 mths – 3 yrs	29	65.9
Total	44	100
Highest educational attainment (n=88)		
Elementary	2	2.3
High school	42	47.7
Vocational	1	1.1
College	42	47.7
Master of science	1	1.1
Total	88	100
Age (n=88)		
20 – 25	15	17
26 – 30	32	36.4
31 – 35	41	46.6
Total	88	100

5.2 Communication Factors

The respondents' communication behavior with regard to family planning information and their communication sources, categorized into interpersonal, printed media and electronic media, were determined to ascertain the communication factors which may affect their practice of family planning methods.

5.2.1 Communication Behavior with regards to Family Planning Information

All (100%) the respondents indicated that they know what family planning is. However, when asked if their knowledge was enough, only 69.3% believed that they did. The rest (30.7%) indicated that they did not have enough knowledge about family planning (Table 2).

Most of the respondents shared their knowledge about family planning with other people *sometimes* (58%). This figure is followed by those who indicated positively that they did share their knowledge with other people (29.5%). Only 11 individuals (12.5%) did not share their knowledge with other people (Table 2).

Many respondents (40.9%) claimed that they are approached by other people for family planning information *sometimes*. However, this percentage is very closely followed by those respondents who indicated that they were not approached for family planning information at all (39.8%). Only 19.3% positively stated that they were approached for family planning information (Table 2).

Almost half (45.5%) of the respondents stated that they *sometimes* receive information about family planning more often than seek it. This percentage is followed by those who claimed that they more often receive information rather than seek it (33%). Only a small number of respondents (21.6%) said that they seek information about family planning more often than receive it (Table 2).

However, despite this, more than half of the respondents (69.3%) did not consider seeking information about family planning as a burden. About an equal number of respondents did, however, consider seeking for family planning information as a burden or somewhat of a burden (15.9% and 14.8% respectively) (Table 2).

This coincides with the fact 50% of the respondents voluntarily sought information about family planning. Nineteen individuals (21.6%) voluntarily sought family planning information *sometimes* while 25 (28.4%) did not voluntarily seek information at all (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents' responses to questions which determined their communication behavior (n=88)

Questions	Responses					
	Yes		Sometimes		No	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Do you know what family planning is?	88	100	NA	NA	0	0
2. Do you think you have enough knowledge about family planning?	61	69.3	NA	NA	27	30.7
3. Do you share your knowledge about family planning to other people?	26	29.5	51	58	11	12.5
4. Do other people approach you for family planning information?	17	19.3	36	40.9	35	39.8
5. Do you more often receive rather than seek family planning information?	29	33	40	45.5	19	21.6
6. Do you consider seeking for family planning information a burden?	14	15.9	13	14.8	61	69.3
7. Do you voluntarily seek family planning information?	44	50	19	21.6	25	28.4

Using the scoring system that the researcher developed (see Appendix), it was found that some respondents exhibited more than one communication behavior. Most of them were information-seekers (61.4%). Fifty-two percent (52.3%) were information givers and 40.9% were information receivers (Table 3).

Table 3. Communication behavior of respondents with regard to family planning information*

Communication behavior	Freq	%
Information-seeker	54	61.4
Information-giver	46	52.3
Information-receiver	36	40.9

*Multiple responses. Percentages are based on the total sample (n=88)

5.2.2 Communication Sources about Family Planning

Among the interpersonal media, other health center workers (64.8%), aside from doctors, nurses and midwives, are the respondents' top source of information about family planning. Nurses (11.4%) were the least sources of information. More than half got information from friends (54.5%) and doctors (52.3%). Forty-two percent (42%) said that they obtained information from their parents while 36.4% got information from other relatives. Twenty-four (27.3%) acquired information from their spouses, 20 (22.7%) from their neighbors, 19 (21.6%) from their siblings, and 17 (19.3%) from midwives. Only four respondents (4.5%) named other people as sources of family planning information: *kumpares/kumares* (their children's godfather/godmother), the Avon dealer, and a seminar speaker (Table 4).

Among the printed media, the newspaper was the most widely used source of information about family planning (50%) while the least used source were comics (9.1%). An equal percentage of the respondents (40.9%) get information from books and brochures. Also, an equal percentage of respondents (27.3%) get information from magazines and leaflets. Posters (26.1%) were also used as sources of family planning information (Table 4).

Among the electronic media, the television was the most widely used source of family planning information (78.4%) while the least used source was the internet (20.5%). Thirty-five (39.8%) used the radio as a source of information (Table 4).

Table 4. Communication sources of respondents about family planning*

Communication source	Freq	%
Interpersonal media		
Other health center workers	57	64.8
Friend/s	48	54.5
Doctor	46	52.3
Parent/s	37	42
Relative/s	32	36.4
Spouse	24	27.3
Neighbor/s	20	22.7
Sibling/s	19	21.6
Midwife	17	19.3
Nurse	10	11.4
Others	4	4.5
Printed media		
Newspaper	44	50
Books	36	40.9
Brochure	36	40.9
Magazine	24	27.3
Leaflet	24	27.3
Poster	23	26.1
Comics	8	9.1
Electronic media		
Television	69	78.4
Radio	35	39.8
Internet	18	20.5

*Multiple responses. Percentages are based on the total sample (n=88)

5.3 Religious Factors

The respondents' level of knowledge about Catholic teachings on family planning methods and their belief on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings were determined to ascertain the religious factors which may affect their practice of family planning methods.

5.3.1 Level of Knowledge about Catholic Teachings on Family Planning Methods

When asked if God doesn't approve of any interference to conception, a large percentage of the respondents (40.9%) got the correct answer (yes). However, this is very closely followed by the number of respondents who answered incorrectly (36.4%). A significant number of respondents (22.7%) were unsure (Table 5).

