INFLUENCES ON ETHICS IN NEWS PRODUCTION

The Socio-Cultural and Political Influences on the Mass Media in Malaysia

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Leicester

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ABSTRACT

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by
HALIMAHTON SHAARI

The thesis examines the approaches to the study of ethics in journalism, with emphasis on the concept of ethics as defined and practised in the socio-cultural and political context of Malaysia. The media environment with its social and cultural sensitivities provides an insight into the journalistic practices in the process of news production. Studies on media ethics have long been dominated by the moral-philosophical perspective which views ethics as a personal choice and decision. This viewpoint is relevant in the Western libertarian media system where personal freedom is a right taken for granted. However, it is too narrow to throw light on the influences on ethics in other media structures. In these media systems, other socio-cultural and political factors intertwine to influence the ethical conduct of news workers. The thesis contends that the practices of ethics in the Malaysian media extends beyond organisational norms and media professionalism as defined by the West.

The data for the study was collected by analysing three case studies covered in two mainstream newspapers in Malaysia, the New Straits Times and Utusan Malaysia; newsroom observations and interviews with the Group Editors, editors and journalists of the said newspapers. The data leads to an examination of the political and social context that is unique to Malaysia which plays a significant role in influencing the ethical conduct of news workers. The study draws on the political economy approach, the cultural studies perspective and the social organisation of news as the framework to examine the internal and external factors that influence ethical decision-making in news production. The routines and practices of these media organisations are examined to gauge how they are affected by the political/government elite which sometimes wields more power than any other factor to influence media output. Socio-cultural elements originating from the religious and cultural values and norms are also analysed to assess their impact on ethical conduct. These socio-political factors intertwine with various regulatory mechanisms like codes of ethics, media laws and regulations to affect ethical behaviour.

Studying the socio-political context in which media ethics is practised has shown that though some ethical principles are universal, others have to be appropriated to the wider social and political environment in which the media operate. This knowledge and acceptance that all social cultures have their own traditions of norms and values that guide communication is necessary to expedite interaction across cultures.
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<td>ASEAN</td>
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<td>ASNE</td>
<td>American Society of Newspaper Editors</td>
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<tr>
<td>BERNAMA</td>
<td>Berita Nasional Malaysia (Malaysian National News Agency)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>Internal Security Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITM</td>
<td>Institut Teknologi MARA (MARA Institute of Technology)</td>
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<td>MCA</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese Association</td>
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<td>MIC</td>
<td>Malaysian Indian Congress</td>
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<td>MPI</td>
<td>Malaysian Press Institute</td>
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<td>NEP</td>
<td>National Economic Policy</td>
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<td>NST</td>
<td>New Straits Times</td>
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<td>NUJ</td>
<td>National Union of Journalists</td>
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<td>PAS</td>
<td>Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTM</td>
<td>Radio Television Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>Utusan Malaysia</td>
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<td>UMNO</td>
<td>United Malays National Organisation</td>
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Halimahton Shaari
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Studying the socio-cultural and political factors that influence the ethical conduct of news workers means acknowledging that virtually all cultures have their own tradition of norms and values that guide communications behaviour in a society. These values are generally considered more fundamental than the demands of media professionalism or media codes of ethics, deriving their obligation from the normative prescriptions of right and wrong of particular cultures. To understand these socio-cultural and political factors would compel one to study sociological features like the "professional ethos" and "the public philosophy" (White, 1989: 45) which would provide an insight into the socio-cultural and political context of a professional ethos of communication. This would mean "going into" (White, 1989:45) a culture to understand the perception of the actors in that culture. For example, "going into" the libertarian tradition of media ethics would enable one to understand that the ethos of media professionals is characterised by individualism, whereas in a society with cultural-political control, there is a stronger sense of obligation to the polity and cultural heritage.

Despite this knowledge that to understand ethics one has to analyse the socio-political symbols, studying ethics is nevertheless not an easy task. This is because ethics is based on the concept of values or concept of right and wrong which has made it subjective and very much dependent on the interpretations of individuals. The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek words 'ethos' (customs) or 'eetikos' (the study of the principles that ought to underline behaviour). The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (and other dictionaries like Oxford, Chambers, Collins, etc.) defines ethics as "values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness or wrongness of certain actions" (Bugeja, 1996).

Because human beings hold different values which may be the result of socio-cultural and political environments in which they live, human communication poses ethical implications for the simple reason that ethical judgement is viewed as individual personal opinion, and therefore, has no final right or wrong answer. Discussions on ethics are usually not conclusive due to the different values and interpretations that people have. Tensions potentially exist between 'is' and 'ought', between the actual and the ideal : what an individual does and what the society judges s/he ought to do may differ. There may be a conflict between a communication technique that one thinks is successful and the judgement
that the technique ought not to be used because it is ethically suspect (Johannesen, 1990).

The objective of this thesis is to study the different factors that constitute the values of the news workers in Malaysia and how these factors subsequently affect ethical decision-making in the process of news production. Unlike a lot of literature on ethics, particularly the Western libertarian tradition, which take the view that ethics is a personal choice, the present study looks beyond the 'individual autonomy' premise to take into account other factors that come into play to influence ethical behaviour. Given the subjective nature of ethics in the production of news, the question of what is ethical and who decides on this ethics varies from individual to individual, organisation to organisation and institution to institution. Ethics in journalism encompasses moral values and virtues like honesty, truthfulness, promise-keeping, humaneness, etc. which are usually used in making ethical judgements of rightness and wrongness in human behaviour. Though certain principles of ethics (e.g. truthfulness, responsibility, objectivity, accuracy, fairness) are universal, to a certain extent, these too would be left very much to the interpretation of the powers or forces at play in a given environment.

The study takes the stand that understanding the innate ability of the 'self' to act morally and responsibly may not be sufficient to give an overall view of the influences on ethics. In fact, putting too much emphasis on individual autonomy has contributed to the ethical problems in communication: in an environment where freedom is considered paramount, ethical principles like 'confidentiality' and 'responsibility' have become of secondary importance. Ethical problems that arise in the process of news gathering and writing include invasion of privacy, lying, breach of reporter-source confidentiality and partisan/biased reporting.

As stated above, the Western libertarian perspective views ethics as a personal choice as advocated by philosophers like John Locke, Emmanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Jefferson since the period of Enlightenment in the 18th century. This viewpoint, however, is rather myopic when seen in a wider context of the various mass media systems that operate in different parts of the world. While the 'self' is the moral master in the ethical decision-making process of news workers in the Western libertarian and capitalist system, more often than not, the state and other political and social forces would be the deciding factors and shapers in other media systems.

In these systems, for example the military, feudal, socialist or Islamic traditions, the media do not shoulder quite the same responsibilities as do the media in the West. While the latter play the watchdog and adversarial role, the former may work in tandem with the government for the development of the society in which the media operate. Subsequently,
communication content and the entire process of gathering, selecting and processing information may be influenced by political and social forces.

In some media systems, cultural and ethnic obligations are formidable factors that should be taken into consideration as influences on media ethics and news content. A news worker in the Middle East, for example, will consider the strict Islamic laws and the dominant Arab culture as part of his/her criteria in news production. The process of news construction is sometimes influenced by the cultural bias of news workers. This happens when news workers consciously or unconsciously conform to accepted norms in society and make choices different from news workers elsewhere because of their different cultural perspectives (Nasser, 1983). These considerations will ultimately influence ethical practices and news production. The following chapters will show that ethics and news construction is not just a function and result of the individual autonomy, but must be viewed in a wider political, social, cultural and ideological context.

Thus, the main contention of the thesis is that the dominant literature on ethics gives too much emphasis on individual freedom and not enough focus on other compelling factors in different media structures that also affect ethical decision-making. Another main concern of the thesis is the effectiveness of media codes in influencing behaviour. The ethics literature largely showed that opinions on these codes vary between the codes playing an essential part in quality assurance and ethical enquiry, and them being too general and not offering concrete moral guidance. While this is so, the lack of mandatory powers once again leaves the observance and interpretation of the codes to the individual news workers. This brings the discussions on ethics back to the problem of the individual autonomy.

A. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Malaysia is a polyglot society with multiple ethnic, religious and cultural orientations. To understand the functions of the media in such a society, one is compelled to initially understand this plural make-up with its inherent ethnic problems. A characteristic of the mass media in Malaysia (especially the vernacular press) is their tendency to concentrate on events important to their respective communities. Given this plural background steeped in different cultural, ethnic and religious traditions, customs and values, news workers are careful not to highlight issues that would hurt the sensibilities and sensitivities of the races. Every news worker is mindful of the 1969 racial riots when law and order almost collapsed, and the feeling of bewilderment as seen in the following quotation is still present today:

What went wrong in a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious country
which for 12 years had enjoyed racial harmony and co-operation, that
tolerance and understanding could be so abruptly terminated and the various
races should sullenly glare at each other....What went wrong that the Malays
and Chinese, the major races of Malaysia, could be so divided that not even
the presence of an authoritarian government and the efforts of national
leaders could heal the rift? (Mahathir, 1970 : 4).

Subsequently, ethical practices in the process of news construction is very much affected
and influenced by the racial, cultural and religious constraints. In fact, it is stipulated in
the Constitution that:

...any matter, right, status, position, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative
established or protected by the constitutional provisions relating to
citizenship, to the national language..to the special position of the Malays
and natives of Borneo and the protection of the legitimate interests of other
communities, and to the sovereignty and prerogatives of the Rulers - issues
about which different communities in the country are sensitive - are
removed from the arena of public discussion. (Information Malaysia
Yearbook, 1992 - 1993)

This stipulation covers many areas considered "sensitive" and knowing the penalty that
results from treading on these dangerous grounds, the news workers (especially the
journalists) would rather censure themselves than focus on those sensitivities. The fear of
slighting the multi-racial sensitivities in Malaysia is not just an unfounded paranoia; it is a
real fear borne out of the realisation that there never was true and deep-rooted racial
harmony (Mahathir, 1970). What is in existence is tolerance, accommodation and a certain
amount of give and take; so media workers, being very aware of the latent racial feelings,
are careful to maintain this precarious 'balance'. This is one of the underlying factors
influencing the Malaysian news workers that is pertinent in this study. Not wanting to risk
another state of anarchy like the May 1969 riots, news workers would sometimes 'skirt
around issues' for the sake of racial harmony and national unity.

The thesis aims to study the influences on the ethical behaviour and practices of the news
workers in the gathering and writing of news. The process of news production is used as
the premise to study ethical practices because this process offers the scenario in which
ethics can be examined. The analysis of the ethical practices of the news workers in
Malaysia will look beyond the individual autonomy perspective because this viewpoint
alone is inadequate to explain influences on ethics. The narrow, albeit dominant, premise
of studying media ethics from the western libertarian philosophical-moral framework is
widened to include other social and political factors which represent a more realistic view
of influences on ethics and news production.

Like their counterparts in other parts of the world, news workers in Malaysia face similar
ethical dilemmas that challenge their professional conduct. The only difference may be the instances and nature of the unethical conduct; the difference in the latter can be attributed to the subjective nature of ethics which stems from the difference in the values held by news workers: e.g. it may be perfectly acceptable for journalists in the Western tradition to openly criticise their leaders; however, in the Eastern culture, this is frowned on. For instance, where the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his government are constantly being analysed by the media, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad and his government, though they too are being examined, would not be openly and directly criticised. This is not to suggest that the Malaysian news workers are more ethical; it only points out the difference in the values of the two societies. Furthermore, the Malaysian news workers lack the freedom (compared to their Western counterparts who have greater press freedom) to exercise more autonomy in the face of constraints from certain quarters, especially the government. This is the important discussion in the thesis: i.e. to study how the socio-political environment the Malaysian media operate in influences ethical behaviour.

The study of ethics in news production is not new in the United States or the United Kingdom. A substantial amount of literature on ethics discusses actual examples of journalistic practices to see whether the actions taken by journalists were ethical or not. Though various aspects of ethics were discussed (theories on ethics, ethical journalistic practices, sources of ethics, media codes/media councils, etc.), the dominant discussion centres around viewing ethics as the result of individual autonomy and moralising. In Malaysia, however, as far as can be ascertained, the subject of ethics in the journalism profession has not been widely explored. This is in large part due to the fact that because of numerous laws already existing that limit the freedom of the press, journalistic practices are assumed to be within the ethical boundaries. Nevertheless, it is time the ethical issue is addressed as, over the years, there has been an increasing amount of dissatisfaction about media performance as the government relaxes and accords the media more freedom. Thus, this is the general objective of the thesis, i.e. to review the literature and theories on ethics in the context of the Malaysian media and journalism. This study hopes to contribute to the field of knowledge by putting the discussion on ethics on the agenda of media studies in Malaysia.

More specifically, the thesis examines the factors and forces that influence the ethical behaviour and conduct of news workers in the print media in the context of news production. At the macro-level, this thesis studies the factors and influences unique to the Malaysian environment which affect ethical decision-making in news gathering and news writing. At the micro-level, the specific external and internal factors in the media environment are analysed to see their effect on ethical decision-making. A pertinent discussion in this study is the sources of ethics - are ethical obligations innate, nurtured or
imposed? Do codes of ethics compel a news worker toward ethical behaviour? What is the influence of cultural values and norms on the ethical conduct of news workers?

It is also the objective of this thesis to study the nature of the ethical problems that news workers face in the process of news production so that understanding could result in better adherence to responsible journalism. The thesis uses universal ethical principles (e.g. truth-telling, not invading an individual's privacy, not deliberately causing harm to people, etc.) to study the ethical conduct of news workers in Malaysia as it is said that violating these ethical practices is one of the major problems in the journalism profession. However, though these ethical principles are said to be universal, are they applicable in the context of the Malaysian media environment?

With these objectives as the basis, the research works on several assumptions: a) the ethical conduct of the news workers is not only the result of personal choices and convictions, but more importantly, is affected by cultural and political factors. In Malaysia, the influence from the government/political factor, more than any other, is the over-riding element. b) cultural, ethnic and religious obligations may act as constraints to unethical behaviour by news workers. c) the existence of codes of ethics is not a guarantee for ethical behaviour as codes are merely guidelines and not mandatory, and d) universal principles of ethics cannot be adopted in totality but instead may have to be appropriated to the socio-cultural and political context.

B. RESEARCH DESIGN

This introductory chapter gives a brief outline of the research problem, the purpose of the research and its objectives. Because ethics is increasingly becoming an issue of concern in the face of the excesses of the media, this research on the influences on the ethical conduct of news workers is deemed timely. The chapter gives an overview of why the thesis adopts a wider premise of looking at ethical influences beyond the libertarian moral-philosophical perspective.

Chapter Two reviews the literature on the salient aspects of the thesis: ethics and news production. The chapter traces the ethics scholarship from the time of ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle to the present study of ethics which go beyond the individual autonomy. It is the contention of the thesis that ethics is more than just individual moralising; other underlying factors in the cultural, social and political environment in which the media operate, are equally important influences on ethical decision-making. Subsequently the chapter embarks on the discussion of the various internal and external influences on media content at the macro and micro levels. A framework for the analysis of
the data is also discussed, and for the purpose of the thesis, various approaches to studying the process of news production are used - the political economy of news, the media in a socio-cultural context and the social organisation of news.

Chapter Three outlines background information on Malaysia in general and the mass media in particular. The purpose of this background chapter is to set the premise for understanding the environment in which the media operate. It gives an insight into the political, socio-cultural scenario which has a significant bearing on how the Malaysian mass media function. Because of the uniqueness of the political and social fabric of the country, the media do not function in the same way as the media in the Western libertarian tradition.

Chapter Four addresses the methodologies employed in the research: content analysis, participant observation and interviews. The strengths and weaknesses of each methodology are reviewed. The research employs the triangulation/combination method as a strategy to compensate for the weaknesses of one single method and to have a more holistic approach to gathering data. For instance, where the content analysis yields a certain set of data relating to the style and technique of news writing, the interviews and participant observation are necessary to provide an insight into understanding how news workers view ethics and news production. The content analysis procedure for the research as per selection of the unit of analysis, category construction and sampling content is discussed here. The procedure for conducting participant observation and the types of questions used for the interviews are also discussed.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the analysis of the selected case studies in the New Straits Times and Utusan Malaysia. The analysis of the coverage of one of the case studies, the Pergau dam controversy, in the Times (London) was also carried out. A comparison is made of the coverage of this case study in the two Malaysian newspapers and the Times. The analysis of the case studies is done according to several categories in the coding schedule which have been formulated with the two news production processes as the basis: news gathering and news writing. The two processes are essential for the ethical component of the thesis to be analysed. This chapter discusses the rationale for analysing the Pergau dam coverage in the Times - this comparative analysis is purely for heuristic purposes, i.e., to reveal and highlight the differences or similarities in the news writing culture between the two Malaysian newspapers and the Times. The analysis of the three case studies show the influence of the political, socio-cultural factors on news production.

Chapter Six focuses on the analysis of the participant observation at the two Malaysian
newspapers and the interviews with the 31 news workers comprising group editors, editors and journalists. The findings from the observation and the interviews enhance the findings of the content analysis in highlighting the internal and external factors unique to the Malaysian environment which influence ethical decision-making and media content. These findings clearly show the significance of understanding the context in which a press system operates to get a realistic view of not only what functions the press plays, but also why it carries such functions.

An overall conclusion is presented in Chapter Seven. Though every chapter has a short summary at the end of it, this overall conclusion examines and summarises the major findings of the analysis in the context of the conceptual framework. This chapter discusses several ethical principles collated from various journalism codes or canons of ethics as guidelines to examine the ethical conduct of the news workers in news gathering and writing. The chapter finally reflects and answers some general concerns of the thesis in that not all ethical principles are universal, and that ethics is a combination of obligations that are innate, imposed and nurtured.
CHAPTER TWO

THEORIES OF ETHICS AND NEWS PRODUCTION

This chapter is a review of the literature on the two major components of this thesis: ethics and news production. The former will focus on the ethics discourse over the decades which has been earmarked by a dominant theoretical orientation that views ethical behaviour as a personal choice and conviction. Various ethical theories to explain the guidelines for the process of ethical decision-making will be discussed. This dominant theoretical framework has its shortcomings simply because it is more relevant to the socio-political system in which it originated. Subsequently, an alternative framework which is more in line with the Malaysian media environment with its political and social realities, is discussed. This framework should not only be an alternative but it should also complement the Western concept of media professionalism to bring about better understanding in international communication; these Western concepts, introduced into other regions of the world, have been proven in some cases not to be entirely consonant with indigenous traditions or the religio-philosophical traditions in these regions (White, 1995).

The second component of the review is the literature on news production. As has been mentioned in the preceding chapter, the employment of the news production component as a foundation to the study of the influences on the ethical conduct of news workers, is essential because the ethics literature alone would not be able to elicit or explain the realities of what is being studied. Thus, the ethics studies need to be anchored or hinged on the studies of journalistic practices. The news production component will be discussed from the macro- and micro-level approaches to see how socio-political and economic factors influence ethical behaviour and media output.

A. ETHICS DISCOURSE

Concern for ethics in the public sphere has been an area for debate where more than 2,500 years ago in Athens, Socrates (who died in 399 BC.) discussed the meaning of abstract terms such as 'good' and 'justice' as guidelines to human conduct (Fink, 1988). These earliest thinkers in ethics (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) began for media workers today the prospect that ethical conduct might require adhering to a personal interpretation of what is good or bad. In the realm of communications and journalism, per se, discussions on and studies in media ethics have been intermittent since the 1920s. The earliest known code of ethics was written in America in 1910 and henceforth, during the 1920s, virtually every
society and most major publishers would adopt one (Christians, 1977).

This early literature on ethics shared a similar definitional framework, calling ethics a moral responsibility to one's community where standards of right and wrong relationships were emphasised. Though the scholarship of these early academicians (Crawford, 1924; Henning, 1932; Flint, 1925; Gibbons, 1926) focused on codes, and courses in ethics which were said to be fostered only when social bonds were firm, they did not discuss right action per se, but rather the virtue in social connections (Christians, 1977).

After the flurry of academic activities in the 1920s and 1930s saw the expansion of curricula (colleges and universities started offering degrees in journalism), efforts toward organisational cohesion (founding of societies like the Sigma Delta Chi), the growing concern for professionalism and objective reporting, the next four decades however, saw a dearth in the scholarship on media ethics, especially the perspective on ethics as a communal duty.

In the wake of the Watergate scandal in America in the 1970s and the Janet Cooke episode in 1981, media ethics research again peaked, especially in the United States. The United Kingdom, Europe and other parts of the world, though not as prolific as their American counterparts, joined the fray. In Europe, for instance, several comparative studies on codes of ethics and press councils were conducted in the late 1970s, one of them being J. Clement Jones's report on codes and councils in different countries which was published by UNESCO in 1980 (Laitila, 1995).

This renewed interest in media ethics is largely due to the growing concern with media performance, not just following the two episodes mentioned above, but more so with the general conduct of media workers over the years in the face of media concentration and commercialisation. In fact, Nordenstreng opines that the interest in media ethics is selling so well that "it is one of the most blossoming corners of the garden of communication studies" (1995: 141). Christians (1991) who has done extensive research on media ethics, quantified more than 50 books published since the 1920s on ethics, more than half of them since 1980, and this number is fast growing in the decade of the 1990s, so much so that "academia is being flooded". All this shows the mounting concern over media performance

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1 Janet Cooke was a Washington Post reporter who fabricated a story about a 10-year-old drug addict. The story won the Pulitzer Prize which was later revoked when Cooke confessed that she had made up the existence of the heroin addict.
The research on media ethics thus far can generally be divided into several categories: a) a large body of the literature discusses ethical issues and media performance (ethical issues commonly discussed relate to privacy, objectivity, bias, truth, honesty in news gathering and writing. These ethical issues are discussed through anecdotes of actual events that media workers experienced; the literature analysed the 'dilemma' the media workers underwent between having to do what is morally right and what the profession compels to be done), b) contents and forms of self-regulation (codes of ethics, press councils, ombudsman) and c) ethics as a branch of moral philosophy and theories which attempt to build ethical systems. Christians (1979) summarised these categories by suggesting a nomenclature into which research, past and present, fit: a) descriptive ethics which discusses actual moral behaviour of persons and groups, b) metaethics is the philosophical study of ethical theories, and c) normative ethics addresses the individual's values and moral consciousness and how these function in ethical decision-making. While there have been extensive writings on media ethics, this subject remains a difficult area to define and reconcile due to the literature being filled with contradictions and little unity of opinion (Deetz, 1983).

This difficulty is due in large part to the relativism in which ethics is shrouded. Ethics by its very nature is subjective. Coming from a Greek word *eetikos*, it means the study of the principles that ought to underline behaviour; what makes it subjective is that the moral principles are influenced by the social setting and the cultural environment (the religious, philosophical or political traditions) in which the individual exists. Relativism is the ethical theory that states that "what is right or good for one individual or society is not right or good for another, even if the situations involved are similar" (Frankena, 1973 :109). What is 'right' or 'good' within this theory would depend on the belief system of the moral agent (Elliot, 1988). For instance, in the journalism profession, if a journalist is asked to judge whether an act or conduct has been ethical or not, he/she could quote several provisions that would justify the behaviour of media workers, for examples: the First Amendment (in the case of the United States), freedom of the press or the ends-justify-the-means provisions. Similarly, the existence of the codes of ethics or codes of conduct, which are formulated to act as guidelines for media workers, does not guarantee ethical behaviour for the simple reason that these codes do not have mandatory powers; thus the observance of these codes would depend largely on the media workers themselves. This leaves ethics very much to the discretion of the individual, and in this lies the main crux of the ethical problem where the emphasis on individual autonomy to decide what is ethical or not corrodes the social basis of ethics (Ferre, 1988).
Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, more than 2,500 years before launched into the mainstream the notion of 'good' and 'justice' and the need to seek virtue for its own sake. Aristotle focused on enumerating virtues and vices and placed the responsibility on the individual to take virtuous action through free choice (Fink, 1988). The advent of Christian ethics brought with it the concept that seeking salvation through God was more important than virtuous action. Nevertheless, the concept of the autonomous self was still inherent and apparent when it was left to the individual the responsibility of interpreting God's will. This line of thinking where the individual is the autonomous self was further developed in the period of the Enlightenment which may be called the modern era of ethical thought (Fink, 1988).

This period saw philosophers like Emmanuel Kant who argued that individuals with moral status live according to the principles of reason and it is this power of reason that will improve the human condition. Individuals are free to act and the moral worth of an act is determined by the rational intention. In the context of today's debate on media ethics and the role of the media worker, Kant would place responsibility on the media worker to reason out what is good. The context for ethical thought was widened by John Stuart Mill who advocated the principle of utilitarianism which promotes the philosophy of the 'greatest happiness for the greatest number'. Mill objected to Kant's emphasis on the intentions behind an act, and argued that it is the outcome or consequence of an act that counts.

A.1 Ethical Theories

Historically, moral philosophers and ethicists like Kant and Mill have established many moral principles as ethics is basically the philosophical study of morality. Five ethical guidelines discussed below have achieved significant success in explaining moral obligations and together present a reasonably wide scope of time-tested alternatives (Christians et al., 1983):

i. Aristotle's Golden Mean: Also known as the "Equilibrium and Harmony" theory, this principle has its origin in the beginnings of western philosophy in fourth century B.C., Greece. By this principle, Aristotle meant that moral virtue is a mean between two extremes, for example, courage is a mean between cowardice and temerity; modesty is a mean between shamelessness and bashfulness. How this translates into ethical journalism is that, in ethics, virtue lies between two extremes or vices, for instance, to print or not to print an exposé, a journalist may use this principle to weigh between the two extremes. Though in reality not all situations have a clear and uncomplicated dividing line, this
principle could at least lend a helping hand in decision-making.

ii. Kant's Categorical Imperative: Moral obligation, according to Kant, is unconditional and without any exception, right is right and should be carried out despite the consequences that may follow. The categorical imperative demands that a moral law be unconditionally binding on all human beings, for example, if a morality forbids us to lie, there is simply no exception to the rule. Kant's contribution is one of the two major categories of theories on moral obligation, namely, deontology and teleology, which are two classical approaches considered as anchors of moral reasoning (the latter term will be explained below). The term deontology comes from a Greek word, deon, meaning 'duty' or 'that is binding'; thus Kant's deontological theory of categorical imperative maintains that moral laws must be obeyed and practised faithfully, even to the sacrifice of all natural inclinations and socially accepted standards (e.g. it is socially accepted to lie to save another person's life, even if one could do this, it would still be wrong) (Christians et al, 1983).

iii. Mill's Principle of Utility: As mentioned briefly earlier, this principle promotes the philosophy of seeking "the greatest happiness for the greatest number". Originating from British philosophers, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, this principle holds that an individual has to determine what is right or wrong by taking into consideration what will yield the best possible consequences for the welfare of human beings. Also called the 'consequentialist theory', this utilitarianism principle is part of the teleological theory that holds that the moral value of an action or practice is a function of the consequence of that action or practice. 'Teleology' comes from a Greek word telos meaning 'end' or 'goal'. This principle of utilitarianism is further categorised into 'act utilitarianism' and 'rule utilitarianism'. While the former weighs the alternative actions open to an individual so that the act chosen will produce the greatest good for the greatest number, the rule utilitarianism puts great stock in precepts and rules that have been deemed to be morally useful in creating the greatest good for the greatest number.

iv. Judeo-Christian Persons as Ends: Moral norms emerge from various religious traditions. Depending on the religious faith one embraces and adheres to, the classic contribution of this religious perspective is that ultimately humans stand under only one moral command or virtue: to love God and mankind. All other obligations, though connected to the central one, are considered derivative. The Judeo-Christian tradition which dominated the western culture has been the most influential. The theme of love, for example "Love thy neighbour as thyself", is unique in this tradition and human beings are exhorted to love others with the same zeal and consistency with which he/she loves.
himself/herself. (The effect of religion in ethical decision-making in the Malaysian context is also significant, and this will be discussed in the succeeding chapters, particularly Chapters 3, 5 and 6).

v. Rawl's Veil of Ignorance : John Rawls in his book "A Theory of Justice" promotes the thinking where all parties in a society step back from real circumstances into an 'original position' behind a veil where roles and social differentiations like race, class, and sex are gone. Participants are equal members of society and behind the veil, no one will know how he or she will fare when stepping out into real life. Members will take part in negotiations and discussions while behind the veil, and the important element that emerges here is that, Rawl argues, the members will inevitably seek to protect the weaker party. Once this covenant is in place, and once back in real life, justice can be achieved when the interests of the least advantaged party is taken care of. This view may be similar to the utilitarian assertion where decisions are made based on what is best for the majority, but the difference is that while the former emphasises on the action that would benefit the majority, the latter emphasises on the virtuous action.

Theories and principles are useful foundations for thinking about the kinds of moral reason which have to be brought forward in trying to resolve the moral problems that constitute the daily routine of a media worker. However, one obvious shortcoming of the utilitarian approach is that it is a distinctly western tradition of media ethics, perhaps not applicable in other traditions or social systems. The difference is what Cooper et al (1989) have tapped into and reinforced in "Communication Ethics and Global Change" - a collection of articles on cultural differences of communication ethics world wide. A criticism against utilitarianism is that while it is altruistic to think of the greatest good for the greatest number, one can never be sure nor guarantee that the action decided on will benefit the greatest number of people. How is one to know that a particular decision will result in the greatest good for all involved? How could one know for certain that some other act would not have achieved the better result with less risk? (Lambeth, 1992). For journalists who are constantly under deadline pressures, having to regularly, (if not daily) ponder on which act to choose that would result in the greatest good for all, can be quite taxing.

Kant's Categorical Imperative which asserts that moral obligations are binding no matter the circumstance, is criticised for posing serious problems for working journalists (Lambeth, 1992). For instance, a literal insistence on the 'whole truth' may result in harm to many people: the journalists themselves, the public, the police, the victim/s, etc. An
alternative ruling should then be taken into consideration - journalists should always report the truth except when doing so would endanger life. However, this too could be problematic as the journalists may justify their actions in the 'interests of the public'.

Though Kant's and Mill's ethical approaches offer guidelines for media workers in deciding on an action, many questions still remain for the media workers, for example, who ought to make the ethical decisions (the journalists? the editors? the media managers?) and to whom is moral duty owned? In reality, do media workers actually have the autonomy to decide upon what is the best for the greatest number? These and many more questions will always confront the media worker in his/her daily work; what one has to bear in mind is that these theories are a good start for thinking about ethical issues and that they do not pretend to be able to solve all dilemmas all the time in the journalists' professional lives.

