THE FORGOTTEN STORM: THE IMPLICATIONS OF AGENDA SETTING ON

HURRICANE IKE'S NATIONAL RELEVANCE

A Thesis

by

AMANDA MICHELLE SUDDUTH

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2011

Major Subject: Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Tracy Rutherford
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ABSTRACT

The Forgotten Storm: The Implications of Agenda Setting on Hurricane Ike's National

Relevance. (August 2011)

Amanda Michelle Sudduth, B.A., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Tracy Rutherford

This study utilized content analysis of newspaper articles in the month following

Hurricane Ike's landfall to evaluate the presence of agenda setting and framing. Three

national newspapers were analyzed to determine the existence and order of news frames.

The results indicate that Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) news frames changed in

order of importance in this study. The order of news frames varied among the three

national newspapers. The newspaper with mostly human interest frames was determined

to be more sensational than the other two, more serious newspapers with predominantly

responsibility frames. This study then compared the five ordered frames to previous

framing research on Hurricane Katrina. The two hurricanes differed greatly in amount of

news coverage and varied slightly in the order of the news frames. An evaluation of

news coverage of major U.S. events occurring in the month after Hurricane Ike was

conducted, with results indicating that news attention of the hurricane was hindered by

other major national events.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Dest,

Without your constant love and support, this would not have been possible. Thank you for understanding that this was something I had to do, even though it meant putting our lives on hold for a year. Your patience will forever be a marvel to me. You're a lifesaver in so many ways. I love you.

And to my mother, Leslie,

I could not have done this without you. Your continual support and encouragement over the past five years of my college career were vital to me. You are the ultimate cheerleader. Thank you for always believing in me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The media have the power and responsibility of relaying information to the public, which in turn allows the public to make decisions based on what they read, see, or hear in the news. With this power comes the ability for the media to set the boundaries for public dialogue (Entman, 2007; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Miles & Morse, 2007; Vasterman, Yzermans, & Dirkzwager, 2005). Mass media focus attention on certain issues, setting the public's agenda (Entman, 2007; McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Uscinski, 2009). Some of the events that the media consider more newsworthy than others are violent crime, war, elections, and natural disasters (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999; Uscinski, 2009). Media coverage of natural disasters sets the stage for public discourse by defining and controlling what appears in the news related to those events (Miles & Morse, 2007).

After Hurricane Ike made landfall on September 13, 2008, the people affected by the natural disaster were left to pick up the pieces without much attention from the media. Ike's presence in the media was not equivalent to its physical destruction. National television and print news media gave little attention to Ike and the people left in the storm's path as compared to the coverage of Hurricane Katrina in the fall of 2005 (Keen, 2009). Media coverage of Hurricane Ike was hampered by major national events

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occurring at the same time. "In the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, the national media's attention was quickly diverted by the financial crisis and the presidential election last week" (Stelter, 2008, p. 8). Hurricane Ike's timing was quite different from Hurricane Katrina's timeline in that no other national tragedies or major occurrences occurred simultaneously.

The media emphasize or de-emphasize the public's awareness and perceived importance of an issue, as explained by framing and agenda setting. Through agenda setting, "elements prominent in the media's pictures become prominent in the audience's picture" (McCombs and Ghanem, 2003, p. 67). The media tell us what the most important news item is by selecting a specific topic and interpreting it for the audience. News frames are essential tools used by the media to "convey, interpret, and evaluate information" for the public (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 60). Agenda setting and framing are related constructs, and their convergence has long been studied by researchers (McCombs & Ghanem, 2003). These tools employed by the media are crucial to understand from a research perspective because the public relies on the media during a time of crisis to relay essential information.

<center>Purpose and Objectives</center>

The purpose of this study was to understand how Hurricane Ike was depicted in national news, and to determine if media coverage of Hurricane Ike was different than Hurricane Katrina. The media have an immense responsibility to provide accurate news on a daily basis; this is especially true when a natural disaster strikes. The people affected by a natural disaster and the onlookers from thousands of miles away depend on

the media to disseminate important information regarding the situation and the hazards involved (Kim, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002; Piotrowski, 1998). The media's ability to portray events as having differing levels of importance can have major implications on those involved in the news event. The amount of news coverage of an event can influence public opinion and public policy (Barnes, Hanson, Novilla, Meacham, McIntyre, & Erickson, 2008). Research on agenda setting in relation to natural disaster news coverage is a fairly new area of interest.

Several studies have placed importance on the media's use of certain frames by exploring the consequences of the public's difference in interpretation of issues and events (Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Neuman et al., 1992; Norris, 1995; Vasterman, Yzermans, & Dirkzwager, 2005). This study was designed to identify the media's framing of a natural disaster to determine its importance. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) discovered that framing of the news may affect the public's perceptions of political issues and institutions. This study implements Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five common news frames to categorize emerging frames and to compare the order of the frames to their previous research of framing.

Two objectives guide this study,

1. Determine the prevalent news frames in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike in three national news outlets.
2. Compare the news coverage and frames found in Hurricane Ike news to the news coverage and frames previously identified in Hurricane Katrina news.

The key theory in evaluating the media coverage of Hurricane Ike and other coinciding national events is agenda setting theory, a communication theory involving the media's ability to place levels of importance on certain news stories (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing is a part of the agenda setting process, and this is the main component of agenda setting theory that the study will analyze.

This study employs content analysis methodology to identify the frames found in national print news coverage of Hurricane Ike from September 13, 2008 to October 13, 2008. By analyzing news frames, this study strives to understand how the media portrayed the hurricane and in its aftermath. Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five predefined frames are used to assess the prevalence of news frames. The study evaluates the national relevance of Hurricane Ike by looking at the amount of print news coverage on a national level. After establishing the amount of news coverage and frames used, a comparison will be made between the prevalent frames and news coverage of Hurricane Ike and Hurricane Katrina.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

Due to rising sea-surface temperatures and human-related climate change, an increase in Atlantic hurricane activity and a doubling of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes are predicted by the end of the 21st century (Bender et al., 2010). The number of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes throughout the world has almost doubled over the past 35 years (NSF, 2005). With the number of hurricanes on the rise and disasters of all types occurring worldwide, it is crucial to understand how the public perceives disasters and how news coverage correlates to the amount of attention given to the disaster.

Definition of Terms

1. Hurricane – A tropical cyclone that forms in the Atlantic, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, or eastern Pacific that sustains wind speeds of 74 miles per hour or greater (Hurricane, n.d.).

2. Natural disaster – Disasters derived from nature, such as hurricanes, volcano eruptions, tornadoes, droughts, floods, or earthquakes.

3. Media – The means of print, radio, television, or online communication that is meant for public access and use.

4. Agenda setting – The mass media decide what issues are important by the amount of coverage and the position given to news stories. The media sets the public agenda by placing levels of importance on issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

5. Framing – "The process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007, 9. 164).

6. Priming – The public's dependency on the media to determine what is most important at the time so they can make decisions (Kim et al., 2002).

CHAPTER II

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HURRICANE IKE NEWS FRAMES

Introduction

The media can be thought of as mediators between the public and news events. The vast geography and population of the United States compared to the specific location of a natural disaster event means a small percentage of the U.S. population is directly affected by the crisis. The only way for those removed from the situation, or those who relocate because of the natural disaster, to learn new information in the aftermath is to rely on the media. The media provide the best, easily accessible updates for the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). With this relationship, the media tend to determine what is important in the minds of the public through agenda setting and framing. Through these research constructs, the media have the ability to tell the public what is salient through amount of news coverage, placement,and tone of the story; this results in the public looking to the media to tell them what is important when it comes time to make decisions.

The media use agenda setting and framing to help make sense of the news. The public relies on the media to interpret events, especially in the event of a natural disaster (Barnes et al., 2008; Lowrey, Evans, Gower, Robinson, Ginter, McCormick, & Abdolrasulnia, 2007; Piotrowski & Armstrong, 1998; Vasterman, et al., 2005). Due to the influence and importance of the media in the time following a natural disaster, it is important to understand the role that they play. Hurricane Ike is known as the "forgotten

storm," (Keen, 2009) and this study's intent was to understand if and why this hurricane was overlooked.

This study is based on the concepts of agenda setting and framing to examine the news coverage of Hurricane Ike. This study sought to understand the media's use of framing and agenda setting in the aftermath of a natural disaster by examining the prevalent news frames found in news after Hurricane Ike made landfall.

Literature Review

This study explored media coverage of Hurricane Ike by applying concepts of agenda-setting theory and framing. This study uses Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) ordered frames to evaluate framing of Hurricane Ike. Semetko and Valkenburg's five ordered frames are based on Neuman et al.'s (1992) predetermined frames found in the news. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) examined national news coverage to discover that the five common news frames, in order of prevalence, were responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality. This study seeks to determine the existence and order of the five common news frames in relation to Hurricane Ike. The literature reviewed in this section focus on agenda setting and framing.

Agenda setting is best known as the media's ability to tell people not what to think, but what to think about (Entman, 2007; Stone et al., 1999). Agenda setting refers to the concept that there is a "strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Mass media can influence people's decisions and perceptions of an issue

through agenda setting by making that issue more prominent in the news. McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that by attaching importance to an issue in the news, through amount of coverage or the portrayal of that issue, the mass media may be in control of determining what is important on the public's agenda.

Agenda setting is based on the inquiry of who sets whose agenda in the news (Bryant & Miron, 2004). The most prominent stories featured in the news are considered items on the media's agenda. This list of trending news topics typically includes the economy, crime, and employment, among varying other topics. The public agenda, the most important issues perceived by people in general, is not always aligned with the media agenda. The most important news story is not always the most discussed story by members of the public. An example is the economy may be issue No. 2 on the media agenda, but it might be issue of importance No. 4 on the public agenda. Some researchers argue that media portrays issues only in a broad context, such as positively or negatively, and the public views issues in this way, not by placing a level of importance on each issue (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). However, some researchers (Stone et al., 1999; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000) maintain that the media's order of story importance plays a significant role in people's cognitive processes.