More than half of the respondents (55.7%) got the correct answer (yes) when asked if having a child was the primary purpose of marriage and the conjugal act. However, again, quite a significant number of respondents (38.6%) gave the incorrect answer. Only five (5.7%) indicated their uncertainty (Table 5).

Again, more than half of the respondents (56.8%) got the correct answer (yes) when asked if the Catholic Church allowed the limitation of family size if the need arises. An equal percentage of respondents (21.6%) indicated the wrong answer and uncertainty (Table 5).

Majority of the respondents (64.8%) got the correct answer (yes) when asked if the natural methods are the only acceptable methods to the Catholic Church in limiting the number of children. Almost the same number of respondents indicated the wrong answer and expressed uncertainty (17% and 18.2% respectively) (Table 5).

Again, majority of the respondents (71.6%) got the correct answer (yes) when asked if the Catholic Church is highly against sterilization and abortion. Fourteen (15.9%) gave the wrong answer and 11 (12.5%) were not sure (Table 5).

Table 5. Respondents' responses to questions which determined their level of knowledge about Catholic teachings on family planning methods (n=88)

Questions	Responses					
	Yes		Not sure		No	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Is it stated in the Bible that God doesn't approve of any interference to conception?	36	40.9	20	22.7	32	36.4
2. Is having a child the primary purpose of marriage and the conjugal act?	49	55.7	5	5.7	34	38.6
3. Does the Catholic Church allow limitation of family size if the need arises?	50	56.8	19	21.6	19	21.6
4. Are the natural methods the only acceptable methods to the Catholic Church in limiting the number of children?	57	64.8	16	18.2	15	17
5. Is the Catholic Church highly against sterilization and abortion?	63	71.6	11	12.5	14	15.9

On the whole, many of the respondents (42.1%) had an average level of knowledge about Catholic teachings on family planning methods. This is closely followed by those who have a high level of knowledge (38.6%). Only 17 respondents have a low level of knowledge (19.3%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Level of knowledge of respondents about Catholic teachings on family planning methods (n=88)

Knowledge level	Freq	%
High (4-5 correct answers)	34	38.6
Average (2-3)	37	42.1
Low (0-1)	17	19.3
Total	88	100

5.3.2 Belief on Family Planning Methods in relation to Catholic Teachings

Many respondents (39.8%) were unsure whether family planning methods violate the natural law. A significant number (34.1%) said that this statement was false. Only twenty-three (26.1%) respondents believed the statement to be true (Table 7).

More than half of the respondents (54.5%) did not believe that family planning methods are against the primary purpose of marriage and the conjugal act, which is to have children. Twenty-six respondents (29.5%) indicated their uncertainty while only 14 (15.9%) said that this was true (Table 7).

Again, a large percentage of the respondents (62.5%) did not believe that family planning methods give way to pre- and extra-marital sex. However, twenty respondents (22.7%) said that it did give way to these. Thirteen (14.8%) expressed their uncertainty (Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents' responses to statements which determined their belief on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings (n=88)

Belief Statement	Responses					
	True		Not sure		False	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Family planning methods violate the so-called natural law.	23	26.1	35	39.8	30	34.1
2. Family planning methods are against the primary purpose of marriage and the conjugal act – having a child.	14	15.9	26	29.5	48	54.5
3. Family planning methods give way to pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex.	20	22.7	13	14.8	55	62.5

On the whole, it was found that more than half of the respondents (58%) are mostly neutral toward the accordance of family planning methods with Catholic teachings. This is followed by those who believe that family planning methods are in accordance with Catholic teachings (34.1%). Only 7 respondents (8%) believed that family planning methods are not in accordance with Catholic teachings (Table 8).

Table 8. Belief of respondents on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings (n=88)

Knowledge level	Freq	%
Positive (8-9)	30	34.1
Neutral (5-7)	51	58
Negative (3-4)	7	8
Total	88	100

5.4 Attitude toward Family Planning Methods

Most respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that family planning methods are beneficial to the health of both husband and wife (45.5% and 39.8% respectively). Most of those who didn't express agreement expressed uncertainty (9.1%). Only 5 respondents out of the 88 expressed disagreement (Table 9).

Again, most respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that family planning methods may be the solution to the population problem (51.1% and 37.5% respectively). Most of those who didn't express agreement expressed disagreement however (7.9%). Two respondents (2.3%) expressed strong disagreement. Only one respondent expressed uncertainty (Table 9).

With regard to family planning methods having no side effects, most responses move towards uncertainty (44.3%) and disagreement (27.3%). Fourteen (15.9%), however, expressed agreement and 3 (3.4%) expressed strong agreement. Eight respondents (9.1%) expressed strong disagreement (Table 9).

Most (55.7%) respondents agreed that family planning methods are simple and easy to use. Another 14.8% strongly agreed. However, a significant number of respondents (19.3%) expressed uncertainty. Eight (9.1%) disagreed and only 1 strongly disagreed (Table 9).

Again, most (39.8%) respondents agreed that family planning methods are low in cost. Another 25% strongly agreed. However, a large number of respondents (30.7%) expressed uncertainty. Only four respondents expressed disagreement (Table 9).

Table 9. Respondents' responses to statements which determined their attitude toward family planning methods (n=88)

Attitude Statement	Responses									
	SA		A		NS		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Family planning methods are beneficial to the health of both husband and wife.	40	45.5	35	39.8	8	9.1	4	4.5	1	1.1
2. Family planning methods may be one solution to the population problem.	45	51.1	33	37.5	1	1.1	7	7.9	2	2.3
3. Family planning methods have no side effects.	3	3.4	14	15.9	39	44.3	24	27.3	8	9.1
4. Family planning methods are simple and easy to use.	13	14.8	49	55.7	17	19.3	8	9.1	1	1.1
5. Family planning methods are low in cost.	22	25	35	39.8	27	30.7	3	3.4	1	1.1

On the whole, most respondents agreed to the use of family planning methods (42%). This is followed by the 31.8% who strongly agreed. A significant number of respondents, however, were undecided about the issue (25%). Only one respondent had a negative attitude toward family planning methods. None strongly disagreed to the use of family planning methods (Table 10).