A.2 The Moral-Philosophical Framework

The ethical theories mentioned above reinforced the characteristic of ethics as practised in the Western media environment - to act ethically or unethically is very much viewed as a personal choice based on a person's moral convictions. This is the theme of the moral-philosophical framework on ethics; ethical approaches by Kant, Mill, Rawl or Aristotle all emphasised the 'self' and put great stock on the 'individual autonomy' to make the ethical decision. In fact, a common feature that emerges from the literature review of the ethical practices in journalism is this emphasis on the moral-philosophical approach to ethics. Attempts to develop a moral grounding for ethical behaviour generally take the form of an appeal to the individual conscience to define one's personal stance toward a standard practice or a particular decision (White, 1995). Ethics is defined in terms of a journalist's personal convictions and choices. The moral-philosophical perspective views ethics as grounded in individual autonomy where the individual is assumed to be a moral agent who has a high standard of responsibility to the society. Mill called this 'the conscience of the agent himself', i.e. that self that will determine the journalist's behaviour and actions and enforces responsibility.

The libertarian philosophy of the press which developed in Britain and United States of America in the 1600s and 1700s, not only fashioned the concept of an 'open market place of ideas' and placed great faith in the society to make rational decisions, it also saw the particular interpretation of the First Amendment (in the United States), i.e. an interpretation that focuses on individual autonomy. The freedom motif - persons understood as ends in
themselves - first released by the Renaissance found maturity during the Enlightenment (Christians et al, 1993).

John Merrill (1974), in particular, advocates individual autonomy when he argues for a "bias toward journalistic determinism, toward individualism and against collectivism, toward personal integrity and self respect and against altruism, toward responsibility self-determined and against social responsibility socially or collectively determined" (Ferre, 1988 : 19). Callahan (1984 : 41-42) made the same point when he identifies seven beliefs that underline individual autonomy: 1) human beings are independent, isolated moral agents, they are not social animals, 2) morality is subjective, there is no good beyond the individual, 3) ideal human relationships should be voluntary, private and contractual, the larger community has no legitimate say, 4) individual rights supersede obligations to others, 5) moral obligations are voluntary rather than compulsory, 6) respect for individual autonomy is the highest moral duty, and 7) respect for another's autonomy is the only moral duty.

Ferre (1988) takes to task this line of thinking where individuals are their own moral masters, and said that it is this very emphasis on "individual autonomy that corrodes the social basis of ethics" (p 19). Though individual autonomy is necessary to counter interference and interception from various quarters within and outside the media organisation, it can still be viewed negatively because, since it views individuals apart from their communities, the sense of obligation to others becomes entirely voluntary. The appeal to the individual autonomy, thus, becomes a rationalisation for selfishness because it posits freedom from responsibility (Ferre, 1988).

A.3 Looking Beyond the Moral-Philosophical Framework

To view ethics from merely the moral-philosophical perspective of Aristotle, Kant or Mill where ethical decision-making is the result of self autonomy and passive moralising, is myopic and denies the changing communication structure and milieu which has made it imperative for other approaches to ethics to be taken into consideration. This has compelled researchers to look beyond the autonomous self to explain the ethical decision-making process of media workers. A useful contribution is from Singletary et al (1990) who studied the motives that reporters have to resolve ethical issues. The motives listed below show that the autonomous self is far from being the be-all and end-all in ethical decision-making:
Personal advancement: Resolution of an ethical dilemma on the basis of what the decision will do for the career or personal circumstances. The reason for the reporter doing right has to do with serving the reporter's own needs and interests.

Colleagues as referents: A reporter's position is based on what the reporter believes is the position of his or her colleagues. The reason for doing right has to do with the need to be a good person in the reporter's own eyes and those of others.

The public's need to know: The reporter believes that the public needs information. The reason for doing right is to meet one's defined obligation.

Punitiveness: For some reporters, the opportunity to punish individuals by public exposure might be a strong motive for ethical decision-making (especially reporters who have internalised the watchdog role, would have a burning desire to book public figures who have erred).

Pragmatism: Some journalists respond to an ethical dilemma by holding to the stance "doing whatever it takes to get the job done".

General sense of morality: Some reporters are guided by a sense of what is morally right or wrong to do.

Credibility with the audience: Some reporters are motivated to one ethical stance or another by a perceived need to maintain credibility with the audience.

Standards of the employer: A reporter may see her/his company or employer's policy as a basis for ethical decision-making.

Perceived standards of the field: Some ethical positions are arrived at from what the individual sees or perceives as the prevailing standards of the field.

Religion: Some reporters use their religious obligations to decide on their ethical stance, e.g. thou shall not lie.

Legality: Some reporters decide on the basis of what is legal, e.g. it is illegal to publicise documents that have been labelled 'secret' or 'confidential'.

Several studies of the same nature as the above (called the ethical motivation scale - EMS study) which exposed the research subjects to an ethical dilemma and asked how they would resolve the dilemma (McAdams, 1986; White and Pearce, 1991; Surlin, 1987), showed that media professionals and communication students made ethical decisions in a variety of ways. When facing an ethical dilemma, journalists have been known to rely on a number of ethical motivations to guide their behaviour. These motivations range from intrinsic motivations such as religious obligations and a general sense of morality, to extrinsic guides such as reliance on written codes of conduct, concerns for professional advancement and peer pressure (White and Pearce, 1991). This research represents a
more realistic and holistic view of the ethical decision-making process as they take into account a more varied perspective than merely the moral-philosophical viewpoint.

These findings were explored earlier by Christians et al (1983) when they questioned the loyalties a journalist carries which would ultimately decide the ethical directions she/he would take. Often, a journalist's most agonising dilemmas revolve around her/his obligations not only to himself/herself, but also to other individuals or social groups. Christians et al summarised the obligations and duties into five categories:

i  Duty to ourselves: Following one's instinct and conscience may finally be the best alternative in many situations.
ii Duty to clients/subscribers/supporters: A journalist is accountable to the group that 'pays the bills' and would have to carry a special obligation to this class.
iii Duty to one's organisation or firm: More often than not, loyalty to the employer takes priority over duty to an individual or group.
iv Duty to professional colleagues: Reporters tend to hold the strongest obligation to their own colleagues and the standards of good reporting.
v Duty to society: Upholding the public's right to know and social responsibility has become a journalistic commitment that sometimes preempts loyalties to any other group or individual.

Similar to Singletary et al's list of motivations that led to ethical decision-making, Christian et al's five categories too gave a clearer insight into the different loyalties a journalist holds. Discussions on these loyalties address the realities a journalist encounters in her/his profession, particularly in the process of ethical decision-making. White (1995) too is of the opinion that media ethics must be seen as an integral part of the responsibility of all members of a society - not just the journalists and editors, but also the owners and administrators of the media, the legislators and policy-makers, specialists in media ethics, communication theorists and the communication values of the general public. It is the very emphasis on individualistic perception of media and communication ethics that has led to anomalies and contradictions in individual and organisational attempts to be ethical. The most recognised source of this contradiction is the clash between the individual sense of professional ethics and the "realities of the market-place" or "realities of politics" faced by the media organisations (Christians et al, 1995 :xii).

This shift of viewing ethical decision-making from the narrow premise of the moral-
philosophical function to a wider and broader societal approach is an acknowledgement that the media ethics tradition which is distinctly westernised is too limited to provide the norms to evaluate media performance. Christians (1995), for instance, challenges this western tradition of enlightenment and modernisation when he said, "...the technocratic and individualistic world view launched in the 18th century has worked itself out as sociologically repressive and intellectually bankrupt" (p 59).

While no one can deny that ethics by its very nature compels one to look at and into the individual conscience to understand how decisions are reached, one also cannot ignore the social and community setting of the individual which in one way or another influences the individual. The study of media ethics, said Nordenstreng (1995 : p 437) turns us away from, rather than toward the fashionable perspectives of individualism, privatisation, capitalism, etc.; leading us back to community and the social. Thus, Cooper et al’s (1989) book is seen as seminal as it looks at how the different backgrounds media workers come from, affect their way of thinking - individuals from different social, political, religious and ideological backgrounds possess a "hierarchy of loyalties": loyalties to truth and other ideals, to country / government, to employers, to public, to family honour, to religious beliefs and to political or social goals.

It is intriguing to see how cultural and ethnic obligations, rather than the autonomous self, become the deciding factor in ethical decision-making. Thus, while at one level there are universal ethical principles among communicators, there are also ethical differences among communicators of different national, cultural, political and religious backgrounds. For example, in Korea, the way the media represent reality has been structured according to commercial interests and the Confucian ideology. In the case of India, on the other hand, communication ethics has emerged as a 'mixed bag of values and ethics' from 1) Judeo-Christian tradition, 2) more indigenous historical compulsions, and 3) the liberal thoughts of the founding fathers of the Indian constitution (Agrawal, 1989). In fact, this seems to be the prevailing scenario in the media systems in many countries: the communication systems are a combination of liberal western influence (perhaps due to colonial legacy) and local indigenous traditions.

A.4 Socio-Cultural Context As An Alternative Ethical Framework

As stated and will be further emphasised in this thesis, the moral-philosophical approach to ethics that stresses the individual autonomy to make ethical decisions is insufficient to explain how ethics is viewed in other social and media systems. This shortcoming has thus
made it imperative for another approach to be taken on board - an approach that takes into account the different cultures, social systems, philosophies and ideologies that a media worker operates in. As has been mentioned earlier, Cooper et al's (1989) effort to discuss media ethics in the different social contexts of countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and South America is timely and useful in understanding the philosophies, ideologies and concepts of freedom and responsibility in information in different social structures.

What Cooper et al attempted in their book were to catalogue a representative number of countries to study communication ethics on the international scene. Their thesis is that there are common grounds and also national cultural differences in communication ethics world wide. Such an approach initially focuses on parochial ethics as a step to provide an insight into understanding how different cultural systems (with their own national, religious and ideological norms and values) influence ethical behaviour. This insight will subsequently promote understanding in the studies of international communication. For instance, many Westerners familiar only with the Anglo-American liberal theory of the press which made persons masters of their own fate, were surprised to discover that in countries like Iran or Lebanon, loyalty to religious tenets supersedes loyalty to modernity or popular culture.

Examples of how individual socio-cultural systems influence communication behaviours are numerous (Henningham, 1994, Ebo, 1994, McDermott et al, 1980, Amadi, 1982, Nordenstam, 1968). Apart from the above examples, other societies still steeped in the socio-cultural traditions also manifest similar characteristics in communication, i.e. socio-cultural values and not the concepts of the individual autonomy or press freedom, are paramount in ethical decision-making. The Malaysian media, for example, as the succeeding chapters will show, are very much characterised by government/political forces and the sensitivities of the multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-religious society. Nordenstam (1968), a lecturer of philosophy in Sudan, writing on Sudanese ethics, concluded that the main components of traditional Sudanese ethics are of courage, generosity, hospitality and preserving one's dignity. Preserving one's dignity, for instance, is important in the Sudanese culture where personal dignity has to be preserved from being wounded or injured, and once this is lost, one's status in the society can be very much diminished. Similarly, the Nigerian culture is very rich in norms and values that are unique only to that society and these have to be understood before effective communication can take place. For instance, the roles of religions, reincarnation, secret societies and the belief in the supernatural are important influences in the lives of many Nigerians.
Understanding the unique and different characteristics that form the basis for normative ethics in each individual socio-cultural entity is important to comprehend the process of communication and ethical decision-making. This is the usefulness of studying parochial ethics - it enables and compels one to look beyond the dominant Anglo-American ethical theory of libertarian individualism and uncompromising autonomy (Christians, 1989) to understand communication in different social structures. Parochial ethics acknowledges the influence of socio-cultural indices on the mindset of news workers which would inevitably affect the way they communicate.

Taking the socio-cultural context as an alternative framework to understanding the process of ethical decision-making would also implore analysing the ethical codes which act as guidelines for news workers. In general, ethical codes of most countries would bear universal principles of generally acceptable codes of conduct already discussed earlier in the chapter. To recapitulate, ethical standards commonly emphasised in most codes are integrity, truth and objectivity of all forms of news collection and dissemination, preservation of the confidentiality of sources, responsibility and freedom. Nevertheless, though these principles are universal, Cooper (1989) hypothesises that "beneath such seeming universals are unique differences" (p21). Media codes that advocate 'truth', 'freedom' and 'responsibility' in the United Kingdom, the United States, Malaysia, and Indonesia, for instance, would have vastly different contexts surrounding those three words. For the purpose of comparison, Table 2.1 on the following page consists of statements that appeared in the ethical codes of news workers in the United Kingdom (the National Union of Journalists), the United States (The Society of the Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi), Malaysia (Canons of Journalism) and Indonesia (Journalism Code of Ethics). The statements on 'freedom', 'truth' and 'responsibility' in the codes of ethics of these four countries suggest that though these principles are universal, they are defined by the specific characteristics of the different societies (see Appendix A for these codes). The statements in the UK and the US are defined by a) personal and organisational freedom, and b) national interests; the statements in the Malaysian and Indonesian codes, though they sound similar in that the overriding mission of the media is to make the public know of events important and of interest to it, this mission and responsibility is tempered with and defined by considerations for the sensitivities of the different cultures and religions co-existing in the society. In fact, the Malaysian code, in its preamble, is further defined by a commitment to contribute to the process of nation-building, to the promotion of racial harmony and national unity - an indirect pledge to work with the government to realise national aspirations (further discussions on the Malaysian code in the following chapter).
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<th>Countries Statements</th>
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<td>'Truth'</td>
<td>This code makes no specific reference to <em>Truth and responsibility</em>, but has statements that indirectly refer to these principles: The primary responsibility of the Malaysian journalist is to report facts accurately and faithfully and to respect the right of the public to truth. He shall avoid publication of news or reports, communal or extremist in nature, or contrary to the moral value of multi-racial Malaysia.</td>
<td>This code makes no specific reference to <em>Responsibility, truth and freedom</em>, but has statements that indirectly refer to these principles: The Indonesian Journalist should use his sense of responsibility and discretion to publish (or otherwise) a piece of information. The Journalist should not publish news that is destructive to the Nation and its people, that would bring about disorder or that would hurt the sensitivities of the cultures and religions of the individuals or groups protected by Law.</td>
<td>The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi believes the duty of journalists is to serve the truth. We believe in public enlightenment as the forerunner of justice, and in our constitutional role to seek the truth as part of the public's right to know the truth.</td>
<td>This code makes no specific reference to <em>truth, responsibility and freedom</em>, but has statements that indirectly refer to these principles: A member should do nothing that would bring discredit on himself, his Union, his newspaper, or his profession. He should study the rules of his Union, and should not, by commission or omission, act against the interests of the Union.</td>
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<td>'Responsibility'</td>
<td>The public's right to know of events of public importance and interest is the overriding mission of the mass media. The purpose of distribution news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare. Journalists who use their professional status as representatives of the public for selfish or other unworthy motives violate a high trust.</td>
<td>A journalist should fully recognise his personal responsibility for everything he sends to his paper or agency. He should keep union and professional secrets, and respect all necessary confidences regarding sources of information and private documents. He should not falsify information or documents, or distort or misrepresent facts.</td>
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<td>'Freedom'</td>
<td>In pursuance of this duty, he shall uphold the fundamental freedom in the honest collection of news and the right to fair comment and criticism. The Indonesian Journalist is free to ply the trade of his profession; (but) this freedom is based on responsibility for national security.</td>
<td>Freedom of the press is to be guarded as an inalienable right of people in a free society. It carries with it the freedom and the responsibility to discuss, question, and challenge actions and utterances of our government and of our public and private institutions. Journalists uphold the right to speak unpopular opinions and the privilege to agree with the majority.</td>
<td>Freedom in the honest collection and publication of news facts, and the right of fair comment and criticism, are principles which every journalist should defend.</td>
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(Sources: Excerpts from the relevant codes of ethics, Jones, 1980; Faridah and Mus Chairil, 1996)
Thus, it is seen here that though several ethical principles are universal as most codes of ethics would mention them, these principles have vastly different implications in different codes. These differences are marked by different hierarchy of priorities and by the underlying socio-political philosophy (White, 1989). A journalist's ethics stems from her/his background and value system and is tied to her/his nation's political and social system. Countries with a strong libertarian tradition would emphasise freedom of information and freedom of the professional or the organisation, whereas other countries (for instance, countries with a socialist tradition) may put greater emphasis on the welfare, solidarity and peace of the society which the media serve (White, 1989).

A.5 Themes of Scholarship in Media Ethics

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter which briefly traces the development of media ethics over the years, the research on media ethics has for so long popularly focused on media performance because the media, like all other major contemporary institutions, occasionally face the problem of public distrust. As the concept of press freedom and journalistic professionalism takes shape and media workers become more aware of their rights to speak out (modelled after the United States First Amendment) and uphold the public's right to information, the growing concern for performance of the media too escalates. This mounting interest in the conduct of the media, which are sometimes seen as trampling on the very toes they have set out to protect, is an indication of how the public views the media. In the United States, for instance, the media have been criticised for setting the trend of scrutinising the characters of those running for the presidency, an example being the Gary Hart affair. Hart, who was a Democratic presidential contender in 1987, had to withdraw his candidacy when the Miami Herald reported that he had put himself in a compromising position with a woman friend. The report was the catalyst to bring to the forefront rumours that Hart was a womaniser, thus legitimising inquiries into his fitness for national office. Though Hart denied the allegation and retaliated by accusing the newspaper of untruthful and biased reporting, some damage had already been done to his reputation and popularity, and he withdrew from the race. In Hart's case, the debate that followed concerned the newspaper's news gathering techniques and whether Hart's personal life was legitimate news (Day, 1991). This and many more examples, not just in the United States but also elsewhere where there is a media system, have started an ongoing debate about various ethical issues, among them being the public's right to know versus the individual's right to privacy or whether the ends (the public's right to know) justify the means (snooping, sneaking, lying, etc.)
Over the last seven decades since the debate on media ethics emerged in the 1920s, the scholarship and themes of the research can be broadly divided into several categories discussed below:

A.5.1. Ethics and Professionalism: Discussions on ethics tend to define ethics as 'professional ethics', a common assumption by journalism practitioners and scholars that the concepts of journalism profession and journalism ethics are inextricably related (Black, 1990). This notion of professional ethics has its roots in the First Amendment (of the United States Constitution) guarantees, the developments of the libertarian philosophy and the social responsibility theory. What the First Amendment guarantees that "..Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..." the media workers use as a licence to assume the role of the 'constitutionally-chosen protector of the people's right to know' (Fortner, 1978 : 46).

This First Amendment guarantee was further reinforced by the development of the libertarian philosophy where the media, while executing the adversarial and watchdog role, were rejecting attempts by governments or other institutions to exert prior censorship or threaten fundamental press freedom. The libertarian press concept also brought with it the popular belief in the autonomous self which is allowed to function unhindered in a free market place of ideas to serve the public. The spirit of Aristotle who believed in rationalism and individualism was rekindled, along with thoughts of British thinkers like John Milton and John Locke who staunchly supported liberty and freedom of expression (Merrill, 1989).

Milton's popular 'self-righting principle' (which holds that in a free and open encounter, truth will defeat error), Locke's liberal philosophy (liberty is a natural right, one that should not be abridged except when it might interfere with the liberty of another) and later Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill set the tone for freedom of the press. However, in spite of the dignity and appeal of these principles, media workers then and today know that these principles are not without their problems.

A major problem to this day is that too much emphasis and stress on individualism has created numerous ethical dilemmas. The most potent critique directed at the advocators of the autonomous self is that an individual cannot exercise freedom in a vacuum, but must consider freedom as it relates to others (Merrill, 1989). Thomas Jefferson, for example, despite his oft-quoted statement that he would rather have a newspaper without a government than a government without newspapers, put strings on this valued press
freedom. Jefferson's complaints about the press were not about the principle which established the guarantee of press freedom, but more about the abuses and the press' failure to seek truth (Fortner, 1978). He believed that if the press did not live up to its responsibilities, then the public as the ultimate check on the press, should force the press into a more responsible mode (Altschull, 1984).

Christians (1983) in one of his many works on ethics, notes that too much attention has been given to freedom and not enough said about press responsibility and accountability; he insisted that ethical concerns - the tempering of freedom with virtues - be woven into the fabric of the press. The 1947 Hutchins Report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press is one of the earliest sources of discussions on journalism ethics that advocate the social responsibility of the press. The commission developed five standards of performance required for a free and responsible press: a) provide truthful account of the day's events, b) serve as a forum for the exchange of comments and criticisms, c) offer a representative picture of groups in the society, d) present and clarify the goals and values of the society, and e) provide full access to the day's intelligence.

Many have attacked (e.g. Merrill, 1974; Altschull, 1984) the report and the social responsibility theory as either meaningless or dangerous because of the fear that the latter would lead to restrictions on the press and the press freedom; and the Hutchins literature contained little that would assist individual journalists in the daily ethical judgements they have to make (Lambeth, 1986). Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, some of the import of the doctrine and the report cannot be ignored if the media hope to be looked upon as a responsible profession with ethics as one of its virtues. Thus, now the image that the press has of itself as being a steward of the right of press freedom has to be tampered with a sense of social responsibility where rights become tied to duties. Acquiring a professional status was claimed to be one of the best methods of improving the reputation and dignity of journalism (Christians, et al 1978). Whether journalism is a profession in the traditional sense of the word has been a perennial debate till today (Black and Barney, 1990; Christians, et al, 1978; Lambeth, 1986; Elliot, 1986). A profession is defined as selective and exclusive, with a minimum entrance requirements, has an 'elite directorate' who can eliminate 'irresponsible members', has a code of ethics to direct its members and has some form of certification or licensing system (Merrill, 1986, Elliot, 1986). By these standards, journalism is not a profession, but in some respects is becoming professionalised because it is a craft with professional responsibilities. Thus, a step toward making the media seem more professional and responsible is their acceptance of some form of accountability in the manner of codes of ethics, ombudsman or news or press councils.
Descriptive ethics: Apart from the focus on ethics as concomitant with professionalism, the literature on ethics has been descriptive in nature to give an insight into media performance. Descriptive ethics usually focuses on issues or case studies in the journalism profession that normally give rise to ethical dilemmas. Many public opinion polls have shown the emergence of the 'credibility gap' as public confidence in the media slips due to perceived problems of media credibility. The literature by both media practitioners and scholars alike is saturated with anecdotes and illustrations of media misconduct or analysis of ethical dilemmas (Cirino, 1971, Hiebert, 1995, Goldstein, 1985, Hulteng, 1976). The most recurring moral problems of the media usually discussed as issues or case studies are invasion of privacy, unethical methods employed by reporters to gather information (misrepresentation, secret taping, etc.), acceptance of free gifts, unnamed sources, plagiarism, etc. A substantial body of literature on descriptive ethics discusses these moral problems in the context of the principles of ethical journalism which would govern or may result in ethical behaviour. The catalogue of these ethical principles include responsibility, truth, accuracy, objectivity, fairness, balance, confidentiality, respect, honesty, etc. Lambeth (1992) attempted to develop a framework of principles for journalism ethics which consists of five principles - truth-telling, humaneness, justice, freedom and stewardship - encompassing ethical virtues and values which are a useful guide in weighing matters of right and wrong. These principles are further discussed in the concluding chapter in the light of the data collected from the content analysis, participant observation and interviews.

With the concept of social responsibility of the media also came the concern for objective reporting that has become central to media ethics. Being objective is seen as the effort to present balanced accounts of all sides of an issue in news stories written as dispassionately as possible by writers who are expected to avoid injecting partisan views in their copy (Fink, 1988). Again, the literature is inundated with case studies and discussions on the media which have been said to exercise bias and distortion in reporting, especially on political news.

The case studies on these 'quandaries' of the journalists critique along ethical lines the actions taken by the reporters. For example, some of the methods undertaken by the reporters to collect information have been criticised by many quarters - the media practitioners themselves, academia, public - as unethical by the very fact that these methods breach the ethical principle of truth-telling. Misrepresentation, for instance, involves a reporter posing or assuming a role to get information. The rationale given by proponents involved in debates over such controversial methods would almost always be the ends-justify-the-means argument, i.e. the public's right to the information over-rides
any other consideration to any other party. Justifications like "it is acceptable when there is no other way to ferret out an important story" or "only in isolated or infrequent situations where failure to conceal one's identity would make it impossible to investigate and disclose an impropriety of major significance" (Goldstein, 1985) have become standard fare to exonerate journalists' usage of morally questionable methods.

On the other hand, critics of these methods lament that journalists have conveniently skipped other avenues in favour of the 'last resort' justification. In fact, some stories where posing/impersonation or misrepresentation has been used could have been avoided with a little bit of ingenuity and hard work. As the Florida Supreme Court of the United States once said, "Hidden mechanical contrivances are not indispensable tools of news gathering. The ancient art of investigative reporting was successfully practised long before the invention of electronic device [s]..." (Goldstein, 1985: 21).

Arguments for or against unethical behaviour all have a basis, depending on where one situates oneself. Herein lies the problem - the ethical decision-making type of analysis that resigns the problem to find the solution in the situation does not provide much guidance. Though the anecdotes and case studies do help a journalist in a dilemma 'to learn by example', the solution or the action to be taken can only be found in the situation that confronts the journalist. The ethics discussion has been a recurring subject for speculation and analysis, yet researchers are no nearer toward understanding the source or the solution to ethical problems. This is partly because the subject itself is tantalisingly elusive, difficult to pin down in definitive, concrete terms. The ethical scene in the field of journalism is almost as imprecise and generalised as is the case with ethics of society as a whole (Hulteng, 1976).

A.5.2. **Control Mechanisms**: The growing concern for media performance and issue of quality in the media following surveys showing the low esteem in which the public holds the media, has prompted the introduction of control mechanisms, both from within and outside the media organisation. The control mechanisms come in various forms - either self-regulatory like the codes of conduct and press councils or other regulatory framework like the ombudsman and media law (e.g. criminal laws of official secrets, sedition, etc.). Jones (1980) who did a comparative international study of professional standards, categorised media codes as either a) mandatory which carry some form of penalty for infringement. The penalties can be a simple fine, public reprimand, demotion or the ultimate suspension from work in the media, or b) voluntary which do not carry any sanctions apart from the disapproval of colleagues. Codes of this nature depend upon the
willingness of the media workers themselves to accept and practise the self-imposed regulations.

The contents of a code depend on the kind of body that drew it up which can be either one or jointly by these bodies - unions or associations of journalists, press councils, editors' or publishers' associations and the state. Apart from being categorised as either mandatory or voluntary, the codes are also further divided according to the formulation: a) formulated by agreement from within the media, and if so, would usually benefit media persons more than the general public, and b) formulated from outside the media in order to protect the consumers. In media terms, the consumer can be any one of these groups - the reader/listener/viewer who buys the product for whatever purpose (to be informed or entertained) and the advertiser who buys the media services for commercial purposes (Jones, 1980).

**Functions and contents of codes:** Whether drawn up individually or jointly by the various bodies, codes of ethics serve two main functions: a) to prohibit journalistic malpractices and provide that journalists be accountable for their actions and b) to protect the integrity and identity of the profession itself both from internal and external pressures (Belsey and Chadwick, 1992, Laitila, 1995, Jones, 1980). Laitila (1995) commented that behind these two main functions of the media codes is the need for the journalism profession to 'look good' in the eyes of the regulators; to convince them that no further surveillance is needed. The codes' concern for appearances suggest a disturbing possibility - that news people basically see ethics as a public relations problem rather than a matter of pursuing good for its own sake (Meyer, 1987). Nevertheless, codes are designed to protect these categories of people in the society: a) to protect the consumers, b) the media workers, c) the interests of the owner who may be a single person, a group of shareholders or a government, and d) the person who has to accept full responsibility for whatever is published and who, in the eyes of the public and the law, would be condemned for any irresponsible or illegal publication (Jones, 1980: 15-16).

In her comparative study of journalistic codes of ethics in Europe, Laitila (1995: 533-534) derives six other functions from the two general functions of press accountability and protection of professional integrity mentioned above. These functions are further divided into various categories as follows:
Accountability

1 To the public:
   i Truthfulness of information
   ii Clarity of information
   iii Defence of public rights
   iv Responsibilities as creators of public opinion

2 To the sources and referents:
   v Gathering and presenting information
   vi Integrity of the source

3 To the state
   vii Respect for state institutions

4 To the employers
   viii Loyalty to the employers

Professional Identity

5 Protection of the integrity of journalists
   ix General rights and prohibitions
   x Protection from public powers
   xi Protection from employers and advertisers

6 Protection of the unity of the profession:
   xii Protection of the status of journalism
   xiii Protection of the solidarity within the profession

From these functions, Laitila (1995) concluded from her study that the most common functions in the European codes are: accountability to the public, accountability to the sources and referents and the protection of journalists' professional integrity. Jones' (1980) earlier comparative international study of codes, has similar conclusions where the common denominators found in most codes are as follows:

i Emphasis upon the integrity: truth and objectivity of all forms of news collection and dissemination.

ii Need for maximum professionalism: a need for the respect and protection of the
personal integrity of the journalists by those employing him/her.

iii Preservation of the confidentiality of sources where this is justified and has been agreed upon. Sources of information can only be disclosed in those circumstances where the reader/listener requires that information to make proper judgements.

iv The maintenance at all times of the free flow of information from governments to those governed, and vice versa.

An example of a code of practice is the Code of Practice of the British Press Complaints Commission (PCC) which is an attempt at self-regulation following a threat by the British parliament to introduce statutory regulation for the press. The PCC which replaced an earlier Press Council that had been widely regarded as ineffective, was proposed by the 1990 Report of the Calcutt Committee on Privacy and Related Matters to supervise a code of practice drawn up by the newspaper industry itself. The threat by the government was in answer to what is regarded as the excesses of the media - unhealthy disregard for authority and government secrets and an unhealthy interest in the sex lives of prominent figures (Belsey and Chadwick, 1995). The press, lukewarm in its response, created the PCC and the self-imposed Code of Practice. The code, which is fairly brief, has 18 clauses which touch on, among others, accuracy, privacy, misrepresentation, harassment, intrusion into grief or shock, payment for articles and confidential sources.

Criticism of codes: Whatever the disciplinary mechanism associated with a code, the fact remains that codes of ethics have long been a debatable issue in the media circle. While proponents assert that codes of behaviour play an essential part in quality assurance and act as a starting point for ethical enquiry, opponents argue that codes are too general and vague and not likely to produce concrete moral guidance. The content of the codes itself differs from one organisation to another, some are broad-sweep principles while others are closely-defined points of detail. But whichever form they take, codes cannot anticipate every situation (Belsey and Chadwick, 1992). The argument continues that because newsroom values shift, ethical thought evolves, choosing the best course of action under a deadline pressure requires judgement, not a code. The general criticism still remains that because codes lack any enforcement provisions, they do not have "punch" (Fink, 1988).