In agenda setting, there are two cognitive levels at which the target audience processes information. First-level agenda setting deals with the perceived importance of an issue based on the amount of news coverage of that issue (Coleman & Wu, 2010; Weaver; 2007). Most of the research on agenda setting is focused on this level because researchers are interested in the relative salience of subjects. The second level of agenda

setting deals with the relative salience of attributes of issues, or how the issue of interest is defined (Coleman & Wu, 2010; Entman, 2007; Ghanem, 1997; Weaver, 2007). Research on the second level predominantly focuses on character traits, the framing of issues, and the positive or negative tone of news, also known as valence (Coleman & Wu, 2010).

Iyengar and Simon's (1993) study of the Persian Gulf crisis demonstrates the difference between the two levels of agenda setting. Survey respondents said the Gulf crisis was the most important problem in the nation at the time; this is in an example of the first level, or object salience, of agenda setting. The respondents continued by explaining the Gulf crisis in terms of military or diplomatic options; this is an example of the second level, or attribute salience, of agenda setting (Iyengar and Simon, 1993). "Explicit attention to the second level, attribute agenda setting, further suggests that the media also tell us *how to think* about some objects (McCombs & Ghanem, 2003, p. 69). This process is where agenda setting and framing converge.

Agenda setting, framing, and priming are interrelated constructs that are many times incorrectly used interchangeably when referring to certain media issues. Framing predominantly deals with the selection and presentation of media, while priming involves the public's cognition of information provided by the mass media (Stone et al., 1999). As Entman (2007) states, framing is "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (p. 164). Framing simplifies the complexities of news items for the public by presenting topics in easily understandable packages (Kim et

al., 2002). A framing effect is "one in which salient attributes of a message (its organization, selection of content, or thematic structure) render particular thoughts applicable, resulting in their activation and use in evaluations" (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997, p. 486). To frame a news story is to raise awareness or increase the perceived importance of an idea by simplifying the content, resulting in interpretations that tend to reflect the views of the news outlet that distributed the information. This ultimately encourages the public to think about this idea in a particular way, and it can even alter the decisions of members of the target audience. Entman (2007) describes framing as a function of priming to shape the public's elucidations and inclinations.

Priming involves the public's reliance on information from the media to evaluate what is salient at the time (Kim et al., 2002; Stone et al., 1999). This demonstrates the public's dependency on the media to tell them what issues are of most importance when decisions need to be made. It is imperative to understand that agenda setting, framing and priming are interrelated. Some researchers consider framing and priming to be extensions of agenda setting because they act as functions of the theory (Entman, 2007; Stone et al., 1999). Other researchers regard agenda setting and framing to be interrelated and converge when the transfer of salience from the media's agenda to the public's agenda occurs (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; McCombs & Ghanem, 2003). Because of this, the three media constructs are often mistaken for each other. It is imperative to understand what each construct entails to properly conduct effective media research.

One component that appears often in media research is the media dependency hypothesis. The concept of media dependency aids the effects of agenda setting and

framing by describing the public to be dependent on the media for information (Neuman et al., 1992). The public depends on the media because they have no other means to collect information about the world around them (Becker & Whitney, 1980). The public also relies on the media for indications on how to frame and understand that information. "As the social system becomes more complex and the informal channels of communication become disrupted, members of society become more dependent on the mass media" (Becker & Whitney, 1980, p. 95). This evolution of reliance on the media for even the most basic information results in considerable influence on society from the media. This massive responsibility to disseminate information accurately often results in the framing of an event to provide answers to the public's inquiries.

Many questions arise after a natural disaster occurs, and the media often frame the event to provide answers for the wondering public. They do so by disseminating a definition for the problem that occurred, interpreting that problem based on the causes, breaking down the ethical issues, and making recommendations to fix the problem (Entman, 1993). Through the use of framing, the media can tie individual stories together into one broad narrative so the audience has a better understanding of the event (Vasterman et al., 2005). Although the media are not the sole contributors to the framing process; often times the media simply follow cue of the government or social leaders (Vasterman et al., 2005). However, the media are typically the creators of the frames, and lead the public based on what they disseminate.

Frames exist in at least four places in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture (Entman, 1993). Communicators,

most often the media, make "conscious or unconscious framing judgments" in determining what to communicate, influenced by frames that help them to make clarity of their own beliefs. "The text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The receiver's understanding is guided by certain frames that may or may not coincide with the frames in the text and the frames of the communicator. The culture is most simply defined as "the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Although frames are an everyday occurrence in the media and they do have an effect on the audience members, the public does not consist of mindless individuals who heed to every idea the media presents. As Neuman et al. (1992) explains, frames do effect people's story selection and perceptions of events but they do not define them. "The frame does not predetermine the information individuals will seek but it may shape aspects of the world that the individual experiences either directly or through the news media and is thus central to the process of constructing meaning" (Neuman et al., p. 61).

The ability to maintain objectivity in journalism is an issue in both daily occurrences and unusual circumstances. However, with natural disasters and humanitarian crises, remaining objective in times of political, emotional, and economical strife can be problematic. "Media reports do not objectively report on humanitarian crises. Rather they report crises in particular and often very different ways" (Robinson,

1999, p. 306). The media struggle to provide answers to the questioning public about what exactly happened during a crisis. Both figures of importance and the media are looked to for why a disaster happened and what the future will hold (Vasterman et al., 2004). In order to answer these questions, the media play the agenda setting and frame setting role.

Especially during a time of crisis, the media are relied on for their ability to provide information to the public (Barnes et al., 2008; Piotrowski, 1998; Vasterman et al., 2005). The media have considerable responsibility in disseminating this information accurately and efficiently. Understanding the amount of news coverage regarding a natural disaster is a complexity. Studies focusing on U.S. news coverage of foreign natural disasters found "no link between the scale of a disaster and the media interest it attracts" (Franks, 2006, p. 281). There is no clear reason why U.S. news outlets choose to cover a natural disaster in one foreign country over a natural disaster in another part of the world. Studies found that the extent to which U.S. media focus their attention on a foreign natural disaster is based on cultural proximity to Americans, characteristics of the victims, shock value of the disaster, and the ease at which the crisis can be explained to the public (Franks, 2006; Moeller, 2006).

Research regarding U.S. media coverage of U.S. disasters is a relatively innovative area of interest. Most of the studies conducted about media portrayal of domestic natural disasters focus on Hurricane Katrina. Out of these Katrina-specific studies, most of them deal with the depiction of African-Americans by the media (Davis & French, 2008; Garfield, 2007; Tierney, Bevc, & Kuligowski, 2006). These studies

revealed that in post-Katrina news, white and African-American people affected by the storm were portrayed drastically different in the news. Race was also a factor in the amount of news disseminated about violence, looting, and even murder and rape (Garfield, 2007). These studies' findings regarding race and violence demonstrate how the media can get wrapped up in sensational news reporting, and based on agenda setting theory, can affect the public's perception of the people impacted by a natural disaster.

One controversial topic that is sometimes avoided and other times emphasized by the media is preparation prior to a natural disaster. In the case of hurricanes, meteorologists and weather experts can predict a hurricane as it forms before it ever reaches the guidelines of an official hurricane. With this type of warning, people who could potentially be affected by the storm and governmental organizations have several days to prepare for the upcoming hurricane. Although technology is continually advancing, this amount of preparation time is not the same with earthquakes, tsunamis, and other unpredictable forces of nature (Birkland, 1997).

With the advantage of time to make preparations, public health messages containing information about hurricane preparedness and response are vital to the public's health and safety (Barnes et al., 2008). However, Barnes et al. (2008) found that the media do not disperse this information as expected prior to a natural disaster. "Ironically, the importance of this message is convincingly conveyed by the media and others during and after the disaster but is avoided before the event" (p. 604). Their study analyzed media agenda setting during and after Hurricane Katrina, specifically by focusing on emergency preparedness, disaster response, and disaster policy (Barnes et

al., 2008). The researchers looked at two local newspapers, along with the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, to determine how much emphasis was placed on response, recovery, mitigation, and preparation during and after Katrina. Their results found that more newspaper articles focused on response and recovery than they did on mitigation and preparation. In addition, the newspapers were more concerned with government response to the event than local individuals' and communities' responsibility and preparedness prior to the storm. "Agenda setting tends to promote disaster relief policies by reflecting on social problems retrospectively while rarely, if ever, dealing prospectively with future disasters" (Barnes et al., 2008, p. 609).

In addition to Barnes et al.'s (2008) study, other researchers found that, in general, news articles refrain from mentioning preparation strategies for future hurricanes (Miles & Morse, 2007; Tierney et al., 2006). Miles and Morse (2007) concluded that the media intentionally de-emphasize risk reduction by not covering the topic in the news. In doing so, the media portray to the public that this issue is not important because it is not discussed by the media.

One way the news "defines and limits the discourse associated with these events" (Miles & Morse, 2006, p. 365) is to focus on the people impacted by the natural disaster. According to Rozario (2003), the more the media portray the victims of a natural disaster as helpless and in pain, the more the public will pay attention to their news stories. Neuman et al. (1992) found that readers prefer news stories that are "a mixture of what is important and what is immediately and personally relevant and humanly dramatic" (p. 41). In addition, news reporters rely on their sources to convey the message of a story

because the victims can express their feelings about an event, while a journalist cannot "express empathy or compassion overtly" (p. 72).

Individual's stories of hardship are often the key to increase public interest in a particular news item (Neuman et al., 1992). If the media make the public aware of these victims' stories, the public will be enthralled but also expect someone to come to the victims' aid (Moeller, 2006). Therefore, the media will fulfill those expectations by placing responsibility, or in some cases blame, on the government for disaster response. In particular, the media will place blame on the federal government if there are any mistakes made during disaster response (Barnes et al., 2008).

In summary, agenda setting and framing converge to shape the public's perception of public issues. The media rely on these tools to organize information and relay it in an understandable manner. The media also employ these concepts to emphasize or lessen the importance of certain events based on the amount of news coverage and frames used in the news story. Especially during and after a natural disaster, the media are looked to for accurate timely information. This study evaluates the news coverage of Hurricane Ike through the lens of agenda setting and framing. To accurately perform this study, it is important to acknowledge that framing is one aspect of the much larger agenda setting theory (Ghanem, 1997).