Table 10. Attitude of respondents toward family planning methods (n=88)

Knowledge level	Freq	%
Strongly agree (21-25)	28	31.8
Agree (17-20)	37	42
Not sure (13-16)	22	25
Disagree (9-12)	1	1.1
Strongly disagree (5-8)	0	0
Total	88	100

5.5 Practice of Family Planning Methods

The type of family planning methods the respondents have used, are currently using, and are planning to use; the extent of their use; and their frequency of practice were determined to ascertain their practice of family planning methods. The discussion on the type of family planning methods tried, being used and are planning to use is divided by sex since the family planning methods used by males are different from those used by females.

5.5.1 Family Planning Methods that have been Tried, are Currently being Used and are Planned to be Used

Male respondents. Of the 44 male respondents, 35 have tried at least one family planning method. Among the 35, 34 were currently using one or more methods. Of the 34, 31 plan to use one or more methods in the future (Table 11).

Among the 35 who have already tried at least one family planning method, most have tried withdrawal (88.6%), 16 have tried using a condom (45.7%), while none had undergone vasectomy (Table 11).

Among the 34 who were currently using one or more family planning methods, 64.7% were using withdrawal, and 13 (38.2%) were using condoms. Again, none had undergone vasectomy (Table 11).

Of the 31 who plan to continue using family planning methods in the future, 16 intended to use withdrawal (51.6%), 14 plan to use condoms (45.2%), while two plan to undergo vasectomy (Table 11).

Table 11. Family planning methods that have been tried, are currently being used, and are planned to be used by the male respondents*

Type of method	Method	Tried		Using		Plan to use	
		Freq (n=35)	%	Freq (n=34)	%	Freq (n=31)	%
Natural	Withdrawal	31	88.6	22	64.7	16	51.6
Artificial	Condom	16	45.7	13	38.2	14	45.2
Surgical	Vasectomy	0	0	0	0	2	6.5

* Multiple responses. Percentages are based on partial samples (n=35), (n=34) and (n=31).

Female respondents. Of the 44 female respondents, 36 had tried at least one family planning method. The same 36 respondents were currently using one or more family planning methods. Of this 36, only 34 plan to use one or more family planning methods in the future (Table 12).

Among the 36 who have tried at least one or more family planning methods, more than half (58.3%) have used the rhythm or calendar method – natural method. On the other hand, 16 have tried pills (44.4%) – an artificial method (Table 12).

Among the other natural methods, 3 have tried the cervical mucus method (8.3%), 2 have tried the basal body temperature method (5.6%), and only 1 has tried the symptothermal method (2.8%). Among the other artificial methods, 4 have tried injectables (11.1%). None have tried the other artificial methods or the surgical method (Table 12).

Of the 36 who were using at least one family planning method, 15 were currently using pills (41.7%) while 13 were currently using the rhythm or calendar method (36.1%) (Table 12).

Moreover, among the other artificial methods, 2 were using injectables (5.6%), 1 was using the intra-uterine device (2.8%), while none were using the subdermal implant, diaphragm and cervical cap, and spermicide. Among the other natural methods, 2 each (5.6%) were using the cervical mucus method and the basal body temperature method. None were using the symptothermal method. Two have already undergone ligation (5.6%) (Table 12).

Among the 34 who plan to continue using family planning methods in the future, 16 intended to use pills (47.1%) while 11 (32.4%) intended to use the rhythm method. The following methods would be used by one respondent each (2.9%): cervical mucus method, basal body temperature method, symptothermal method, intra-uterine device and the bilateral tubal ligation. Two plan to use the injectables (5.9%) while none plan to use the subdermal implant, the cervical cap and the spermicide (Table 12).

Table 12. Family planning methods that have been tried, are currently being used, and are planned to be used by the female respondents*

Method	Tried		Using		Plan to use	
	Freq (n=36)	%	Freq (n=36)	%	Freq (n=34)	%
Natural						
Rhythm/calendar	21	58.3	13	36.1	11	32.4
Cervical mucus	3	8.3	2	5.6	1	2.9
Basal body temperature	2	5.6	2	5.6	1	2.9
Symptothermal	1	2.8	0	0	1	2.9
Artificial						
Pills	16	44.4	15	41.7	16	47.1
Injectable	4	11.1	2	5.6	2	5.9
Subdermal implant	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intra-uterine device	1	2.8	1	2.8	1	2.9
Diaphragm and cervical cap	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spermicide	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surgical						
Bilateral tubal ligation	0	0	2	5.6	1	2.9

* Multiple responses. Percentages are based on partial samples (n=36) and (n=34).

On the whole, it can be seen that the natural methods are the most widely used (55.7%) among all respondents. The surgical methods were the least used (2.6%) since these are more permanent in nature and are mostly planned to be used in the future (Table 13).

Table 13. Type of family planning methods currently being used by the respondents*

Type of method	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq (n=34)	%	Freq (n=36)	%	Freq (n=70)	%
Natural	22	64.7	17	47.2	39	55.7
Artificial	13	38.2	18	50	31	44.3
Surgical	0	0	2	5.6	2	2.6

* Multiple responses. Percentages are based on partial samples (n=34), (n=36) and (n=70).