It is the limited powers that the media have to enforce their codes which have raised the question of the benefit of having codes of conduct. If breaches go unpunished, if complaints produce no more than verbal criticisms from the bodies that made the codes, then what good would a code be? (Harris, 1992). Nevertheless, codes of conduct are not the only regulatory framework within which news workers operate. One important
constraining and regulating factor is the media laws which act as a deterrent to a news worker to go beyond an ethical boundary. The media are faced with various laws and regulations (depending on the country they are operating in) that would limit the extent of press freedom. The succeeding chapter on the political and social environment in Malaysia shows the broad regulatory framework the media have to operate in. The weakness of the codes of ethics (in that they are not mandatory) is made up for in the existence of the media laws which cover areas like invasion of privacy (e.g. telephone-tapping may be a criminal offence), confidentiality (i.e. a journalist may not use the First Amendment to refuse to give a grand jury information sought for a criminal prosecution) or the disclosure of government secrets may be considered to be contrary to public interest. Belsey (1995) describes the British journalists as being "surrounded, hemmed in, by barrier after barrier of legal restriction" (p95) in the form of 50 specific legislation restricting what can be published in the media. Legislation on official secrets, libel, obscenity, confidentiality, contempt of court, etc. all have considerable implications for journalism. News workers may be weary of breaking such laws as legal proceedings not only take a long time to settle, but they are also costly lawsuits (Harris, 1992, Lambeth, 1992). Though news workers know that a democratic society would uphold and protect free expression, they also realise that the court system may not always decide in their favour.

Other criticisms of codes of conduct are summarised as below (Belsey and Chadwick, 1995, Harris, 1992, Merrill, 1974, Meyer, 1987):

i It should be remembered that the existence of a code is not in itself a guarantee of greater protection; since it lacks enforcement provisions, its requirements may be ignored as it is left to the journalist to adhere to it or otherwise.

ii Many codes do not explicitly mention obvious virtues like truth-telling and objectivity, for example, instead they are more concerned with the way information is gathered rather than how it is to be presented to the public. Statements like newspapers should "neither accept anything nor pursue any activity that might compromise or seem to compromise their integrity" (code for the American Society of Newspaper Editors) do not give much guidance. What is seen as immediately wrong with many codes, e.g. the PCC code of practice, is that they are just a series of unconnected do's and don'ts, a mixture of positive requirements and negative prohibitions (do be accurate, don't invade privacy or harass people) without any clear statement of basis and principle (Belsey and Chadwick, 1995).

iii Codes and news councils are also seen as ultimately leading to intervention and control (if the codes are formulated by the state), and this goes very much against the
constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press. There is the concern that a news council would encourage an atmosphere of regulation which might gain public acceptance (Kotlowitz, 1981). Moreover, there is also the fear that putting principles of statements and codes of ethics in black and white could create a backlash as these could be used against the newspaper workers in a court of law.

A.5.3 The Moral-Philosophical Framework Revisited: Discussions on media ethics from early times were based on the moral-philosophical foundation that gave the autonomous self the freedom to choose between wrong or right. Much of moral philosophy focused on questions in the theory of moral obligation. However, when this basis is found to be the cause of numerous ethical problems rather than the solution, a panacea in the form of self-regulatory framework (codes of ethical practice, laws, etc.) was then looked into. Nevertheless, this too was found wanting in its effectiveness as the decision to follow the codes or not still rests on the autonomous self, subsequently sparking the debate again on media ethics as a study of moral obligations. The study on media ethics, thus, has come full circle.

Nevertheless, this time around, the scholarship on media ethics from the moral philosophical perspective is looking beyond the emphasis on the "discourse of public media performance in terms of essentially amoral, functionalistic, instrumental, utilitarian terms" (Rowland, 1983: 291-307) to a broader basis and awareness of moral obligation. The appeal is to virtues, i.e., for media ethics to be based on virtues which would dictate good character rather than media ethics because of sanctions, threats, rules, laws, regulations, etc. (Klaidman and Beauchamp, 1987).

Klaidman and Beauchamp's prescription that the journalist be a "virtuous journalist" with a commitment to many virtues (truth-telling, fairness, accuracy, honesty, trustworthiness, etc.) should be considered and taken seriously if the journalism profession hopes to be viewed as ethical. Cynics who are repelled by 'virtue language' should not be too hasty in dismissing this appeal to the virtuous self; there is nothing novel about a virtue-based approach to professional responsibility. Examples from the medical and law professions have amply illustrated this. Naturally no one can be expected to possess all the moral virtues or to behave virtuously with complete consistency, but some virtues such as honesty and trustworthiness are fundamental to the notion of a morally virtuous character (Klaidman and Beauchamp, 1987). Only then, when the journalist displays a commitment to virtues and has a disposition to act virtuously in familiar or novel situations, can ethics be a vehicle for media quality (Belsey and Chadwick, 1995).
The appeal to the virtuous self should be coupled with the communitarian ethics approach recommended by Christians et al (1993) where the 'collective' is emphasised in reaction to the Enlightenment 'individualism'. According to this approach, human beings are communal, viewed fundamentally in terms of tribe or state and take seriously the phenomenon of 'fellow-feeling'. It is with this basis of the awareness of others that Christians et al, hope to make transformative social changes, for example, in news production, the press's occupational norm would be to give priority to civic transformation. Public affairs reporting grounded in a communitarian ethics requires that decisions about news coverage be driven by community norms, not by market or mechanical efficiency.

Along similar thinking with the communitarian ethics, White (1995) advocates the dialogical ethics of communication where he views the ethical decisions of the public communicator not on the basis of solitary dialogue with his or her conscience, but based on a relation of interpretative listening to the public and to other social actors who take part in communication. All members of the public are involved or ideally should be involved in the interaction to arrive at what he calls the "public cultural truth" (p444), i.e. the morality of communication lies in truth-telling, and a more adequate conception of truth-telling is the public cultural truth (some statements are considered true by everybody in the society at a given historical moment, and at a later time, the same society may consider them to be false). Thus, it is the society, and not the individual, who is involved in the dialogue to decide the public cultural truth. This truth is formulated and reformulated according to the procedures and general communication culture (the communication values) of a people. Whether the public cultural truth will become a dominant theory as an alternative approach to communication ethics and the development of norms of public media performance would depend a lot on the publics in the media circle.

Summary

An important point that emerged from the review of the literature on ethics is that there is no one specific paradigm that can explain the ethical decision-making process. Early philosophers and thinkers from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment periods believed in the autonomous self that should not be abridged in its freedom. Rousseau, for example, promoted a limitless freedom - not just disengagement from God or the church, but freedom from culture and freedom from any authority (Christians et al, 1993). This is the basis for the libertarian theory of the press that later emerged, further celebrating the freedom motif. With this also developed the view that a journalist who is free to pursue all he or she wants to contribute to the market place of ideas, is a professional whose main aim
is to safeguard the public's right to know and to protect the freedom of the press from internal or external encroachment.

The literature on ethics over the decades has contributed to the understanding of the process of ethical decision-making. From the periods of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment till today, ethics is very much seen as a personal choice and conviction. This is very relevant and understandable given the context in which the dominant ethical framework originated - the Western mindset which emphasises individual freedom to make the decisions in every sphere of life. This framework is useful in understanding the source and basis of ethical behaviour.

The emergence of codes of ethics as a regulatory framework to check on the performance of the media reinforced this 'individual autonomy' theme of the ethics thesis. Codes of ethics do not have mandatory powers, again leaving it up to the individual news worker or organisation to honour them or not. The ethical framework has continued to be in usage despite its shortcomings because it offers an explanation to ethical behaviour; the view that ethics is an individual choice is still the dominant view.

Before long, however, this emphasis on the self as the moral master was criticised as the very element that corrodes social ethics. Classical moral theories of Kant or utilitarianism were realised to provide little or no help in the resolution of concrete moral dilemmas in real-life situations. The main theme of these criticisms is that the autonomous self and freedom, like that guaranteed by the American First Amendment, selfishly releases one from a sense of responsibility. In then came the appeal for a regulatory framework to check the excesses of the media workers.

Codes of ethics, canons of journalism, statements of principles, mushroomed in response to the decrying of media credibility and media quality. These codes of moral conduct became a fashion as they serve several purposes: a) they are a public declaration of the media's sensitivity to ethical standards in professional practice and to serving the public, b) the codes as a system of self-regulation are certainly better than statutory regulation (Belsey and Chadwick, 1995), c) they have a disciplinary function, and d) they offer journalists some guidance in areas that are going to be problematic in their practice (Belsey and Chadwick, 1995).

Nevertheless, no matter how finely-tuned a code could be, no code or legal framework can
guarantee ethical behaviour in every area of life. The final analysis lies in the individual himself/herself, and for that person to be an ethical media worker, the only hope and appeal is for that individual to have a virtuous character committed to positive virtues. With this appeal, then, the study of media ethics has come full circle; the only difference being that in the early times, freedom given to the self was both negative or positive freedom, and the execution of this freedom was entirely the decision of the individual. The appeal to the conscience now is grounded in a sense of responsibility to the community. The shift is from the emphasis on the 'autonomous self' to a 'feeling of fellowship'.

Whether the scholarship on media ethics focuses on metaethics, descriptive ethics, applied ethics or normative ethics, the fact remains that some media workers would still be in a quandary and would still be "groping for ethics in journalism" (Goodwin, 1994). This is because the review of the literature has clearly shown that ethics cannot be viewed from only one perspective; the study of moral philosophy or regulatory framework alone would not explain how ethical conduct is arrived at. The answer to the study on ethics then would have to be the holistic approach where other political, economic and social factors have to be considered to see how these influences affect ethical behaviour. This is the necessity and the rationale for the thesis to shift from the ethical framework to the news production framework as the former alone is inadequate to explain the influences on ethical behaviour in the context of the media in Malaysia. Since the ethical framework emphasises individual and organisational autonomy through the guarantee of press freedom, this is insufficient to justify the effect other socio-cultural factors have on the media, as the succeeding chapters will show.

B. MEDIA SOCIOLOGY AND NEWS PRODUCTION

Since the main concern of this thesis is to study the influences on the ethical behaviour and performance of media workers in the process of news production, it is pertinent to analyse these influences in the political, economic, social and cultural contexts that the mass media operate. McQuail (1992) calls these influences "the field of social forces" where the media are viewed as being at the receiving end of a number of sources of "power leverage" (Gerbner, 1969) or hierarchy of influences, ranging from the very distant and general (e.g. requirements of international regulation or traditions of past performances) to the immediate and particular (e.g. pressures from political or business interests) (McQuail, 1992 : 81). Barratt (1986) too looks at similar elements that influence media organisations: audience, 'real' world and ideological environment, state and legal systems, media technology, ownership and control, organisational, working and professional expertise. Depending on
where the media are situated, they are subjected in one way or another to some or all of these influences. In some countries, the state seems to monopolise mass media production, using it as an instrument of government; while in others, "freedom of the press is revered" (Barratt, 1986).

In the context of Malaysia, in a typical media environment would be found the government, owners, pressure groups, political and social institutions, advertisers and audience. These forces vary in the degree of power and influence: the forces with the most power or leverage (i.e. the government, political forces) will be the closest to the media compared to forces that do not wield much power or influence (advertisers, pressure groups). This field of social forces sum up the internal and external elements and provide the theoretical framework that would give an insight into understanding the influences that affect the ethical conduct of media workers in the process of news production.

To expedite the study of these influences, the thesis will discuss the media from the macro-and micro-level approaches. On the macro-level, the study will focus on the media in the wider context of the political, social, economic and cultural settings that together help shape the media output. The mass media in Malaysia are especially affected by government, political, social and cultural forces that exert different degrees of influence on the media.

On the micro-level, the discussion delves into the process of news production and the factors that influence the shaping of raw material into the end-product called 'news'. These processes include methods of news-gathering, selection processes and various journalistic practices and routines.

B.1 NEWS PRODUCTION AT THE MACRO-LEVEL

What can and should be the roles and functions of the press in a liberal democracy? How have these roles affected the conduct of media workers in the execution of their responsibilities? It is incumbent to reiterate here that most of the literature on ethics in journalism originated from America and thus, the American socio-political structure has to be borne in mind especially when discussing ethics pertaining to other countries. Though there is no particular answer to the first question above as the specific obligations can only be defined through agreements or a covenant between news organisations and their audiences, Hodges (1987) outlines four functions of the press: 1) the political role - the press acts as a link in the chain of communication between the government and the
governed. Since not every citizen has access to the working machinery of the government (executive, legislative and judicial), the press undertakes this responsibility of playing the watch-dog and oft-times, adversary roles, 2) the educational role: the press provides the public forum for ideas, opinions, truths and principles that society needs as part of its daily diet in the shaping of individual and corporate lives. The best form of education is when, in a free market place of ideas, conflicting opinions can face each other in open debate, 3) the mirroring role: the society learns from the press about social ethos, about the existence of other ethnic groups, customs and habits. Though people are different, they have to learn to live together to face a common future. For this knowing one another, binding together and enriching of common heritage to take place, the press plays a very important role, and 4) the bulletin board role: the press functions as a utility, a conduct of information by telling the public what is going on, not just in the neighbourhood, but also nationally and globally.

Similar to the functions outlined by Hodges above, Lasswell (1971), Wright (1964), McQuail (1987) and Deutsch (1966), too have discussed the functions of the media which can be summed up as follows: entertainment function, information function and surveillance of the environment, correlating and integrating of parts in the society, especially in societies where there is a need to build a viable nation from diverse ethnic groups, transmission of the cultural heritage for social continuity and social mobiliser function, i.e. the media are said to campaign for social objectives in several spheres - politics, economic and development, etc.

Though the functions mentioned above are equally important, the media in reality tend to focus more on certain functions, e.g. the political function, than they do on others. Since the thesis of this research is to study the influences on the ethical conduct of media workers in the process of news production, and since the focus will be on politics and the society, discussions will emphasise the press-political and press-cultural/social functions.

B.1.1 Press and Politics

That the press plays a central role in politics is an indisputable fact, looking at the voluminous literature on press-politics role relationships (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1986; Downing et al, 1990; Paletz and Entman, 1981; Janowitz, 1981; Black, 1982). The relationship between the press and the political actors is one of symbiotic interdependence. Each side of the politician-press partnership is striving to realise certain goals vis-a-vis the audience, and it cannot pursue them without securing in some form the co-operation of the
other. The mass media offer the politicians access to an audience through a credible outlet, while politicians offer journalists information for audience consumption (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 108-109). Both legitimise the existence and importance of the other.

While at times these role relationships continue smoothly to both parties' advantage and benefit, at others they are not without their problems. Both have criticised the other for trying to manipulate or influence the production of news. As Polsby (1980) points out, journalistic professionalism demands that news media elites establish their own account of day-to-day reality, independent of that propounded by the politicians whom they cover. Elliot (1977) talked of this uneasy relationship when he said that it is part of the journalistic routine for journalists to accept some sources as official and reliable while ignoring or questioning others. The Time magazine, for example, which has been singled out by numerous press critics and journalism scholars, has been reported to be biased and distorting in reporting political news. References to the magazine's "heroes" are usually "flattering" and the "villains" are "denigrated" (Hulteng, 1976: 213). This love-hate relationship between politicians and media workers has been very well documented over the decades, the most classic among them being the relationship the media had/have with the presidents of the United States.

The debates on this relationship have a remarkable circularity in that the issues may change, but the arguments always went back to the same fundamentals (Reedy, 1974): the politicians would accuse the media of bias, partisan, unobjective and slanted reporting, and in turn, the media would accuse the politicians of not understanding the adversarial role they play that compels the press to be critical, aggressive and inquisitive toward those in office. The press also accuses the political and government elites of trying to curb the freedom of the press.

The supposed ability of the press to sway the world of politics is legendary. Maybe what Napoleon Bonaparte claimed in the 18th century when he said "three hostile newspapers were more to be feared than a thousand bayonets" (Black, 1982: 2) was a prophecy of how the press would be viewed in the 21st century. Common criticisms against the press are that it "accords preferential status to certain political positions and opinions" (Efron, 1971: 4), or that it harks on trivialities – the personalities of the political elites rather than their ideas or plans. The scholarship of these criticisms goes back and forth between the press as a propaganda tool of the political elites or the press as an adversary of the status quo. The press has been said to have contradictory effects – while it crusades against injustices, it condones inequality. It props up capitalism; it vilifies big business. It
educates the public; it pacifies the people. It mythologises some presidents; it helps topple others. (Paletz and Entman, 1981: 6)

The literature review shows that many critics of the press-government relationships tend to be biased for or against the press. For example, proponents of regulatory impositions on the press (e.g. the ethicists) rarely consider the symbiotic relationship the press and government are in, i.e. if blame is to be directed at one side, the other part, too, should equally be scrutinised. The criticisms against the media can be summarised into two broad categories, i.e. criticism on news gathering technique and news writing technique. A large volume of the literature on media ethics discusses ethical issues like invasion of privacy (due largely to the different views on privacy: many people view privacy as an absolute right, but media workers generally view privacy as a prima facie right which may be overridden in certain circumstances); the acceptance of free gifts like all-expenses paid vacations or new tyres for a car; the reporting of secret information obtained clandestinely, breach of source-reporter confidentiality and the perennial argument about whether it is possible to produce objective, fair, bias-free, non-partisan and balanced reports. A large body of this literature discusses and analyses actual events that media workers face and the dilemma they undergo to decide between how they feel and what the profession demands (Christians, et al 1983, Fink, 1988, Hiebert, 1995, Hulteng, 1976, Meyer, 1987, Meyer, 1993, Hausmann, 1992, Gordon, 1996). The press has been known to prove critics right with its unethical conduct. Downing et al (1990), talking about the press in the American context, questioned whether the press, for all its freedom and perceived power, is really free and independent to present views, news and entertainment just as it wants? Is it free to be diverse from each other? Are journalists and other media workers empowered to write what they feel they should?

No matter what tradition or culture the press operates in (ranging from the most democratic to the most oppressive), no press system is totally free to function as it pleases. Curry (1982), in analysing the system of press control around the world, concludes that the structure and content of mass media everywhere is limited by forces such as: a) the monopoly of bureaucrats over information, b) the needs of politicians and officials to ensure their own legitimacy with and penetration of their societies, c) the necessary bureaucratic pressures and interests involved in journalistic work, and d) the natural colouring of events by the observer's preconceptions. Even the media systems in America and the United Kingdom that are known to be "liberal, free, diverse and abundantly opinionated" (Downing et al, 1990), are used as an important tool in the political economy of the countries. This has raised endless debates on the nature and character of media influence and on the degree to which the media are an independent force or merely reflect
and transmit the views of other important power interests in the countries (Herman, 1990: 75).

The study of how the centres of power in politics/government and the economy interact with one another and subsequently influence the autonomy and contents of the mass media is called the political economy of news. The central themes of the political economy approach are: the relationship between the economic base or the mode of production and other superstructural institutions of society; and the role of ideology as a dominant entity for or against social change. This theoretical approach has its roots in the works of Karl Marx who viewed all capitalist societies as being divided into two major sections: a) the ruling class, i.e. a small group of powerful people who, through their ownership of the means of production, was able to dominate other groups, whom Marx called b) the working classes (Barratt, 1986). The power of this ruling class arose from their control of the economy and subsequently spread to other aspects of society, including the state and the mass media. The state, according to Barratt, not being a neutral institution, would represent in the main, the interests of the ruling class. The control of the ruling class also extended into the control of ideas, prompting Marx to say, "In every historical epoch, the dominant ideas are those of the dominant class" (cited in Barratt, 1986).

This scenario became more complicated in the centuries to come when this dominant class which owns major corporations, started 'buying into' the mass media. In the *Media Monopoly*, Bagdikian (1987) observed that while in 1983, the American media were controlled by 50 corporations, in 1987, the mass media markets were controlled by 29 corporations. What this meant is that not just in America, but elsewhere too, the mass media are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few large companies. This was and is still being made possible through two interlinked movements in the structure of the communications industries - concentration and conglomeration. Conglomeration is the product of the merger movement which has been accelerating since the 1950s which reinforces the dominance of the leading firms in most major sectors with significant stakes in different markets, which may or may not be related (Murdock, 1988). In addition to consolidating and extending their control within and across the various media sectors, the big companies are also becoming increasingly intermeshed through joint investments, reciprocal share holdings and interlocking directorships (Murdock and Golding, 1973, Murdock, 1988, 1990).

The increasing reach and power of these conglomerates has triggered a growing concern about concentration and ownership in the communications industries. Among the
recurring concerns are who controls these communications corporations and whose interests do they serve? Murdock (1990) cautions that media ownership and concentration may pose a problem for two basic reasons. Firstly, the power accruing to ownership bestows the owner the potential to control production, not only within the corporations directly owned or influenced, but also give cumulative advantages to the leading corporations and enables them to set the terms on which competitors or suppliers relate to them. Secondly, the communications industries play a pivotal role in organising the symbolic role of modern capitalist societies and in linking economic structures to cultural formations. More importantly, they connect a productive system rooted in private ownership to a political system that presupposes a citizenry whose social participation depends on access to a full range of information and analysis. The concern now is how far a communications system dominated by private ownership can guarantee the diversity of information and argument (Murdock, 1990: 3-4) This concern was also apparent in Altschull's (1984) economic model where he asserts that the over-riding determiner of media content is the ideology of those who finance the media, like the saying 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. Murdock (1990: 7) further outlines two basic kinds of potential control owners have over the symbolic environment: a) they are able to regulate the output of the machinery they own either by intervening in day-to-day operations, or by establishing general goals and appointing managerial staff and editorial staff to implement them, and b) they may also be able to influence the strategies of companies they do not own in their roles as competitors or suppliers.

This concern is understandable as media ownership heralded what Curran and Seaton (1991:49) call the "era of the press barons" where the press magnets built vast press empires and ruled them like personal fiefdoms. These owners exercised and maintained detailed control over the newspapers not just as engines of propaganda and instruments of political power, but also as instruments of power against political parties. Thus, depending on who owns the press empire and what his or her political inclinations are, concern about the power and influence of these press barons would either be that they are politically ambitious or politically independent. Moreover, even though the press became more independent of political parties and of government, it operated within an economic framework which limited the range of voices that could be heard (Curran 1991). The growing integration of newspapers into the core sectors of capital has threatened to create new 'taboo' areas for critical reporting on corporate affairs. For instance, it is not uncommon for a news analysis on the hazards of smoking to be "killed" (to use a journalistic jargon) to appease a major corporation because of the newspaper's dependence on advertising revenues. This has clearly created a conflict of interest which is not unusual with the integration of the press into finance and industry (Curran, 1991). This is what
press critics have been cautioning against. At the heart of the matter is whether the workings and output of the media are seen as subject to the control of the ruling class in capitalist societies, or alternatively, whether they are seen as enjoying substantial autonomy vis-a-vis contending forces and interests (Schlesinger et al 1991).

Another important contribution to the discussions on political economy is the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky (1988, Herman, 1990) that views the media as tools of the status quo as they produce news that coincides with and reinforces the definition of the political situation evolved by the political elite. Studying the performances of the mass media in the United States, Herman and Chomsky contend that the media play a propaganda role in a liberal society where the "levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy; the monopolistic control over the media...makes it clear that the media serves the ends of the dominant elite" (1988 : 2). They looked at how 'money' and 'power' are able to filter the news, marginalise dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public.

Their propaganda model is earmarked by a set of essential ingredients called "news filters" as follows:

1) The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms; 2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; 3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; 4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media, and 5) anti-communism as a national religion and control mechanism. These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of the basis and operations of what amounts to propaganda campaigns. (1988 : 2)

The view that the close relation the media have with the powerful elite serve to mobilise support for this dominant group was earlier articulated by Antonio Gramsci in the 1920s and 1930s in the hegemony theory. Gramsci's hegemonic concept can be defined this way:

"Hegemony" exists when a ruling class's (or alliances) domination of subordinate classes and groups through the elaboration and penetration of ideology (ideas and assumptions) into their common sense and everyday practice; it is the systematic...engineering of mass consent to the established order. (Gitlin, 1980 : 253)

Gramsci, who was the first to specify this concept in a modern Marxist context,
emphasised ideological, moral and cultural factors rather than simply political and economic ones as offered by classical Marxist view. He also emphasised ideological superstructure over the economic structure, and civil society over political society (Bocock, 1986, Hall, 1980). Hall (1977) who elaborated on the notion of hegemony, said:

Hegemony is in operation when the dominant class fractions not only dominate but direct - lead; when they not only possess the power to coerce but actively organise so as to command and win the consent of the subordinated classes to their continuing sway. Hegemony then depends on a combination of force and consent. But - Gramsci argues - in the liberal-capitalist state, consent is normally in the lead, operating behind the "armour of coercion. (1977: 332).

Hegemony is, in the end, a process that is entered into by both dominators and dominated. Both rulers and ruled derive psychological and material rewards in the course of confirming and reconfirming their inequality (Hall, 1977). The media are controlled by members of top corporate and political elites, and at the same time, the dominant class fractions are to a great extent dependent on the ideology-shaping institutions (Gitlin, 1980).

The political economy theory that asserts the power of the dominant class over the subordinate class has received various criticisms. The propaganda model has been criticised for its assumption that "powerful unilinear effects occur" (Schlesinger, 1989), without taking into account the effects of the media reporting or the audiences. Schlesinger also argues that this model is a "highly deterministic vision of how the media operate coupled with a straightforward functionalist conception of ideology" (1989:297).

The political economy approach, being very much in the Anglo-American liberal capitalist tradition that is characterised by the attitude that the newspapers should function as businesses publishing news and opinions and that the newspapers are not constrained by performance standards or a sense of responsibility to any individual or groups, has not properly taken into account the political and legal constraints of news production; it is more 'economic' than 'political' (Schudson, 1991). Both these perspectives tend to oversimplify the connections between media practices and social and political practices. Another criticism of these approaches is the undue emphasis and credit given to owners, advertisers and the political elite who cannot always do as they wish. The media operate within structures which constrain as well as facilitate, impose limits as well as offer opportunities (Golding and Murdock, 1991). The fact that the media have sometimes been characterised as adversarial or even nihilistic toward various sectors in the society, negates the fact that media serve and support the powerful. Another shortcoming is that these
perspectives have paid inadequate attention to the communication process as a whole. Specifically, they neglect the conflictual processes that take place at the moment of definition both inside central institutions and within the media themselves. Such perspectives, too, have been characterised by a tendency to treat media as homogeneous, as 'the' media, especially the 'elite', 'prestige' largely ignoring the distinctiveness of particular or alternate media (Schlesingr et al, 1991, Schudson 1991). The elite press and the popular press differ in what news they cover and how they cover it.

Nevertheless, Schudson (1991) while dismissing the political economy approach as he argues that media workers have more autonomy in the running of the newspapers, agrees that the more sophisticated versions of this theory facilitate the general understanding of the production of news. However, despite its shortcomings, the political economy approach can help toward understanding some factors that influence news production in Malaysia.

However, though the political economy approach is seen as appropriate and relevant to provide an insight into understanding the influences on media output in Malaysia, this approach is adopted with caution. Contrary to the main thesis of this approach that emphasises power being in the hands of those who control the economy, in the Malaysian context, control rests on those with the political power. Chapters Three and Five will show how those with the political power in Malaysia wield control and because those with the economic clout are close associates of those in politics, they too become a formidable force in the domination of the masses. In fact, the latest development in the Malaysian political scenario is that those with the economic power are clamouring for a place in politics. Observers (in the media and the academia) think that the time will come soon when the Malaysian political scene will be dominated by those with the economic power. Where before those with the economic power are quite separate from politics, even though they are close associates of people in politics, now those with the economic power and the political power are the same people.

**B.1.2 Press and Cultural Context**

Taking just the political economy approach to explain the influences on media content may work very well in a liberal capitalist environment where capitalist-owned media decisions and contents will tend to favour those with economic and political power. In a country like Malaysia, however, which is still steeped with cultural and ethnic obligations and where the media are under some form of control by the government, understanding media content
should not ignore or downplay the significance of these factors as influences on media content.

The fact that news is 'constructed' or 'manufactured' suggests that it is "socially constructed, where an event is not just happening, but is a relation between a certain happening and a given symbolic system" (Sahlins, 1985: 153). This 'given symbolic system' is the cultural system within which and in relation to which individuals go about their daily lives. Culture is not just produced by the dominant political and economic strata of society, culture itself is also productive in that it constructs the categories by which social reality will be defined, not just in literature or drama, but more so in everyday life (Jensen, 1986).

Research on communications from a cultural perspective is centrally concerned with the construction of meaning - how it is produced in and through particular expressive forms and how it is continually negotiated and deconstructed through the practices of everyday life (Murdock, 1989: 436). This culturalist approach which developed in the 1960s and 1970s, offers an alternative to the mainstream mass communication debate in media effects and audience attitude/behaviour change. Culturalist interpretations of news organisation take different forms (Curran, 1991), and for the purpose of this research which studies the socio-cultural context the media function in, the culturalist approach is from an anthropological perspective where the focus is on how culture determines how meaning is constructed. The more persuasive and influential paradigm of the culturalist approach is advocated by Stuart Hall who argues that news content is decisively influenced by the dominant culture that shape journalists' thinking.

Hall (1986), who traced the development of the cultural studies tradition in the works of some British theorists, especially Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson and Richard Hoggart, views culture as interwoven with all social practices, and those practices are a form of human activity. Cultural studies is opposed to the orthodox Marxist view of base-superstructure, especially where the base is defined as the determination by the 'economic'; instead it emphasises the dialectic between social beings and social consciousness. The dominant paradigm in the cultural studies defines 'culture' as both the meanings and the values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships; and as the lived traditions and practices through which understandings are expressed and in which they are embodied. Williams brings together these two aspects - definition and ways of life - to the concept of 'culture'; while Thompson emphasises the two elements - consciousness and conditions - to the concept.
of experience (Hall, 1986: 3-39). Both positions, particularly Williams' 'structure of feeling' (grasping how the interactions between all patterns and practices are lived and experienced as a whole, in any particular period) tend to read structures of relations in terms of how they are 'lived' and 'experienced'.