Methodology of the Study

This study used a content analysis to investigate the recurring frames and the amount of news coverage of Hurricane Ike post-storm. The recurring frames were established and then compared to Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) ordered frames, as

implemented in their study of framing in political news. This study is part of a larger study and all data was collected in a single process.

Content analysis is defined as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). A content analysis is the best procedure for this study because the technique allows the researcher to formulate themes from the analyzed information (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). According to Krippendorff (2004), researchers use content analysis to deduce answers to their research questions from the texts they examine. As a text is analyzed, content relative to a particular context emerges in the process. Krippendorff (2004) states that "a text means something to someone, it is produced by someone to have meanings for someone else, and these meanings therefore must not be ignored and must not violate why the text exists in the first place" (p. 19). Mass media produce texts daily that are full of inherent messages. Content analysis is the appropriate research method for examining what messages are being conveyed by the media.

A content analysis can be conducted in two forms: quantitative and qualitative. In their lowest forms, quantitative content analysis is concerned with numbers, while qualitative content analysis looks for themes in the text. Quantitative content analysis "seeks a precise estimate of the presence or absence of different features" (Priest, 2010, p. 41). Qualitative content analysis resembles the examination of interview data because this method looks for general themes in the text (Priest, 2010; Krippendorff, 2004). Text is always considered qualitative at its basic level, so the distinction between these two

types of content analysis can be difficult to discern (Krippendorff, 2004). For this study, qualitative content analysis was used to identify frames in news stories while quantitative content analysis determined how often these particular frames emerge in the text.

News stories from three national newspapers were retrieved using LexisNexis Academic database. The units of analysis in this study are sentences from the selected news stories. Print news stories were chosen instead of broadcast news coverage because of their broad circulation and their ability to influence the elite (Putnam, 2000). As compared to television reports, newspaper stories are longer in length, provide more in-depth information and can be processed at the reader's pace. Newspaper stories tend to be more fact-based, whereas televised news provokes the emotions of the viewer (Piotrowski & Armstrong, 1998). In a study conducted by Neuman et al., (1992), the evaluations of mass audience members revealed that respondents believed newspapers to provide the most factual news above all other mediums. "Moreover, print media permit the audience to select which items to attend to and to refer back and review a passage for more complete understanding" (Neuman et al., 1992, p.50). For these reasons, this study's focus remained on stories from newspapers instead of television news reports.

This study focused only on national newspapers because of their reach and reputation. Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) found that the press as a whole follows procedures and news selection practices based on the choices of major national news outlets such as *The New York Times*. Major national newspapers also have influence on what is considered important to report, along with values and beliefs displayed in the

news stories (Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000). Although smaller newspapers have a certain advantage because they are closer in location to the event that occurred, their considerably smaller circulation sizes and their locally concentrated readers were not conducive to this study. In addition, local media are not considered to have same amount of power or influence as national media on both individuals and policymakers (Liu, Lindquist, Vedlitz, & Vincent, 2010).

The scope of this study was limited to news articles from three of the top five largest circulated newspapers in the U.S.: *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Washington Post*. Out of all national newspapers, *USA Today* is second with 1,826,622 in circulation. *The New York Times* came in third with 951,063 in circulation, and *The Washington Post* came in fifth with 578,482 (Shea, 2010). Each newspaper is featured in print and online versions, and each is owned by separate companies: *The New York Times*, owned by The New York Times Company; *USA Today*, owned by Gannett Company; and *The Washington Post*, owned by the Washington Post Company. The difference in ownership is important to note for this study because a difference in ownership often means a difference in how newspapers report (Gilens & Hertzman, 2000). For this study, a difference in perspective was desired to determine levels of agenda setting and to accurately examine the amount of news coverage and recurring themes in Hurricanes Ike.

This study was based on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study of five common deductive frames that appear in the news. The frames used were responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality. A deductive approach

was used to determine the frames in each news story. "A deductive approach involves predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news" (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 95, 2000). It is imperative in content analysis research to have predefined frames so that when a researcher analyzes a news story, no frames will be overlooked.

> A reliable set of content analytic indicators is necessary for studying
>
> developments in the news over time and similarities and differences in the ways
>
> in which politics and other topics of national and international importance are
>
> framed in the news in different countries. (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 94, 2000)

Frames were coded using the same instrument used in Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study. The sentences were coded based on a series of 20 dichotomous-orientated response questions (Appendix A). After assigning a frame to each sentence, the coded items were put into subcategories based on that frame. The results were then compared to Semetko and Valkenburg's ordered frames to examine the difference in news event coverage.

Conflict frame, the most common frame in U.S. news, is especially prevalent in political news (Neuman et al., 1992). "This frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest" (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 95, 2000). When evaluating the news stories, conflict was categorized as either personal disagreements, government/organization disagreements, or conflict of information.

Human interest is the second most common frame in U.S. news stories (Neuman et al., 1992). "This frame brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem" (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 95, 2000). When evaluating the news stories, human interest was categorized as either describing the people who were impacted by the hurricane, heroes who rescued those impacted by the hurricane, or human perseverance. The human interest frame gives the media the chance to capture the audience's interest because the story has an emotional, personal aspect to it that draws readers in to sympathize with the people in the story (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Economic consequence is another common frame used in the news (Neuman et al., 1992). "This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country" (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 96, 2000). When analyzing news stories, the economic consequences frame was defined as being either directly related to the national and/or local economy, the assessment of damage after the storm hit, or references to physical damage from the storm.

The morality frame is less common in the news because of journalism's tendency to be objective. However, journalists unintentionally make references to moral issues through the use of quotes or inferences in word usage (Neuman et al., 1992). "This frame puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions" (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 96, 2000). When evaluating the news stories, morality was considered to be either references to religion, patriotism, or looting—due

to the moral implications of stealing. Neuman et al. (1992) found this frame to be more common in the minds of the readers than in the written word of news stories.

Finally the responsibility frame is identified in fewer sentences than the other news frames, even though the news media have been known to mold readers' perceptions of blame and responsibility (Iyengar, 1987). "This frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group" (Semetko & Valkenburg, p. 96, 2000). To evaluate the news stories in this study, responsibility was broken down into four subcategories: responsibility placed on FEMA, responsibility placed on government officials—both state and local, responsibility placed on local officials (i.e., police officers, firefighters, local organization leaders, etc.), and reference to prevention measures taken prior to Hurricane Ike's landfall.

Guidelines were predetermined to identify appropriate and useable news stories. Stories pertaining to Hurricane Ike had to be focused on the Gulf Coast, therefore eliminating stories focused on the Caribbean or foreign countries. If it was apparent that the news story was not mainly focused on Hurricane Ike, but only mentioned the storm, then the story was dismissed from the study. In general, if it was clear that Hurricane Ike was the main subject of a story, then it was retained. Stories that mentioned Hurricane Ike but focused solely on gas and market reports, the presidential election, the financial crisis, and corrections to previous stories about Hurricane Ike were omitted from this study. Stories pertaining to schedule changes for high school, college, and professional sports related to the hurricane, as well as editorials were also excluded.

The stories were uploaded to Weft QDA, a content analysis software, and coded by hand. The program did not eliminate human coding, however it improved the efficiency of the coding process by keeping the study sample organized, allowing coders to view the coding key alongside the data, and automating code tracking.

The researchers conducted the content analysis of the news stories. In lieu of intercoder reliability, public justifiability was established.

> To achieve public justifiability, interpretive researchers let reviewers of their work see a random sample of their texts along with the texts' coding results, and if necessary, a justification of why the researchers obtained those results. In this way, reviewers can directly access the quality of interpretive researchers' coding. (Kenney, 2009, p. 235)

This alternative to intercoder agreement prevents the researchers' innate tendency to select the most obvious coding samples for reliability testing. "Public justifiability is just as scientifically legitimate as intercoder agreement, if not more" (Kenney, 2009, p. 235).

Results

The news stories were analyzed using a mix of a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Three national newspapers—*The New York Times* ($n = 25$), *USA Today* ($n = 6$), and *The Washington Post* ($n = 12$)—released a total of 43 news stories about Hurricane Ike's effect on the Gulf Coast between September 13 and October 13, 2008. The stories from each newspaper were analyzed as a set, and then the existing frames were compared to the other newspaper sets. The total number of articles found that

discuss Hurricane Ike versus the number of articles relevant to the study are shown in

Table 1.

Table 1

Articles Related to Hurricane Ike One Month after Landfall

Newspaper	Search Returns	After Filter
The New York Times	92	25
USA Today	39	6
The Washington Post	73	12

Note: The articles retrieved were written between September 13, 2008 and October 13, 2008.

As shown in Table 2, the human interest frame was the most common news

frame found in articles from *The New York Times*. The human interest frame was found

in 640 of the total 1598 sentences, making up 40.05% of the total news content. The

most common subcategory of the human interest frame was people impacted. Following

human interest are, in order, responsibility, economic consequences, conflict, and

morality frames. The least common frame was morality. A total of 14 sentences out of

1598 discussed morality, making up only .88% of the total news content.

Table 2
Percentage of News Frame Variables in The New York Times (n=1598)

Frame Indices	n	%
Conflict Frame	**65**	**4.07**
Personal Disagreements	26	1.63
Government/Organization Disagreements	21	1.31
Information	18	1.13
Human Interest Frame	**640**	**40.05**
People Impacted	460	28.79
Heroes	83	5.19
Human Perseverance	97	6.07
Economic Consequences Frame	**308**	**19.27**
Economy	56	3.5
Damage Assessment	108	6.76
Physical Damage from Storm	144	9.01
Morality Frame	**14**	**.88**
Religion	3	.19
Patriotism	7	.44
Looting	4	.25
Responsibility Frame	**355**	**22.22**
FEMA	23	1.44
Government Officials	89	5.57
Local Officials	237	14.83
Prevention Measures	6	.38

Note: "n" is the total number of sentences analyzed. The bolded numbers are the sum of the subcategories within each news frame. The subcategory numbers are listed beneath the bolded total of each category.