5.5.2 Extent of Practice of Family Planning Methods

Number of Tried Family Planning Methods. More than half (56.8%) of the respondents have tried one method. Two methods have been tried by 21.6% of the respondents while one respondent (1.1%) each have tried 3 and 4 methods. Seventeen of all respondents had not tried any family planning method (19.3%) (Table 13).

Table 13. Number of family planning methods tried by the respondents

Number of methods tried	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq (n=44)	%	Freq (n=44)	%	Freq (n=88)	%
0	9	20.5	8	18.2	17	19.3
1	23	52.3	27	61.4	50	56.8
2	12	27.3	7	15.9	19	21.6
3	0	0	1	2.3	1	1.1
4	NA	NA	1	2.3	1	1.1
Total	44	100	44	100	88	100

Number of Family Planning Methods Currently Used. Most of the respondents were currently using just one method (77.3%). One respondent each was using 2 and 3 methods. None were using 4 methods. Eighteen of all respondents were not using any method (20.5%) (Table 14).

Table 14. Number of family planning methods currently used by the respondents

Number of methods tried	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq (n=44)	%	Freq (n=44)	%	Freq (n=88)	%
0	10	22.7	8	18.2	18	20.5
1	33	75	35	79.5	68	77.3
2	1	2.3	0	0	1	1.1
3	0	0	1	2.3	1	1.1
4	NA	NA	0	0	0	0
Total	44	100	44	100	88	100

5.5.3 Frequency of Practice of Family Planning Methods

The respondents used family planning methods quite frequently. Among the respondents who were currently using family planning methods, 20 used them always (29.4%) while only 6 almost never used them (8.8%). Eighteen used them often (26.5%), 13 used them sometimes (19.1%), and 11 seldom used them (16.2%) (Table 15).

It may also be useful to note that the female respondents used family planning methods more frequently than the male respondents as can be seen in Table 15. This is evident by looking at the distribution of the respondents throughout the choices. The female respondents' responses tend to slant towards the more regular practice of family planning methods while the male respondents' responses are relatively well-distributed without any pronounced slant.

Table 15. Frequency of practice of family planning methods currently used by the respondents in a month

Frequency of Practice	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq (n=34)	%	Freq (n=34)	%	Freq (n=68)	%
Always	6	17.6	14	41.2	20	29.4
Often	10	29.4	8	23.5	18	26.5
Sometimes	6	17.6	7	20.6	13	19.1
Seldom	7	20.6	4	11.8	11	16.2
Almost never	5	14.7	1	2.9	6	8.8
Total	34	100	34	100	68	100

5.6 Relationship among Variables

The relationship of each component of the independent variables (communication behavior, level of knowledge, belief, and attitude) to each component of the dependent variable (type of family planning method being used, number of methods tried, number of methods currently being used, and frequency of practice) was tested.

Only two relationships were found to be significant: 1) the respondents' communication behavior and the type of family planning method they are currently using; and 2) the respondents' belief on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings and their frequency of practice.

To show more clearly the significance of the two relationships, two-way tables were constructed showing the frequencies of the variables.

5.6.1 Communication Behavior & Type of Family Planning Method Currently Used

As pointed out earlier, some respondents exhibited more than one communication behavior, as indicated by the results when computed using the scoring system developed by the researcher. Because of this, combinations of the types of behavior were added to Table 16 in order to compute exact values.

Looking at Table 16, it can be noted that among the respondents:

- information-seekers & information-receivers tended to use natural methods or no method;
- information-givers tended to use natural or artificial methods;
- information-givers/receivers/seekers & information-givers/seekers tended to use artificial methods; and
- information givers/receivers & information receivers/seekers tended to use natural methods.

Table 16. Respondents' communication behavior by type of family planning method currently being used (n=88)

Communication Behavior Frequency Percent Row percent Column percent	Type of FP method currently being used				Total
	Natural	Artificial	Surgical	None	
Information-seeker	10 11.36 43.48 27.78	4 4.55 17.39 12.9	1 1.14 4.35 33.33	8 9.09 34.78 44.44	23 26.14
Information-receiver	6 6.82 37.5 16.67	2 2.27 12.5 6.45	1 1.14 6.25 33.33	7 7.95 43.75 38.89	16 18.18
Information-giver	7 7.95 46.67 19.44	8 9.09 53.33 25.81	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0	15 17.05
Information-giver/receiver/seeker	2 2.27 15.38 5.56	8 9.09 61.54 25.81	1 1.14 7.69 33.33	2 2.27 15.38 11.11	13 14.77
Information-giver/seeker	3 3.41 27.27 8.33	8 9.09 72.73 25.81	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0	11 12.50
Information-giver/receiver	6 6.82 100 16.67	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0	6 6.82
Information-receiver/seeker	2 2.27 50 5.56	1 1.14 25 3.23	0 0 0 0	1 1.14 25 5.56	4 4.55
Total	36 40.91	31 35.23	3 3.41	18 20.45	88 100

5.6.1 Belief on Family Planning Methods in Relation to Catholic Teachings & Frequency of Practice

Looking at Table 17, it can be noted that among the respondents:

- those who hold a positive belief on family planning method in relation to Catholic teachings tended to use them often/always;
- those who hold a neutral belief tended to use family planning methods often/always or almost never; and
- those who hold a negative belief tended to use family planning methods seldom or almost never.