Thus, media studies from this perspective would analyse communications as an indicator of social values and meanings; the concrete communication situation is circumscribed by the social totality. In fact, the mass media are instrumental in reaffirming the 'lived system of meanings and values' and inducing a 'particular sense of reality' in the audience. This line of argumentation has been pursued in a substantial number of media studies, and Hall (1977, cited in Jensen, 1986) has explored the extent to which the media transmit these meanings and values in his works on encoding and decoding (Jensen, 1986).

The culturalist approach gives an insight to understanding the generalised images and stereotypes in the news media. Using cultural forms as mechanisms for regulating public discourse, Hartmann and Husband (1973), in their analysis of British mass media coverage of racial conflict, noted that the British cultural tradition contains elements derogatory to foreigners, particularly blacks. The media which operate within this culture are therefore obliged to use these cultural symbols. The way the media define the situation is seen as resulting from the definitions prevailing in the general culture and the institutional factors that stem from the media themselves. Gans (1979) arrives at a list for American journalism that includes individualism, ethnocentrism and altruistic democracy which form as background assumptions through which the news is gathered and within which it is framed. Along a similar view, Hoggart wrote that the most important filter through which news is constructed is "the cultural air we breathe, the whole ideological atmosphere of our society which tells us that some things can be said and that others had best not be said" (cited in Bennett, 1982:303).

The construction of meaning through the media, Gamson and Modigliani (1989:3) suggest, is made possible by a "set of interpretative packages". A package has an internal structure with a central organising idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events. Gitlin (1980) too earlier on talked about media frames in the construction of meanings. "Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organised discourse" (p7). The frame bears the meaning of the text and enables media workers to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely. Gamson and Modigliani further stress that certain packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and
language resonate with larger cultural themes, making them familiar and natural. Resonances increase the appeal of a package. These cultural resonances are the 'cultural symbols' which are a part of culture within which, and in relation to which, media workers and officials go about their duties (Schudson, 1991, 1989). These media frames and packages which contain elements that would give meaning to an event suggest that these meanings are derived from the cultural context in which the media are found. This is the 'tool' contributed by Gamson and Modigliani and Gitlin to explain the cultural factor that influences media production.

The fact that news is gathered and framed within a certain ideological or cultural context is especially true in Malaysia where the concept of the guided press freedom, which is functioning in a society with racial and ethnic sensitivities, dictates how news is selected and constructed. The content analysis, participant observation and the interviews in the following chapters will show how these factors affect news production. Knowing that this is a plural society with a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-racial community, media operators are always mindful of the sensitivities of the groups. Through newsroom socialisation, journalists know what the media packages and frames are that would expedite their news gathering and writing process; these packages and frames are dictated by the cultural factors which have to be taken into consideration when deciding how news is to be selected and written. In fact, several media routines are practised with this cultural and social set-up in mind - e.g. in crime stories, only names and not ethnic identification of offenders and victims will be printed. Such is the import and weight of the cultural and racial element in the society that media practices and policies are formulated seriously taking these sensitivities into consideration. These policies and practices will subsequently affect the way news is selected and processed.

In summary, the main element of the culturalist approach is the emphasis on the cultural values and meanings that are prevalent in the society to show their effects on the media. This approach has been chosen as the theoretical backdrop to this research for the precise reason that this perspective takes the 'cultural system of a society' into account to explain the influence on media content. The Malaysian society which is made up of several ethnic groups with their own cultural values, norms, religions and languages, will in one way or another, influence the way news is gathered and written. The succeeding chapter will give an insight into the 'cultural system' of Malaysia with its cultural sensitivities which the news workers will have to take into account in news production. The content analysis of the three case studies and the interviews of media workers in the chapters to come will also show how the cultures and religions of the media workers affect their ethical conduct and the way news is gathered and processed. Henningham (1994) in his field research on
Hawaii's ethnic communities, said that it was suggested to him that Asian-socialised journalists may be less successful than Caucasians in the forceful, often rude methods needed in some circumstances to obtain information. In particular, Caucasians have been found to be less beholden to either nuclear or extended families, and more committed to individualistic values, than are Asian and Pacific people. People of Asian background are said to be more deferential to authority, more respectful and polite (McDermott, 1980).

Similarly, many other countries with a strong cultural and religious foundation, would take into account these factors when constructing news. This parallel could also be drawn to the journalism practice in Malaysia where cultural and religious beliefs affect or determine communications at every level. Mahathir (1970, and also Wilson, 1967), said that the value system of the major ethnic group in Malaysia, the Malays, is influenced by a "comprehensive and rather formidable code of behaviour and forms of ceremony" called adat (customs) (p155). An example of an adat which affects social interactions is the respect for hierarchy: respect is accorded to people with the social status due to wealth, education, skill and age. Where in general people interact with one another with expected etiquette (e.g. gentleness in actions and use of language; using course language is considered crude), interactions with people with the social status are even more refined. Etiquette provides the formal means of expressing the mutual respect of one relationship position to the other and thereby ensuring a proper functioning of that relationship (Wilson, 1967). Thus, open criticism, especially via the media, is still not an accepted code of conduct (more discussion on this in Chapter Six). Nigeria is another example of a society whose social interactions are very much influenced by cultural norms: for instance, there are various systems of supernatural resources to ensure justice, fair play, honesty and truth in communication. One of the most important ethics of journalism is ethnicity where the news value of any event can be changed drastically by the ethical consideration of how one's ethnic group is affected by media coverage of such an event (Okigbo, 1989). To take another example, Japan has a latent code of ethics - the taboos that have been instilled and passed down from generation to generation - that will act as a gatekeeping factor and will subsequently affect media content (an example of this taboo is criticising or embarrassing the emperor) (Ito and Hattori, 1989).

Another source that influences not only ethical conduct but also media content is Islamic obligations. In Malaysia, as in many other Islamic societies, ethnic constraints are coupled with religious obligations as underlying principles that guide in deciding what gets into print. From an Islamic perspective, the religion not only wholly encompasses a person, but the Islamic socio-religious ethics also shaped the general conduct of individuals. Unlike in the West, since the Enlightenment, where religion is divorced from secular life,
in Islam, this separation of the religious from the secular sphere did not materialise (Mowlana, 1989). Hence, while modern ethics in the West became predominantly social in nature, where the ethical conduct of the everyday life was left to the person's conscience as long as such actions did not conflict with the perceived public morality, in Islamic societies that power remained social as well as religious. In the West, ethical conduct is the result of the person's conscience, convictions and choices. In contrast to this, in the Islamic tradition, "the religion wholly encompasses a person" (Mowlana, 1989:139), thus making religious ethics (as opposed to the individual autonomy) the shaper of the conduct of individuals.

In the Islamic tradition, several principles guide ethical conduct in communication: a) the normative religious ethics as explained in the primary sources of Islam (the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet and the religious scholars), b) the 'ummah' (the Islamic community) - communication in Islam emphasises interpersonal communication over impersonal type of communication, i.e. the interests of the 'ummah' are paramount; this is in contrast to the Western philosophy where individual interests override public interests, c) the principle of 'taqwa' (God-fearing) - the ethical conduct of an individual is the result of 'taqwa' (fear of God) and not personal autonomy.

These religious principles guide the ethical boundaries of communication in Islam; these principles (especially the concepts of 'taqwa' and 'ummah') are very much in contrast to the libertarian philosophy which views individual freedom as paramount (for example, Merrill [1974] who argues for "individualism against collectivism", "personal integrity and self-respect against altruism" and "responsibility self-determined and against social responsibility, socially or collectively determined" [cited in Ferre, 1988:19]).

Though cultural studies have been heralded as another useful tool to understand influences on the media and how news is shaped, this view of the media as a mirror of society where news is determined by the patterns of events in the real world, is questionable on a couple of grounds. First, this view suggests a greater degree of shared experience between journalists and the large audiences than is common (Curran, 1990). Studies have shown that media workers know very little about their audience; Gans (1979) found that American journalists underestimate the size of their working class audience; they filmed and wrote for their supporters and themselves, assuming that what interest them would interest the audience. Second, cultural studies, because of the emphasis on the culture, pay scant attention to other influences on the media, for instance, organisational influences on the editorial development of newspapers or the relative autonomy of the journalists.
Tunstall (1971), for example, found out that most specialist correspondents tend to conform more to the collective judgements of 'competitor-colleagues' than to any other influence.

The macrosociological perspective of the political economy and cultural studies discussed above have shown the relationships between the major components in news production, i.e., media, culture and ideology. While the political economy approach emphasises how the political group with the power garner the support of those with the economic power to influence and dominate the masses, the cultural perspective studies the media-society linkage to see how media use the wider cultural context as the basis of reporting. The next section will deal with the microsociological perspective which studies social organisation, the sociology of occupations and occupational ideology. This perspective looks at how journalistic practices are constrained by organisational and occupational routines (Schudson, 1991). By employing these three perspectives together, this research hopes to understand how media messages are shaped and influenced in a more comprehensive and holistic way.

B.2 NEWS PRODUCTION AT THE MICRO-LEVEL

The basic premise of the sociology of news is that social structure is the major influence on the contents of the press. As a social product, news reflects the society from which it emerges; and as an organisational product, press content is a result of the workings of specialised organisations whose function is to gather and dispense news.

B.2.1 News values and selection: To understand news, a discussion of the many and complex factors that influence media content is essential. To conduct a content-influence study, a detailed analysis of news must initially and eventually ask and answer numerous questions - among them being, what is news? who decides what is news? what factors influence the gathering and processing of news? does news "mirror" reality, or is it a construct or manufacture of the journalists? do journalists merely report news, thus becoming mere conduits of information, or do they have the independence to select and interpret the stories?

To begin with, the definition of news is varied: some say "news is what newspapermen make it" (Giebert, 1964 :173), or news is "manufactured by journalists" (Cohen and Young, 1973 : 97), while others like Tuchman define news as "...news, like all public
documents, is a constructed reality possessing its own internal validity" (1978: 97). Asking reporters what is news, too, may elicit vague references like "what is important" or "what is new" or "what is interesting". Though it seems (from these definitions) that there is an absence of shared criteria for news, these definitions also made apparent a common feature of news: i.e. news is seen as being manufactured or constructed or "what the newspapermen make it". To quote Sigal (in Epstein, 1978: 109), "If news is defined in situ, that is, in the process of making it, then to understand what news is, we must find out how it is made".

The process of making news, however, is not a simple process as the media do not simply and transparently report events which are 'naturally' newsworthy in themselves. News is the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories (Hall et al, 1981). One aspect of the structure of selection is in the routine organisation of newspapers which has regular types of areas of news.

The factors that are used to identify and select the news for inclusion in the media are discussed to understand how news workers decide routinely and daily what constitutes newsworthy stories. Galtung and Ruge's (1965) news criteria which seem seminal and often quoted by media researchers (Cohen and Young, 1973; Negrine, 1994 and Tunstall, 1971), are similarly quoted here to better understand what media workers would consider important and newsworthy:

1. The more similar the frequency of the event is to the frequency of the news medium, the more probable that it will be recorded as news by the news medium.
2. There is a threshold of amplitude before an event is considered newsworthy - e.g. a certain level of violence must be reached for it to be covered.
3. The less ambiguity, the more the event will be noticed - i.e. an event with a clear interpretation is preferred to one that is highly ambiguous as the latter is opened to many interpretations and implications.
4. The more meaningful, i.e. it has to be culturally proximate, and relevant, the more the event will become news.
5. The more expected - the event is predicted and wanted - the more likely it will become news. The event should also be consonant with and correspond to the mental pre-images of what one expects to happen.
6. The more unexpected or rare, the more chance of it being included as news. To this
must be added that journalists tend to play up the extraordinary, dramatic and tragic (more negative than positive) elements in a story to enhance its news worthiness (Hall et al, 1978).

vii Once an event has become news, it will continue to be defined as news even if the amplitude may have lessened.

viii There is an element of composition - the media would want to produce a 'balanced' diet of news.

Though Galtung and Ruge's study has been criticised for its narrow focus (only on three foreign crises reporting) and dependence on news agency material, its strength lies in the reliability of its hypotheses which can be applied to crises other than the selected foreign crises (Tunstall, 1972).

Another important contribution from the Galtung and Ruge study is that they looked at the cultural parameters that may also influence the transition of event to news. They point out that the more the event concerns elite people or nations, the more probable that it will become news. The actions of the elite are more consequential than the activities of other people; thus in an elite-centred news communication system, ordinary people are seldom given the chance of representing themselves.

Gans (1980) made a similar point when he categorises the frequent actors in the news as the Knowns and the Unknowns. The Knowns who are political, economic, social and cultural figures appeared most frequently in the news, taking up to between 70 and 80 percent of all domestic news. The Knowns are the incumbent presidents, presidential candidates, leading federal officials, state and local officials, alleged and actual violators of the laws and mores (well-known people who get into trouble with the law). The Unknowns - the ordinary people - obtained about a fifth of the available time or space. The Unknowns include protesters, rioters, strikers, victims of natural or social disorders, participants in unusual activities, voters, survey respondents and other aggregates, and alleged and actual rioters of the law and mores. Most ordinary people never come into the news except as statistics.

Understanding news values and the criteria used to select events that would become news is just one part in comprehending a complex process where raw data is organised and written into decipherable stories. Though the criteria discussed above are useful guidelines, it is still the journalist's "professional ideology" of what constitutes good news
(Hall et al, 1978) that would help him/her to select from the many contending news items. This sense of news values helps the media workers to decide routinely and regularly which stories are newsworthy.

The selection process is part of the social production of news; Hall et al (1978) outlines three aspects of this process - the first aspect being the bureaucratic organisation of the media where the news is compartmentalised into specific types or categories and the second is the structure of news values which gives the order and ranking of the stories within the categories. The third aspect is one of the most important steps in the production of news - identification and contextualisation - as events are 'made to mean', i.e., the event is assigned to a social context and placed within a range of known social and cultural identification. This is the process of signification: giving social meanings to events; making the events meaningful and intelligible to the society. To this end, media workers work on the assumption that society is "consensual" - i.e. to some degree, society inhabits the same classifications of social reality, the same central value system. Whether this assumption is right or wrong is debatable, nevertheless, the media professionals do make the assumption to expedite communication (Negrine, 1994).

Looking beyond the Galtung-Ruge guidelines for news selection, Tuchman (1980) suggests the "routinisation of the unexpected" practice to plan ahead in preparation for unexpected events. Since news is unexpected and it cannot appear in the press unless it is made known to news people, Tuchman argues that news organisation disperse a 'news net' that 1) would aim at certain pools of events, and 2) would be geared to pick up only certain topics, 3) is connected to the institutional structures of the powerful, and 4) these institutional forces would precast the events themselves (Cohen and Young, 1973). Through this news net and by identifying centralised sources of information as legitimated social institutions, news organisations and news workers can gather legitimated and legitimating sources of both information and governance (Tuchman, 1978).

The dispersion of reporters to gather facts is part of the organisational structure where beats and bureaus are set up with assigned responsibilities and priorities. Through the news nets, the identification of the news gathering sites and with the news criteria, news workers 'routinise the unexpected' by clustering the numerous competing information that come their way daily into themes according to the news criteria. By utilising a notion of consonance, news makers identify the news which fit the news criteria, and are able to reject those that do not fit as uninteresting (Cohen and Young, 1978, Fishman, 1980).
While the news net is a useful practice in a news world bombarded with information, it can be criticised for its discriminative tendency. The news net, because it has been geared to pick up certain topics, will inevitably select only topics that fit the criteria for news values. Since news values always favour the Knowns over the Unknowns, the voice of the latter would always remain marginalised.

B.2.2 Influences on media content: Theoretical perspectives: So far this section has discussed the definitions of news and its selection criteria as one part to be understood in the process of news production. It is important for those concerned about and interested in the media to study the relationships and the interactions among the influences on mass media content to get a holistic view of news production. In an attempt to aid theory-building in the study of influences on news content, Gans (1979) and Gitlin (1980) suggested the following approaches which have been categorised from a variety of theoretical perspectives:

i. The mirror approach
ii. The organisational routines approach
iii. The communicator/journalist-centred approach
iv. The external influence-centred approach
v. The ideological/hegemony approach

Since these approaches give an insight not only into the internal workings of a news organisation, but also its relationship with outside forces that influence news content, a discussion of each category is in order.

i. The mirror approach: content reflects social reality with little or no distortion. This approach views the mass media as mere channels, neutral gatherer and transmitter of information and conveyor of exact pictures of social reality to the audience. The mirror metaphor is especially popular with journalists and news executives who assert that they do not cover stories from their point of views. Walter Cronkite's oft-quoted ending for his television news programme, "And that's the way it is" exemplifies this perspective.

Research has shown that the media do represent events and people in proportion to their true occurrence (Borman, 1978, Renfro, 1979). In studies comparing mass media content with other sources of information about social reality which look at either the accuracy or
the representativeness of mass media content, it is found that there seems to be more evidence in favour of the media's general accuracy than for their representativeness (Shoemaker and Mayfield, 1987). Borman, for instance, found that few of the facts published about science topics were inaccurate. However, this view that the journalist is a disinterested recorder and conveyor of news was criticised by researchers and analysts who advocate that news is systematically selected and produced. Young (1981) contributed another perspective to this approach when he said that though mass media content provides a fair representation of reality with minimal or no distortion, it is not because journalists are neutral observers and recorders of reality, but because they are compelled by counter-balancing forces into providing a fairly accurate view of the world.

Though the notion that the media represent reality with minimal or no distortion is debatable, studies which test whether news content is accurate and representative suggest that, while the media are usually accurate, they do not often publicise classes of people (e.g. minority groups) and event in proportion to their occurrence as measured by other sources. The representativeness of news content is affected by a journalist's conceptions of which events and people are most newsworthy (Shoemaker, 1991).

ii. The organisational routines approach: content is a function of media routines. Several studies (Tuchman, 1978, Gitlin, 1980, Fishman, 1980, Altheide, 1976) have analysed how news organisation habits and routines affect how stories are written and published. These studies show that occupational and organisational considerations sometimes far outweigh any constraints imposed by audience needs and interests. Examples of media routines are deadlines, story quotas, news sources and the inverted pyramid style of news writing. In the news gathering process, reporters adhere to standard operating procedures: they have a hierarchy of authority and they have a system of rules for gathering and transcribing information.

The gathering and disseminating of news has to be conducted within a framework of value orientations and news judgement (Roshco, 1975). Just as objective reporting and timeliness are values for news workers, news judgement which is exercised at every decision-making level of news production (e.g. at the reporter level: which facts to include or discard, and at the news editor level: which story to include and the prominence to be given to it) is also a media routine that a journalist adheres to. The basis of news judgement is common occupational experience leading to a consensus regarding news values within a news organisation. News judgement is thus learned by the news workers in the process of socialising; standardised practices and criteria are transmitted from the
more experienced to the less experienced and from the higher ranking to the lower ranking (Breed, 1973). The essence of the news judgement is that it is consensual and this speeds up routine role performance.

Breed (also Johnstone, 1976, Hankins, 1988, Wintour, 1972, Barratt, 1986) discussed six social controls within the newsroom that originate from adherence to policies and policy-makers in the news organisation which serve as controlling guides. The six factors are: 1) institutional authority and sanctions: policy-makers who ordinarily own the papers have the power to fire or demote staffers who deviate from professional norms, 2) feelings of obligation and esteem for superiors: news makers 'conform' to policy-makers or a higher-ranking executive out of an obligation to the newspaper for hiring them, or out of respect, admiration, gratitude for certain editors who have perhaps schooled them, 3) mobility aspirations: news makers aspire for status achievement, and because of this, view trouble-making as inhibiting such achievements, 4) absence of conflicting group allegiance, 5) the pleasant nature of the activity: many news workers genuinely enjoy their profession, and news room socialisation too is done on a compromise basis, and 6) news becomes a value: news workers' manifest function is to get the news, and the demands of competition (both from within and outside the organisation) and speed enhance this focus.

Other institutional routines that influence content daily include deadline pressures, competition from colleagues within and outside news organisation and the limitations on artistry in favour of conventional, efficient and accessible procedures. These and other occupational realities not only make professionalism a mechanism for controlling the news workers' production, but also constrain a media worker's imaginative impulses by exerting controls that encourage conformity (Shulman, 1990). Davison et al (1976) reinforce this point when they said that the norms of the profession like striving to write an impartial, objective and balanced story, can add pressure to the media workers and contribute toward the shaping of news content.

The news is determined to some degree by the inter-relationships within the news-gathering and disseminating organisation: the media may shape the story initially by selecting the details, quotes and other aspects; further up the hierarchy, the gatekeeping process continues and the news can be revamped to some degree, according to the inclinations of the newspaper management (Hulteng, 1979). These influence what and how much gets covered, e.g. the deadline constraint has been known to compel a journalist to send in a story without thoroughly checking for its accuracy and completeness. Hall et al (1981)
who studied the effects of journalistic routines on media content and finding that these routines have an impact, concluded that news is the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories.

The term 'routines' refers to the patterned, routinised, repeated practices and forms, a cohesive set of rules that media workers use to do their jobs. These routines can also be viewed as a set of constraints on the individual media worker because at times the routines of the news organisations may not always go in tandem with the individual goals of the members. Routines are essential in the daily management of the media as they help the organisation and the journalists cope with the tasks at hand.

Another media routine the press relies rather heavily on in the routine of news production is the news source. Some sources have a major influence on media content and can dictate routines for the media organisations. Though the news media have countless resources available to them as a raw product, they depend on interviews with individuals for their information. Journalists do not create news items, instead they are informed of events and other happenings by regular institutional sources. Sigal (1973) termed these sources as a) routine channels which include official proceedings, press releases, press conferences and non-spontaneous events (such as speeches, ceremonies, etc.), b) informal channels - background briefings, leaks, non-governmental proceedings (such as professional association meetings) and c) enterprise channels - interviews conducted on reporter's initiative, spontaneous events witnessed firsthand, independent research and reporters' own conclusions and analysis.

Journalists' reliance on information structured for them by the bureaucracies - e.g. government agencies like the courts, police, defence, inland revenue - prompted Fishman to say that "the world is bureaucratically organised for journalists" (1980 : 57). Journalists find it easier to rely on official sources for many reasons, for instance, the government provides a convenient and regular flow of authoritative information, and a reliance on sources reduces the need for expensive specialists and labour-intensive research. Murdock (1974) also notes that the incessant pressures of time and work scheduling in news organisations journalists faced can be reduced or alleviated by covering these 'prescheduled events'. A consequence of this reliance is the inevitable dependence of news workers on new sources willing and able to preschedule their activities.

Because the journalists adopt, through these routines, the perspectives of the bureaucracies
they cover, there is a tendency to "reproduce the definitions of the powerful" (Hall et al., 1981). The preference of the media to use these sources for the sake of impartiality, balance and objectivity has resulted in these sources becoming the "primary definers" and to give the initial definition or primary interpretation of information. This interpretation will then "command the field" and set the terms of reference within which all further coverage or debate takes place. Being secondary definers, more often than not, the journalists will reproduce the definitions given by these "accredited sources" who "set the limits" for all subsequent discussions by "framing what the problem is". These sources are usually the representatives of major social institutions which are accredited because of their institutional power and position, and also because of their "representative status", either they represent the people or organised interest groups (Hall et al., 1981: 342).

It is not uncommon for official sources to maintain extensive public relations staffs for the purpose of generating positive publicity and directing attention where officials want it. The bulk of the news items comes from the officials, and the reliance of the journalists on these officials would make them (the journalists) adopt their (the officials) definition of the situation or problem and work within that framework (Goldenberg, 1978). The practical pressures of constantly working to beat the deadline and the professional demands of impartiality and objectivity, have compelled an over-accessing to the media of these accredited sources. The media thus tend to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order.

Hall et al.'s approach of the importance of the primary definers have received numerous criticisms (Schlesinger, 1990, Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994, Hackett, 1991). First, Schlesinger (1990) argues that the broad characterisation offered did not take into account the dissentions and contentions that official sources may have on a key question or policy to influence public opinion. In cases like this, who would be defined as the "primary definer"? Hackett (1991) echoes the same argument when he said that powerful sources do not occupy the field uncontested: "primary definitions themselves are not monolithic" (1991: 73). Second, the primary definers perspective has failed to register a well-known occurrence of official sources regularly attempting to influence the construction of a story by using "off-the-record" information, in which case the primary definers do not appear directly where he or she can be attributed. Third, another objection against this model deals with the media's relative autonomy from the political system in a purely unidirectional way. Schlesinger argues that the movement of definitions is uniformly from power centre to media. The model did not consider the occasions in which the media take the initiative in the definitional process to challenge the primary definers and forcing them to respond. This is regularly seen in investigative journalism dealing with scandals inside
the state apparatus, or in the event of leaks by dissident figures.

The notion that the journalists, just because they are dependent on the official sources and the primary definers, would merely "reproduce the definitions of the powerful" is not quite accurate because the media practice selectivity where they will not regurgitate every statement given; they impose their own criteria on these raw materials. This selectivity ensures that though the media are the secondary definers of information, they are not passive receivers and transmitters of these "authoritative definitions" (Hall et al, 1978).

Nevertheless, though the primary definers approach has its shortcomings, as in the tendency in every model, it is still a worthwhile and useful approach to study journalistic practice which is seen as generally promoting the interests of authoritative sources, especially within the apparatus of government and state.

The reliance and dependence of news organisations on source organisations have compelled them into a relationship that converges on several levels (Ericson et al, 1989): a) convergence at the institutional level: the media elite is not separate from the elites who control many of the government and corporate bureaucracies that are reported on, b) sources and journalists converge to the extent that journalists rely upon sources to function as reporters. It is reasonable to argue that the real reporters are the source spokespersons who do all the essential 'signwork' within the organisation in order to produce an acceptable news account, and c) this convergence is most evident on news beats, the "routine round of institutions and persons to be contacted at intervals for knowledge of events" (Tuchman, 1978: 144).

News organisations interlock with source organisations, resulting in the sustenance of an elite culture that circumscribes the ability of the news media to be analytically detached from the elite persons and organisations they report on. Though it is empirically difficult to document how the values of the elite culture filter down and influence decisions in the news rooms, nevertheless, these values and relationships do shape perceptions and recognition of how things ought to be done. Sources ensure access to the news media by being the most routinely cited authority in stories pertaining to their organisation. They write news releases that are cited in whole or in part, contributing substantially to the final news item. Sources are also asked to write stories, features or columns on a regular basis.

Sources too manage news by continually deciding whether certain information should be
revealed, which details should be highlighted or discarded, and when the story should be offered to the press (Roshco, 1975). The reporters then function as an editor to determine what aspects of the information will be used, wittingly or unwittingly playing up to the "bureaucratic propaganda". Sources also decide and effect varying degrees of restriction on access to spatial regions and knowledge in their organisations. Ericson, et al (1989) devised a model, inspired by the works of Goffman (1959) and Giddens (1984), to analyse how organisations protect and present their activities to the public, especially the news media. This model delineates the front and back regions which are accessible and inaccessible to the public. Where the front region gives access to the public, the back regions symbolise efforts and an attempt at secrecy and enclosure by the source organisations to keep signs and knowledge from the public. Confronted with a bureaucratically constructed universe, the media workers can only reproduce bureaucratic constructs for public consumption.

iii. The communicator / journalist-centred approach: content is influenced by a journalist's socialisation and attitudes. A journalist's personal attitudes, values, beliefs and orientations affect the stories she/he writes. For instance, a journalist's biases or his orientations toward certain values may affect his coverage of people and events (Paletz and Entman, 1981; Rainville and McCormick, 1977). Paletz and Entman argued that news content is determined by the "internal logic of media organisations and personnel" (1981: 24). They said that journalists hold traditional American values (these values can also be prevalent in other societies and cultures) - individualism, free enterprise, competitiveness and materialism - which influence in one form or another the way journalists process the news. Similarly, Rainville and McCormick who studied how white and black football players were described by game announcers, found a difference in that description. Since the white and black players were matched on a number of characteristics to control for other variables which would explain the different coverage, the difference was assumed to be racial attitudes.

Breed's analysis of the social controls in the news room discussed earlier, suggests how a journalist is socialised to take on the role of a media professional. Journalists learn through socialisation, observation and experience what is newsworthy and how to avoid libel suits and criticisms from peers. Sigal (1973: 3) calls this "a context of shared values" with other journalists. A journalist's socialisation to the media organisation's culture would normally steer him/her away from "topics outside the proper purview of news" (McManus, 1994: 26). The news organisation, following policy already set by the media firm, defines the acceptable scope of reporting, not the journalists. Several studies too (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1991, Rosenthal, 1978) have analysed how journalists' professional
conceptions of what is newsworthy can affect their selection of stories. Cohen and Young (1981) who used the term "market theory" to refer to the effects of professionalism on media content, said that journalists select those events for publication which are in the public interest. McManus (1994) uses the term "market-driven journalism" to analyse whether journalists as gatekeepers would replace the standards of journalism with the rigours of the market, to decide news.

Another factor that may influence a journalist's attitude in the shaping of news is the journalism training that he/she may have undergone and will continue to receive. More often than not, the journalism training, whether at the tertiary level or on-the-job, would emphasise the ideals of journalistic practices and professionalism. For example, a common emphasis in most journalism schools, be they in the western libertarian societies and also elsewhere in the Third World, would be the virtues of press freedom. However, when translated into actual work, journalists may realise that these ideals and theories have to be adjusted to the values prevalent in the environment. The discrepancy between theory and practice may be a source of dilemma in the media worker. It is a contention of this thesis that in the case of Malaysia, some media workers may be torn between being a western-influenced journalist in Malaysia and being a journalist with Malaysian values. Nevertheless, no matter what factors influence the media workers and how they resolve the conflicting dilemma, the fact remains that the attitudes of the workers are affected by the journalism training they receive.

Gatekeeper theory: The notion that media content is influenced by the journalists' socialisation and attitude is also seen in the seminal study of the news workers as gatekeepers. The term 'gatekeeper' was first coined by Kurt Lewin who developed the theory of channels and gate keepers to understand how one could produce widespread social changes in a community. This concept offered early communication scholars a framework for evaluating how selection occurs and why some items are selected and others rejected. White (1950), the first communication scholar to translate Lewin's theory into a research project, found out that selection decisions were "highly subjective" where Mr. Gates (a wire editor on a small-city newspaper) rejected stories based on his personal evaluation of the merits of the story's content, especially based on whether he believed the story to be true. White concluded that Mr. Gates's selections were "reliant upon value judgements based on the gatekeeper's own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations" (p.386).