      As shown in Table 3, the responsibility frame was the most common frame in

USA Today news stories. The responsibility frame was found in 62 of the total 153

sentences, making up 40.52% of the total news content. The most common subcategory

of the responsibility frame was local officials. Following responsibility are, in order,

economic consequences, human interest, conflict, and morality frames. The least

common frame was morality. A total of 3 sentences out of 153 discussed morality,

making up 1.96 % of the total news content.

Table 3
Percentage of News Frame Variables in USA Today (n=153)

Frame Indices	n	%
Conflict Frame	**6**	**3.92**
Personal Disagreements	2	1.31
Government/Organization Disagreements	3	1.96
Information	1	.65
Human Interest Frame	**31**	**20.26**
People Impacted	25	16.34
Heroes	4	2.61
Human Perseverance	2	1.31
Economic Consequences Frame	**49**	**32.03**
Economy	13	8.50
Damage Assessment	4	2.61
Physical Damage from Storm	32	20.92
Morality Frame	**3**	**1.96**
Religion	3	1.96
Patriotism	0	0.00
Looting	0	0.00
Responsibility Frame	**62**	**40.52**
FEMA	12	7.84
Government Officials	10	6.54
Local Officials	40	26.14
Prevention Measures	0	0.00

Note: "n" is the total number of sentences analyzed. The bolded numbers are the sum of the subcategories within each news frame. The subcategory numbers are listed beneath the bolded total of each category.

As shown in Table 4, the responsibility frame was the most common frame used

in news stories in *The Washington Post*. The responsibility frame was found in 211 of

the total 569 sentences, making up 37.08% of the total news content. The most common

subcategory of the responsibility frame was local officials. Following responsibility are, in order, human interest, economic consequences, conflict, and morality frames. The least common frame was morality. A total of 6 sentences out of 569 discussed morality, making up only 1.05 % of the total news content.

Table 4
Percentage of News Frame Variables in The Washington Post (n=569)

Frame Indices	n	%
Conflict Frame	**84**	**14.77**
Personal Disagreements	22	3.87
Government/Organization Disagreements	54	9.49
Information	8	1.41
Human Interest Frame	**129**	**22.67**
People Impacted	113	19.86
Heroes	5	.88
Human Perseverance	11	1.93
Economic Consequences Frame	**95**	**16.70**
Economy	21	3.69
Damage Assessment	5	.88
Physical Damage from Storm	69	12.13
Morality Frame	**6**	**1.05**
Religion	4	.70
Patriotism	0	0.00
Looting	2	.35
Responsibility Frame	**211**	**37.08**
FEMA	7	1.23
Government Officials	80	14.06
Local Officials	117	20.56
Prevention Measures	7	1.23

Note: "n" is the total number of sentences analyzed. The bolded numbers are the sum of the subcategories within each news frame. The subcategory numbers are listed beneath the bolded total of each category.

Table 5 summarizes and compares frames between the three newspapers by compiling the data totals from Tables 2, 3, and 4. *The New York Times* was the only newspaper with the human interest frame dominating the majority of its news stories at 40.05 %. The responsibility frame dominated *USA Today* and *The Washington Post*, with 40.52 %and 37.08 %, respectively. Although the most common frame differed, all three newspapers shared the same fourth-ranked frame – conflict – and the same fifth-ranked frame – morality.

Table 5
Comparison of News Frame Percentages

Frames	NY Times	USA Today	Wash. Post
Conflict Frame	4.07	3.92	14.77
Human Interest Frame	**40.05**	20.26	22.67
Economic Consequences Frame	19.27	32.03	16.70
Morality Frame	.88	1.96	1.05
Responsibility Frame	22.22	**40.52**	**37.08**

Note: The bolded percentages indicate the most prevalent news frame in each newspaper.

Summary and Conclusion

This study demonstrated how the national print media presents information about a natural disaster through the use of agenda setting and framing. This study attempted to find the order of common news frames by print media coverage of Hurricane Ike based on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) ordered frames. By looking at three well-known national newspapers, this study found that the prevalence of the five common news frames differs among the newspapers.

The most common frame in *The New York Times* was human interest. The majority of the human interest frame consisted of news about the people impacted by Hurricane Ike. For example, one journalist wrote: "'It's very hard,' said Phoebe Crump, 33, a homemaker. 'You don't know where you are going to step. You can't see where your food's at. You don't know where your water is at. You can't see nothing'" (McKinley, 2008, p. 18).

The least common news frame in *The New York Times* was the morality frame. The most prevalent subcategory of the morality frame was patriotism. One news story depicted a man's loyalty to his country as being more important than evacuating for the hurricane:

> Walking with the American flag on a four-foot pole, Mr. Shumake said he had not broken his routine in seven years and, 'by golly,' he was not going to deviate now. Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, he said, he has not missed a day of his morning ritual of walking along the shore carrying the flag. 'This is nature meets the proud United States of America, and my US of A is going to win,' Mr. Shumake said. (Urbina, 2008, p. 15)

Neuman et al. (1992) explain that morality is the least common news frame because the "discourse of the media tends to be somewhat antiseptic – cleansed of much of the morality, empathy, and compassion of the political discourse of private conversations" (p. 76).

By implementing the human interest frame more often, stories in *The New York Times* evoke more of a response from readers than the responsibility frame. Instead of

placing blame, the media allow the readers to make their own demands for action by causing them to sympathize with the victims of the hurricane. As previous research found, the more helpless the victims, the more interested the public will be in that cause (Rozario, 2003). And by peaking the public's interest in people affected by a hurricane, the public expects someone to take responsibility for those accounts of human suffering (Moeller, 2006). For example, a personal account of suffering was portrayed in one of many residents of Galveston without basic necessities. "'I got no ice, no water, no electricity, no nothing,' said Maria Phillips, 25, of the Houston suburb of Baytown, echoing the comments of many others" (McKinley, 2008, p. 18).

If the responsibility frame had been more prevalent in *The New York Times*, the effect on readers would have differed. For example, a story was printed about FEMA's efforts to reach those affected by the storm around the same time as the story about Maria Phillips. "The Federal Emergency Management Agency has delivered to Galveston a large supply of emergency items, including bottled water, packaged meals and rolls of plastic sheeting" (Feuer, 2008, p. 11). By putting a human face to the story, the readers sympathize more and expect someone to account for that person's suffering (Moeller, 2006; Neuman et al., 1992; Rozario, 2003).

The most common frame in *USA Today* was the responsibility frame. The majority of the responsibility frame consisted of sentences that placed responsibility on local officials. For example, Galveston's mayor took responsibility by giving residents reassurance by discussing a budget and a timeline for the city's recovery. "Galveston Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas said the city's recovery will take three to five years. She said

the city has $14 million in reserves that can run operations for about three months"

(Leinwand & Dorell, 2008, p. 3A).

The least common news frame in *USA Today* was the morality frame. The only

subcategory of the morality frame found in the news stories was religion. One resident

who chose to ride out Hurricane Ike in her home made retrospective comment about her

decision to live on the coast, with a reference to Christianity. "'There's a passage in the

Bible that says woe be to those who live on the coast,' she says. 'I'm going to heed that

warning. ... I'm leaving'" (Bello, 2008, p. 3A).

The most common frame in *The Washington Post* was also the responsibility

frame. The most common subcategory of the news frame was local officials'

responsibility. For example, the writer of one *The Washington Post* story attributed

responsibility to local officials with a quote from the city manager of Galveston. "City

officials wanted most of the 45,000 residents who fled before the Sept. 13 storm to stay

away until more repairs could be made. 'We didn't promise paradise when you came

back here. We've got a lot of work to do. You've got a lot of work to do,' City Manager

Steve LeBlanc said" (Galveston Residents, 2008, p. A06).

The least common news frame in *The Washington Post* was the morality frame.

The most prevalent subcategory of the morality frame found in the news stories was

religion. By using a quote from a source about how she survived the storm in her house

on the coast, the reporter referenced religion in this news story. "She prayed all night.

'God said I was going to be okay,' she said. 'And I trusted that. I'm pretty sure He said,

'Don't do this again'" (Achenbach, 2008, p. A08).

As shown in the results, *USA Today* and *The Washington Post* have similar results. Responsibility is the main frame found in their news stories, and this could be related to their proximities to the hub of U.S. politics. *The Washington Post* is located in the heart of Washington D.C., less than three miles from Capitol Hill. *USA Today* is located in Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington D.C. The distance between the two newspaper headquarters is fifteen miles. Their closeness to the center of all politics and governmental issues could explain their tendencies to focus on the attribution of responsibility. Writers for both newspapers are physically around politics so placing blame is an everyday issue. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) found that a newspaper's tendency to frame responsibility in the news "suggests the importance and potential influence of political culture and context on the framing of problems and topics in the news (p. 106). The government is expected to supply solutions to social problems, and both newspapers are looking to the government to provide these answers in the form of framing their news stories with the responsibility frame.

According to Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study, the more sensational news outlets have a primary focus on relaying personal accounts, which results in a more prevalent human interest frame in their news stories. *The New York Times* was the only newspaper out of the three studied with the human interest frame as the most prevalent frame. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) would categorize *USA Today* and *The Washington Post* as serious newspapers because they emphasized responsibility after Hurricane Ike.

As shown in the results of this study, the topic of prevention measures was the least common subcategory of the responsibility frame. The lack of information about prevention measures taken prior to the storm was consistent with previous studies on natural disaster media coverage (Barnes et al., 2008; Miles & Morse, 2007; Tierney et al., 2006). The results of this study are consistent with Barnes et al.'s (2008) study reporting that newspapers focused more on governmental response after Hurricane Ike than on local efforts that were made to prepare for the storm. The media's inattention to the preparations that were made prior to the hurricane indicates that this is not an important measure to take (Barnes et al., 2008; Miles & Morse, 2007). In addition, news stories did not discuss what could be done differently in future natural disasters. This could be attributed to the fact that stories were analyzed one month after Hurricane so the storm's impact was still fresh on everyone's minds. With present problems to report on, the media's focus on preparation for future natural disasters could have occurred after the month of time analyzed in this study.