Table 17. Respondents' belief on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings by their frequency of practice (n=88)

Belief Frequency Percent Row percent Column percent	Frequency of practice				Total
	Almost never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often/Always	
Positive	6 6.82 19.35 22.22	4 4.55 12.9 36.36	2 2.27 6.45 15.38	19 21.59 61.29 51.35	31 35.23
Neutral	18 20.45 36 66.66	4 4.55 12.9 36.36	11 12.5 22 84.61	17 19.32 34 45.95	50 56.82
Negative	3 3.41 42.86 11.11	3 3.41 42.86 27.27	0 0 0 0	1 1.14 14.29 2.7	7 7.95
Total	27 30.68	11 12.5	13 14.77	37 42.05	88 100

5.7 Summary and Conclusions

The study determined the relationship of communication, religious and attitudinal factors (independent variables) with the practice of family planning methods (dependent variable) among married Catholic couples in Los Baños, Laguna. Through a one-shot survey, the respondents' communication behavior with regard to family planning information; their communication sources on family planning; their level of knowledge about Catholic teachings on family planning methods; their beliefs on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings; their attitude toward family planning methods; and the type of family planning methods they are currently using, and their frequency and extent of practice were determined. The Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel Statistics was used to test for relationships among the variables.

Communication behavior. Results show that all respondents believe they know what family planning is. Despite this, only 69.3% indicated that they have enough knowledge on the subject. More than half of the respondents (58%) shared their knowledge about family planning and 40.9% indicated that they were even approached by other people for family planning information sometimes. However, a significant number (39.8%) also indicated that they were not approached by others for family planning information at all.

When it comes to seeking information, a big majority (69.3%) do not consider seeking information about family planning a burden. This coincides the fact 50% of the respondents indicated that they voluntarily sought family planning information. On the whole, it was found that the respondents were mostly information-seekers (61.4%). More than half were also determined to be information-givers (52.3%) and a significant number were determined to be information receivers (40.9%).

Communication sources. With regards to communication sources on family planning information, other health center workers (besides doctors, nurses and midwives) were named as the top information source (64.8%) among the interpersonal media; newspapers (50%) among the print media; and the television (78.4%) among the electronic media.

Level of knowledge. Most of the respondents (42.1%) exhibited an average level of knowledge with regards to Catholic teachings on family planning methods. This percentage is closely followed by those who exhibited a high level of knowledge (38.6%). This was quite evident since almost always, more than half of the respondents answer the knowledge questions correctly. This was not true for only one question – the one regarding God's approval of any interference to conception. Only 40.9% of the respondents answered the knowledge question correctly.

Belief. On the contrary, with regard to beliefs held about family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings, a significant number of respondents (39.8%) were unsure if family planning methods violate the natural law. Another 34.1% believes this to be false.

More than half of the respondents (54.5%) indicated that family planning methods did not go against the primary purpose of marriage and conjugal act. Similarly, a big number of the respondents (62.5%) did not believe that family planning methods give way to extra- and pre-marital sex.

On the whole, more than half of the respondents (58%) were mostly neutral toward the accordance of family planning methods with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Only 8% did not think family planning methods are in accordance with the said teachings.

Attitude. Of all the attitude statements, the respondents mostly strongly agreed or agreed except for the one referring to family planning methods having no side effects. Most respondents were unsure of this (44.3%) while some even expressed disagreement (27.3%). Significant numbers of respondents also expressed uncertainty with regards to family planning methods being simple and easy to use and their being low in cost.

On the whole, most respondents exhibit a positive attitude towards the use of family planning methods as can be seen by the percentages of the respondents who agreed (42%) and strongly agreed (31.8%) to the use of family planning methods. However, a significant percentage of respondents (25%) expressed uncertainty towards the issue.

Type of family planning method currently used. Among the male respondents, withdrawal was the most widely used family planning method (64.7%). Female respondents were more inclined towards pills (41.7%)

and the rhythm or calendar method (36.1%). On the whole, most respondents favor natural methods (55.7%) but artificial methods follow closely (44.3%).

Extent of practice. More than half (56.8%) of the respondents have tried one family planning method. A significant number (21.6%) have tried two. Only 19.3% of the respondents have not tried using any family planning method at all.

A great number of the respondents (77.3%) are currently using one method of family planning. Only 20.5% are not using any.

Frequency of use. The respondents used family planning methods quite frequently. Among the respondents who were currently using family planning methods, 20 used them always (29.4%) while 18 (26.5%) used them often.

It may also be useful to note that the female respondents used family planning methods more frequently than the male respondents. The female respondents' responses tend to slant towards the more regular practice of family planning methods while the male respondents' responses are relatively well-distributed without any pronounced slant.

Relationship of variables. Using the Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel Statistics, the relationship of each component of the independent variables (communication behavior, level of knowledge, belief, and attitude) to each component of the dependent variable (type of family planning method being used, number of methods tried, number of methods currently being used, and frequency of practice) was tested. Only two relationships were found to be significant: 1) the respondents' communication behavior and the type of family planning method they are currently using; and 2) the respondents' belief on family planning methods in relation to Catholic teachings and their frequency of practice.

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Appendix

Table A. Scoring system in determining the respondents' communication behavior

Question	Score and communication behavior					
	Yes		Sometimes		No	
3. Do you share your knowledge about family planning to other people?	2	info-giver	1	info-giver	0	info-giver
4. Do other people approach you for family planning information?	2	info-giver	1	info-giver	0	info-giver
5. Do you more often receive rather than seek family planning information?	2	info-receiver	1	info-receiver and info-seeker	0	info-seeker
6. Do you consider seeking for family planning information a burden?	2	info-receiver	1	info-receiver	0	info-receiver
7. Do you voluntarily seek family planning information?	2	info-seeker	1	info-seeker	0	info-seeker

The computation of the score is as follows (sample answers only):

Question number	Answer	Score	Communication behavior
3	Yes	2	Info-giver
4	Sometimes	1	Info-giver
5	Yes	2	Info-receiver
6	No	0	Info-receiver
7	Yes	2	Info-seeker

Info-giver: $2 + 1 = 3$

Info-receiver: $2 + 0 = 2$

Info-seeker: $0 + 2 = 2$

Communication behavior: Info-giver

BOOK NOTES

Underwood, Doug. *From Yahweh to Yahoo! The Religious Roots of the Secular Press*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002. pp.346. ISBN 0-252-02706-X.