White's study stimulated many others whose findings vary from the individual to the
media organisation as gatekeepers (Giebert, 1956, Westley and McLean, 1957, Donohue et al, 1972, Tuchman, 1974). For example, Nisbett and Ross (1980) found that not only do gatekeepers make decisions based on their personal criteria and on those routines of communication work that pervade their profession, they also make decisions based on organisational mind-set that is the result of organisational socialisation.

Gatekeeping studies involve all aspects of message encoding: not just selection, but also withholding, transmission, shaping, display, repetition and timing of information as it goes from the sender to the receiver (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991). A gate is an 'in' or 'out' decision point, and messages come to the communication organisation from a variety of channels. The process of gatekeeping decides the selection from among a large number of messages those few that will be transmitted to one or more receivers. The most obvious effect of gatekeeping on the audience is cognitive - shaping the cognition of the receivers as to what the world is like. Ranney (1983) calls this the "cognitive maps"; information that gets through the gates becomes part of the social reality.

Though this concept has been useful in explaining the process of news selection, it too has received criticisms. O'Sullivan et al (1983) said that this concept is "oversimplified and of little utility" because, though several gatekeeping models have been proposed, none covers the full complexity of gatekeeping in the communication process. Because of its emphasis on the attitudes and experiences of the individual gatekeeper, it takes little account of organisational factors like the size of the newspaper, sources, the market environment, government, etc. that influence the journalists (Shoemaker, 1991).

It has to be noted that studies have shown that it is difficult to accept such indirect measures of journalists' or publishers' attitudes as adequate evidence of attitudes causing behaviours. Some studies have supported this idea while others refuted it. Giebert (1964), for example, repeated White's study with a larger sample and found that the samples' personal evaluations rarely entered into the selection process. Instead, they were more preoccupied with the mechanical pressures of their work. But Flegel and Chaffee (1971), on the other hand, found that reporters were consciously influenced by their personal opinions. The existence of an attitude, value or belief does not necessarily translate into behaviour. As Gans (1985) points out, the routines and constraints imposed by the media organisation may negate the influence of personal attitudes, values and beliefs.

Ericson et al (1987) criticise the concept for assuming that there is only one main 'gate area', where in actuality there are numerous gates in the selection process. This has
prompted Shoemaker (1991) to suggest that studies on gatekeeping not only emphasise the individual level, but also the organisational and routines level and extra media, social/institutional level. The study of the individual needs to progress beyond simple questions of attitude or bias to include a variety of intra-individual approaches - models of thinking, cognitive heuristic - that could help identify the extent to which individual-level processes are important.

iv. The external influence-centred approach: contents result from social and institutional forces working on it. This social/institutional influence approach looks at factors external to the journalist such as economic forces, advertisers, technology, culture and audience. To understand the production of news, one must first understand the power relationships involved between various institutions or social forces outside of the news organisation. For example, influences on the media due to ownership is a well documented fact; chain-owned newspapers have been known to publish fewer argumentative editorials and fewer editorials on controversial topics than independent papers (Shoemaker and Mayfield, 1987). A wide variety of studies have analysed how economic forces of chain ownership, cross ownership and independent ownership have shaped news content, and while some studies do show that chain and group ownership does influence media content, others do not.

Altschull (1984) asserts that mass media content reflects the ideology of those who finance the media. Different social and institutional forces vary in the degree of power or influence in different countries or institutions. These power, influence, pressures and constraints are what McQuail (1992) calls the "field of social forces" that have been discussed earlier. Media owners and managers are subject to pressure from many quarters, especially government, advertisers, the business community, special interest groups, competition from other media organisations and the public in general. Depending on the size of the newspapers, pressures from advertisers can be a dominating influence. Smaller and weaker media have more difficulty in resisting government or advertiser pressure. A word from an official to a publisher to the effect that advertising might have to be transferred to another newspaper could be enough to influence the publisher's decision (Davison et al, 1976).

Another structural relationship of importance is the media companies' dependence on and ties with government. Even though the media are powerful enough to play the watchdog and adversarial role in relations to the other social forces in the media environment, especially the government, the media are also dependent on the government for more
general policy support. All business firms are interested in taxes, interest rates, labour policies, etc. These interests will compel the media organisations to enter into an intimate relationship with the government, which may eventually affect content (Herman, 1990).

In a capitalist society, the economy and the market forces, more often than not, would be the piper calling the tune; on the other hand, in a society like Malaysia, the government and other social institutions would be the dominating factors. Though top leaders in media organisations do not often try to influence specific stories, they may do so under pressure from leaders from other powerful institutions, among them being the government elite and large corporations like advertisers. These institutions have been known to make attempts to control mass media content, although some of the controls may be self-imposed by the media themselves in an attempt to ward off censure by these large corporations. In television advertising, for instance, as advertising spots increase in price, advertisers have been known to 'call the shots'. For instance, the American Broadcasting Corporation's plan to feature the impact of nuclear war on the United States, had almost all advertisers cancelling their options on spots during or around the programme (Herman, 1990). As far as controls are concerned, there is little doubt that governments of all countries exert control over the mass media in one form or another - through laws, regulations, licenses, taxes or financing.

v. The ideological / hegemony approach: content is a function of ideological positions and a tool of the status quo. Altschull (1984) outlined four sources of media ideology: a) under the 'official' pattern, media are controlled by the state (such as in the communist countries), b) in the 'commercial' pattern, media reflect the ideology of advertisers and their media-owning allies, c) under the 'interest' pattern, media content reflects the ideology of the financing groups, and d) in the 'informal' pattern, content reflects the goals of individual contributors who want to promote their views. These patterns vary from country to country, and whether the press is free or state-controlled, it reflects the ideology of the paymaster.

This hegemony approach is reflected in the Marxist paradigm which regards society along class between dominant and subordinate groups. Gramsci (in Shoemaker and Mayfield, 1987) said that the powerful dominate the powerless through the hegemonic insertion of an ideological framework into the subordinate classes' common sense. Individuals are viewed as unable to compete effectively against power centres in society, which manipulate people in ways contrary to their natural interests. The dominance of the powerless is not generally by coercion, but rather by leading and winning their consent.
This approach takes the position that the media do not reflect the social reality, but rather reflect the "practices of those having the power to determine the experience of others" (Molotch and Lester, 1981). Hall et al (1981) call this the 'ideological role' of the media. According to the Marxist paradigm, the ruling class, in addition to its ownership and control of the means of production, also dominates the "mental production". Because of their control over material and mental resources, and their domination of the major institutions of society, the dominant class's definition of the social world would be the most powerful and universal of the available definitions. The social and political definitions of those in dominant positions tend to become objectified in the major institutional orders, so providing the moral framework for the entire social system (Parkin, 1971).

Criticisms against the Marxist paradigm have been discussed earlier: it over-simplifies the relationship between media practices and political power, it gives too much credit to those with economic and political power who in reality cannot always do as they please, it neglects other factors that intertwine to affect media output and it ignores the ideological variations among those in the dominant class by assuming that this class is in consonant in their outlooks.

SUMMARY

The main objective of the thesis is to study the ethical conduct of news workers, and this conduct is viewed in the context of the process of news production. The process of news production has been chosen as the arena from and on which ethical conduct is analysed because this process offers several opportunities where ethics can be studied. The practice of journalism as a profession raises many ethical issues. Ethical elements creep into every step of the news production process, from information gathering to writing to the final stage where the story gets into print. The two components - ethics and news production - have an inevitable link because the process of news production brings to the fore numerous ethical issues when news workers transgress accepted ethical norms. One just has to look at the conduct of tabloid newspapers (in the United Kingdom, for example, and elsewhere in the world) to understand the urgency in discussing the ethical dimension in news production. Because some media workers have legitimised certain acts and behaviours, the study of ethics in the process of news production seems a worthwhile area of research.

Studying the news production process will indicate the ethical behaviour of the news workers - i.e. news gathering and news writing techniques employed by news workers
will suggest their ethical tendencies. Taking just one framework alone - either the ethical framework or the sociology of news production - would hamper the research in that one framework is inadequate to bring out the realities the news workers face in their daily craft. The existence of socio-cultural and political influences in the media environment in Malaysia has made it necessary for the political economy approach and cultural studies to be employed as the framework for analysis.

Media scholars and practitioners alike have generated a lot of research and information on the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of news production. Among the common topics are analysing the conduct of media workers in the context of ethical principles like conflict of interest, truth-telling, privacy, confidentiality, freedom and responsibility, etc. It has to be reiterated that a lot of research on ethics and news production that has been carried out so far studies ethics from the western libertarian moral-philosophical framework. The emphasis of this framework is that the libertarian concept views ethics as originating intrinsically from the media workers themselves. This line of thinking gives the individual the autonomy to make ethical decisions. Thus, the individual looks 'into' her/his ethical tendencies to decide the course of action to embark on in news gathering and writing. The onus of lying, sneaking, masquerading, etc. therefore, falls entirely on the shoulders of the news workers.

For so long this has been the tradition in media ethics studies. However, though the individual self is the starting point where ethical decision-making is processed, to think that it is the only denominator can be problematic. This framework is problematic in two areas: one, the western libertarian concept cannot be applied to media systems in other media environment that do not qualify as libertarian, and two, the moral-philosophical emphasis ignores the influence of other compelling factors that affect media content. Other factors that may also come into effect to affect media output are media routines, organisational, ideological and extra-media influences.

The shortcomings of this libertarian philosophical tradition of studying media ethics has made it imperative for other approaches to be drawn on to understand how ethical behaviour is influenced in the process of news production. The different political, social and economic settings that the media system operates in each individual country are factors that have to be taken into account to replace or to complement the western libertarian moral-philosophical framework when studying the ethical conduct of news workers. Media workers are affected by different influences and understanding these influences is a step toward understanding what shapes media content and what triggers ethical behaviour.
What has become apparent from the discussions of the political economy approach, cultural studies and the sociology of news production adopted for this research to analyse the influences on media content is that employing just one framework would be insufficient to get a holistic view of ethics in news production. Thus, the adoption of the macrosociological and the microsociological perspectives seem inevitable.

The macrosociological perspective studies the institutional and professional dimensions of news production by journalists working for media organisations, and is concerned with the economic and ideological controls of news production and newspapers. To that end, the political economy approach, heralded and also criticised by several media researchers, has been employed to analyse the link between the dominant groups in the society, and these would almost always be the government and economic elites, and the subordinate groups. The approach examines how the dominant groups intertwine, one because of political power and the other because of economic power, to win the consent of the subordinate groups (including, if not especially the media) and subsequently legitimise the existing order. The adoption of this framework to be applied to the study of the Malaysian press, however, will not be in toto; alterations are inevitable as the Malaysian context emphasises the political domination over economic domination (contrary to the original understanding of the approach that gives dominance to the economic factor through ownership and control). Nevertheless, the approach is all the same congruent, as the newspapers in Malaysia, functioning as a commercial enterprise first and foremost, interacts with political dominance to perpetuate the existing order.

The second perspective employed, cultural studies, examines how the wider socio-cultural context influences news production. Though this approach has been criticised as being too abstract to be of utility in the study of news, it nevertheless does help in explaining how a society's cultural system influences the ethical behaviour of those involved in news production.

The fact that the macrosociological perspective itself has its weaknesses in that it looks at influences on the media from a limited angle has made it imperative for news to be studied at the microsociological level. The perspective deals with the journalistic routines, practices, values and ideologies which news workers have internalised during socialisation to expedite their news gathering and writing process. It also studies how extra media forces influence production.

Approaches and methods to assess and evaluate media performance are unlikely to suit all
purposes or preferences. The task is made complicated by the diversity of values, claims and criteria, as well as the differences of level at which research can be directed. In the end, most of the methods of performance will be a matter of "preference, perspective and value judgement" (McQuail, 1992). Bearing this in mind, the adoption of the three approaches, instead of one, to explain the influences on news content, is an attempt at getting a comprehensive understanding of news production.
CHAPTER THREE

MALAYSIA : MASS MEDIA IN A SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The defining elements of the political economy and cultural studies approaches discussed in Chapter Two will be further explored in this chapter to see how the political and socio-cultural indices influence media output. A country's media system cannot be fully understood without getting an insight into the political and social milieu in which the media operate. McDaniel (1994), in his comparative study of the broadcasting systems in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore rightly delves into the "political activities, practical circumstances" (p xi) of media in the Malay archipelago to analyse how purposes for action emerge, and how decisions are made and acted upon. He examines the link between electronic media and government officials' / authorities' actions, motivations and objectives, policy interpretations of media enterprises and public perceptions of the media and government policies. An intimate knowledge of the society under scrutiny that emphasises the cultures, subcultures, the groups in society that are "the creators of autonomous cultural practices" (Hardt, 1988 : 141) is essential toward understanding a society on its own terms.

The press system in Malaysia is very much influenced or affected by factors like the country's history, the make-up of the population, government policy, economic development, the political and legal systems (Syed Arabi, 1989). To begin with, Malaysia is a diverse country with two geographical and political segments: West Malaysia occupies the southern third of the Malay Peninsula in South East Asia while East Malaysia occupies the northern quarter of the island of Borneo (West and East Malaysia are separated by 400 miles of the South China Sea). West Malaysia is made up of 11 states and East Malaysia consists of Sabah and Sarawak. The multi-ethnic character of the population falls into two main groups, the Bumiputera groups (literal meaning - 'the sons of the soil') and the non-Bumiputera groups. The Bumiputeras are made up of the aborigines and the Malays; the aborigines who are mainly in Sabah and Sarawak consist of 30 different groups while in West Malaysia, there are seven aboriginal groups. The non-Bumiputeras consist primarily of the Chinese and Indians where each group in turn is heterogeneous with a host of sub-groupings. The Chinese belong to sub-groupings based on clan identities such as Hokkien, Cantonese and Teochew; and the Indians have sub-categories like Malayalese, Punjabis, Tamils and Sikhs. In addition, other ethnic minorities make up the population, including the Eurasians, Indonesians, Pakistanis and
Sri Lankans. More than anything else, the racial composition of Malaysia is the key to understanding the disposition and psychology of the society. It dictates the pattern of the economy, helped shape the Constitution and has influenced the democratic process and the political party system.

The cultural complexity existing in Malaysia is the result of various factors like immigration, colonialism, religion and mercantilism. Before the 15th century, Malaya (as Malaysia was known before 1965), even though strategically located in terms of the sea trade routes between China and India, was largely ignored by the sea traders from India, Sumatra, Java, China and Arabia. The Malays, the dominant ethnic group, lived mainly in kampungs (small villages) pursuing fishing and agriculture. The early Chinese (immigrants from China) who trickled into Malaya in the 14th century were mainly engaged in pepper cultivation.

Over time, the contact with and influence from the above traders increased, especially the Chinese and Indians. Consequently, the greatest initial religio-cultural impact came from India in the form of Hinduism and Islam. Over the centuries when Malacca (a small southern state), was realised to be a significant trading port, trading powers started clamouring for control. Malacca first came under the colonial powers of the Portuguese in the 15th and 16th centuries. Then it was the turn of the Dutch, who with their naval supremacy, monopolised the spices and pepper trade in the archipelago in the 17th century, and kept a firm grip on Malaya (especially Malacca and Johor, another southern state) which was used to enforce Dutch supremacy. When this supremacy waned, the British who were already holding a monopoly over the China trade and were looking for a trading base in the East, gradually took control of Malaya in the 1700s.

Where religion was concerned, the Portuguese and Dutch powers made little attempt to convert the population, regarding Malacca more as a source of personal profit and a guardian of the sea power on which their trade depended (Turnbull, 1989). Islam, which had come with the Indian Muslim traders, thrived as the main religion of the dominant Malay ethnic group. By the time the British established their control in the late 1700s, Islam was firmly established as the religion of the peninsula. The advent of British rule in Malaya also saw the influx of Chinese and Indians who were encouraged by the British to immigrate to fill the work force in the tin mines and rubber plantations in Malaya, respectively. Where the country was relatively homogeneous before, the start of the British rule and the migration of the Chinese and Indians also saw the beginnings of ethnic segmentation and problems (Mauzy, 1987). While the Malays were encouraged to continue with fishing and agriculture, the Chinese worked in the tin mines and the Indians
in the rubber plantations.

Economic development under British colonial administration offered few gains to either the Malays or Indians, and when the Chinese traditionally dominated the business world, this resulted in inequality in wealth. Because of their entrepreneurial acumen, the Chinese share of national wealth had grown far beyond that of the Malays by the time of independence in 1957, an economic advantage which continues to the present (McDaniel, 1994). This economic disparity sowed the initial seeds of discontent among the three principal ethnic groups, especially the Malays who felt handicapped and disadvantaged in their own homeland.

The colonial authorities initially encouraged and allowed the Chinese and Indians to remain separate and dissimilar from the Malay society. The logic to this was that the immigrants were temporary residents and did not need to integrate into local communities, this perpetuated foreign cultural and ideological views. The immigrants were encouraged to set up their own vernacular schools, newspapers and associations and to govern their own intra-ethnic affairs. This resulted in the creation of a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious society (Mauzy, 1987). This was the weakness of the colonial policy - i.e. the 'divide and rule' policy made no attempt to integrate the people into a Malayan community; instead the immigrant Chinese and Indians remained Chinese and Indians, not only physically, but also culturally and socially (Atoma, 1988).

Though economic, political and cultural differences were maintained during the British occupation, peaceful ethnic relations were preserved. However, though there were no significant racial clashes, it is wrong to infer that there was racial harmony. The seeds for conflict were already there, though prevented from germinating by the authority of the British (Mahathir, 1970). The racial situation escalated when the Japanese invaded Malaya for three-and-a-half years during the Second World War. Latent racial feelings were rekindled when the Japanese "played off one ethnic group against another" (Mauzy, 1987:148). The Japanese wooed the Malays whereas the Chinese were treated as enemies and the Indians were pressured to support the pro-Japanese Indian Independence Army. This resulted in the Chinese forming resistance forces in the jungles against the Japanese, making them come into contact with the communist movement in the jungles. Because anarchy prevailed then, no statistics were recorded, but tales have survived of ethnic atrocities and village massacres. The cumulative effect of the brief period of the Japanese occupation during the war was a legacy of ethnic hostility, where each group's worst fears and suspicions about the others seemed to have been confirmed (Mauzy, 1987).
The 18 million multi-ethnic population of Malaysia is made up of 56 per cent Malays and other Bumiputeras (the aborigines), 33 per cent Chinese, 10 per cent Indians and 1 percent others. The Malays are predominantly Muslims while the rest are 17 per cent Buddhists, 12 per cent Confucianists, 7 per cent Christians, 7 per cent Hindus and 2 per cent Animists. The Chinese religions of Buddhism and Confucianism represent 29 per cent of the total population (Deng, et al, 1994).

Each of these dominant and minority groups has its own identity - not only its own religion but also language, cultural practices, values and norms. Dividing along linguistic lines, the Malays speak Bahasa Malaysia, the Chinese speak Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien or several other dialects and the Indians speak Tamil, Malayalam or Hindi. Most Malaysians also use or understand one other language, and depending on their geographic location, this would almost always be English. Urban dwellers tend to be bi- or trilingual, usually in English, Bahasa Malaysia or Chinese. In the rural areas, the most commonly used language is Bahasa Malaysia while English is widely used and understood in urban areas (Parker, 1982). The multi-racial character of the country means that people need the mass media in different languages to satisfy their needs. In fact, the linguistic diversity has led to the growth of different media in different languages.

With the exception of the capital city, Kuala Lumpur, there are striking differences among the ethnic groups in geographical distribution between the main population centres, smaller towns and rural areas in the rest of Malaysia. The Chinese are predominantly urban, while the Malays are in the vast majority in rural settlements (Kurian, 1987; Grenfell, 1979).

In addition to the diversity of language and ethnicity, the country is further divided along political and economic lines. The Chinese who are involved in business have primarily been the group to control the economy; they are not widely represented in government administration or politics and are concentrated in towns and cities. The Malays, on the other hand, since the pre-independent era, have always been in politics and government.

A brief mention of the political scenario is also essential to shed light on the way the media function. The dominant political parties in Malaysia have always followed communal

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1 The Chinese population of Malaysia is derived largely from South China, with Cantonese and Hokkien forming the largest dialect groups. Amongst the Indians, the largest groups are the Tamils from South India and Sri Lanka, with significant Sikh and Malayalee minorities. These minorities each has their own language, like Malayalam or Urdu or Punjabi.
rather than ideological lines, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) each cater to different ethnic groups - the Malays, Chinese and Indians, respectively. This has an important bearing on other institutions and upon the ways in which grassroots interests are articulated, aggregated and communicated. Where grievances and needs exist, they are far more likely to be expressed through party channels and hence to be rapidly politicised (Nagata, 1975). This is the form politics takes in Malaysia - i.e. it is communal-based where each party is established specially to serve the purpose of one ethnic group.

UMNO, formed in 1946 to press for independence and Malay nationalism, is the largest party in the National Front coalition. The MCA, the second largest party, was initially formed as a post-war welfare organisation, but soon after developed a political character. The MIC, which has neither the power nor the influence of UMNO or MCA, concentrates its energies on issues of special interests to the Indian communities.

Historically, the Malays have been more focused on politics since the pre-independent days. The Chinese and the Indians then were not politically-active and were slower to react to events in the society as their political feelings were directed to the on-going struggles in their motherlands and were not Malaya-centred. Only when Malay nationalism was on the rise did they see the need for a political organisation to protect their ethnic interests. These three ethnic political parties are the principal parties in the National Front government which has been in power since the first general elections in 1955 (except for a brief period from 1969-1971 when Malaysia was under an "emergency government").

The most notable opposition parties in Malaysia are the Democratic Action Party (DAP), which is predominantly Chinese in membership and character, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS) and most recently an UMNO breakaway group, Semangat '46. PAS with its policies of strict adherence to Islamic principles, receive popular support from the more religious segment of the society in its struggles against secular interests (which UMNO has been said to represent). The thought of Islamic revivalism which is sweeping the Middle East, Africa and Asia (including Malaysia) is a cause for concern on the part of the minority ethnic groups. This concern stems from the wider context and scenario in which Islam is practised, for instance, in Iran and Saudi Arabia where Islam and the society practising it in general is viewed as repressive. Though the Muslims in Malaysia are generally known as liberal in their outlook and practise of the religion, and even though freedom of worship is guaranteed in the Constitution, many non-Muslims are not at ease with the prospect (if at all there is one) of the country turning into an Islamic state under
Malaysian politics has developed in such a way that safeguarding the rights of a particular race, more often than not, means hurting the sensitivities of another. When issues, be they issues on education, language, culture or economics (as all these impinge on the sensitive parameters of every racial group) are raised and reported in the press by one political group, other races would feel their 'rights' have been impinged upon. Thus will begin the replies and counter replies, accusations and counter accusations, resulting in the issue becoming sensitive (Syed Arabi, 1989). Racial tensions and sentiments could easily be fanned this way through the media.

Malay-Chinese acrimony is likely to remain a feature of Malaysian life. With this racial mosaic as the background, it is hard to avoid seeing signs of communalism in many aspects of life in Malaysia. Milne (1967), calling the differences in the social fabric as "cleavages", said that perhaps the most that could be expected is that the various groups would interact for purposes of commerce or government, according to certain agreed rules, but that they would continue to lead separate social lives.

While for so long this melting pot of races and cultures has generally managed to live in harmony with only the inevitable occasional racial skirmishes, this harmonious complacency was rocked in May 1969 when Malaysia experienced her worst ever racial riots. These riots which broke out following the 1969 general elections, were the culmination of built-up tensions between the Malays and Chinese, the major cause being the widespread Malay economic discontentment (Mauzy, 1987). Comber (1983: 74) summarised the sources of hostilities as: "Chinese resentment at what they perceived to be 'Malaysia for the Malays' policy...and on the Malay side, a deep-rooted sense of frustration at being left behind in the modernisation process". The five-day violence which ensued brought home to the political and government elites the fact that the pre-independence assumption that the "Malays would govern and the Chinese would be left to make money" (Dobbs-Higginson, 1993: 317) was no longer tenable.

The aftermath of these riots was the restructuring of society to eliminate economic disparities and ethnic identification by class or race. This resulted in the introduction of the

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This concern also originates from the fact that PAS is in control of Kelantan, a state in the eastern part of West Malaysia, where the Islamic Sharia' law is in effect. Non-Muslims in general would be uncomfortable and would find this law repressive as personal liberties like gambling and alcohol consumption in public would be prohibited.
New Economic Policy (NEP) which had the twin policy of reducing and eventually eliminating poverty for all Malaysians, and correcting the economic imbalance in society so that race could no longer be identified with economic function. A blueprint for a national ideology was also drawn up (called the Rukunegara) which spells out five goals for the country: national unity, a democratic way of life, a just society, a liberal approach to cultural traditions and a technologically progressive society. This restructuring, too, has tremendous effect on the mass media where they are now expected to cooperate with government policy and assist in development (Kurian, 1987).

A. MASS MEDIA IN MALAYSIA

A.1 Print Media

Given the plural make-up of the society, any attempt to analyse the role of the media would have to address this polyglot culture. This precarious balance of the multi-ethnic population is what distinguishes Malaysia from other developing countries. By its very nature, this plurality makes the society prone to incessant ethnic and religious animosities and consequently, political instability. Thus, the study of the mass media in Malaysia must take into account and address the existing ethnic relationships and national unity.

A characteristic of the Malaysian press is its tendency to concentrate on events important to their respective communities (Syed Arabi, 1989). It is therefore not surprising to note that Utusan Malaysia, Nanyang Siang Pau or Tamil Nesan would concentrate on issues pertinent to its own ethnic group. This ethnocentrism in content and organisation has its roots in the colonial era. The first newspaper, because it was published by the British colonial administrators, was published in English in 1805 to serve British interests in Malaya. The early English newspapers during this time mainly served the interests of the business community. News items of foreign countries, especially Europe, were given prominence as these events affected British business in Malaya.

The Chinese followed suit in 1815 with the publication of the Chinese Monthly Magazine which, despite its name, was the first Chinese-language newspaper published in Malaya. This newspaper was used to spread Christianity in China. Subsequent Chinese newspapers published in 1881 and 1932 were extremely partisan and sympathetic to the Chinese Revolution in China in 1911. When the Chinese Revolution ended, these newspapers focused their attention on business; and businessmen in Malaya would start their own newspapers to promote and advertise their products.
The seeds of ethnocentrism were further sown when the Malays published the Malay newspapers in the 1870s and 1900s. These newspapers, the most popular among them being Utusan Melayu, were preoccupied with kindling and fostering nationalism and were used as channels to speak out against certain attitudes that hindered the progress of the Malays. To a great extent, the newspapers were also used to agitate against the British. In fact, the development of the Malay political parties was made possible by the Malay press (Syed Arabi, 1989).

Like the rest of its counterparts, the Indian press too highlighted Indian interests. Newspapers like the Tamil Nesan and Tamil Murasu carried the plight of the Indians in the estates and other economic sectors, championed Indian education, helped spread literary works and became the vehicle for political demands (Syed Arabi, 1989). Basically, the dailies related closely to their ethnic constituency and in the case of the Chinese and Indian newspapers contained great amounts of news from the homeland (Parker, 1982). To summarise, the development of the newspaper industry in Malaya is marked by two phases. The first phase (1806 till late 1930s) saw the British traders and colonial officials pioneering the printing of English newspapers to satisfy the commercial needs of the British and the Europeans in the Malayan colony. A large part of the contents of these newspapers were commercial news and advertisements. Where the British newspapers accommodated commercial news, the contents of the Chinese and the Indian newspapers that followed suit reflected the cultural, emotional and political attachment of these people to their homelands. The Malay newspapers too mirrored the main concerns of the community then - i.e. religion and later Malay nationalism. The second phase (1940s and toward independence in 1957) witnessed a shift in the Chinese and Indian newspapers when both races realised they were going to make Malaya their home, the newspapers especially the Indian newspapers campaigned to the readers to remain and become citizens of Malaya. This period saw newspapers further developing a stronger identification with their own ethnic communities (Hamdan, 1993, Dahari, 1992). The Malays, overwhelmed by the influx of the Indian and Chinese immigrants and realising that they would lose their control on the political and economic affairs of the country, began demonstrating these fears through anti-Chinese and anti-Indian sentiments in the newspapers. The non-Malays through the English and other vernacular language press became more critical, especially against the pro-Malay attitude of the British administration. The seeds of ethnocentrism were further sown; the fight for factional interests was prominent in the newspapers (Dahari, 1992).

Currently, there are 76 newspapers in Malaysia: 35 in Mandarin, 18 in English, four in Malay, seven in Tamil and the rest in the minority or ethnic languages (Hamdan, 1993).
Generally, the newspapers in West Malaysia are national in nature (i.e. they are distributed nation-wide), unlike in East Malaysia (which totalled about 19 dailies) where the newspapers are circulated in the states concerned (Sabah or Sarawak). In fact, several newspapers, particularly the Chinese-language newspapers, are published and sold only in the area of their publication (Hamdan, 1993). In terms of circulation, however, the combined circulation of the two major Malay newspapers, Berita Harian and Utusan Malaysia, (250,000 and 240,000 respectively) is about equal to the total circulation of the Chinese newspapers, and far surpassed the combined circulation of the English-language newspapers (Syed Arabi, 1989).

The reason the Malay-language dailies are more widely read could be attributed to the fact that in the late 1970s, the Education Policy promoted the use of the Malay language as the medium of instruction not only in schools but also in official dealings with the government. This led to a tremendous increase in the circulation of newspapers in the official language.

The racial orientation of the newspapers where they cater mainly to readers of the same racial groups has not changed from the colonial days. The Mandarin, Tamil, Malayalee and Punjabi newspapers cater mainly to readers from the same racial groups. The Mandarin newspapers are generally read by the Chinese; the Tamil and Punjabi dailies by the Indians. The Malay newspapers, though, while generally read by the Malay population, are also to a lesser extent read by the other races, if not for other reasons than for educational purposes since the Malay language is the official language. The exception is the English-language newspapers whose readership transcends racial groupings. However, though the circulation of the Malay newspapers has increased, other language newspapers such as Mandarin and English have not been too much affected by this as these newspapers still have their own target audience. While the Chinese still continue to read newspapers in their own mother-tongue, the 'elites' and the English-educated (who are mostly concentrated in the urban areas) continue to read the English newspapers. The English newspapers are an important source of information especially on business news (Hamdan, 1993). In fact, Mansor and Singh (1987), in their content analysis of four Malaysian newspapers, concluded that the English newspapers covered more issues on business, world affairs and regional affairs (the South East Asian countries - Singapore, Indonesia, Philippine and Thailand) compared to the Malay newspapers which had more news on religion, education, literature/ arts and government.  