The media frame and report on natural disasters in differing ways, and as this study found, this can vary from newspaper to newspaper. As Robinson (1999) stated, the media "report crises in particular and often very different ways" (p. 306). Framing occurs in the time after a natural disaster because the media want to provide answers to the public's questions. All three newspapers analyzed in this study struggled to provide answers to the public in differing ways. *The New York Times* focused on individuals and groups of people impacted by Hurricane Ike to demonstrate to the public that someone needed to help them. *The Washington Post* and *USA Today* emphasized attribution of

responsibility in their news coverage because they wanted the public to know who was taking responsibility, or who needed to take responsibility, for the problems that arose after the hurricane hit. These differences in frames of the same event have implications for the readers of each newspaper. Differing frames have more importance in each newspaper, and this difference in importance transfers to the public's understanding. Even the most important public figures seek answers from the media, and policy makers rely on the media in times of crisis to know what needs to be done after a natural disaster (Vasterman et al., 2004). To do so, the media rely on agenda setting and framing to answer these questions as best as they can.

CHAPTER III

COMPARISON OF NEWS COVERAGE AND FRAMES BETWEEN HURRICANES

IKE AND KATRINA

Introduction

In the event of a crisis, the media are relied on the most for information, so the accuracy and amount of news coverage is essential for the sake of policymakers and the people involved (Barnes et al., 2008; Birkland, 1997; Olsen, Carstensen, & Høyen, 2003; Piotrowski & Armstrong, 1998; Vasterman, et al., 2005). The media are the links between the public and the events that occur (Oliver & Myers, 1999). When a natural disaster strikes, the distribution of information containing details of the hazard is crucial for local residents, organizations and governments. The media have "considerable responsibility and influence on how a community experiences and responds to a mass emergency" as the media have resources and connections through which they can disseminate information during the worst of times (Piotrowski & Armstrong, 1998, p. 343). Because of this immense responsibility, it is crucial to understand what fuels the media's portrayal of disaster events in the news, and why they place differing levels of importance on these events.

Soon after Hurricane Ike made landfall in the U.S., the national media's attention was "quickly diverted by the financial crisis and the presidential election" (Stelter, 2008, p. C8). Ike dropped down the list of national crises when Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy on September 15, 2008—only two days after Ike made landfall in the U.S. Due to coinciding national crises and a difference in the amount and style of news

reporting, Ike's effect on the national news scene paled in comparison to the dramatic portrait that was painted of Katrina in 2005 by U.S. reporters and news outlets.

Part of a larger study, this study compares the prevalent news frames found in the news and the amount of news coverage of Hurricane Ike to the news frames and amount of news coverage of Hurricane Katrina. In addition, this study compares the amount of news coverage given to Hurricane Ike in the month after the storm's landfall to two major national events of 2008: the financial crisis and the presidential election.

Literature Review

Agenda setting is best known as the media's ability to determine the public's agenda (McCombs & Ghanem, 2003). Through the concept of agenda setting, the media are gatekeepers of the information released to the public, and they establish the boundaries in which people discuss public events based on the amount and context of the information they publish (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Perceived importance from the media based on elements including news placement and the number of times a story is repeated are what make an event seem more important in the public's eye. The media's emphasis on certain stories over others plays a significant role in people's understanding perceived importance of that event (Stone et al., 1999; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000).

A related construct of agenda setting, framing is when the media selects, emphasizes and excludes information about an event to focus the public's perspective in a particular way about that event (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Framing and agenda setting as a pair have been researched and recognized in numerous fields ranging from basic mass communication to political science (McCombs & Ghanem, 2003). News

frames are "conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information" (Neuman et al., 1992 p. 60). Frames are established to help audiences interpret the often-overwhelming amount of information consumed daily (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Entman (1993) describes framing as a means to paint a more coherent picture of an object.

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

The media uses frames because they help the public to "determine the personal relevance of the issues, to provide linkages among issues, and to formulate arguments from which opinions could be drawn" (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 62). However, it is important to note that people do not mindlessly follow what the media tells them. "They actively filter, sort, and reorganize information in personally meaningful ways in the process of constructing an understanding of public issues" (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 77).

In a study specifically focused on politics in the news, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) analyzed newspaper and television stories for existence of framing and framing effects. They based their study on the five common news frames discovered by Neuman et al. (1992). Their results showed that attribution of responsibility was the most prevalent frame in the analyzed news stories, followed by conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality frames, respectively. The use of these five news frames depended on the news outlet, not the type of medium (television versus

print) used to distribute that message. The more serious newspapers and television programs employed the responsibility and conflict frames; whereas the sensational newspapers and television programs used the human interest frame the most. Neuman et al. (1992) also conducted a study of framing in political news. The researchers found that in reference to politics, audience members "alternatively accept, ignore, and reinterpret the dominant frames offered by the media" (p. 62). With applicability to politics, this similar process could be recreated for other news topics, such as natural disasters.

The amount of news coverage of a natural disaster is often determined by the type of disaster. According to a study conducted by Birkland (1997), hurricanes and earthquakes receive different amounts of news attention. Earthquakes garner more attention from the media due to the amount of damage and number of deaths, whereas hurricanes garner more news attention based on the rarity and scope of the storm (Birkland, 1997). The damage wreaked by an earthquake is "dramatic and very graphic," and the media consider this type of natural disaster to be more newsworthy based on this scale of devastation (Birkland, 1997, p. 53). Hurricane damage is considered less sensational by the media because it is widely dispersed across a large region, while an earthquake's damage is more concentrated to a specific location. However, a hurricane can be considered more newsworthy by the media if the size of the storm is "unusually great" (Birkland, 1997, p. 53). Birkland found that no matter the type of natural disaster, the degree of damage and deaths is strongly correlated to the amount of congressional activity in response to that disaster. Decision makers rely heavily on the news to provide

information about the natural disaster, and this can affect the amount of enacted policies and provided aid (Birkland, 1997).

There are many reasons why the media do not cover certain events, with one of them being that multiple newsworthy events conflict with each other. If a newspaper is lacking in the resources and column space to cover an event, then it will ultimately be pushed aside to make room for another newsworthy event. Specifically, humanitarian crises have to compete with disasters in other parts of the world — or the U.S. in this study — for news coverage (Natsios, 1996; Moeller, 2006). The minute amount of research existing about major events that grapple for the media's attention mentions a "news-attention cycle" or "issue-attention cycle" (Livingston, 1996). These terms imply that some events receive media attention on a cyclical basis. These events receive even less attention if the location of the disaster or event is far away from the people consuming media about the event. Livingston (1996) suggests that "the world does not have an appetite for more than one crisis at a time" (p. 84). Therefore, if a natural disaster occurs in an inconvenient part of the world or country, a lack of news coverage can be expected. On top of this happening is the possibility that the media will not cover an event because there is already enough strife in the news.

In terms of news coverage for disasters, the major determinant of whether or not that crisis will be covered is based on whether or not the story is sensational enough as compared to other disasters. In 2005, mudslides, a hurricane and a volcanic eruption devastated Guatemala, making it a major emergency and a story of interest to worldwide media (Moeller, 2006). However, an earthquake shook Pakistan and India the same day,

and the media's attention for Guatemala was quickly diverted the countries affected by the earthquake. "Those disasters that garner the most attention from the American media are not always the same disasters that governments, policy analysts, the NGO community or the insurance industry rank highest" (Moeller, 2006, p. 174). There has to be a certain level of sensationalism for American media to turn to their attention to a natural disaster or humanitarian crisis. According to Tierney, Bevc and Kuligowski (2006), the media's tendency to focus on reporting what is most newsworthy dictate their practices and judgments in the production of disaster news.

Many parts of the world experience what is called the "CNN effect." This term implies that the media are able to influence the amount of emergency assistance and decisions on public or foreign policy based on the amount of attention in the media given to a disaster (Olsen et al., 2003). Olsen contends that "it is commonly assumed that massive media coverage of a humanitarian crisis will lead to increased allocations of emergency funds" (p. 110). Recent research regarding the CNN effect's on emergency situations implies that there is "a strong CNN effect in instances of aid relief and deployment of troops as part of a non-coercive operation" (Robinson, 2002, p. 126). In many cases, the amount of media coverage correlates to the amount of political or economic action provided in repairing the damages of the crisis (Olsen, 2003; Robinson, 1999, 2002). Although sometimes immeasurable, there is a general consensus that media coverage plays an important role in stimulating political aid for humanitarian crises (Minear et al., 1996; Olsen et al., 2003; Robinson, 1999, 2002; Rothberg & Weiss, 1996).

The India cyclone in 1999 and the Mozambique floods in 2000 are demonstrations of the positive correlation between media coverage and political and financial aid post-natural disaster. Olsen et al. (2003) compared the post-disaster news coverage of a cyclone that hit parts of India in 1999 and the floods in Mozambique in 2000. The researchers examined the news content from 23 U.S. and European newspapers for three months after each event occurred. Olsen et al. (2003) found that 91 news articles were published about the India cyclone and 382 news stories were written about the Mozambique floods. The total value of humanitarian assistance for the India cyclone was $23,097,000, and the total for the Mozambique floods was $165,846,000 (Olsen et al., 2003). The two natural disasters were comparable in impact and were close in relation to time. However, Mozambique received four times more media attention and seven times more financial and humanitarian aid than those affected by the India cyclone. According to Olsen et al. (2003), the reason why Mozambique received more aid than India is the media's contributions. Due to the media's extensive coverage of the Mozambique, international audiences, —both individuals and governments—were more aware of the disaster and more willing to contribute to the restoration of the country. These examples confirm the argument that media coverage is essential to the assisted recovery and emergency aid to countries struck by disaster.

One of the biggest problems in disseminating accurate information after a natural disaster is the media's lack of specialists in disaster-related events. Most media outlets send science reporters who know nothing about disaster response, organizational communication or crisis communication (Lowrey et al., 2007; Tierney et al., 2006). In

the months following Katrina, Tierney et al. (2006) found that the majority of reporters lacked a basic understanding of emergency management issues and how society responds in the event of a natural disaster. Due to this misunderstanding of how people, organizations and governments function after a natural disaster, most journalists are unprepared to gather and report accurate, helpful information to the public. This problem was apparent in Katrina and in other past natural disasters. This is one possible reason why journalists rely on framing the news about a natural disaster.