Doug Underwood, an associate professor of communication at the University of Washington in Seattle, forwards the thesis that American journalism is influenced by Judeo-Christian religious traditions notably the 17th century religious civil war in England, the 18th century Enlightenment philosophies, the 19th century Romantic Movement on journalism, and the 20th century muckrakers and Social Gospel movement. (Part 1)

The writing profession can even be traced back to the Bible and to such religious figures as Moses, Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, and most important, Jesus himself. The invention of the printing press, however, started transforming writing as a spiritual endeavor into the money-making form it takes today. The author, former correspondent of *Seattle Times* and the *Gannett News Services*, presents the American journalist's professional value system being marked with ethical concepts derived from Christian heritage, but the practitioners themselves are not always aware of this. (Part 2)

Underwood says that unless journalists veer away from a business focus they will continue to miss the authentic religious experience in newspaper reporting. He exhorts all journalists to abide by the highest ethical principles that lie at the heart of the journalistic profession. Only then can journalism revert to its religious roots and fulfill its essential mission, he says.

The book includes an examination of why modern mass media organizations are seen as undermining religious values while operating as powerful voices for moral and ethical values in the culture. (Part 3) Underwood says that the media's seeming alienation from religion is only superficial, and that journalists hold religious convictions expressed in varied ways. But there remain difficulties in covering spiritual experiences and such coverage is more often regarded as unhelpful in understanding religious phenomena. (Part 4) The author concludes with an analysis of why the American press, viewed domestically as hostile to Christian culture, is internationally criticized as a "vital element of Western cultural imperialism" that is Christian in nature.

K. Ann Renninger and Wesley Shumar (Eds.). *Building Virtual Communities, Learning and Change in Cyberspace.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002. pp. 381. ISBN 0-521-78558-8 paperback, ISBN 0-521-78075-6 hardback.

“*Virtual communities* involve a combination of physical and virtual interaction, social imagination, and identity. They may be distinguished from *physical communities* in that virtual communities can extend the range of community, and individuals can tailor their personal communities.” (pp. 1-2)

“This book examines how learning and cognitive change are fostered by online communities. Contributors to this volume explore this question by drawing on their different theoretical backgrounds, methodologies, and personal experience with virtual communities. Each chapter explores the different meanings of the terms ‘community,’ ‘learning,’ and ‘change.’ Case studies are included for further clarification. Together, these chapters describe the building out of virtual communities in terms that are relevant to theorists, researchers, and practitioners. The chapters provide a basis for thinking about the dynamics of Internet community building. Consideration is given to the role of the self or individual as participant in a virtual community and to the design and refinement of technology as the conduit for extending and enhancing the possibilities of community building in cyberspace.” (p. i)

The chapters in this book “do not justify concluding that some fundamental shift is taking place in the role of community in the reproduction of contemporary social formations. They can be read as demonstrating that an important shift is probably necessary if ‘knowledge networking’ is to be shifted from places and mediated by automated information technology, but there is nothing here to suggest that such a shift is occurring already or is even inevitable.” (David Hakkenn’s “Afterword,” pp.365-366)

This book “set us on the path toward expanding our views and knowledge in (1) ethnographic work in ‘computer-mediated communication’ and in studies of online community; (2) in the social formations one may encounter online; and (3) perspectives on community.” (Steven Jones’ “Afterword,” p. 374)

Editor K. Ann Renninger is a developmental and educational psychologist at Swarthmore College, while co-editor Wesley Shumar is a cultural anthropologist at Drexel University.

Beaudoin, Tom. *Virtual Faith, The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998 (First paperback edition, 2000). pp.211. ISBN 0-7879-5527-2 paperback.

“Generation X” are those born from the early 1960s through the late 1970s. They share pop culture references that shape meaning in their lives – music video, virtual religious communities in cyberspace, and fashion. The author puts into doubt the prevailing belief that Xers, unlike their elders, are irreligious. He used three different theological concepts to show how to use pop culture as an indicator of GenX’s lived theology:

First, Beaudoin invokes the concept of the signs of the times, noting that the content of pop culture is a sign of GenX’s “times,” “a provocative barometer of GenX religious needs, desires, and practices.” He also invoked the concept of the sense of the faithful. GenX pop culture is one indication of what “faithful” Xers believe and how they are responding to Church teaching, preaching, and practices. He also advanced the idea that considering the sense of the unfaithful from GenX pop culture could make a real claim on religious institutions. This occurs, Beaudoin says, when, for instance, the benefits of religious cybercommunities (including frankness in faith discussions and access to online religious resources) are brought to bear on real religious communities. (Part 1)

In Part 2, the author illustrates four primary themes in GenX popular culture: (1) suspicion of institutions, (2) experience, (3) suffering, and (4) ambiguity. In Part 3, he underscores the importance of virtual culture and religious tradition for understanding GenX as a generation practicing “religiosity.” Beaudoin suggests that Xers have “this authentic but imitation faith because the culture itself is so heavily invested in mimicking reality” – in *bricolating* their own spirituality and carrying forward religious traditions. “Bricolage” means solving particular (in this case religious) problems and questions with whatever materials are at hand. This term describes the way GenX pop culture brings together diverse religious symbols and images, forever recombining and forming new spiritualities. (p. 178)

Four main claims were made throughout the book. First, a theological interpretation of popular culture reveals a spirituality characterized by irreverence on the part of Generation X. Second, the apparent irreverence is actually a *lived theology*, and “this lived theology can both teach religious institutions and learn from them.” Third, Generation X is religious, in its own characteristic “religiosity.” “Because of this religiosity, it is possible to divine a theology by, for, and about Generation X.” The fourth and final claim is that “interpreting pop culture theologically highlights the depth of GenX’s religious practice... GenX can make great strides not only toward fostering its own spirituality but also toward reinvigorating religious institutions and challenging the faith of older generations.” (p.179-180)

Tom Beaudoin earned his Master of Theological Studies from Harvard University. During the release of “Virtual Faith,” he was a PhD in Religion and Education candidate at Boston College.