1 Mansor and Singh analysed the contents of two Malay newspapers (Berita Harian and Utusan Malaysia)
English newspapers to cover more news on business and international affairs has made them more popular among the various ethnic groups; otherwise on the whole, newspapers cater to the interests of their racially-stratified readers.

It is possible for the Malaysian newspapers to cater to their own racial groups due to ownership and management of the media. The media are either private or public enterprises; and even in the case of the former, ownership is in the hands of the ruling political parties or people close to the ruling elite. Several big organisations produce and print the newspapers, notable among them being the New Straits Times Press Group, the Utusan Malaysia Group and the Star Publications. The NST Group, the largest publishing group which publishes the New Straits Times newspaper, is owned by government-related corporations. It is tied by ownership and management to UMNO through a complicated network of nominee companies and individuals affiliated to UMNO (Lent, 1984, 1982; Parker, 1982).

The NSTP Group currently publishes eight newspapers - five in English, two in Bahasa Malaysia and one in Chinese. Up until 1993, the NSTP Group was controlled by Fleet Group which is closely aligned with the government through UMNO. In 1983, NST underwent a major management reshuffle, resulting in a number of politically-motivated appointments. The move, said to be for improving efficiency, is seen by critics as an attempt by the government "to seat more sympathetic figures at the paper's helm" (Lent, 1984: 28). In 1993, the control of NSTP Group (and TV3) came into the hands of Realmild in the country's largest management buy-out. Realmild is the brainchild of four senior executives of the New Straits Times, Berita Harian and TV3. Together, these management executives own slightly more than 48 per cent shares of the NSTP Group, while the remaining shares are owned by institutions and individuals (NSTP Backgrounder, 1994). UMNO also owns two-thirds of Utusan Malaysia Group which publishes the Utusan Malaysia newspaper.

The other major component parties in the government, MCA and MIC, too, have majority shares in major newspapers catering to the Chinese and Indian communities respectively.
The Star Publications, which publishes The Star, 1 a leading English newspaper known for its rather anti-government stance before its closure in 1987 (resumed operations six months later but very much 'subdued') is 75 per cent owned by MCA. It also owns another newspaper in Chinese, and two magazines, one in English and one in Chinese. The owner of the leading Indian newspaper, Tamil Nesan, is a high ranking official in MIC. It is also a common practice till today for board members of the media organisations to be political-appointees.

A.2 Electronic Media

Unlike the print media, the electronic media in Malaysia did not develop a comparable diversity of ethnic content. Both radio and television, from the time they were introduced (radio in 1930 and television in 1963), have been used to air programmes which provided information on current affairs, educating the public and indoctrinating the audience with the goals of national unity (Syed Arabi and Latifah, 1989). Radio, which began during the colonial period, became heavily used as an instrument of propaganda, not only during that period, but also when the country was under Japanese Occupation during the Second World War. Radio and television, operated as government departments, are under the Ministry of Information.

Radio Malaysia broadcasts over six networks: four of these cater to specific language groups - the national language, English, Chinese and Tamil - and the other two are Radio Ibukota (Capital City Radio) and an FM Stereo service. Radio Ibukota and FM broadcast mainly music and news. In addition to the four main languages, broadcasts are also made in two main aboriginal languages. The policies and operations of radio and television, being under government control, give a clearer view of the government's media philosophy (Parker, 1982). Apart from having to reflect government policies, programming decisions are very much dictated by having to provide entertainment (Lowe, 1987).

At present, Malaysia has three television stations: one is government-owned under the Ministry of Information (with two networks, TV 1 and TV 2), and two are privately-owned (TV 3 and TV 4). Private ownership of TV3 and TV4 is similar to that of the print media -

1 Prior to its six-month closure in 1987, The Star, despite being owned by MCA (a ruling political party) was known for its critical stance toward the government. This critical stance led to its temporary closure. With its daily circulation of 161,000, The Star gave stiff competition to NST in terms of readership (NST's circulation stands at 168,000). When it resumed operations after the shut-down, media analysts said The Star has lost its 'sting' as it now treads with caution. Nevertheless, it has not altogether lost its old form and is slowly regaining its popularity, especially among the non-Malays and the elites.
they are owned by individuals or conglomerates affiliated to the ruling establishment (Lent, 1988). Like many other government-owned and private-owned television stations everywhere else, the Malaysian television stations, too, are in constant competition to attract viewers. The advent of TV3 (1982) and TV4 (1995) have resulted in less viewership of TV1 and TV2 because TV3 and TV4 offer more "items that audiences find more exciting" compared to the former's fare that "carried more government news" (McDaniel, 1994: 155). TV1 and TV2, despite having been compelled to improve to keep up with the competition from TV3 and TV4, largely remain a 'government network' that would be used to disseminate a large proportion of government development projects.

Unlike TV4 which is in its infancy and both network and audience are still adjusting to one another, TV3 has received both commendations and criticisms. Overall more creative and adventurous than TV1 and TV2, TV3 has over the years been criticised for airing too much sexual obscenity, vulgarity and violence. In fact, in 1985, the station was instructed by the government "to reduce violence in its offering and to screen more programmes on family life" (McDaniel, 1994: 151). The religious aspect of its telecasts was also asked to be improved on. TV3's problem is caused partly by its dependence on American shows which has evoked persistent criticism because of the presumed influence they have on Malaysian social standards.

All programmes acquired from outside sources are edited by the Censoring Board comprising individuals from the public service, religious experts, scholars and law enforcement officers. Though censoring is much less restrictive now than in the 1960s, many programmes are still being censored if they carry these elements: sexually explicit content (like passionate kissing, nudity), suggestive dialogue, rude language and violent actions. Because of the racial and religious sensitivities of the various ethnic communities, the board also censors programmes that sympathise with criminals or show that crime pays, or attempts to show there is no god (Parker, 1982). Some censorship is also of a political character: programmes glorifying communism or projecting the idea of race supremacy are also censored or banned. Since Islam is the religion of the predominant Malays, certain themes contrary to Islam are also censored, for example, programmes projecting Israel and the Jews. In advertisements, pork and pork products, liquor and alcohol cannot be shown.

News makes up a large proportion of the total broadcast of radio and television partly because of the number of languages - bulletins are transmitted at key hours on each of the radio networks and television channels carry at least one newscast daily in each of the four major languages - the national language, Chinese, Tamil and English. News is also
viewed as an important vehicle for communicating government ideology, spreading development information and performing a general educational role (McDaniel, 1994).

News items are presented according to hierarchy. If the king is to be shown on the broadcast, this will be the lead item, followed by items on the prime minister and working down through the protocol list (this hierarchy changed slightly in 1993 when Parliament approved constitutional amendments limiting the privileges of the Sultans). Opposition party members, except during the period of campaigning for the general elections, are not allowed to use television or radio.

To supplement programmes acquired from external sources, six separate specialised units have been formed for the production of radio and television programmes on development and agricultural services, public affairs, religious affairs, sports, drama and entertainment. An important unit is the development and agricultural services unit that is responsible for producing programmes to encourage and motivate rural people to actively participate in socio-economic and political activities and to create awareness and aspirations on government policies and modernisation plans. The drama unit is responsible for producing dramas in the national language, Chinese and Tamil with 'local flavour' depicting themes of racial unity, family life and norms and values of the society. A ministry requirement states that each play must carry a message and reflect the country's multi-racial society. Although no quotas on imported programmes exist, a target of 70 per cent local content is accepted by TV1 and TV2, while TV3 and TV4 are required to air 30 per cent of local programmes (McDaniel, 1994).

B. THE MEDIA AND NATION-BUILDING

When the social fabric of the country was shattered during the 1969 race riots, maintaining national unity became uppermost in most Malaysians' agenda, especially the government's. In fact, it became the government's policy to maintain national unity at all costs. In its efforts to safeguard this unity, the government garnered the help of the mass media to propagate toward nation-building.

Applying Wilbur Schramm's and Daniel Lerner's classic advocacy that the mass media in a developing country play a major role in nation-building, the Malaysian leaders openly expressed their expectations of the media's support and execution of this responsibility. In a seminar of newspaper editors and publishers in 1974, the then Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, said:

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The press and other mass media act as an intermediary between the Government and the people...All those concerned should take heed to ensure that whatever is published for the general public should not cause misunderstanding or be detrimental to certain groups...The press should also avoid publishing materials which will give rise to tension among various groups. (Grenfell, 1979)

The 1969 racial riots became a historical watershed for Malaysia; the aftermath of which saw laws being drafted and national policies being redirected to restore and regulate harmony within the social partnership of the major ethnic groups. A significant amendment was made to the Constitution to prohibit open discussions of certain carefully defined 'sensitive' subjects. Article 10 of the Constitution which concerns freedom of speech, was amended to prohibit the discussions of four sensitive issues: a) Bahasa Malaysia as the national language, b) citizenship rules and policy, c) the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities, and d) the sovereignty of the rulers (Sultans and the King).

A consequence of the 1969 clashes is that the media are obliged to assist in the process of nation-building. While it was observed (McDaniel, 1994, Parker, 1984) that the media were not effectively used during the crisis to allay rumours, mounting fears and racial tension, the mass media are now utilised to support the government in developing a 'Malaysian identity and culture'. RTM's objectives, for instance, were reviewed to focus on explaining in depth the policies and programmes of the government in order to ensure maximum understanding by the people and to forster national unity, communal harmony and religious tolerance. There is a high degree of sensitivity over ethnic portrayals; slights, whether real or imagined, are quick to draw protests and other forms of responses from the multi-racial audience. For example, an old radio programme which played on the imperfect use of the national language, when adapted to television, drew protests and had to be cancelled because such humour was no longer tolerated (Lowe, 1987).

The sensitivities of communities in a plural society is a factor media operators have to always bear in mind. While the press has the right to inform, monitor and advocate the issues of the day, it also has a more dominant responsibility to ensure the continued stability of the nation, given the ethnic situation. Newspaper editors were careful not to highlight issues that would hurt the sensibilities and sensitivities of other races at the expense of national unity (Rejal, 1988). It would be very easy for news workers, if profits were the bottom line, to sell newspapers by fanning racial sentiments. Though there has
not been a repeat of the 1969 riots and though the country is generally peaceful to date, no one can deny that (in an heterogeneous society) there will always be a residual amount of primordial feelings among each ethnic group. Mahathir (1970) and Zahari (1984) realistically pointed out the fact that the absence of open conflict should not be equated to or assumed for racial harmony. This harmony can be disrupted if any one group 'pokes at the hornet's nest' (a Malay proverb), and this harmony is due more to "extrinsic rather than intrinsic forces" (Mahathir, 1970 : 8).

With the realisation that feelings of ethnocentrism are always present, the government has stepped in with various strategies and policies to encourage national integration. The government has also constantly exhorted the mass media to be a catalyst in government campaigns for national unity. These exhortations have made media editors and broadcast managers to be very cautious in reporting sensitive issues, especially those relating to ethnic groups and religion. Reporters and copy editors are briefed on the use of such materials: ethnic identity is used only if it pertains to harmony, advertisements are not to identify classes by occupation for fear of stereotyping and group photographs in advertisements are to portray multi-ethnicity (Lent, 1989).

Syed Arabi and Latifah (1989) categorised the portrayal of racial issues in the mass media as positive and negative portrayals. Positive racial portrayal is termed as light news, for example, reports of festivals (Eid, Chinese New Year, Divali, Christmas, etc.) where leaders hold 'open houses' and visit one another in the spirit of racial harmony, or

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1 Hamdan (1993) quantified that from 1945 to 1969, Malaysia had endured 22 racial disturbances, with the 1969 riots as the culmination. However, since then, though minor skirmishes do occur, the country has managed to progress economically, socially and politically.

2 Khalil (1985), a minister in the prime minister's department, categorised four strategies for national integration: the national ideology, the National Education Policy, the New Economic Policy and Amendments to the Sedition Act. The National Ideology is a social code that spells out the national aspirations; the National Education Policy aims at integration through a common schooling system, a common curriculum and examination system; the New Economic Policy is the corrective measure to the economic disparities between the Malays and the non-Malays where strategies are drawn up to eradicate poverty irrespective of race and to reconstruct society so that vocation will no more be identified with race; and the Sedition Act is a restraining strategy by the government on the public from discussing issues that are deemed 'sensitive', i.e. status of the Malay rulers, the National Language, the Malay special rights, Islam as the official religion and citizenship rights of the non-Malays. The entrenchment of this provisions and putting them beyond the realm of public discussion was felt to be necessary because it was found that the unfettered freedom with which these provisions were criticised and challenged during the 1969 election campaigns was a contributory factor to the breakdown of social order in May 1969. To this Act has been added other acts (discussed later) to safeguard the social foundation of Malaysia with its multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-political elements.

3 During an 'open house', selected guests or the whole public are invited to a leader's (government or political leaders) house to celebrate the major ethnic or religious festivals mentioned above where the public officials and the public can mingle. Open houses are normally held for a few hours (e.g. from 2pm - 6pm or 6pm - 10pm) or the whole day (e.g. 10am - 6pm). This practice has caught on and it is now common.
neighbourliness workshops where participants are urged to be tolerant of other races. At
the other end is the negative racial portrayal, i.e. portrayal of issues generally raised by
political parties to obtain support from their own groups over other communal groupings.
This was rampant during campaigning for the 1995 general elections where political parties
(both the ruling party - especially UMNO, MCA and MIC - and the opposition parties -
DAP, PAS and Semangat '46) raised ethnic issues which under normal circumstances,
would have been deemed sensitive.

Because the print media are communal-based and are controlled by political parties which in
turn owe their support to particular racial groupings, highlighting racial issues seems
inevitable. Ethnic issues have been raised by the newspapers since their establishment. In
the 1930s, for example, the Malays and the Chinese were engaged in a heated argument in
the press about a policy on special privileges the British administrators were giving the
Malays. The Malays at one time retaliated by writing in the Malay Mail (August 7, 1940):

> Why is it difficult to defend this policy on general or particular principles
> when you very well know that this is a Malay country under British
> protection and the British are treaty-bound to guide and help the Malays to
> hold their own in their country? (Khoo, 1988)

It is obvious from this excerpt that the tone for racial relationships has already been set
many decades earlier. Editors of both the print and electronic media are constantly faced
with a dilemma when reporting sensitive issues (Syed Arabi and Latifah 1989, Lowe,
1987). Editors have been known to 'play it safe' by not airing or printing a story that was
expected to be sensitive, especially if it pertains to races and religions.

The role and influence of media on racial issues have not been clearly defined and
thoroughly analysed: do the media set the agenda by disseminating racial issues or do they
merely mirror and reflect the issues that are already in existence? Realistically, the media
play both roles, depending on various factors that would decide whether the media are the
agenda-setter or the reflector of issues. Since the media cover both negative and positive
racial issues, editors and reporters are always conscious of the implications and
repercussions of this coverage. Haddad (1967) offers several guidelines toward
responsible journalism in reporting civil disorders and public tension: a) reporting should
minimise interpretation, eliminate rumours and avoid unverified statements, b) scare

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for just about anybody to hold an open house for friends and relatives. Undoubtedly this practice has
become popular as it promotes a feeling of goodwill and harmony.
headlines, scare bulletins and sensationalism of other kinds should be avoided, and c) avoid using superlatives or adjectives which might incite or enlarge a conflict.

Because of this heterogeneous and volatile society, policy makers would always be overly cautious, hence their concern about and control of the mass media will continue to be a hallmark of Malaysian journalism. News content of the media have always been and will continue to be criticised as uncritical, 'bland, pleasant and non-controversial' (Haddad, 1967). Lent (1984, 1988) who has traced the development of the Malaysian media over the years, has always concluded that the media are mere conduits of information and have become propaganda outlets for the administrations. He quoted a source who said that the New Straits Times is:

...more dedicated to chronicling every movement and pronouncement of the administration than giving the public the truth...It so frequently reports speeches of ministers... (1984: 34)

By and large, the Malaysian media do have press freedom. However, this freedom should not be seen in the same light or the same context of the Western concept of press freedom. Where the latter advocates freedom from any internal or external interference or intervention, press freedom in Malaysia is very much guided by self-discipline and self-restraint because of the multi-racial composition of the society where the emphasis is on building a united nation (Parker, 1982). In the West, the libertarian orientation of the media is constitutionally protected, thus giving the media leeway to critically oversee the activities of the government. But in many developing societies (of which Malaysia is a good example), the government openly proposes the development journalism philosophy which oblige the media to be agents of the government (Ebo, 1994).

Examples of incidents where the government has clamped down on the freedom of the media are as follows:

i. in 1980, a Tamil language newspaper was closed for publishing an article considered insulting to Islam. The article implied that polygamy (a practice permitted in Islam) could spread venereal disease. Reaction was swift and police squads had to be deployed when about 2500 people gathered in protest. Despite a page one apology by the newspaper, the government had to close down the newspaper to diffuse tensions which had mounted.

ii. in 1981, a journalist and the publisher of a bi-weekly opposition paper in Malay, were arrested under the charge of being involved in allowing their paper to be used by
communists and for publishing materials from the outlawed Communist Party of Malaya.

iii. in 1983, a bilingual monthly of social analysis was banned after three warnings in that year for publishing articles detrimental to diplomatic relationships between Malaysia and its neighbours.

iv. in late 1987, the fear of the 1969 clashes was hinted at when a crisis occurred within UMNO and the National Front. A split between the prime minister and party dissidents arose and subsequent developments resulted in the escalation of racial tensions within the country in 1987 and 1988. This conflict provided the backdrop for a dispute over government policies for Chinese medium schools. Because tensions were already high, in reaction to Chinese complaints, an UMNO Youth rally was scheduled, but was called off at the last minute. Using the Internal Security Act, the government arrested many Malaysians, several among them media workers. The Star publication, a newspaper noted for its critical stance (before 1987) and three other newspapers were closed when they were found to be too critical against the government. The arrests and the closure were done on the rationale of diffusing tension.

The government monitors the flow of information externally between media organisations in Malaysia and other countries through the national news agency, BERNAMA. Before 1984, all international news agencies channelled their news direct to media organisations in Malaysia. However, since then, BERNAMA buys all foreign news from the international news agencies and disseminates them to local subscribers. This move initially received strong opposition from the public as it was seen as having wide implications on the free flow of news. However, the government explained that as sole distributor, BERNAMA could not only earn additional money, but could also help smaller newspapers which would otherwise not been able to afford international wire services.

Apart from arrests of media workers and the closure of newspapers, foreign publications too are either banned or censored. The criteria for censorship used on the electronic media are also applicable to the print media. Though it is easy and expedient for media critics to criticise the Malaysian media for their apparent lack of freedom and for focusing more on government propaganda, the government's points of view too should not be totally dismissed. The four events chronicled above, while showing the limitations to press freedom, also suggest the sensitivities that exist in the society, especially pertaining to religions and cultures. Whether these sensitivities are real or imagined is a risk the government could not afford to take and discover by giving the press the freedom to print
as it deems fit as practised by press systems in the West.

The 1980s saw the government gradually relaxing its stranglehold on the media where the media are given a greater modicum of freedom to write about more issues. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad allowed the press to uncover high-level corruption in the government. This resulted in the mainstream newspapers, especially the New Straits Times and the Star making investigative reporting and consumer-oriented journalism regular features (English, 1982). Nevertheless, despite these concessions, the media will continue to be a controlled entity. The general thinking among the policy makers (both within and outside the media) would always be:

...in the context of Malaysia's pluralism, an all powerful press may...not adjust adequately to the practical dilemmas of the Government...It is important that newspapers place great emphasis on positive news and encourage a positive attitude toward change. (Ismail, 1989)

The usage of the media as a major tool in promoting national unity is not new in the developing world. Curry and Dassin (1982) in their analysis of press controls in different social and political systems, found that the press serves various functions from watchdog role (mainly in western libertarian societies), maintenance of the status quo, to commitment to national development and modernisation. All political, economic and social institutions and leaders in a society try to influence the messages transmitted in the media; the roles of the media differ according to the ideologies held by these forces in the society.

That journalists have been obliged to be agents of the government has at times drawn them into an ethical dilemma between conflicting obligations to their profession and the sociopolitical environments. Ebo (1994), in his study of ethical dilemmas faced by Nigerian journalists, finds that journalists are caught between conflicting media philosophies - wanting to maintain professional integrity by being independent from government, and at the same time, realising that they must work with the government to promote national development (Golding, 1979). This parallel could easily be drawn to Malaysia where such dilemmas also exist between loyalty to media professionalism and to government aspirations for the country. Media workers are aware that the country does not have the political and social maturity and stability to support a Western-type libertarian journalism.

Another parallel to the Malaysian press system is the Jordanian and the Arab press that Rugh (1979) has classified as loyalist press (Badran, 1988). Rugh asserts that a loyalist press has five characteristics: a) lacks diversity, b) gives publicity to government activities and
achievements, c) lacks thorough and investigative reporting, d) supports the status quo but criticises inefficient government practices, and e) tend to be muted in its commentaries and is slow to react editorially. Badran (1988) in his study of the Jordanian press system, concludes that the press is partially loyalist in nature, fitting some of Rugh's categories while negating others. Similarly, by the standards classified by Rugh, the Malaysian press can be seen as loyalist in several aspects, especially pertaining to supporting government activities and achievements while simultaneously criticising inefficient government practices. However, while it is an unfair characterisation to say that the Malaysian press lacks diversity as journalists do attempt to give several viewpoints, these viewpoints seldom include the oppositions'. The Malaysian press, too, in recent years has conducted investigative reporting, and while government policies are not directly questioned, the performance of government departments is constantly being scrutinised and criticised.

B.1 Forms of Constraints

Laws regulating what information is made public exist in every political and media system. Curry (1982) distinguishes two types of censorship which a political system usually imposes on the media: a) censorship of political information by the government which wishes to impose its own view of events or to withhold information which might lead to views which are disagreeable to it, and b) censorship that is designed to protect taste and morals. Both types of censorship exist in Malaysia, though the frequency of this interference has lessened over the years (Lent, 1988). Some laws, like the licensing law that obliges the print and electronic media to apply for a licence annually, were already in existence since the colonial era, but have remained in force till today, with amendments made in the light of changed circumstances. Others, like the law on reporting sensitive issues, were introduced after the 1969 racial riots. Most legislation for the print and broadcast media were drafted in the 1940s and 1950s before Malaysia had begun to industrialise and before the details of governance for a pluralistic society has been completely worked out. Hence, amendments to accommodate current developments seem inevitable (McDaniel, 1994).

Although Article 10 of the Malaysian Constitution provides that 'every citizen has the right to freedom of speech and expression', this freedom is not without its limitations. To begin with, this freedom is subject to several clauses in the Constitution which gives Parliament the power to impose law on these rights whenever it deems necessary in the 'interest and security' of the country. Guided by such clauses and articles in the Constitution, Parliament enacted several laws relating to media operations which are deemed important for the well-being and security of the nation. Hamdan (1987) lists 47
pieces of legislation and ordinances like the Defamation Act, Official Secrets Act, Broadcasting Act, Copyright Act, etc. imposed by the government on the mass media to regulate communication. Three of these forms of constraints are mentioned below to give a 'feel' and insight into what affects mass media operations in Malaysia:

* **Internal Security Act 1960**

This Act prohibits the printing, publication, sale, issue, circulation or possession of any document or publication that appears to contain or incite violence, cause disobedience to the law or to any lawful order. The Act also makes provisions to prohibit publications that are likely to lead to a breach of the peace or promote feelings of hostility; or be prejudicial to the nation or public order or security of the nation. Like the other security law, the Official Secrets Act, these are broad laws that could legitimise government control over activities that would threaten the nation's security and stability.

ISA enforcement is not conducted by means of normal court procedures. No public charges against the accused are usually made in which case the accused can be held for 60 days before any charge is made. Following this, the case is heard by a special board which may place the accused in confinement for up to two years. Cases are reviewed by an advisory board at least every six months.

* **Sedition Act 1948**

The Act makes it an offence to print, publish, sell, offer for sale, distribute, reproduce or import any seditious publication. Amended in 1970 following the race riots in 1969, this Act forbids public discussion of issues that could arouse communal sentiments or promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races or classes of the population. A ruling by a High Court in 1982 virtually did away with parliamentary privilege in the name of racial harmony. The court ruled that Parliament has a right to limit freedom of speech in the House to "minimise racial explosions" (Das, 1982).


The Act requires the registration of printing presses and a permit to publish a newspaper or other serial. A newspaper may not be printed or published without a government permit which is renewable annually. This Act further strengthens government grip on both local
and foreign publications. Under the original act of 1948 and subsequent amendments in 1971 and 1974, newspapers cannot publish any matter harmful to the public order, security or morality of the country, and must ensure the materials published are relevant to Malaysian affairs.

What media operators are weary of is the fact that stipulations like "issues sensitive to the well-being and security of the nation" cover a lot of areas that they may inadvertently tread on. Knowing the penalty that results from treading on these dangerous grounds, and not wanting to risk another state of anarchy as happened in May 1969, news workers would rather play it safe by censuring themselves and "skirting around issues" for the sake of national unity.

On whether laws pertaining to communication have brought severe negative side effects to freedom of speech and press freedom, is still a continuing debate. If a statement by Dr. Mahathir in a keynote address at the 1985 World Press Convention can be taken as a prophecy for the future media scenario, then government control will remain the trademark of the mass media:

> The press cannot escape laws ...in the name of freedom. Just as the government cannot be allowed to have the freedom to do exactly as it pleases in society, so too the media. (Hamdan, 1987)

The sensitivities in a plural society will almost always be a deterrent factor that would put a damper on media operations. Given the various racial pressures and sentiments, the mass media have to weigh and consider the implications of raising issues that might affect the stability and well-being of the nation. This attitude very much echoes Dr. Mahathir's stance that though the country accepts democratic principles, democratic practice must be appropriated to Malaysia's internal environment.

C. MEDIA ETHICS IN MALAYSIA

The subject and scholarship on media ethics, though not new in Malaysia, is not well explored. Discussions on ethics follow a trend, only in vogue when a cabinet minister or a senior academician broaches the subject in reaction to a media organisation that or a media worker who has been perceived as having crossed an accepted cultural norm. Then there would be calls from various quarters - the government, the academicians and other social groups - for the media to act with more 'decorum'.
Ethics among media workers is not yet seen as too much of a problem in Malaysia because generally the media workers have kept within the accepted boundary and code of conduct. This in large part is attributed to the social responsibility role the media play and the environment the media operate in with its various internal and external regulatory forces. A preliminary study by Hamdan (1987) on how Malaysians view journalists concluded that, generally, the public has a positive image of the journalists. The public thinks that the journalists play a vital role in the economic, social and political development of the country. Complaints against media representatives are seldom heard, apart from the occasional allegations from politicians who feel they have been misquoted.

By and large, media workers have managed to confine themselves within the framework of regulatory laws like the Official Secrets Act 1972, Sedition Act 1948, Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984. The media workers do cross the boundary now and then, they do push their luck in reporting on critical issues, and when this happens, they know the penalty they have to face if they or their media organisations violate such laws (as experienced by several newspapers discussed earlier). The press may look at these statutes as "gagging statutes and muzzling legislations", but the executives (the government) "feel that this is the way that it should manage security and public order" (Nik Rashid, 1994:5). Apart from these restrictive laws, the government has also successfully garnered the support of the media toward nation-building. Lent (1989), in studying the role the mass media play in the development of multi-cultural stability in ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations consisting of Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippine and Brunei), finds it "unique" that the media are widely used to bring about solutions to the multi-ethnic problems in the ASEAN region. Malaysia and Indonesia, for instance, have national ideologies that include principles pertaining to their pluralistic nature. The Rukunegara (National Ideology) in Malaysia which promotes a united nation and a democratic, just, liberal and prospective society, guides media content. With this guidance, media personnel know that their primary role is to promote national consciousness and racial harmony. In fact, Malaysia is the South East Asian nation that has been most active in orienting media to function in a pluralistic society. The mass media are used to encourage ethnic groups to respect one another's cultures, and to play down materials that touch upon communal sensitivities (Lent, 1989).

Apart from the above regulatory forces to ensure that the media function within the accepted social and political framework, media codes and press councils have also been discussed to encourage media responsibility and accountability, and over-all, to enhance the professional outlook of the media. The first attempt to establish a press council in Malaysia was mooted in 1974 by the then Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, who suggested that press
operation in Malaysia be in line with national aspirations. Though a committee was set up
in 1974, the idea fizzled out soon after due to lack of interest in such a council. Over the
years, the suggestion for the setting up of a press council has surfaced every now and
then, but each time the enthusiasm died because of the lack of interest shown.
BERNAMA (the national news agency), which has a supervisory council that accepts
complaints, in all its 28 years of existence, has only had one complaint. In the late 1980s,
the Organisation of Newspaper Editors (ONE) was set up because newspapers are aware of
its responsibility to the public. However, not only are the activities of ONE not well
known in the media circle, its very existence is equally unknown (Mohd. Safar, 1995).

In recent years, too, attempts are still being made to set up some form of regulatory
framework to guide media workers. In 1989, several veteran journalists formulated an
Ethics for Malaysian Journalists. Despite calls by the veteran journalists and the Chairman
of the Malaysian Press Institute for a body to be set up to oversee that newspaper
organisations adhere to the Journalism Ethics, no committee to date has been formed. The
latest call for a media council was again raised in 1993 by the Minister of Information who
urged media workers to set up a self-regulatory media council to ensure that national
information policies (which would be formulated) are implemented by the media. However,
so far both media council and the national information policies have not
materialised.

All these failed attempts at setting up a media council in Malaysia suggest several points
about the media and the media environment. First, despite the popular belief that the
Malaysian government controls the media, it does not exert its power for the media to set
up a council. The Minister of Information had said that the formation of a media council is
not to curb press freedom, but for it to be a guideline for the media to be more responsible
(NST, 1989). Second, many people still do not see the need for a media council or such
regulatory bodies. The need has not emerged for two reasons - one, media workers are
generally ethical and there has only been the infrequent violating of ethical conduct (over
the years, two cases of infringement of the OSA, and a few cases of defamation brought
before the courts), and two, Malaysia already has adequate laws governing the press.
Third, there is no body that wants to undertake the responsibility of setting up a media
council. While the government does not want to be seen as too authoritative in pushing for
a council, the media's cool reception shows their apprehension of a possible non-
governmental control, in addition to governmental control (Mohd Safar, 1995).