Hurricane Katrina was the most expensive hurricane in U.S. history, and it was by far the most notorious due to the amount of news coverage the storm received. Katrina dominated the news when it struck the U.S. coast on August 28, 2005. The hurricane received the most news coverage of any disaster that year, tripling NBC's average annual viewers (Moeller, 2006). Katrina dominated U.S. domestic news in the last six months of 2005 because it was the most newsworthy event during that time. News organizations were not forced to choose between covering Katrina and sending reporters to cover another major national event, unlike the case with Hurricane Ike.

The Tyndall Report, a website that monitors the weekday nightly television newscasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC, releases an annual report of the top news stories based on the amount of news coverage that year. According to the Tyndall Report's (2005) *Year in Review 2005*, Hurricane Katrina was ranked the most covered news story of the year. To finish out the top ten news stories of 2005, the list continues with the war in Iraq, elections in Iraq, the earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia, the death of Pope John Paul II, the London bombings, reconstruction efforts in Iraq, the legal case of Terry

Schiavo, the leaking of a CIA agent's name, and suicide bombings in Iraq, respectively

(Tyndall Report, 2005).

Coupled with the fact that nothing major was occurring at the same time in the

U.S. and the types of frames being employed by national media, Katrina dominated the

news for the remainder of 2005. Some of the frames consistently found in news coverage

post-Katrina were exaggerations of lawlessness and depictions of New Orleans as being

a warzone (Tierney et al., 2006). "Initial media coverage of Katrina's devastating

impacts was quickly replaced by reporting that characterized disaster victims as

opportunistic looters and violent criminals and that presented individual and group

behavior following the Katrina disaster through the lens of civil unrest" (Tierney et al.,

2006, p. 60–61). One of the strategies employed by the media was the constant use of

words such as "victim" and "survivor" (Davis & French, 2008). Initially, the media

portrayed the people affected by Katrina, specifically those in New Orleans, as being

helpless and not in control of their situations. However, this strategy backfired on the

Katrina victims, and the blame was soon directed at them for being unable to remedy

their situations (Davis & French, 2008). Images and words describing New Orleans as

being worse than it was further enthralled the public, and a desire for more news content

regarding the status of Katrina victims was fueled by the media.

Aside from media blunders, the major problem after Hurricane Katrina was

government response. Local and federal government response and supply of aid was

inadequate and untimely, and the public looked to the media to provide answers for what

went wrong (Tierney et al., 2006). Brunken (2006) found that the news in the aftermath

of Hurricane Katrina was full of conflict because the media focused on the lack of

communication and slow response of federal, state, and local authorities. The public

wanted answers as to why aid was taking so long to reach people impacted by Hurricane

Katrina, and the media attributed responsibility by placing blame on the government.

Research regarding the news coverage after Hurricane Ike is very limited. This

may be partly because relatively little time has passed since Ike's destruction in

September 2008. Concrete research regarding agenda setting and the frames that

appeared in the news coverage in the months following Ike is virtually nonexistent. The

only mentions of the amount or type of news stories that followed Ike were in news

stories themselves. In an article ran by *USA Today* in April 2009, a local resident from

the Galveston area whose house was destroyed by Ike said, "No one knows about us and

our problems" (Keen, 2009, p. 03a). He is referencing the lack of media coverage about

the storm and the destruction that was left behind.

As for Hurricane Ike, the storm's presence in nightly newscasts was virtually

nonexistent. Hurricane Ike did not make the Tyndall Report's (2008) top 10, or even the

top 20, news stories in the *Year in Review 2008*. In order, the top ten news stories of

2008 were: Barack Obama's presidential campaign, John McCain's presidential

campaign, Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, the financial industry's federal

bailout, the price of crude oil and gasoline, NYSE-NASDAQ market action, U.S. combat

in Iraq, the troubles of the automobile industry, the Summer Olympics in Beijing, and

the nomination of GOP vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. The only natural

disaster-related stories to make the top 20 were unrelated to Hurricane Ike. Flooding

along the Mississippi River was ranked as number 12, and tornado season as a whole was ranked as number 18. Clearly, Hurricane Ike was not on the radar of media giants such as ABC, CBS, and NBC.

The amount and level of importance of the top news stories of 2008 differ greatly from the top news stories of 2005. The presidential election and financial crisis dominated five of the top six news stories of 2008, while a miscellaneous collection of international stories filled the top 10 of 2005. According to Fleetwood (2006), Hurricane Katrina dominated the news during the latter half of 2005 because viewership tends to be low during that time of year. Katrina hit during a lull in terms of newsworthy events and at the end of summer with a record number of hurricanes. The media had spent the summer reporting on natural disasters, so networks were more than willing to send reporters to New Orleans to cover another natural disaster—Hurricane Katrina (Fleetwood, 2006). "Weather becomes the big media event, similar to anticipation around the Super Bowl or other risk-involved live events (Fleetwood, 2006, p. 772).

Although Ike and Katrina were two different storms, they were similar in size and destruction, with Ike ranked as number three and Katrina ranked as number one on the list of costliest hurricanes in U.S. history (Insurance Information Institute, 2009). Both hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast, and they occurred within three years of each other. The total of direct fatalities from Katrina was 1,320 people, while Ike's fatalities as a direct result from the storm was 60 people (Insurance Information Institute, 2009). Although Katrina topped Ike in the financial amount of damage and total number of deaths, Ike's damaged was more widespread across the country. Katrina's damage was

found in six states, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Ike's damage affected nine states, including Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas (Insurance Information Institute, 2009).

The amount of news coverage can impact the amount of aid given after a natural disaster, as shown from the CNN effect (Olsen et al., 2003). Katrina and Ike's differences in the amount of news coverage correlates similarly to the amount of aid donated after each storm. Katrina garnered more than $100 billion in federal aid and $130 million in private donations, while Ike received only $2 billion in federal aid and around $3 million in private donations (Keen, 2009; Robelen & Klein, 2007). Celebrities, politicians and organizations flocked to provide aid to Katrina victims, but Ike saw no such occurrence (Keen, 2009).

In summary, agenda setting is the media's ability to place a level of importance on news events by the amount of news coverage and the placement of the story, whether in print, online or televised news (McCombs, 2005). Often in news coverage of natural disasters, certain events receive more attention than others, and this can depend both on the type of storm and on whether or not there are coinciding news events. Both the public and policymakers depend on the media to provide crucial information about a natural disaster, and this can affect the amount of aid provided post-storm. After a natural disaster strikes, the amount of news coverage is significant because "the news media are the primary conduits of information from the disaster scene to decision makers" (Birkland, 1997, p. 53). Hurricanes Ike and Katrina were similar in many ways,

but based on the Tyndall Report (2005; 2008), the amount of news coverage of the two individual hurricanes was starkly different.

Methodology of the Study

This study is based on the results from the content analysis explained in the previous chapter that investigated the recurring themes and the amount of news coverage of Hurricane Ike post-storm. After establishing the order and amount of the frames in news about Hurricane Ike, the frames were then compared to Brunken's (2006) ordered frames in Hurricane Katrina news. In addition to a comparison between the frames, this study examined the amount of total news coverage of each hurricane. This study also evaluated the national media presence of Ike by comparing the amount of news coverage of the hurricane to two coinciding national events: the financial crisis and the presidential election. This study is part of a larger study and all data was collected in a single process.

This study was based on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study of five common deductive frames that appear in the news. The frames used were conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. Using Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) ordered news frames, Brunken (2006) analyzed four newspapers in the five weeks immediately following Hurricane Katrina's landfall. This study compares Brunken's (2006) ordered frames to the ordered frames in Hurricane Ike news found in the previous chapter.

News stories were retrieved using LexisNexis Academic database. Print news stories were chosen instead of broadcast news coverage because of their broad

circulation and their ability to influence the elite (Putnam, 2000). The stories were uploaded to Weft QDA, a content analysis software, and then coded by hand. The researchers conducted the content analysis of the news stories. In lieu of intercoder reliability, public justifiability was established.

When selecting a similar study to compare results, the main concern was finding a study with similar objectives. Brunken's (2006) study analyzed frames in Hurricane Katrina news by using the same common frames implemented by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). In addition, the study analyzed solely print media. It is important to confine the analysis of news coverage of an event within the same type of media. As Neuman et al. (1992) explain that "all of the words spoken in a typical evening newscast (consisting of about twenty-two and a half minutes of actual news) would not fill the front page of a newspaper" (p. 51). Therefore, it was crucial not to compare the frames found in Hurricane Ike print news with frames found in televised newscasts about Hurricane Katrina. Due to the similarities between the frames and medium analyzed, Brunken's results were chosen to compare to the results from the Hurricane Ike study.

The scope of this study was limited to news articles from three of the top five largest circulated newspapers in the U.S.: *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Washington Post*. Out of all national newspapers, *USA Today* is second with 1,826,622 in circulation. *The New York Times* came in third with 951,063 in circulation, and *The Washington Post* came in fifth with 578,482 (Shea, 2010). For this study, a difference in perspective was desired to determine levels of agenda setting and to accurately examine the amount of news coverage and recurring themes in Hurricanes Ike. In Brunken's

(2006) study, the researcher analyzed news stories from two national newspapers and two local newspapers. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were the two national newspapers used in this study and Brunken's (2006) study.

The study was based on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study of five common deductive frames that appear in the news. Frames were coded using the same instrument in Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study. The sentences were coded based on a series of 20 dichotomous-orientated response questions (Appendix A). The coded sentences were then placed into subcategories of each frame to signify the news items associated with the frame. For this part of the study, the results were then compared to Brunken's (2004) ordered frames to examine the difference in news coverage of Hurricanes Ike and Katrina.

In addition to comparing the frames, this study compared the amount of news coverage both hurricanes received. This was achieved by using the LexisNexis Academic database and searching the same three national newspapers: *The New York Times, USA Today,* and *The Washington Post*. The search term used were "Hurricane Ike" for the Hurricane Ike-related stories, and "Hurricane Katrina" for the Hurricane Katrina-related stories. No filters were set for this search because this part of the study evaluated the volume of news stories about each hurricane, not the specific items within those news stories.