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

Books

- Callahan, Christopher. *A Journalist's Guide to the Internet, The Net as a Reporting Tool (2nd Edition)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc., 2003.
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ABSTRACTS

Missionary Sisters' Perception of Communication Media in Disseminating Developmental Information in Timor; Indonesia. M. Florentina Seran, University of the Philippines at Los Baños, 1989.

Some 76 missionary Sisters of the SSpS (Missionary Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit) perceive the appropriateness and effectiveness of slides, posters, lectures, field/class demonstrations, and audiocassettes for disseminating religious, health, cultural, and ethical and moral information. Slides and lectures were perceived as 100 percent effective in educating about the Bible. In fact, these channels are commonly used for catechism in Timor.

A Textual Analysis of the English Texts on Communications by Fr. James Alberione. Jose Cipriano Enarso, University of the Philippines at Los Baños, 2000.

The study explored the possibility of constructing the meaning of 'communication' according to Fr. James Alberione, founder of the Pauline Apostolate, and based the analysis on the priest's book "The Pauline Apostolate in the Thought of the Founder." The results showed that like Kincaid's "Convergence Model," a cyclical interaction occurs between the Divine (Alberione called "The First Editor"), the Apostle (communicator), and the Soul (receiver) thereby creating a "Triadic Transformational-Convergence Model of Communication." The Apostle, being the source of the Content transforms into being the Content, and the Means he used are transformed into the attributes of the First Editor. The communication then gains reward for the Soul, merit for the Apostle, and glory to the First Editor.

Content Analysis of Feedback Letters of Radio Veritas Asia-Kachin Service. Peter Hka Awng Tu, University of the Philippines at Los Baños, 2002.

Radio Veritas Asia, the short-wave station based in the Philippines, broadcasts in 17 languages throughout Asia and parts of Europe. In Myanmar, the radio station of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) broadcasts in four languages – Burmese, Karen, Zomi-chin, and Kachin. This study determined the degree of acceptance of the Kachin program by listeners in Myanmar. The 2,281 feedback letters analyzed and a complementing survey yielded a high acceptability among listeners – 15 percent of whom are non-Catholic Christians. Comments about the need for other types of programs, beyond Bible Study sessions, news, Sunday homily and family-oriented programs, were forwarded.

AEJMC 2003 Research Papers.

The 2004 Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, AEJMC, (www.aejmc.org) in Toronto, Canada August 2-7, 2004 featured presentations of research papers in the field of Journalism and Mass Communication. Here are some abstracts of studies on Religion and Media:

Discord and Religious Identity: News Framing of Muslims in the Kashmir Conflict. Sandhya Bhattacharya, Pennsylvania State University.

For the past five decades (and more) the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been a territory of contention between India and Pakistan. This paper examines the conflict in Kashmir from a religious perspective. Given the growing popularity of a *Hindutva* ideology and increasing communal tensions within the country, the study asks how Muslims in Kashmir, Pakistan and India are framed with regard to the conflict. Content analysis has been used to identify news framing patterns of Muslims. Results indicate that Indian newspapers do indeed focus more on Muslims than Hindus and that news frames of Muslims tend to be a lot more negative than positive. Implications of such framing patterns are discussed with regard to the nature of communal relations (between Hindus and Muslims) in India.

Spirituality Online: Teen Friendship Circles and the Internet. Lynn Schofield Clark, University of Colorado.

Several recent studies of religion and online virtual communities have set out to demonstrate the ways in which the Internet is radically altering how people experience and participate in religious life in contemporary society. With its starting point in the "offline" social environment of young people, this article expands upon that research, offering an analysis of narratives gathered with in-depth individual interviews and focus groups. The paper explores how young people of various levels of religious commitment are using new communication technologies in relation to their religious practices and beliefs. It argues for an analysis that views teens as both consumers and producers of religious and spiritual meaning online.

The Gospel of Freedom and Liberty: George W. Bush, the "War on Terror," and an Echoing Press. David Domke, Kevin Coe and Robert Tynes. University of Washington.

Freedom and liberty long have been core elements of U.S. national identity, dating to the mythic founding of the nation as a republic that would serve as a beacon of democracy. In the months following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration emphasized these values in reconstructing what Niebuhr has called a nation's positive "social myth": a culturally embedded narrative that distinguishes a nation from others, justifies its existence, and establishes a sense of superiority to others. The focus of this manuscript is on how these values were presented in presidential communications and, in turn, often "echoed" by news coverage – as defining moral qualities of the nation that were divinely desired for all peoples, with the United States as the God-chosen promoter and defender of values. The argument here is that such claims were simultaneously rooted in religious fundamentalism while engendering political capital in this period of crisis.

Independent News Websites' Coverage of Religious Freedom and Restraints on Religion in Central Asia. Eric Freedman and Maureen Walton, Michigan State University.

The five Central Asian governments tightly control religious freedom and practices. Most mass media is state-owned or tightly-controlled, and journalists exercise self-censorship even without official censorship. One result is a dearth of reporting by domestic media about religious freedom issues. Western-based Web news sites provide alternative ventures for covering these issues. This study examines types of religion-related coverage by three Web news sites, their use of unnamed sources and journalists' pseudonyms, and where their journalists report from.

A Quantitative Comparison of the Portrayals of Islam in British and American Newspapers. Mark Hungerford, University of Texas at Austin.