In the absence of a media council that should primarily be seen as a body to mediate
(between press-society relations) and support (as a guidance to the press), and secondarily
as a body of control and regulation, media workers in Malaysia fall back on several codes of ethics which act as guidelines: their own organisational code which is informally introduced and taught to media workers during their socialisation to newsroom practices; the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Code of Ethics and the 1989 Canons of Journalism drawn up by several veteran journalists under the auspices of the Malaysian Press Institute (MPI).

**The NUJ Code of Ethics**: The NUJ was founded in 1962 with the following objectives: a) to organise all of the country's working journalists, b) to obtain just and proper rates of remuneration, c) to obtain security of employment and reasonable hours and conditions of work, and d) to encourage high standards of journalism conduct and workmanship. To realise the latter objective, the NUJ formulated a code of ethics with eight canons covering areas of press responsibility (to report the truth, report honestly and accurately, gather information through fair means, honour source confidentiality) and press freedom (to collect and disseminate information and opinions).

**The 1989 Canons of Journalism**: The Malaysian Press Institute was established in 1974 with the following objectives: a) to sustain the high ideals of a free and responsible press, b) to be a centre for the training of journalists in the Communication Arts, c) to arrange conferences, seminars, courses and discussions, d) to hold examinations and to award diplomas, certificates and other distinctions for proficiency in or distinctive contribution to journalism, e) to establish and maintain contacts with mass media organisations overseas, and f) to promote and/or organise international exchanges of journalists. The MPI launched the 1989 Canons of Journalism drawn up by several veteran journalists in answer to the dissatisfaction voiced by media personnel that the existing NUJ code is inadequate in guiding journalistic practices. The 1989 code reiterated the eight canons of the NUJ code, and in addition acknowledges the duty of the Malaysian press to contribute to the process of nation-building, to the promotion of racial harmony and national unity. The code also manifests the belief of the press in the principles of the **Rukunegara** and recognises the threat of communism, racialism and religious extremism to Malaysia's well-being and security. To this end, the journalists shall avoid publication of news or reports contrary to the moral values of multi-racial Malaysia (see Appendix A and B for the Malaysian codes).

The main criticism against the NUJ code is that it is too general with no constructive guidelines on what or how a news report is to be written, especially the technique of writing news of a communal nature in a pluralistic society. Another criticism is that there is no body to execute the code. The NUJ does not have any mandatory power, especially on
media workers who are not members of the Union. Most media workers, especially those
at the executive level or unit chiefs, are non-members of the Union (Faridah and Mus
Chairil, 1996). Though the 1989 code is equally general in some of its statements, it at
least offers some guidance on what issues are to be avoided. It also formalises the duty of
the press to help toward nation-building and to maintain racial harmony. However, like the
NUJ code, this code also does not have a regulatory body with the power of execution.

Chapter Six which discusses the analysis of the interviews with the media workers will
show that because of the general and imprecise nature of the codes of ethics and because
they lack any mandatory power, these codes are not utilised fully by media workers.
Faridah and Mus Chairil (1996) in their survey research\(^1\) of the ethical conduct of editors
and journalists in Malaysia, concluded that though most of the respondents think that the
codes of ethics are a guidance in producing objective and accurate reports, some
respondents (both editors and journalists) did not think these codes are important as a
guideline. The researchers also concluded that the editors and journalists lack a clear
understanding of the meaning of the codes, e.g. the editors were unsure of what
'accuracy' constitutes; the journalists were not serious about producing reports that are
objective and non-partisan. The researchers feel that the time has come for the media
workers and the executives to adopt a more serious attitude toward ethical codes in terms of
understanding and practising them.

Apart from organisations like NUJ and MPI which function as bodies to promote
professionalism, the Malaysian media are also represented by other organisations that have
been set up for specific purposes, for example, the Women Journalists Association of
Malaysia (PERTAMA) aims at promoting issues of interest to journalists in general and
women journalists in particular. These organisations generally have the following
objectives: not only to encourage social interactions amongst those in the media circle, but
more importantly, to further the professional interests of the members within Malaysia and
with media personnel from other countries.

D. JOURNALISM TRAINING IN MALAYSIA

For some media workers, socialisation to newsroom practices begin at the tertiary level

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\(^1\) Faridah and Mus Chairil conducted a survey research (in 1989) of 64 print and electronic media workers
comprising journalists and editors (sub-editors, assistant producers, deputy-editor-in-chief). Among the
questions asked were the frequency of reporters producing accurate reports (accuracy in news facts, names,
addresses, etc.), the frequency of reporters including their opinions in the news reports, reporter-source
relations and whether they were aware of the existence of codes of ethics.
where they study mass communication (and journalism per se) courses. Of the nine universities in Malaysia, seven offer mass communication courses, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The first university programme in communication was started at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in mid-1972, followed by Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM) a few months later. The mass communication programme, a three-year or four-year bachelors-degree course, requires students to undergo a period of internship at local or international news or other media agencies. Though the medium of instruction in all the universities is Bahasa Malaysia, English is also widely used in addition to a third language that students are required to study.

The curriculum emphasised varies from university to university. While University Malaya (UM) specialises in mass communications theory and research, ITM, and to a lesser extent USM, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) emphasise practical skills of news gathering and news writing. Most of the programmes (except those offered by UM and the newer universities like Universiti Sarawak Malaysia) require students to specialise in one or two disciplines of mass communications (journalism, public relations, broadcasting, advertising, publishing).

An example of a journalism programme (offered by ITM) is as follows: the first year offers courses on communication theories, introduction to news gathering and news writing skills, language proficiency and Islamic religious knowledge (since the population of ITM is 99 per cent Malays, Islam is emphasised). The second year emphasises on in-depth studies of news gathering and writing skills like investigative journalism and feature-editorial writing. Students are also required to produce the department's monthly newsletter, DIMENSI. Students undergo a term/semester of internship in the final year and in their final semester, are required to produce the department's magazine, SASARAN. All the universities that offer specialisation courses attempt to give the students both theory and practical emphasis on mass communication and the disciplines they choose.

As far as can be ascertained, no programme offers media ethics as a course. Media ethics is covered as part of a course on law or discussions on contemporary issues in mass communication. In fact, media ethics is quite a popular subject discussed as a topic in classroom discussions, seminars or by a guest speaker from the communications circle (practitioners and academicians alike), especially after an ethical conduct has been seen to be violated.

Apart from journalism training at the tertiary level, every media organisation conducts
seminars, conferences, workshops, etc. and refresher courses at regular intervals to update the general and specialised knowledge of the media workers. Training is also organised by the Tun Abdul Razak Training Centre (which is part of the Ministry of Information), the Asian Institute for Broadcasting Development (which offers training courses to students from the Pacific and Asian regions; this body is partially supported by the Malaysian government and UNESCO), the Malaysian Press Institute and other media organisations. Training is also received at regional (amongst the nations of the Association of South-East Asian Nations - ASEAN) and at international level (for example, Fellowship for journalists to do their attachments overseas, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom).

The training at the tertiary and non-tertiary level, while generally benefiting the students and participants, can also be seen as a source of dilemma when it comes to practising what has been learnt. This dilemma stems in part from the orientation of the courses conducted and the trainers themselves. The predominant models of news media institutions and the communication / journalism programmes at the tertiary level, and the professional orientations of the media workers and the media educators are derived from the news media tradition of the West. Though there are many areas in communication which can be safely assumed to be universal (e.g. some aspects of news gathering like lying and misrepresentation are generally considered wrong), other aspects should be adopted with caution. To illustrate, in journalism schools (in the West and in other parts of the world), the concept of press freedom is emphasised as a tool to be guarded from encroachment by any force, but in reality, this concept (as far as Malaysia is concerned) has to be exercised with a certain degree of social responsibility.

Many of the communication scholars / educators in Malaysia have had some form of training (be it at the tertiary or postgraduate level) from universities overseas, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. Consciously or unconsciously, they would be influenced by the training and the orientation of the media tradition in the West. This orientation is taken back to Malaysia and 'transferred' to the students and other participants. Some media workers too get training from overseas, thus perpetuating the Western media tradition. This is not to suggest that media educators and practitioners simply absorb and later regurgitate what they have learned from their overseas exposure; this is a point to consider that this overseas experience may be a contributing factor to the dilemma faced by people in the media.

The training programmes take different approaches (Golding, 1979). Not only do media workers and educators go overseas to get the training, Western news media practitioners
and educators come to Malaysia to conduct the training. A dilemma would occur if, or when, the media worker influenced by the Western libertarian philosophy, fails to reconcile this orientation to the values and norms prevalent in the media and social systems. This is a problem quite prevalent amongst Third World countries where media workers are caught between two conflicting and in some ways desirable obligations: to maintain their professional integrity and at the same time, to work closely with the government because of the peculiar needs of developing societies (Ebo, 1994, Okigbo, 1989).

Summary

The aim of this chapter is to give an insight into the political and socio-cultural scenario in which the Malaysian mass media operate as it was argued in Chapter Two that these political and cultural indices are paramount in influencing media output. The media in Malaysia are given limited freedom to function both as a watchdog to the government and simultaneously as a symbiotic partner to gear the nation toward development. Because of the uniqueness of the social and political fabric of the country with its multi-racial mosaic, sensitivities of the different ethnic groups are a consideration media workers are always mindful of. Race relations in the country are not made any easier by the political parties and the media (especially the print media) which are basically communal-based. Racial sentiments and skirmishes have been present since the early days of pre-independent Malaya. Though the government constantly urges the society toward racial harmony and nation-building, and though the society generally lives in harmony, racial sentiments are still very much a problem to be reckoned with. This has put the government in a 'dilemma' over press freedom. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has said that:

If we (the government) allow extreme freedom, the country's well-being could be threatened. on the other hand, if we act to restrict the press, we will be accused of being undemocratic. (McDaniel, 1994 : 288)

This dilemma is manifested in the ownership and management of the mass media. While on one hand, the private media are owned by financial interests of the ruling political party, and one would assume that the owners would toe the party line, on the other hand, the government over the years has gradually relaxed its control on media content. As a solution, the government relies on the media workers' sense of responsibility and patriotism (Dadameah, 1988) to guide them in their profession. The fact that several publications like ALIRAN, Harakah and the Rocket which are "bitterly antagonistic toward the government" (McDaniel, 1994 : 288) are allowed to operate, shows that the
government does make concessions despite the numerous regulatory constraints like the Internal Security Act and the licensing law. Whether the fears of the racial sentiments are real or imagined is not a hypothesis the government and the society are willing to experiment by giving the mass media the freedom to report as they wish.

Western thinking on such regulatory media constraints is that they act to suppress dissent and alternative political expression. Though the truth of this cannot be denied, neither can the realities of the Malaysian political and cultural sensitivities be taken lightly. The government needs to maintain social and political equilibrium by keeping public debate of certain issues within bounds. If the government faces a dilemma of how much freedom to accord the media, the media workers also face a dilemma between their professional integrity to watch over the government and their social responsibility to work in tandem with the latter for the benefit of nation-building.

Scholars and professionals, mostly from the West, have criticised the national media policies of the developing world for failing to ensure freedom of information. This criticism still persists because media scholars are assessing the performance of the Third world against Western standards and traditions. These Western media conventions and professional orientations are 'transferred' to the developing world through journalistic education and training. The prevalent mindset in comparative news media research is that the Western news media model is the ideal against which all other models must be measured (Ebo, 1994). This thinking ignores that fact that "the social system in which professional mass communicators function set standards and values of performance and determines how they fulfil their responsibilities, the characteristics that identify professional mass communicators are unique to specific social systems" (Starck, 1988: 1). That journalism practices across different societies do share certain universal characteristics, is not denied. Nevertheless, beyond these commonalties, other characteristics and attributes of journalism practices are context-bound (Ebo, 1994). To ignore the significant role that indigenous political, social and cultural factors play in the shaping of news will not give a true account of the mass media, not only in Malaysia, but also in other developing countries.

Similarly, the standards and the social system will influence, if not determine, the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of news production. The former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, sums up the sentiments of the region (South-East Asia) when he asserts that what he terms American-style journalism is "not a universal standard". Singapore's approach is "equally valid" (McDaniel, 1994: 287). One defence of this assertion is that adversarial journalism as practised in Western countries is culturally
unacceptable. The 'indirect style' is more suited to the Asian behavioural norms. Razak (1986) asserts that "assertive journalism is considered insensitive and crude. Readers are used to, and comfortable with, reading between the lines" (p 219). In the Malay culture especially, verbal contradiction is unseemly and distasteful; much meaning in stories is revealed by insinuation and implication. Very often, the manner of presenting an idea or the elements missing from an account are more significant than a news item's factual details (McDaniel, 1994). This concept is alien to Westerners who are used to the direct approach. This direct and frank approach is certainly not part of the social code in Malaysia, especially among those of the older generation. Mahathir (1970), in his book, The Malay Dilemma described the Malays as "formal and painstakingly polite" (p171) where their good manners would demand that criticisms and frankness be minimal or at worse, indirect. This is but a small example of the social values and norms of the culture that form the basis for ethical conduct and communication.

The concept of 'Asian values' (as opposed to Western values) as an approach to understanding media philosophy in the Asian region began as a political slogan by a few national leaders when debating the issue of press freedom. This tag has caught on and is now becoming the agenda of common citizens, especially now with many Asian countries becoming economically assertive, developed and wanting to be recognised by their own identities.

In December, 1994, a group of more than 30 leading Asian journalists and publishers convened in Hong Kong to discuss the topics of "Asian values and the role of the media in society". To begin with, the concept itself is misleading: Asia's vast territorial span results in inhomogeneity in the practices of values among Asian countries (just as the concept of the Western values too is not clear-cut due to the different countries and cultures that make up the Western world). Because each individual country has its own values and norms, there can never be "truly Asian values". The concept was also criticised by several participants as part of the rhetoric and an attempt by governments that seek to perpetuate themselves in power by restricting the press and other civil liberties. As the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, said in his keynote address at the conference:

If we in Asia want to speak credibly of Asian values, we too must be prepared to champion those ideals which are universal and which belong to humanity as a whole. It is altogether shameful, if ingenious, to cite Asian values as an excuse for autocratic practices and denial of basic rights and civil liberties.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of consensus and to a certain degree, a lack of acceptance of
this concept, it should be seen as a foundation to show the difference in the media philosophy between the West and the East. The major Asian traditions (like Buddhism and Islam) stand for a holistic vision of life and society encompassing economic, social and political dimensions as opposed to partialistic and fragmentary approaches to development. The Asian journalists have to find a middle ground between the Western paradigm of press freedom, which in certain countries border on the unconstrained, and carrying developmental journalism to its extreme, to the extent that even mild criticism of the ruling elite and a critical attitude is viewed with fear, suspicion and sometimes contempt (Ibrahim, 1994). Asia's complexities and diversities demand diverse and complex media and media methods, apart from or complementing the traditional Western discipline of reporting.
CHAPTER FOUR

A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

For the purpose of examining and analysing the issues and questions raised in Chapter One and the rest of the thesis, the methods employed to this end are content analysis, participant observation and interviews. This chapter will discuss why the three methodologies have been chosen and their strengths and weaknesses. Basically, the three methodologies were chosen because they are the most appropriate to empirically examine the objectives of the study. Using a single method to analyse data for a study may leave it open to vulnerabilities as a result of the weaknesses of the method. Thus, to avoid this, a combination or triangulation of methods is employed.

Jankowski and Wester (1991:62) define 'triangulation' as a "research strategy in which different methods are employed for data gathering and analysis around a single object of study". Denzin (1970, cited in Jankowski and Wester, 1991:62), on the other hand, said that triangulation which uses multiple methods, is a plan of action that will raise sociologists above the "personalistic biases" that stem from single methodologies. Thus, triangulation, as a methodological strategy is necessary because certain aspects of the research queries cannot be analysed with just a single methodology. Because all methodologies have their own strengths and weaknesses, the triangulation method is essential to compensate for the weaknesses of any one single method (Jorgensen, 1989; McCall and Simmons, 1969). The possibility of personal biases creeping into the analysis is always present, therefore if only one method were to be used, the objectivity of the analysis could be questioned. In fact, Jicks (1983 : 135-148) argues that not only do the triangulation methods insulate against personal bias, they also provide other advantages: a) they help to uncover the deviant dimension of a phenomenon, b) they may serve as the critical test, by virtue of their comprehensiveness, for competing theories, and c) they allow researchers to be more confident of their results.

Thus, the assumptions above about triangulation suggest that it can assist in constructing a more encompassing perspective, a more 'holistic' approach to gathering data. However, despite these advantages, it would be misleading to assume that the usage of these multiple methods would offer a complete 'insulation' against "personalistic biases". Phillips (cited in Jankowski and Wester, 1991), for instance, raised the question of whether triangulation actually raises rather than reduces biases inherent in particular data collection methods. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that the data collected through the multiple methods would complement one another; findings derived from different methods may conflict or fail to
corroborate each other.

A. CONTENT ANALYSIS

A.1 Definitions and Characteristics

Content analysis as a useful research tool in mass communication has been used for decades to determine the meaning of media messages. Krippendorff (1991) defines content analysis as a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (p21). This definition emphasises two key characteristics of content analysis: replicability (i.e. reliability) and validity. The former concept requires that the analysis be reliable where the same technique should yield the same result even when conducted by different researchers at a different time and under different conditions. This is the requirement of a content analysis to be reliable, and to achieve replicability, two other characteristics of content analysis are required: the method chosen should be objective and systematic. By objective is meant that each step in the research process must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures (Stempel, 1981; Holsti, 1969). A set of rules and procedures can help a researcher carry out the analysis of media messages objectively by minimising - though not altogether eliminating - the possibility that the findings reflect the researcher's subjective predispositions rather than the content of the documents analysed (Holsti, 1969). That the analysis is objective means that the results depend upon the procedure and not the analyst. One test of objectivity then, is whether other researchers are able to arrive at similar conclusions by following identical procedures when working on the same data. The second characteristic of the content analysis is that it be conducted in a systematic manner where a set of procedure is applied in the same way to all the content being analysed. This set of procedure would secure data relevant to the research question and would eliminate analyses in which only materials supporting the analyst's hypothesis are included.

Krippendorff's definition (i.e. valid inferences) also recognises that content analysis help conceptualise that portion of reality that gave rise to the analysed text; that it be performed "relative to and justified in terms of the context of the data" (p23). Thus, the obtained inferences should be in agreement with the attributes or properties in the context of the data to which these inferences refer.

An earlier definition of content analysis was given by Berelson (1952) who said that it is a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (p18). While certain aspects of Berelson's definition are in agreement with Krippendorff's (i.e. the requirements of 'objective' and 'systematic'
would be consonant with Krippendorff’s requirement of replicability/reliability), the latter (and also Stempel, 1981, Holsti, 1969) finds Berelson's definitional requirements of 'quantitative' and 'manifest content' to be either problematic or restrictive. The quantitative aspect of content analysis means the recording of numerical values or the frequencies with which the various defined types of content occur. This 'quantitative' requirement has been criticised by advocates of qualitative research who said that studies which used the quantitative method are shallow and lack meaning (Stempel, 1981; Kracauer, 1952). There is also considerable disagreement about the meaning of 'quantitative' as applied in content analysis. Some definitions are restrictive, for example, requiring that content analysis measures the 'frequency' with which symbols or other units appear in each category; or other definitions equate the analysis with 'numerical' :

"Content analysis aims at a classification of content in more precise, numerical terms than is provided by impressionistic 'more or less' judgements of 'either-or'" (Kaplan and Goldsen, 1965 : 83, cited in Holsti, 1969 : 6).

On the other hand, advocates of quantitative analysis criticised qualitative analysis as lacking precision: descriptions such as '45 percent' or '27 times out of 30' convey information more precisely than statements such as 'less than half' or 'almost always' (Holsti, 1969). As Lasswell et al., (1952 : 31) pointed out:

Can we assume that a scholar read his sources with the same degree of care throughout his research? Did he allow his eye to travel over the thousands of papers of parliamentary debates, newspapers, magazines and other source lists in his bibliography or notes?

Quantitative content analysis is said to be more advantageous because quantification provides a powerful set of tools for precise summary of findings and for improving the quality of interpretation and inference.

However, though the qualitative-quantitative debate still exists between proponents and opponents of the two methods, many researchers have also realised and acknowledged that the combination of the two methods would complement one another. Only by moving back and forth between these two approaches that the analyst is most likely to gain insight into the meaning of the data. Pool (1959 : 192) summarised the advantages of the combination analysis when he said:

It should not be assumed that qualitative methods are insightful, and quantitative ones merely mechanical methods for checking hypotheses. The relationship is a circular one: each provides new insights on which the other can feed.
Another major source of disagreement on the definition of content analysis pertains to whether the analysis must be limited to manifest content or whether it may be used to analyse the deeper layers of meaning embedded in the media content. Some researchers have expressed concern that taking content at its face value may distort reality as they are certain that the intent of the communicator is not always made apparent on the surface (Stempel, 1981). However, this concern can be dealt with by considering content analysis at two levels: at the coding stage of research, the analyst, because of the requirements of objectivity, is limited to recording items which actually appear in the document by using a set of procedures or categories. At the second stage – the interpretation stage – the analyst would be free to use his/her intuition to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. Nevertheless, despite these measures, the 'manifest content' requirement is still viewed as problematic and is excluded from subsequent definitions of content analysis (e.g. Krippendorff, 1980, Larsen, 1991).

A.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Content Analysis

An important feature of content analysis is that it is a 'non reactive' or 'unobtrusive' research technique (Webb, et al, 1966; Holsti, 1969; Berger, 1991). One of the problems of doing research is that the presence of researchers may influence what they find. Knowledge that one is being studied may, in some circumstances, alter those aspects of behaviour under analysis. Especially when it is important to get repeated measures of the subject's values or attitudes over a period of time, and if there is reason to believe that continued interaction between analyst and subject may affect the nature of responses, then content analysis may be a useful way to gather the required data.

Content analysis also allows researchers to deal with the subjects that are current (e.g. they can work with the latest magazines), recent or in the past. Working with current issues, for instance, (and comparing them with earlier ones) may enable researchers to study phenomena as they develop - e.g. fads, fashions and other social movements. This is an inexpensive and convenient method of getting information as much of the material is available in libraries and on microfilm.

Another instance where content analysis is a useful research technique is when the volume of material to be examined exceeds the analyst's ability to undertake the research alone. For example, in studies of newspapers, magazines, movies, radio, literature and many other forms of communication, the analyst can rarely afford to examine all relevant data. Content analysis helps to overcome the problem of data volume by allowing a sample of the data (which is representative and whose characteristics are clearly and precisely described) to be analysed. Findings from the sample documents selected for study can then
be used to make inferences about the larger universe from which it was selected.

Though it is a useful tool for research, content analysis has its disadvantages. While this methodology is a way of avoiding the problem of researcher influence on individuals under study, at the same time there is the problem of researcher influence on the research design. The interests, beliefs and to a certain extent, the personalities of the researchers may determine what they choose to investigate; this constitutes coder bias. However, this problem can be minimised with a proper set of procedures that would help the researchers be objective and systematic in their coding.

Two technical problems also arise from the use of content analysis as a research tool: the problem of validity and reliability. Although these are general problems of social science research and not distinctive to this particular method, some consideration of this problem, however, should be given (Berelson, 1952). As has been discussed earlier, reliability means that the method used should be able to yield the same results regardless of who does the analysis or when it is done. A problem that may arise pertaining to reliability is the consistency in the analysis of the contents through time. However, this weakness can be controlled by formulating precise definitions of categories where operational definitions are given on all important terms or concepts used in the analysis.

Content analysis also poses the problem of validity which is defined as the extent to which an instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure (Holsti, 1969; Berelson, 1952). Berelson acknowledged that in cases where there is agreement on the definitions of the relevant categories, there is little problem in achieving validity; on the other hand, in cases where the basic definitions are not clear or widely accepted, the problem of validity may arise. To illustrate, Berelson used the example of a case where communication content for 'emotionalism' was analysed. Several definitions may be made of this term with several different sets of indicators which should be appropriate to the category in the context. In the event that the indicators are not appropriate or sufficient, an analyst would face a definitional problem of choosing which meaning of 'emotionalism' is intended in the particular case. Nevertheless, though researchers believe (Holsti, 1969; Berelson, 1981) that adequate sampling and reliability may not sufficiently overcome the problem of validity, they would to a great extent, minimise this weakness.

While sampling in content analysis may be regarded as a practical solution to voluminous data, it can also be considered as a problem area. Among the questions raised in sampling are: How representative is the material one studies relative to all the material that could be studied? Even if a sizeable amount of material is chosen, what is the right amount of material to study? This problem is further complicated by the fact that as many as three
decisions about the sample are necessary for many studies. There are three universes from which samples must be drawn: a) titles - i.e. specific newspapers or magazines or television stations, etc., b) issues or dates of titles, and c) sampling the relevant content within specific issues of specific titles.

However, though numerous problems arise from sampling in content analysis, researchers agree that decisions at any step in the research process are not independent of those made at earlier stages. Many problems with sampling design could be minimised when at the initial stage, the research problem has been carefully defined. With a precise and definitive research problem, problems like representativeness, sample size and types of sampling to employ can be minimised.

A.3 Content Analysis Procedure

The content analysis for this research was done according to several key steps: selection of the unit of analysis, category construction, sampling of content and reliability of coding.

Selection of the unit of analysis: To decide on the unit of analysis, the purpose of the research and the research questions were used as guidelines. Since this research studies the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of news gathering and news writing, news articles or items were chosen as the unit of analysis. The news items were further scrutinised for the usage of words, statements and sentences. The analysis of the words (which include word compounds like phrases as well as single words) in the news items would provide empirical evidence for the research questions like the tone of the news and the accuracy of news.

Category construction: Several category systems already developed by other researchers and which were relevant were selected for this research (refer to appendix C for coding schedule). The categories formulated for this research which were appropriate to answer the research objectives were headlines, news type, writer of news item, source of news, tone of news, number of viewpoints in the news, the forum that was identified in the news where / how news was gathered, treatment of individuals in the news and the accuracy of the news.

Since the main concern of the content analysis is to study the influences that affect the ethical decision-making of news workers in the process of news production, the categories for the coding schedule were formulated with two news production processes in mind: news gathering and news writing. Principles of ethics were used as guidelines to draw up these categories; hence categories like tone of news, news accuracy, methods of news
gathering and treatment of individuals were included. A key dimension in this study of the news process is source-reporter relationship and press-government relations, thus categories to that effect (e.g. sources of news, number of viewpoints, etc.) were also included. The sources of news were also analysed for the type of quotation used - the reporters used the information given by the sources as direct quotations, indirect quotations or the sources were simply referred to. An important category in the coding schedule is the tone of the news, and though no scale was used to measure the tone (e.g. the "Semantic Differential Scale" or "Likert Scale"), the researcher used judgements/labels like critical/unfavourable, favourable or neutral and when a news item has been analysed as, for example, 'critical', words to show this stance would be used as evidence. This category was left open-ended so as not to restrict the researcher in the coding: the use of a scale (word/phrase/statement) could limit the coding to what is available. This researcher feels that the 'essence' of the 'tone of the news' would best be 'captured' without the usage of a pre-determined scale that would only compel and limit the coding to be fitted into one of the options in the scale. Many news reports analysed for this research were not exclusively 'favourable' or 'unfavourable' or 'neutral', an explanation or justification had to be included to explain what has been said.

Using a category system that is workable and that has been used in other studies (e.g. news type) will enable one to get a notion of the kinds of results that are likely to be produced. Basically, when creating the set of categories, three considerations were kept in mind: a) the categories must be pertinent to the objectives of the study, b) the categories should be functional, and c) the system of categories must be manageable.

It is an important requirement for the categories constructed to reflect the purposes of the research and to be exhaustive. For the purposes of the research to be reflected - i.e. to study the influences on the ethical conduct of news workers in news gathering and news writing - the research must initially clearly define the variables to be dealt with. These variables are the 'conceptual definitions' (Holsti, 1969) which are contained in the nine categories mentioned above. The analyst is also required to specify the indicators (the operational definition) which determine whether a given content datum falls within the category. In this instance, the words used in the news items (for example, 'mad mullah' to describe an individual in a news item) that are value-laden to show favourable, unfavourable or neutral coverage are used as an indicator to define such concepts like

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1 The 'open ended' expression is borrowed from one of several types of questions a researcher employs when conducting an interview. An open-ended question in an interview gives the respondent the leeway to elaborate on her/his answers, in contrast to a close-ended question that limits the answer to either a 'yes' or 'no' or to a specific topic or area of discussion.
'treatment of individuals in the news' and 'tone of news'. It is also important for the categories to be exhaustive in that all relevant items in the sample of documents under study must be capable of being placed into a category. Again, for this to be possible the initial definition and formulation of the categories is important: the better (clear and precise) the category, the more likely it is to conform to the requirement of exhaustiveness.

**Sampling of content**: Many of the problems attached to sampling briefly mentioned earlier, was overcome in this research through the use of case studies as the sampling content. The rationale for the selections of the newspapers (the *New Straits Times* and *Utusan Malaysia*) and the case studies (Pergau dam conflict, Rahim Thamby Chik scandal and the Al-Arqam ban) is discussed in the chapter on the content analysis.

The usage of case studies avoids the problems of deciding on the time frame of the analysis, the issues to be included for the period of analysis, the amount of relevant contents to be analysed and the sampling method to be used. The case studies chosen were analysed for as long as the issues were reported in the selected newspapers.

As will be further explained in Chapter 5, the selection of the above case studies was not done randomly, but instead fulfilled two basic considerations. Firstly, they were the main issues and events in discussion for the year 1994; this point was derived at after having perused all issues and happenings in 1994 in the two selected newspapers. Though several other issues were initially considered, they were finally dismissed as the time frame was too short (the issues were only discussed for a couple of weeks). For the purpose of this research, issues and events were considered major when they were discussed over a longer period of time and they concern a broader spectrum of the public. All three issues selected were discussed for more than five months and they were of public interest as the main arm of the society (i.e. the government) was directly involved. Secondly, these issues were also appropriate and relevant in answering a major objective of the thesis, i.e. to study the internal and external influences on the ethical conduct of news workers. The case studies chosen fulfilled certain criteria for the study - they had elements of social, cultural and political influences that were pertinent to this research.

**Reliability of Coding**: As mentioned earlier on reliability of coding, to ensure that the content analysis is objective and systematic, the analyst must be concerned with reliability. Reliability of coding demands that the same results be produced when a set of procedures are used to analyse a given sample of data. Several factors come into effect to ensure reliability of coding: clarity of categories and coding rules, and coder's skill, insight and experience. Though more consistency could be obtained on reliability of coding if only one coder were to conduct the analysis, this however is not a guarantee as other factors,
especially the exhaustiveness of categories, are equally important.