One additional comparison was made in this study to determine the influences of coinciding national events. A search in the LexisNexis Academic database was conducted in the month following Hurricane Ike to determine the number of articles

about the financial crisis and the presidential election. The search term used for the 2008 economic crisis was "financial crisis." The search term used for the 2008 presidential election was "presidential election" and "Obama OR McCain" to specify that the researchers wanted the search to return only news stories pertaining to the presidential candidates. To determine whether or not the news story was applicable to this study, special filters were set prior to the search for selecting the news stories. LexisNexis Academic database has the option of using special filters to narrow down searches. For searches pertaining to the financial crisis, a filter was chosen with the Index Code name of "Economic Crisis." For searches pertaining to the presidential election, a filter was chosen with the Index Code name of "U.S. Presidential Candidates 2008."

<center>Results</center>

As stated earlier, the news stories were analyzed using a mix of a quantitative and qualitative content analysis as part of a larger study. After a filtering process, it was determined that three elite national newspapers—*The New York Times* ($n = 25$), *USA Today* ($n = 6$), and *The Washington Post* ($n = 12$)—released a total of 43 news stories about Hurricane Ike's effect on the Gulf Coast between September 13 and October 13, 2008. The stories from each newspaper were analyzed as a set, and then the existing frames were compared to the other newspapers. Table 6 displays the results as discussed in the previous chapter.

Table 6
Comparison of News Frame Percentages in Hurricane Ike News

Frames	NY Times	USA Today	Wash. Post
Conflict Frame	4.07	3.92	14.77
Human Interest Frame	**40.05**	20.26	22.67
Economic Consequences Frame	19.27	32.03	16.70
Morality Frame	.88	1.96	1.05
Responsibility Frame	22.22	**40.52**	**37.08**

Note: The bolded percentages indicate the most prevalent news frame in each newspaper.

When comparing these results to Brunken's (2006) results, it is important to note that these results are not compiled into one ranking, as Brunken did with the results from the four newspapers analyzed. As stated earlier, in this study, the frames from each newspaper were kept separate to make a comparison between the three newspapers. In order of prevalence, Brunken's (2006) five common news frames were human interest, conflict, attribution of responsibility, economic consequences, and morality. As clearly shown, none of the three national newspapers has the same order of frames as Brunken's (2006) ordered frames. *The New York Times* shares the closest order of frames to Brunken's (2006), with human interest first, then responsibility, economic consequences, conflict and morality.

Table 7 displays the results of the LexisNexis Academic search of Hurricane Ike and Hurricane Katrina news articles. The time frame of the search was kept to one month after each hurricane made landfall. For the content analysis conducted in the previous chapter, the Hurricane Ike articles were narrowed down based on relevance to

that study, but for this search, no filters were applied to the results. The researchers

wanted a basic comparison of the total amount of news coverage. The table shows the

calculated difference of news stories between the two hurricanes.

Table 7
Articles Related to Ike and Katrina One Month after Landfall

Newspaper	Hurricane Ike*	Hurricane Katrina**	Difference
The New York Times	92	1042	950
USA Today	39	501	462
The Washington Post	73	1195	1122

Note: *The Hurricane Ike articles retrieved were written between September 13, 2008 and October 13, 2008. **The Hurricane Katrina articles retrieved were written between August 28, 2005 and September 28, 2005.

As shown in Table 8, a search was conducted to compare the total amount of

news coverage for each topic. All three topics were current issues during the search time

frame, as demonstrated by the amount of news articles retrieved for each topic.

Hurricane Ike received the least amount of news coverage out of the three topics with

204 total articles written by the three newspapers analyzed. The 2008 presidential

election garnered the most news coverage with 798 total articles. Following closely

behind the election, the financial crisis was covered by the three newspapers in a total of

765 articles.

Table 8
Comparison of News Stories One Month after Hurricane Ike

News Topic	NY Times	USA Today	Wash. Post
Hurricane Ike	92	39	73
Presidential Election	312	160	326
Financial Crisis	378	95	292

Note: All articles retrieved were written between September 13 and October 13, 2008.

When conducting the content analysis of frames in Hurricane Ike news, the researchers found sentences that did not pertain to the five news frames being analyzed. These sentences did not specifically fit into one of the five frames from the content analysis because the news was not relevant to Ike's effects in Texas. The three newspapers gave differing amounts of attention to external damages in other states. In *The New York Times* news, 5.51 percent of the total articles was unrelated to Hurricane Ike's presence in Texas. In *USA Today*, .65 percent was categorized as unrelated news, and in *The Washington Post*, 7.73 percent was categorized as unrelated news about other states.

Summary and Conclusion

This study offered a comparison of how two different hurricanes were presented by the national media to the public. Based on the findings of the larger study, this study took those results and applied them to previously discovered frames found in Hurricane Katrina news, finding that the order of frames differed between the two hurricanes. This study compared the news coverage of Hurricanes Ike and Katrina and found that Katrina received much more media attention than Ike. Hurricane Ike occurred simultaneously with the presidential election and financial bailout, and the amount of news coverage of Ike was significantly less than the other two national events. In addition, this study looked at the amount of external news coverage that existed outside of the five common news frames analyzed.

The most common news frame in the Hurricane Katrina study was the human interest frame. In the Hurricane Ike study, human interest came first in *The New York Times*, third in *USA Today,* and second in *The Washington Post*. An example of the human interest frame that appeared most often in Hurricane Katrina stories and Hurricane Ike stories from *The New York Times* is one of the many news stories that chronicled people losing their homes and belongings. Nadine Hernandez's house was destroyed by Hurricane Ike's storm surge. "'I didn't expect this,' said Ms. Hernandez, 78, a retired caretaker, as her daughter, Janie Padilla, hugged and comforted her. 'I really didn't'" (Evans, 2008, p. 18).

The second most common news frame in the Hurricane Katrina study was the conflict frame. In the study about Hurricane Ike news, conflict came fourth in the ranking of frames in all three newspapers. For example, *The Washington Post* wrote about tension arising between FEMA and the mayor of Houston over the delivery of supplies post-Ike:

> 'We expect FEMA to deliver these supplies, and we will hold them accountable,' Houston Mayor Bill White said at a televised news conference. FEMA Administrator R. David Paulison forcefully rebutted the criticism, saying the agency had sent 5 million pre-packaged meals and 3 million bottles of water to Texas, with 7 million more meals on the way. 'We have not been slow to deliver anything,' said Paulison. Texas officials, he said, were responsible for coordinating distribution of the supplies to residents." (Richburg & Achenbach, 2008, p. A02)

Conflict in Hurricane Katrina news was more directed at local, state, and federal governments and organizations that were not providing adequate help (Brunken, 2006). There appears to be little of this conflict in Hurricane Ike news. For the most part, the conflict frame appeared in relation to personal grumblings at neighbors or between governmental organizations. The conflict frame was expected to appear more frequently than it did. This could be attributed to the short time frame that was analyzed. Problems with the government's reaction to Katrina were immediately apparent so the media reported on them. With Hurricane Ike, if there were major problems with the government's reaction, they were not immediately known in the month following Hurricane Ike because the media did not discuss them.

Although the use of conflict was not consistent between the two, there was one recurring similarity between the two hurricanes. News stories presented conflict in the form of an accusatory tone regarding the amount of attention given to Hurricane Katrina victims versus Hurricane Ike victims. "'We're still hearing about Katrina victims, but no one seems to know about this,' said Mike Latta, a rancher and rice farmer in this agricultural community about 10 miles from the Gulf Coast. 'It's total devastation'" (Murphy, 2008, p. 17). There were several instances where the media featured public figures and people displaced by the storm expressing frustrations at the lack of attention. One story featured Skip Valet, a news director from a Houston TV news station writing an email to *NBC Nightly News* anchor Brian Williams. Valet wrote in the email, "'I'm hearing from friends around the U.S. that surprisingly little information about Ike is being broadcast or printed" (Stelter, 2008, p. 8). It would appear that a conflict of

information occurred more in the news coverage of Hurricane Ike, and the conflict over governmental response occurred more frequently in Hurricane Katrina news.

The vast difference in the amount of news coverage of Hurricane Ike could be explained by the "news-attention cycle" as described in previous literature (Livingston, 1996). Hurricane Ike struck at a time when the financial crisis hit and there was an upcoming presidential election. A financial storm that would affect the majority of U.S. citizens took precedence over a physical storm that impacted those living on or near the Texas coast. As Livingston (1996) explained, "the world does not have an appetite for more than one crisis at a time" (p. 84). Both national events showed up in numerous stories written about Hurricane Ike. For example, one of the stories featured in *The New York Times* touched on President Bush's visit to the Texas coast but emphasized the financial crisis. "A former Texas governor, Mr. Bush took a rapid helicopter tour of the devastated areas around Galveston, then jetted back to Washington to meet with economic advisers about a different sort of storm on Wall Street" (McKinley, 2008, p. 18). This diversion of attention away from the hurricane and in the direction of the economic crisis could be a result of location. The newspapers that covered Hurricane Ike are physically closer to the financial storm on Wall Street and the talks of a bailout in Washington D.C. than they are to the Texas coast.

In addition, the presidential election was just around the corner, and the newspapers covered this event extensively. However, this was expected as a presidential election occurs once every four years and hurricane season occurs every year. As the *Economist* explains, "The rest of the country hardly registered the chaos. Ike came

ashore two days before Lehman Brothers went bankrupt on September 15th 2008, and less than two months before the presidential election" (Building Back, 2010, p. 1). No events of this proportion occurred at the same time as Hurricane Katrina (Tyndall Report, 2005). Also, Hurricane Katrina occurred during a relatively quiet time for the media (Fleetwood, 2006). The media only had so much attention to spread around with several major national events occurring simultaneously as Hurricane Ike.