This content analysis contrasted coverage of Islam in four prominent newspapers in America and Britain during the two years after September 11, 2001. Five variables were coded on stories about Islam: if it appeared in a conflict frame; if Muslims were depicted as violent; context of coverage; valence of coverage; and lexical usage of adjectives "Muslim" and "Islamic." Overall, coverage varied little among the four papers, suggesting similar news values about Islam in both countries.

"We can get redress nowhere": Seditious libel and free expression for early nineteenth century Native Americans, as told in Indian Nullification by William Apress. Kevin R. Kemper, University of Missouri at Columbia.

William Apress, a Native American preacher and political activist, used press clippings in a book entitled *India Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe* to defend himself against a charge of seditious libel and build a case against his ministerial accusers. Also, his story gives a glimpse into the meaning of free expression during the 1830s in Massachusetts, as well as introduces Apress to journalism and mass communication scholars.

Mapping the Landscape of Compassionate Conservatism: Analyzing the Moral Vocabulary of a Religious and Political Discourse. Brian M. Lowe, SUNY at Oneonta.

Since its emergence in 1998, the term "compassionate conservatism" has drawn varying degrees of media attention as to how it synthesized particular religious conceptions of charity and service with recent undertakings of (neo) conservatism. This paper utilized the moral vocabularies strategy (Lowe, 2002) to examine the compassionate conservatism discourse as articulated in the documents in the Compassionate Conservatism Archive at the White House web site. This analysis focuses on examining what specific moral claims and policies were promoted by the Bush Administration as "compassionate conservatism" in order to construct an ideal type of what constitutes this emerging form of political and religious discourse.

Spirituality that Sells: An Analysis of Religious Imagery in Magazine Advertising. Rick Clifton Moore, Boise State University.

Little research has been done of religious dimensions of one of the most powerful media forms, advertising. In this study I conducted a content analysis of advertisements in three popular national magazines to determine how much religious imagery is present in them, and how it is portrayed. Only a small number of ads were found to include religious images. Equally important, use of imagery from eastern religions was very different from use of western ones.

Dueling Southern Baptist Press Agencies: An Examination of Coverage of Denominational Controversies by Baptist Press and Associated Baptist Press. Bryan Murley, University of South Carolina.

On July 17, 1990, the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee fired the two top journalists at *Baptist Press*, the official news agency of the SEC. In the wake of these firings, a group of Southern Baptist journalists formed the *Associated Baptist Press*. As the two agencies covered controversies within the denomination, it became evident that they were covering the same events from vastly different worldviews. This study examines themes that emerged from this coverage.

Religion in the Box: Religious Television Programming and Viewership in the Philippines. Elena E. Pernia, University of the Philippines.

This study sought to discover religious cultural adaptation by Christian programs and networks in the Philippines, using a combination of content analysis, survey, and in-depth interviews. A good number of these programs exhibit adaptation in terms of content and production values. However, there is no conclusive evidence to indicate that audiences, who are adherents of different Christian religions, have accommodated such shows as regular habit. Hence, the influence of these shows on audiences is limited.

Church and State in Utah: Local Newspaper Coverage of the LDS (Mormon) Church and Political Actors over a First Amendment Controversy. David W. Scott and Christopher S. McDonald, University of South Carolina.

This study compares an LDS Church-owned newspaper with a secular newspaper in their portrayals of the LDS Church and city officials during a political controversy. Both newspapers emphasized conflict. The secular newspaper discursively constructed the political divide as primarily religious (framing Mormons as exerting influence on politics). While the Church-owned newspaper acknowledged the religious divide, emphasis was placed more on divisions between local lawmakers and the mayor.

John Bascom's Journalism: Moral Force and Proto-Progressivism. Jeffery A. Smith, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

One liberal Christian and reform writer often overlooked in histories of the Social Gospel movement and the Progressive Era is John Bascom (1827-1911), a moral philosopher whose books and essays were in the forefront of American religious and political thought. A severe critic of the shallow, sensational, and partisan newspapers of his time, Bascom looked deeper than current events and sought systematic cures for individual and social ills.

Architecture and Land Use as Religious Speech: A First Amendment Frontier. Rovert L. Spellman, Southern Illinois at Carbondale.

Faith communities speak through the location and design of their churches, synagogues, mosques and temples. Although below the radar screen of most of the public, a great conflict between faith communities and public authorities has ensued since the U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith* in 1990 that strict scrutiny did not apply when free exercise of religion was curtailed by laws of neutral applicability. The paper argues that free speech jurisprudence offers a constitutional shield for faith groups faced with government efforts to either control their location through zoning or dictate their message through architectural and historic preservation laws.

The New York Times' Coverage of the Holocaust. Toby R. Stark and Beth Olsen, University of Houston.

This content analysis examines the amount and type of media coverage of the Holocaust by the *New York Times* from 1993-1941, specifically related to the agenda-setting and framing theories. The *New York Times* was selected because it is considered an elite publication – other media outlets often cover an issue after it has been reported in the *New York Times*. Results show that the *New York Times* minimized the importance of the Holocaust in its coverage.

Geopolitical Imaginations about Mormons in News and Popular Magazines, 1910-2002. Ethan Yorgason and Chiung Hwang Chen, Brigham Young University at Hawaii.

This paper explores news and popular magazines' portrayals of Mormonism through the lens of geopolitics. It argues that geopolitical reasoning dangerously exacerbates difference and represents people as essentialized and threatening others. Media portrayal of Mormonism through Protestant inspired geopolitical reasoning was strong throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. Geopolitical content in stories about Mormonism moderated in subsequent decades, but geopolitical reasoning flared up under liberal secular guises in the 1970s and 1980s. Continued use of geopolitical terminology and themes remains a problematic feature of stories about Mormonism.