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**Identity Discourse In The International Newspapers' Websites: An Analytical  
Study Of Sports And Crime Sections**

**PhD Thesis**

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## **Thesis Summary:**

The identity discourse is a major area of interest within the field of content analysis in the newspapers because it will show and reflect how the identity is being constructed in the online newspapers discourse. The identity discourse is at the heart of our understanding of studying how events are being covered and represented in newspapers as there is a link between the identity discourse and it's leading to the public in an indirect way.

The thesis's main problem is determined in the following main questions which are how did the international newspapers' websites cover the identity of the major actors in the sports and crime sections? To what extent is this identity influenced by the nature of the roles that those actors practiced positively and negatively? Moreover, to what extent is this identity influenced by the culture of the country of origin of the newspaper?

This thesis studies the mechanisms of identity construction for the major actors in the sports and crime sections in the international newspapers' websites as it is considered an important key area for studying a positive and a negative identity through monitoring and analysis of the factors that affect the identity coverage in the news discourse. These factors may be professional, cultural, political, and geographical, etc....

The four newspapers that are included in this study are The Guardian, The Rio Times, The Japan Times and The Huffington Post.

The research adopts both Identity Theory and Social Responsibility Theory.

This study applies a CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) approach to selected media texts of newspapers. It is also a comparative study on more than one level as it aims to determine the similarities and differences of the newspapers under study themselves in constructing identity.

Results revealed that the identity construction has the power on directing the public and that it is employed as one of the public orientation mechanisms. The newspapers have constructed these different identities to provide specific images of these identities, and consolidate these images through the written discourse. The newspapers' websites have varied in the degree of dealing with the images of the identities according to the seriousness and severity of their impact in society.

Finally, the identities construction is intentional and that is shown in all the stated results of the current study, but the image continues to be drawn for each identity without lagging in some times.

The identities construction in the press work is done professionally and accurately.

**Keywords:** International News\ Identity Construction\ Identity Discourse\ Newspapers' Websites\ The Guardian\ The Rio Times\ The Japan Times\ The Huffington Post\ Sports Sections\ Crime Sections

## **DEDICATION**

Completing this dissertation has been one of the biggest challenges of my life, for a variety of reasons that could fill books of their own. I could not have finished this project without the support of my supervisors, family and friends.

My heartfelt thanks go to my Mom, Dad and Brothers. I always start with you because I have you to thank the most. There is no doubt that I would not be where I am today without your endless support and guidance as I have embarked on this tiresome and sometimes thankless journey. You have helped me in countless ways, so, thank you. Just know that I appreciate all that you have done for me and I love you very much.

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# **Introduction**

In the last decades, the identity construction in social sciences has increased extremely. Identity is speedily becoming a catchphrase to which researchers of all sorts contentedly refer.

According to (Paul V. Kroskrity, 1999)<sup>1</sup>, Identity is “the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories”. Then later on, (Paulin G. Djité, 2006)<sup>2</sup> stated that identity is understood according to each person’s vision and their own knowledge of what, who, where they belong to.

Lately, the identity study within discourse merge between theorizations of the self, the interaction role in the formation of personal and social worlds and the impact of language to socio-cultural processes.

The portrayal of individuals, groups, cultural and social norms in news discourses influences both social and personal identities.

Some countries may try to control the identities’ presentation in one form or another through their media. They seek to establish a general identity for their own citizens who are considered their major actors as this is the way that leads the other foreign media to represent them.

The threat of constructing identity in the news discourse is confirmed through different things, most notably the national identity which is shaped through the press and the media. And, the media in general, is the one that stays in the public minds. In addition, the treatment of ethnic identity either positively or negatively affects the stability and calmness of the society. Also, various ideological, political principles and beliefs are being transmitted in the news discourse in an indirect way through the identity construction as the identities are linked to the various social,

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<sup>1</sup> Kroskrity, P. (1999). Identity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 9(1/2), PP. 111 – 114. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43102440>

<sup>2</sup> Djité, P. (2006). Shifts in linguistic identities in a global world. *Language Problems & Language Planning* 30(1), PP.1 – 20. DOI: 10.1075/lplp.30.1.02dji

cultural and political factors that are important in society, and that they are employed from time to time in international conflicts and conflicts.

Identity categories used in news discourse mirror the identities' types more commonly in use in a given society and historic moment.

There is no doubt that the importance of identity to the society reflects the importance of studying the role played by the press in constructing identity, and the importance of studying the factors affecting this role.

Moreover, there is no doubt that the trifling of the news discourse in the introduction of identities, distortion and misrepresentation has a severe and an indirect impact on the perceptions of the public and their perception of reality.

The news discourse, in its presentation of different identities, may fall in the bias trap and may focus on certain aspects of identities and may neglect others as clearly manifested in the presentation of identities of sportsmen, sportswomen and criminals, etc..., which indirectly may affect the perceptions and values of the public.

The seriousness of the role played by identity construction is due to the invisibility of directing it to the public and to the power of its influence. The press invests the public's attention in certain points in passing different negative values.