Contributing to this lack of coverage, more serious news outlets tend to predominantly cover political and economic issues (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). As discussed in the previous chapter, *The New York Times* could be categorized as more sensational than serious based on the focus on human interest frames. The newspaper had more articles covering Hurricane Ike than the other two newspapers analyzed. In addition, the newspaper covered the presidential election less than *The Washington Post* so this coincides with the sensational vs. serious news outlets. However, *The New York Times* covered the financial crisis the most out of the three newspapers, but this could be attributed to the newspapers location to Wall Street. The more serious newspapers, *USA Today* and *The Washington Post*, followed suit and covered the political and economic stories more than the sensational stories. In all, Hurricane Ike fell short in order of importance when compared to the presidential election and the financial bailout. Due to the media's minute amount of coverage of Hurricane Ike and emphasis on the two other national events, this level of importance transferred to the public's perceived level of importance (Stone et al., 1999; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000). The public's agenda was set by the media's agenda and Hurricane Ike was not a high-priority item.

This study also looked at the amount of news coverage discussing Ike's effects in states outside of the hurricane's landfall. An example of external damage was when *The Washington Post* reported on storms stemming from Hurricane Ike in the Midwest region of the U.S. "Nearly 1.5 million homes and businesses in the Midwest lost electricity over the weekend as Ike and a soaking storm from the west delivered a double whammy" (Richburg & Achenbach, 2008, p. A02). Not to discredit the damage from Ike in outside states, but the people directly affected or displaced by Hurricane Ike were expected to take precedence over those who lost electricity or received rain over the weekend from the remnants of the storm. Although this news coverage is unrelated to the five analyzed news frames in this study, the amount of national news coverage focusing on outside regions is significant because in some cases, the percentages are higher than several of the analyzed frame totals. As demonstrated in previous literature (Stone et al., 1999; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000), the media's choice to spend time discussing states indirectly affected by Ike has implications on the cognitive processes of their readers. By choosing to spend space in the newspaper on people in the Midwest who received a large amount of rain rather than on the people living on the Texas coast who lost homes, these newspapers are de-emphasizing the importance of people displaced from the storm.

The results of this study support the notion that "the world does not have an appetite for more than one crisis at a time" (Livingston, 1996, p. 84). The vast difference in the amount of news coverage of Hurricane Ike, the presidential election, and the economic crisis from September 13 to October 13, 2008 is an indication that the media

placed emphasis on the latter two news event over Hurricane Ike. Comparing the caliber and number of national newsworthy events after Hurricane Ike to the national events after Hurricane Katrina provides reason for why the media concentrated their efforts on Katrina more than Ike. Hurricane Katrina was considered more newsworthy by the media because the high death toll and large amount of damage was unusual for the average hurricane (Birkland, 1997).

The media's lack of attention to Hurricane Ike had major repercussions for the amount of aid received (Olsen et al., 2003). People throughout the U.S. received considerably less news about Hurricane Ike than they did about Hurricane Katrina. This group of people included everyone from policy makers to individual donors. The lack of attention from the media negatively impacted the amount of federal and private aid. As stated in the literature review, Katrina received more than $100 billion in federal aid and $130 million in private donations, while Ike received $2 billion in federal aid and around $3 million in private donations (Keen, 2009; Robelen & Klein, 2007). These findings show that serious consequences arise when the media does not provide adequate news coverage in the aftermath of a hurricane. Organizations and local authorities need to raise awareness about their conditions after a hurricane by making contacts with members of the media. If enough attention is not garnered after a hurricane, the recovery process will be much more difficult because of insufficient funding. Although sometimes incalculable, there is a general agreement that media coverage plays an important role in stimulating political aid for humanitarian crises (Minear et al., 1996; Olsen et al., 2003; Robinson, 1999, 2002; Rothberg & Weiss, 1996).

When a hurricane hits, the dissemination of information containing details of the hazard is crucial for local residents, organizations and governments. Members of the media have "considerable responsibility and influence on how a community experiences and responds to a mass emergency" because of their vital connections and resources (Piotrowski & Armstrong, 1998, p. 343). It is important that journalists spread important news items after a hurricane so the local community has adequate information about its current state and so the entire nation can be aware of the situation. This study demonstrated the need for ample information after a hurricane by showing that Hurricane Ike received considerably less news coverage than Hurricane Katrina. In addition, the presidential election and financial crisis diverted the media's attention away from Hurricane Ike, resulting in the public's unawareness and deficient aid.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

In the days and weeks following a major natural disaster, the media are responsible for disseminating vital information to the public. It is important to understand how the media portrays the natural disaster and the extent to which agenda setting and framing are used in explaining the recent crisis. This study provides insight into how the media portrays a natural disaster to the public by looking specifically at the media's use of agenda setting and framing.

News coverage of a natural disaster is different from typical news coverage because it often involves the loss of life, displacement of residents, impact on businesses and the economy, and the destruction of property. Hurricane news coverage should be timely and as accurate as possible because the public often makes decisions based on what the media report after a disaster. In this time of crisis, the media, both intentionally and unintentionally, set the public's agenda.

Frames help the audience interpret the news, and the type of frames implemented by the media can impact the public's understanding of an event. In addition, the amount of media attention given to an event can determine the public's perceived importance of that issue. This study found that in the event of a natural disaster, the media place differing emphases on frames based on the newspaper reporting the news. Frames found in *The New York Times* were, in order, human interest, responsibility, economic consequences, conflict, and morality. News frames found in *USA Today* were responsibility first, then economic consequences, human interest, conflict, and morality.

Frames found in *The Washington Post* were responsibility, human interest, economic consequences, conflict, and morality, respectively.

This study's comparison of the frames to Hurricane Katrina frames revealed that the government's response to a natural disaster could determine the frames employed by the media. In addition, the presence of other major national events in the news can undermine the media's coverage of the disaster.

Limitations

While this study offered conclusions about the media coverage of Hurricane Ike, there were some limitations. People use different types of media to receive the news, and this study could not evaluate every medium used post-Hurricane Ike. With technology ever changing, media consumers often use Internet and television in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Words can go only go so far in describing physical devastation so visuals are heavily relied on by the media to convey the nature of the disaster to the public. An additional limitation is the amount of articles analyzed from each newspaper. The totals of articles released by each newspaper vary so the frequency of frames could differ based on the uneven amounts.

Implications

This study showed that three national newspapers differed in their framing of Hurricane Ike, which means that readers of each newspaper are reading stories with differing focuses. It is important that readers know the frames employed by the newspapers they read. As shown in this study, newspapers can have differing focuses and do not use identical frames to interpret the same event. As explained in the literature

of this study, frames are used by the media to "convey, interpret, and evaluate information" for the public (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 60). If the public is receiving altered versions of the same event, especially in the case of a crisis, this has serious implications for individuals' grasp of what truly happened. These altered versions of the natural disaster are also read by individuals who play a big role in policymaking, distributing aid, or any other facet of the recovery process after a natural disaster.

The results of the study are significant for local organizations involved in recovery efforts after a natural disaster. If local organizations are aware that their region is not receiving attention from the media, then they could have the opportunity to be more proactive about disseminating information. A lack of national attention can negatively impact recovery aid and funding (Olsen, 2003; Robinson, 1999, 2002). Aid organizations should keep the results of this study in mind when planning communication strategies for a future natural disaster.

This study also has implications for the journalists who write the news stories. It is difficult to tell where frames take their form, and who decides which frames to use. The writer, the editor, and the company that owns the newspaper can all shape the focus of the story. The news stories analyzed in this study may correlate to the journalist who wrote the story. This study did not examine the news stories based on the author, but an analysis would provide insight into the framing tendencies of the authors.

Journalism teachers should take the results of this study and interpret them into lessons in the classroom. Students learn the basics of journalism such as writing, editing,

and interviewing sources; however, educators should also make students aware of agenda setting and framing in the news. Journalists are taught to remain as objective as possible but they are not necessarily shown the ways that news can be biased. Courses specifically teaching media theories such as agenda setting and framing could make these future journalists more conscious of these elements in their writing.

Recommendations

Results of this study provide clues as to how the media operate after a natural disaster, and they also open up doors for future research possibilities. A modification of this study could be applied to a number of mediums. A visual communication study could be implemented to evaluate the media's use of visual agenda setting post-Hurricane Ike. A content analysis of both the images used by the media and their corresponding captions would provide insight into how the media explains the phenomena of a hurricane. An in-depth analysis of these images would provide clarity on the recurring themes and any evidence of framing in visual form.

This study focused on one side of framing – the media's use of framing. A look at the other side – the public's understanding of the news – could provide more insight into the phenomena of attribute agenda setting and framing. Personal interviews or focus groups could provide valuable, in-depth qualitative research about the public's perceptions of the news around them. Similar to Iyengar and Simon's (1993) study of the Persian Gulf crisis, the study could potentially show what the public perceives to be the most important issue in news after a natural disaster. The time that has passed since Hurricane Ike is too much to evaluate the public's opinion of the news coverage. The

study would have to be conducted in the following weeks after an immediate natural disaster so the news stories would be fresh on the respondents' minds. A look into the public's perspective of the news coverage of natural disasters would greatly complement the results of this study.

To compare the results of this study to Brunken's (2006) results more accurately, a content analysis of Hurricane Katrina news could be redone to examine individual newspapers' use of the five common news frames. Brunken's (2006) provided the order of the five common frames but did not separate the results by newspaper. A comparison could then be made between each individual newspaper's coverage of both hurricanes. In addition, a similar study could be conducted to compare U.S. and foreign media coverage of the same event. For example, global media outlets heavily covered the earthquake and resulting tsunami in Japan for weeks following the disaster in March 2011. An analysis of the news coverage of this tragedy could provide insight into how foreign and U.S. media outlets portray the same natural disaster.

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APPENDIX A

CODING INSTRUMENT

Attribution of Responsibility
1. Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the problem?
2. Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?
3. Does the story suggest solutions to the problem/issue?
4. Does the story suggest that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for the issue-problem?
5. Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?

Human Interest frame
6. Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?
7. Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings or outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?
8. Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?
9. Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?
10. Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?

Conflict frame
11. Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?
12. Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?
13. Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?
14. Does the story refer to winners and losers?

Morality frame
15. Does the story contain any moral messages?
16. Does the story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?
17. Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?

Economic frame
18. Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?
19. Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?
20. Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

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