Then, Sports and Crime reporting discourse does not usually deal directly with ideologies, political beliefs and opinions.

As stated above, the study of identities' construction is one of the most important tools for directing the audience. It is through which different societal values are passed to the audience accurately and indirectly. This happens when the press goes beyond the culture of society. At this point, when any actor does any negative action and the press wants to disgrace it, the actor's

identity is presented in a certain way condoning some negative details related to that action and focusing on the positive ones only. And consequently, the audience starts accepting those negatives gradually as being normal, not deviant actions. The press may reach the point of fallacy where it would make positive aspect negative or makes a negative one positive. The fact that the press presents a positive or negative identity is often associated with the division of identity and not presenting it fully, focusing on other aspects and marginalizing the other.

For example, the newspapers represented the world swimmer Michael Phelps identity in a positive way at the time he was accused of using marijuana – which is considered a crime – and that consequently affected the public who started gradually to socially accept this criminal action.

The fundamental argument in this research is to examine the major actors in the sports and crime sections that can provide an insight into the construction processes of identity.

This research seeks to debate and analyse identity constructions of major actors in the international news discourses, using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework.

The main aim is to study how these newspapers websites constructed the major actors' identity and the processes involved, while also debating the discourses that were produced, considering the ideologies of these newspapers and at the same time, trying to find out the type of the role model used in those newspapers websites.



# **Chapter 1**

## **Research Methodology**

**Research Importance:**

**There are several factors that show the importance of this thesis such as the following:**

1. The identity discourse is a major area of interest within the field of analysing the content in the newspapers because it will show and reflect how the identity is being constructed in the online newspapers discourse.
2. The identity discourse is at the heart of our understanding of studying how events are being covered and represented in newspapers as there is a link between the identity discourse and it's leading to the public in an indirect way. That also requires the need to analyse the identity discourse in the International newspapers to point out the various dimensions of its role in drawing identities.
3. It is important to reveal who or what stands behind the identity discourse in the newspapers such as political or cultural or professional factors, etc....
4. It is important to find out the association between the identity discourse, the national identity and international identity as these three especially show how the online newspapers draw the country.
5. It is important to explore the type of identity discourse in different newspapers in order to understand the differences and similarities.
6. It is important to study the culture as each society has its own culture that give it its own identity, and characteristics which are unique especially crime and sports in that country to facilitate the analysis of the results of each online newspaper.

**Research Problem:**

The thesis's main problem is determined in the following main questions which are how did the international newspapers' websites cover the identity of the major actors in the sports and

crime sections? And to what extent is this identity influenced by the nature of the roles that those actors practiced positively and negatively? Moreover, to what extent is this identity influenced by the culture of the country of origin of the newspaper?

This thesis studies the mechanisms of identity construction for the major actors in the sports and crime sections in the international newspapers' websites as they are considered an important key area for studying a positive and a negative identity through monitoring and analysis of the factors that affect the identity coverage in the news discourse. These factors may be professional, cultural, political, and geographical, etc....

In this context, the thesis attempts to find out the identity types used in the sports and crime sections such as personal, cultural, gender, racial, economic and national identity, etc... The researcher will then attempt to know the roles given to each candidate such as the 'straightforward success' role model, the 'challenging stereotypes' role model, etc.... From this point, the researcher will be able to check whether stereotypes are being formed from analysing the identity discourse.

### **Research Objectives:**

**This thesis aims to achieve the following:**

1. Exploring the role of the international newspapers in shaping the identity of the major actors in the specialized content (sports and crime sections).
2. Exploring the political and cultural factors that influence the identity discourse in the international newspapers.
3. Comparing the construction of identities of the major actors in different cultures and professional mechanisms.
4. Determining the types of identities in the international newspapers.

5. Determining the difference between drawing the identities in sports and crime sections.
6. Knowing the extent of the involvement of the international newspapers in re-drawing the identities as it may build an identity and demolish another one.

### **Research Questions:**

**This thesis will address the following research questions to study the Identity discourse in the International Newspapers' Websites in the Sports and Crime Sections:**

1. How did the international newspapers' websites cover the identity of the major actors in the sports and crime sections?
2. What do identity constructions in this manner reflect on the ideologies of these newspapers?
3. To what extent the nature of this identity is influenced by the nature of the specialized content (between the content of sports and another for crime)?
4. What are the factors that influence the identity construction in the news coverage by being either positive or negative?
5. What type of role model is given by the newspapers to the major actors' identity in the sports and crime sections?

### **Literature Review:**

Reviewing of literature in the field of this study reveals that there are not enough researches that studied the identity discourse, whether on the local or international levels.

Literature review can be classified into three dimensions in which the first one will include previous studies on the news coverage and identity construction while the second will include previous studies on the identity and the specialized content (Sports and Crimes) in the newspapers,

and the third will include previous studies on the news coverage and the specialized content (Sports and Crimes) in the newspapers.

### **News Coverage and Identity Construction**

A number of researchers have worked on the identity construction in the newspapers and numerous studies have attempted to explain through their researches that identity can be constructed in a way or another. However, the Arabic library does not include any studies about the news coverage and identity construction.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on **the national identity construction** in newspapers such as (Kožíšek, 2016)<sup>1</sup> study where it tried to find out the representation of the national identity of North Korea in two Japanese newspapers discourse. Findings showed that there is availability of negative emotions in those newspapers that affected the portrayal of their identity. In the discourse, it was shown that Japan's identity was drawn as being part of the international community while the identity of North Korea was shown as being an irrational outsider. Taking into consideration that North Korea at that period was part of causing security threat to neighbouring countries.

In the same vein, (Parvez, 2015)<sup>2</sup> study explored the role of three Bangladeshi newspapers in constructing the national identity of Bangladesh through analysing the content. The study concentrated on major events such as Shahbagh movement, the murder of blogger Rajib, and the Hefajat movement, etc... Parvez main goal was to know how each newspaper would build meanings associated to national identities and ideologies that would help to justify the interests of

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<sup>1</sup> Kožíšek, D. (2016). National Identity and Security in Contemporary Japanese Media Discourse: Images of North Korea. Journal for Political Sciences. Online: <<http://www.politickévedy.fpmv.umb.sk/archiv-vydani/2016/4-2016/david-kozisek.html>>

<sup>2</sup> Parvez, M.S. (2015). The Press, National Identity, and the Shahbagh Movement. A Study of the Contemporary Politics of Bangladesh. Degree of Master of Arts. The Elliott School of International Affairs of The George Washington University.

“us” and to criticize “them”. Results revealed that radical frames existed and it increased especially after the Shahbagh movement. This means that the newspapers constructed radical national identity in Bangladesh since 2013.

Also, (Chan, 2014)<sup>1</sup> study examined how the China Daily newspaper was broadly able to achieve the essential strains and pressures between the double critical discourses of “nationalism” and “multilateralism” in its news coverage of the argument. The context of the study was Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in East China. The study questioned to “what extent are common identities emphasized by the China Daily in its reporting of the East China Sea dispute between China and Japan from 2002 to 2011?”. Findings pointed that 50% of news articles shaped the identity of the Asians that concentrated on unities between China and Japan. In addition to the re-classification of China and Japan into one similar identity which gave the chance for the China Daily newspaper to portray from present ruling party discourses of American control and therefore re-classifying “United States as the “out-group that acts against the interests of the superordinate group”.

Muller (2013)<sup>2</sup> study explored the ways the news coverage constructs the national cultural identity of a country too. It also tried to find out whether it represents the newspaper country of origin in a better way than the other foreign ones. Additionally, it tried to find the similarities between the construction of the national cultural identity and the third-person perception which claims that people are more affected by the negative effects of the media. Muller conducted a qualitative content analysis on the newspaper coverage from the US and Germany on elections.

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<sup>1</sup> Chan, M. (2014). (Re) categorizing Intergroup Relations and Social Identities through News Discourse: The Case of the China Daily's reporting on Regional Conflict. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 33(2), PP. 144-164. DOI: 10.1177/0261927X13508125

<sup>2</sup> Muller, P. (2013). National identity building through patterns of an international third-person perception in news coverage. *The International Communication Gazette*, 75(8), PP. 732-749. DOI: 10.1177/1748048513482546

The newspapers sample included The New York Times, Washington Post and USA Today from United States and Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Welt and Frankfurter Rundschau from Germany. The study noted that there are cultural factors that started to strongly influence the construction of the national identities “in times of political and economic globalization”. The main hypothesis of this study was if “the media coverage contains implicit or explicit information on the strength of media influences in own and foreign nations, media influence in the own nation will be rendered as weaker than in foreign nations”. Results showed that a journalist’s mind will shape how the news coverage and therefore shape the identity that will be expressed in the newspapers.

Also, (Stice, 2012)<sup>1</sup> study investigated the representation of the French Nation identity at the time of the French colonial empire in the British and French Trench newspapers and the findings revealed that within the Trench newspapers, the colonial troops were represented as being rum, mud, and leave. In addition, Germany enemy’s identity was represented sometimes as an imperial aggressor and other times as a rebellious colony.

Kulyk (2011)<sup>2</sup> study also examined the representation of the national identity and historical memory in three Ukrainian newspapers. Noting that in this study the researcher dealt with the historical memory as being part of the national identity of the country. Results showed that the differences found in the representation of the national identity in the newspapers returns to the different contents written about Ukrainians’ relation to Russia and the USSR “as either that of

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<sup>1</sup> Stice, E. (2012). *Empire Between the Lines: Constructions of Empire in British and French Trench Newspapers at the Great War*. Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, Emory University.

<sup>2</sup> Kulyk, V. (2011). The media, history and identity: competing narratives of the past in the Ukrainian popular press. *National Identities*, 13(3), PP. 287-303. DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2011.591373