Though this research has an advantage in that this researcher worked alone and thereby could minimise the problem of inter-coder reliability (the problem of consistency arises when coding is done by multiple coders), single-coder analysis, however, does not guarantee consistency. To ensure that intra-coder consistency is achieved in this research, the analysis of the three case studies in NST and Utusan (and also the Times for the Pergau issue) was done in three phases. In the first phase, a pre-test was carried out when 10 per cent of the news items were analysed. This way the researcher was able to test the exhaustiveness of the categories and subsequently improve on reliability. For instance, the coding during this phase showed that the options found in the category on 'how individuals were covered' was not sufficient to include all the possible answers found in individual news item; a third option (other) had to be included. The second phase was the actual content analysis where all news items were analysed (see succeeding chapter for the overall number of news items, and the breakdown of the news items according to newspaper and case study). In the third phase, 10 per cent of the stories was again analysed to see if the same results would be obtained: this comparison shows that there is consistency in the coding of the news items, especially for news items which have been analysed as 'favourable', 'unfavourable' or 'neutral'.

B. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation, also known as ethnography, has its roots in the field of anthropology and is concerned with understanding behaviour through data gathered in field settings. The term ethnography was first used in 1922 which refers to the anthropological process of studying a whole culture. An ethnography is a description of what a culture is, what being a member of that culture means, and how that culture differs from other cultures. An ethnography is the product of systematic observations, interviews and case histories (Kamil, et al, 1985). It is a methodology in social research that gives a better insight and understanding of the different cultures that human beings live and operate in. This approach requires the researcher to step outside his narrow cultural background with its socially inherited ethnocentrism, to apprehend the world from the viewpoint of other human beings who live by different meaning systems (Spradley, 1980). This methodology focuses on the meanings of human existence as seen from the standpoint of insiders and provides direct and observational access to the insiders' world of meaning (Jorgensen, 1989).

Observing and analysing the insider's perspective of reality is central to ethnographic
research. Fetterman (1989) called this the emic (insider's) perspective where the insider's perception of reality is instrumental to understanding and accurately describing situations and behaviours. Though the insider's perceptions may not conform to an objective reality, they help a researcher to understand the conduct of a member of a social group.

The ethnographer not only tries to fathom the culture of a group from the emic perspective, but also attempts to place the data in an etic or scientific perspective. Most ethnographers today approach ethnographic research by looking at both the emic and etic orientations with the aim to provide practical and theoretical truths about human existence - they would collect data from the emic perspective and analyse it in terms of both the insider's view and their own scientific analysis (Fetterman, 1989).

To ensure the integrity of the data and depending on the familiarity of the researcher to the social situation, the ethnographer uses a variety of methods and techniques, like direct observation, formal or informal interviews or analysis of documents. The methodology of participant observation, generally, is practised as a form of case study which involves the detailed description and analysis of an individual case - which may be a culture, society, community, organisation, group or even a phenomenon such as beliefs or practices.

B.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of Participant Observation

Proponents and opponents of the physical sciences or the social sciences have argued long and hard over the advantages and disadvantages of collecting data by the positivists or naturalistic methodology. While on one hand it is generally agreed that the ethnographic method of data collection can be viewed as non-scientific (Easthope, 1971, as cited in Jorgensen, 1989), this methodology cannot be simply dismissed as not useful. Instead, the uniqueness in this method of data collection in that it constitutes a humanistic methodology has to be taken into account.

To begin with, the methodology of ethnography is appropriate for studies of almost every aspect of human existence. It describes what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur and why. It is especially useful to shed light on the study of processes, relationships among people and events, the organisation of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns (Jorgensen, 1989).
Jorgensen (1989) summarised the strength of participant observation when he said that ethnography focuses special interest in human meaning and interaction by viewing from the perspective of people who are insiders or members of particular situations and settings. This in-depth, qualitative, case-study approach and design enables the researcher to constantly redefine what is problematic based on facts gathered from everyday life situations and settings.

In the field of communication, for instance, many observations have been done to understand the process of news production. Among the observations that have been regularly quoted are those done by Tuchman (1978), Fishman (1980), Altheide (1976) and Golding and Elliot (1979). Altheide, for example, who conducted a study on bias or distortions in television news making, was able to question the accuracy of previous hypothesis with the new empirical information he gathered. The new concepts and generalisations were used to critically examine existing hypotheses and theories. Fishman too "learned first hand, the background knowledge one had to know to determine 'what's going on' in a setting in order to 'see' news in it" (1980: 23). Similarly, this present research uses participant observation to discover the journalistic norms and culture that exist in the news organisations of NST and Utusan. Getting an insight into the journalistic norms and culture is essential to understand the process of news production. This period also made it possible for the researcher to create rapport with the news workers; to a certain extent, this rapport defined the success or failure of the face-to-face interviews that followed.

Being able to view life from the inside makes ethnography meaningful because the world of everyday life constitutes reality for its inhabitants, insiders or members. Thus, ethnography seeks to uncover, make accessible and reveal the meanings (realities) people use to make sense of their daily lives. This is how ethnography differs from other approaches: while the former places the meaning of everyday life first, the latter begins with concepts defined by way of existing theories and hypotheses (Jorgensen, 1989).

Hammersley (1992) categorised the advantages of participant observation as: 1) insightful descriptions and 2) descriptions of social microcosms. As has been stated earlier, the strength of ethnography lies in its ability to give insightful descriptions of a culture and present phenomenon in new and revealing ways which would enable the researcher to be free of those frameworks that she or he routinely employs and has taken as reality. Much of the interest of ethnographic research comes from the description of events in types of setting of which the researcher probably has no experience. Being able to observe and
The aim of the ethnographic investigation is to study the general features of human social life through the description of particular events. It is believed that through the study of "representative individuals" we would discover general types of human individual. It is argued that, sometimes, it is only by means of this inductive, or discovery-based, approach that generic social processes can be understood. This strategy is contrasted with the hypotheses-testing of much social research (Hammersley, 1992). Ethnographic work focuses not only on the richness and diversity of human social life, but at the same time seeks to identify generic features. The value of ethnographic work often depends on showing that the particular events described instantiate something of general significance about the social world.

The strength of the descriptive character of ethnographic accounts is that they map the morphology of some area of the social world. In fact, this constitutes the key feature that ethnography has over other approaches to social research. Blumer (1969) criticised practitioners of these other approaches for failing to investigate "naturally occurring" phenomena in a sufficiently direct and detailed manner and failing to see beyond the "veil" of their own common-sense assumptions. This naturalist approach is reflected in ethnography that presents accounts of an event "as it appeared" (Atkinson, 1982).

In summary, the strength of ethnography lies in its concern to represent a close resemblance to routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life. Because ethnography presents accounts of an event 'as it appeared', the meanings that give form and content to social processes can be better understood. By using an approach that would give access to the meanings that guide human behaviour, the ethnographer can, to a certain extent, understand or have a better insight into people's behaviour. This is possible through participant observation where the observer learn the culture or sub-culture of the people under study. The observer can then interpret the world in the same way as the observed do (Hammersley, 1983).

Though it is a useful research technique, this methodology is not without its weaknesses.
Central to the criticisms against ethnography is the argument by proponents of positivism that data and findings collected through participant observation are subjective and cannot provide a solid foundation for rigorous scientific analysis (Hammersley, 1983). Unlike physical sciences where the generalizability and reliability of findings across time and space presents few problems, there is a serious problem in the study of human behaviour where people do behave and are expected to behave differently according to context. Thus, the conclusions the ethnographer draws from the data are by no means necessarily valid for that setting at other times. The findings in one setting may not be true for other settings of the same type. A lack of consistent results raises serious questions about the scientific value of the procedure or method.

Nevertheless, what positivists view as a weakness in ethnography, this writer thinks herein also lies its strength, at least for this particular research. Not being able to generalise the findings across time and space should not be the main concern of a social science researcher. It should be acknowledged at the very outset that no two social environment or context or setting should be seen as identical. It has to be acknowledged that the findings of a research are more meaningful when the different social environment is taken into consideration as a factor that influences the behaviour of human beings. Taking the different social setting and time into account is very pertinent in understanding human behaviour. In fact, this is the essence of the thesis compared to some of the existing literature on media ethics: it emphasises the influence of the social environment in Malaysia on the ethical conduct of the news workers in news production.

Another shortcoming of ethnography is more basic—i.e., the problem of obtaining access, especially access to "sacred" highly restrictive places. The researcher must be sensitive to the issue of access to different domains. More often than not, the success of a research that uses participant observation as its methodology, hinges upon getting access, thus if this is denied, the research may collapse. In fact, even when access has been obtained, this may not necessarily be unconditional, for instance, during the participant observation for this research, though accessibility was granted, this did not initially include automatic permission to attend editorial meetings. Permission was only granted later when this researcher managed to convince the management that attending the editorial meetings was imperative for her to glean some information on the policy of the organisation and the decision-making process of news production. The permission given also came with a stipulation that the researcher must respect any request for confidentiality of some of the information gathered during the editorial meetings.
In any one social setting under study, there would be a restrictive place that would be out of bounds to the researcher; this may handicap the research. The researcher may have to content with the presence of gatekeepers whose formal permission is needed. These gatekeepers are not only the initial point of contact, but may also be a constant barrier to the researcher getting to information pertinent to the research. Uppermost among the difficulties in the relationship between the researcher and the gatekeepers is the concern of the latter with the picture/image of the organisation that the researcher will paint. The politics of participating as an outsider may present problems where the people under study may respond to the ethnographer based on their preconceptions of him/her as a 'researcher'. This may result in displays of suspicion, contempt, hostility, indifference, curiosity, friendliness, etc. (Jorgensen, 1989).

Another problem of participant observation is that the ethnographer must strenuously avoid feeling 'at home' because if and when all sense of being a 'stranger' is lost, one loses (or may lose) one's critical, analytic perspective. Losing his or her objectivity as the observation progresses is one of the casualties that may happen as the ethnographer gets drawn into the social processes of the group or organisation under study. On the other hand, being emotionally-detached, too, would not make it any easier for the ethnographer to empathise with the situation. It is not easy to strike a balance between the development of empathy and the pursuit of a distanced, non-judgmental stance (Ely, et al, 1991). This was experienced when doing the participation observation at NST and Utusan: a few times the line between being a 'researcher' and a 'friend' became blurred. It was quite easy to be sympathetic and not to view the situation with a critical eye, especially when the observation involved informal settings like several chats over a cup of tea where people's 'guards' are usually let down. This researcher had to constantly make a conscious effort to remember her role in the research and the objective/aims of the participant observation. Checking the notes/data at the end of the day (in preparation for the next day) helped to put things back in proper perspective.

Even though ethnography enables the researcher to get direct experiential and observational access to the insiders' world of meaning, this too has its own weakness. This meaning could be tempered by the influence of values that the researcher has. The implicit values and bias already present in the researcher could influence the way he or she describes or gives an account of what is being observed. The ethnographer may be interpreting data from a rigid framework of assumptions. Thus, claims by ethnographers that this method can elicit an account "as it appeared" should not be taken at its face value. It should never be assumed that people's accounts are necessarily "true" or "rational" (Hammersley, 1992).
Ethnographic findings have also been criticised for their lack of validity. The question that needs to be asked is how the findings about particular situations studied can be generalised to conclusions that have general relevance. More often than not, ethnographic studies involve some form of empirical generalisation. Though this generalisation from a study of a single case (or a small number of cases) to a larger population is a legitimate means of making ethnographic findings generally relevant, users of these findings have to be cautioned that this generalisation require reflection and clarity about the population and the time period to which generalisation is to be made (Hammersley, 1992). This is the danger of ethnography - i.e. in that it can produce a stereotype of a group, culture or subculture. Ethnographies, however long or detailed the observation, typically represent only a fraction of what the ethnographer learned and saw (Fettermann, 1989).

B.2 The Methodology of Ethnography

Ethnography follows several sequences which can be summarised into the ethnographic research cycle (Spradley, 1980) with six basic steps: selecting an ethnographic project, asking ethnographic questions, collecting ethnographic data, making ethnographic record, analysing ethnographic data and writing the report.

The cycle begins with the selection of a research project - i.e. the scope of the investigation. This scope can range along a continuum from macro-ethnography to micro-ethnography (Spradley, 1980; Fettermann, 1989). A macro study focuses on the 'large picture' which can range, for example, from a single school to world-wide systems. A micro study, on the other hand, is a close-up view of a small social unit or an identifiable activity within the social unit. This scope can be determined by the parameters of the study. Based on this definition, my research is a micro-study of the activities of news workers in the news department of NST and Utusan.

It is also imperative for the researcher at the outset to seek entry/access to the setting as this would decide on the success or failure of the observation. Another decision that would have to be made before the start of the observation is the participant role the researcher will adopt. There are four participant roles ranging from complete observer, a participant-as-observer (more observer than participant), an observer-as-participant (more a participant than observer) or a complete participant (Jorgensen, 1989; Spradley, 1980; Junker, 1960). Here again the purpose of the research is used as a guideline to determine the level of participation. Opinions on this range from discouraging complete participation because
subjective involvement is thought to be a threat to objectivity (Gold, 1969) to active involvement as participation reduces the possibility of inaccurate observation.

A researcher begins asking questions at the very start of the observation where even the simplest observations and fieldnote entries involve asking questions. A researcher begins by making broad descriptive observations to get an overview of the social situation. Then after more analysis and repeated observations, a more focused and selective observations will be made. Ethnographic data gathering include formal and informal interviews, documents search and field notes. As data is collected, the researcher makes ethnographic record which builds a bridge between observation and analysis. The recorded data would be heavily relied on not only when analysing the data at the end of the observational period, but also during the observation. The researcher occasionally checks the recorded data during the period of observation in order to know what to look for during the subsequent days' observation. The last step in ethnographic cycle is writing the report; in fact, a researcher may find that writing may not necessarily be at the end, but becomes part of the research cycle. It is advantageous to begin writing early as this will enable the researcher to make subsequent observations when questions arise during the analysis and the writing process (Spradley, 1980).

C. INTERVIEWING

Collecting ethnographic data involves informal and formal interviews. Though both interviews require the researcher to ask questions, the informal interview occurs whenever the researcher asks someone a question during the course of the participant observation as was constantly done during the participant observation for this research. On the other hand, a formal interview occurs at an appointed time and results from a specific request to hold the interview. A formal interview is usually conducted during the later stages of the fieldwork once the researcher has obtained an overview of the social setting; the interview is done to gather more focused and selective information. A formal interview systematically seeks answers to study issues and problems. Formal interviews differ from informal interviews in that they employ a structured schedule of questions which will produce a highly uniform set of data. Uniformity in the data given by the key actors in the social setting being observed is important so that comparisons can be made between the attitudinal and factual information given by these actors. Whether formal or informal, the central value of an interview is that it allows both interviewer and interviewee to explore the meaning of the questions and answers involved. There is a need to understand each other's meanings in an interview to avoid miscommunication or errors of interpretation.
A review of the literature on ethics showed that interviewing is a popular method to gauge the ethical orientation of news workers in the production of news. Merrill (1985), for instance, interviewed journalism educators and practising journalists to find out the degree to which these groups accepted the notion that objective reporting can be equated to ethical reporting. In a study by Singletary et al, 1990, who asked journalists and communication students what motivated them to be ethical, it was found that extrinsic (organisational policies, credibility with the audience, etc.) as well as intrinsic reasons (religion, moral principles, etc.) motivate them to be ethical. Similarly, for the purpose of the present research, a set of questions was formulated to elicit the attitudinal and factual data to answer the objectives of the thesis. Questions were derived from the main areas of concern in the research: respondents' perception of the definition and understanding of ethics, the news gathering and news writing techniques that would help in showing the ethical orientations of the news workers and the press-government relations. The questions were pre-tested and the feedback received enabled this researcher to make corrections to the wordings and the order of the questions. Though the same questions were basically asked in all the interviews with the reporters, editors and group editors, the last two groups were also asked more questions on the philosophy and policies of the organisations (see appendix D for the interviewing schedule). The questions formulated were of several types ranging from the general (e.g. What is your understanding / definition of ethics?) to the specific which explored the details of a particular matter (e.g. Would you explain why you think accepting a free gift is considered 'selling one's soul'?). Questions were also formulated to get illustrations and examples on matters of interests based on the news workers' direct experiences (e.g. Have your stories been rejected because they are not 'aligned' to the policies of the news organisation?).

One advantage of the formal interviews is that the researcher can go beyond the structured schedule of questions and probe the interviewees to get more detailed information that would give an insight into the attitudes of the news workers. Many questions asked during the interviews for this research were not scheduled as they were follow-ups to the answers given by the interviewees. These follow-up questions usually probed into the feelings of the news workers on a particular subject, for example, how the journalists feel when their stories have been rejected by the editors. However, though the interviews provide more information, they also have a disadvantage in that interviewees may be unwilling to provide accurate information especially when posed with difficult questions. In fact, sometimes interviewees do not answer questions truthfully, instead they say what they think the researcher wants them to say (Kamil, et al, 1985). Though it is difficult to say with absolute certainty that the journalists have not answered the questions truthfully (unless one knows for sure the answers are clearly wrong), this was sometimes the
impression this researcher got when interviewing a few journalists in NST and Utusan. When asked questions difficult to answer (e.g. Do you think it is acceptable for journalists to take free gifts from the people you write about? or Do you think your media organisation upholds press freedom when it at times succumbs to the instructions of the political elites?), a few journalists gave 'diplomatic' answers that would make them and their organisations look good. For instance, when asked why they gave in to the instructions 'from the top' (within the organisation or from the government / political elites), a few journalists would quote the 'public interest' rationale. This is seen as taking the easy way out of discussing a difficult issue like press freedom in Malaysia. Chapter Six explains the impression this researcher got when a few reporters quoted the 'public interest' answer to rationalise certain decisions they made.

To safeguard against journalists giving answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear, the initial formulation of the questions has to take this factor into account. This researcher sometimes repeated a question already asked earlier in the interview to countercheck on the answers given. It is important for the researcher to be alert to the answers given so that should a contradiction in answers happen as the interviews progress, the interviewer can ask the respondent about this contradiction. This is not so much an attempt to try to catch the mistake the interviewee has made, as to try to understand why there is a contradiction in the answers. Contradictions can be revealing in that they may contain significant answers to the issue under scrutiny. For instance, in one interview with a reporter from Utusan, the reporter has said that he was not aware of the NUJ code of ethics, but later said that the code has no effect on his profession. Queried as to why he thought the code had no effect on him when he had said that he was not even aware of its existence, the reporter said he had neither seen nor read the code, but had been told about it by his colleagues in the course of their discussions on ethics.

**SUMMARY**

A combination of methods employed in the thesis - content analysis, participant observation and interviews - is an attempt to overcome the limitations found in the use of any one methodology. The weaknesses of one methodology could be countered with the use of another methodology: for instance, the content analysis can only yield a certain set of data (e.g. what stories are written or how a story is written); it lacks the ability to find out why a story is written in a particular style. To answer the 'why', a different methodology - in this case, the interviews and participant observation - is used. Nevertheless, though the triangulation of methods is utilised to strengthen the research, it is not a guarantee for covering up the weaknesses found in the usage of any one methodology.
nor is it the answer to these weaknesses. At best, triangulation of methods will help to control some of the weaknesses, but it is not necessarily a complete 'insulation' against the weaknesses of these methods.

The three methodologies have been chosen as this combination seems the most appropriate to answer the objectives of the thesis. The content analysis has been chosen as it is a useful tool to measure some of the main concerns of the thesis: i.e. the 'what' (the type of news covered) and 'how' (news style and technique) of news production. Analysing the contents of the three case studies in **NST** and **Utusan** has yielded valuable information pertaining to the type of news frequently covered (e.g. straight news or editorials) and how the news was covered. The latter (the 'why' aspect) is especially important to see the general characteristics of news reports; to see the news gathering and news writing style and how this translates into the ethical conduct of the news workers. The interviews and the participant observation, on the other hand, were chosen to observe and find out the activities of news staff and to analyse the reporters' professional and political attitudes. These methods were chosen not only because they are seen as complementing one another but also because they 'check' on one another - for instance, a significant finding from the content analysis shows that the news organisations studied used legitimated sources of information; this journalistic practice was further reinforced by the analysis of the interviews and participant observation.

A point that merits mention about the participant observation is the care that has to be taken to observe ethical principles during and after the observation. The ethnographer must safeguard the rights, interests and sensitivities of the observed. Ethical problems may also arise - informants are human beings with problems, concerns and interests. The values held by an ethnographer may not always coincide with those held by the informants.

Various ethical dilemmas may arise, among them being how much of what is being learned can be shared with the "outside" world. Whenever faced with choices, the decision will necessarily involve an appeal to some set of ethical principles (Spradley, 1980). During the observation for this research, the news workers requested anonymity. This has to be respected both where it has been promised explicitly and where no clear understanding to the contrary has been reached. Even if adhering to the ethical principles during the observation puts the ethnographer in a conflicting situation between the interest of the observed and the interests of the research, the ethnographer must always consider the interests of the observed first.
CHAPTER FIVE

COVERAGE OF THREE CASE STUDIES IN NST AND UTUSAN

Content analysis has been employed as one of the three methodologies in this research because analysing content is useful not only in its own right, but more importantly, as an indicator of many other underlying forces. Analysing content helps researchers infer many things about phenomena that are less open and visible: the people, the organisation, the internal and external forces that produce the content (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991).

For the purpose of the research, the content analysis involves both quantitative and qualitative analysis where the former will give an insight into what is covered and how the stories are covered, and the latter would give an indication to the 'meaning' of the coverage, i.e. why a story is covered in a certain manner.

To recapitulate, the main objective of the research is to study the factors that influence the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of news production. News production involves the process of gathering information and writing the raw data into a processed product called 'news'. The ethical dimension of the study comes in when the ethical conduct of the news workers will either be made apparent or hinted at when analysing the news gathering and news writing techniques based on several ethical principles. To illustrate, the way information is gathered for a story, be it the traditional methods like personal interviews or press conferences, or through some under-handed means like secret-taping or stealing of confidential documents, would indicate the ethical orientation of the media worker or media organisation. Another basic principle of ethical journalism is that a clear distinction be made between news and opinions: news is information about facts and data, while opinions convey thoughts, ideas, beliefs and value judgements on the part of the media worker or organisation (The Ethics of Journalism, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 1993).

The ethical principles in the journalism profession commonly discussed in numerous media research and in many media codes of ethics could be summarised as follows: a) truth and objectivity of all forms of news collection and dissemination, b) preservation of the confidentiality of sources, c) need for maximum professionalism where the respect and protection of the personal integrity of the news workers are maintained, and d) maintenance of the free flow of information from governments to those governed, and vice versa (Laitila, 1995, Jones, 1980, Lambeth, 1986). Similarly, Lambeth attempts to
develop a framework of principles for journalism ethics which include the principle of truth-telling, the principle of humanness, the principle of justice, the principle of freedom and the principle of stewardship. He calls it a 'system' where the principles are intimately related and are useful guides in weighing matters of right or wrong. The content analysis is used to gauge the ethical conduct of the news workers based on several of these ethical principles especially principles which are relevant and relate to the news gathering and new writing process.

To be more specific, the ethical principles to be analysed in the process of news gathering relate to central issues like invasion of privacy (like sneaking, snooping, secret taping, using zoom lens and other devices to get pictures of individuals in their private sphere), honesty (as opposed to lying or misrepresentation to get information), stealing (e.g. information that is classified as confidential) and promise-keeping (especially to sources who have requested for anonymity). Among the ethical issues that may arise in the process of news writing are objectivity, bias and truth in the way stories have been written. Klaidman and Beauchamp (1987) look at truth-telling, for instance, as a principle that news workers should adhere to by attempting to produce stories that are substantially complete, encourage an objective understanding and are as balanced as possible. They view the concept of substantial completeness as the point at which a reasonable reader's requirement for information is satisfied.

A. Ethical Concepts Used in the Content Analysis

To expedite the news analysis, several categories have been formulated that would provide evidence to conclude the ethical orientation of the news workers. Several of these categories - headlines/sub-headlines, placement of news, news type and sources - are categories commonly used in most content analysis studies to put the unit of analysis (the news stories) in a context. The rest of the categories - identification of story-writer (bylined stories), number of viewpoints in a story, the forum or method of news gathering, news accuracy, over-all tone of news and how the main individuals in a story were covered - were formulated with the objectives of the thesis as guidelines. Previous research on ethics in news production was also used as guidelines to see what has been studied and how the research was conducted. The common methods used were survey research (e.g. Singletary et al, 1990, White and Pearce, 1991 and Wulfmeyer, 1991, who studied the motives that reporters and news editors bring to the resolution of ethical issues) and content analysis (see literature below) of documented materials (the common unit of analysis being the news stories) based on various ethical concepts. These concepts are fundamental universal ethical values that are commonly discussed in media codes of ethics world-wide:
accuracy, partisan/balanced reporting, objectivity, invasion of privacy, methods of news gathering, source confidentiality, etc. These concepts are similarly used for the present research since they would help to answer some of the objectives of the thesis - i.e. studying these ethical concepts through the content analysis would give an indication of the ethical orientation of the news workers in the process of news gathering and writing.

There are numerous studies on news production which analysed various fundamental concepts, specifically bias, accuracy, objectivity, fairness and balance to show the ethical orientation of news workers (Hofstetter, 1976, Streckfuss, 1990, Lawrence and Grey, 1969, Cirino, 1971, Heffner, 1973, Lacy et al, 1991, Meyer, 1988 and Hackett, 1985). Since these ethical concepts pose definitional and operational problems in content analysis, a discussion of these concepts is essential to see how they can be used as a tool in the analysis.

The research literature (as mentioned above) on the concepts of objectivity, fairness and balance has commonly used the terms ‘objectivity’, ‘fairness’ and ‘balance’ as synonyms (thereby using them interchangeably), and the term ‘bias’ as an accepted opposite. Though media academics have increasingly adopted these concepts in many studies of journalism, the utility of these concepts as tools in content analysis has remained questionable. Day (1991), for instance, questions whether a news report termed ‘fair’ refers to an ethical concern or merely a matter of taste. Hackett (1985), on the concept of bias, agrees with Hall et al (1976) that it is a ‘wholly inadequate conception’ (p52). Nevertheless, Hackett proposes that rather than dismissing this concept altogether (and subsequently ignoring the accepted idea that responsible performance requires adherence to professional standards of accuracy, fairness and balance) 1, research should investigate the politics of the bias rhetoric as to who raises the bias issue, when and why, and check the discourses and interests carrying it (p268). In short, these concepts should be linked to the political or ideological role of the news media, thus abandoning the notion of unbiased communication.

So far, the studies on bias, objectivity, fairness and balance has mirrored the difficulty and the variations in defining and operationalising these concepts. For example, Maclean (1981) regards bias as the intrusion of subjective opinion by the reporter or news organisation into factual account (see also Roshco, 1979, who takes bias to mean

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1 The notion that a responsible press is to voluntarily adhere to professional journalistic standards first came about with the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947) which called for the press to serve the public by taking a less partisan approach to news reporting. The three important tenets of this responsibility are accuracy, fairness and balance in reporting. Many codes of ethics and performance of media organisations have formalised these norms into the press role.
interpretative and analytical reporting); Hofstetter (1976) distinguishes between "political bias" resulting from partisan preferences or ideological convictions of news workers, and "structural biases" which are due to the character of the medium; and Doll and Bradley (1974) define bias as a lack of balance between competing viewpoints and a tendentious, partisan distortion of reality. McQuail’s (1977) analysis of five types of newspapers to provide evidence on the question of editorial standards, operationalises bias in a more wide-ranging way: a) explicit argument and compilation of evidence favouring one view, b) a tendentious use of facts and comments without any explicit statement of preference; c) use of language which colours an otherwise factual report and convey an implicit but clear value judgement, and d) the omission of points favouring one side, in an otherwise straight news report.

In lieu of the fact that appropriate benchmarks for the study of bias (and objectivity, fairness and balance) are not always available (and even when available, their application is limited, e.g. are the concepts of balance and neutrality concomitant?), this content analysis adopts the more broad definition used by McQuail as variables to analyse these ethical concepts. At the same time, this analysis will also take into account the role the news frames play (more on this in the analysis of the categories) in highlighting the ideological orientation of the news workers and the news organisation.

Like bias and objectivity, the study on accuracy has also raised dubious questions mainly because there seems to be different concepts of accuracy in communication. Both communication theorists and communication researchers have worked with the different aspects of accuracy, and their differences seem due largely to the ‘point of view’ aspect, i.e. who does the comparing (Heffner, 1973). For this reason, it is important for a study on accuracy to analyse both ‘accuracy according to whom’ and ‘accuracy of what’. To enable accuracy to be viewed from different perceptions, there are three possible standpoints from which it can be looked at: 1) the source of the message, 2) the observer of the message (writers on accuracy tend to take an observer’s standpoint), and 3) the receiver of the message. Several studies have analysed accuracy from these different perspectives; the most common is checking accuracy with the original source of the message (Charnley, 1936, Singletary, 1980, Meyer, 1990, Singer, 1990, Heffner, 1973, Lawrence and Grey, 1969).

To expedite the designing and testing of a method for measuring accuracy sufficiently so as to permit its usage as a performance standard, academicians over the years have developed classification systems to define accuracy in each of its subtle forms (beginning with Berry, 1967 and Blackenburg, 1970). Berry, for instance, distinguished between objective errors by which he meant errors that are purely factual or mechanical, and
subjective errors, those that involved disputed meaning or interpretation. For example, studies in science reporting have generally asked scientists to evaluate the news stories based on their work. The errors cited in such studies are most often omissions (of relevant information) and changes in emphasis (stories being too short) rather than incorrect statements (Singer, 1990).

Similarly, for the purpose of the research, because of the lack of specific tools to measure accuracy, Berry’s categorisations of ‘subjective errors’ and ‘objective errors’ have been used to operationalise instances of inaccuracies in NST and Utusan. Ideally, news sources should be interviewed for their perceptions on the accuracy of the written stories based on the information they have given. However, due to obvious limitations (time constraint and the nature of the sources who are mostly inaccessible), the accuracy of the news would be viewed not from the standpoint of the sources (through interviews), but from the facts in the case studies (and most often, these facts would be from the Malaysian government’s point of view - through the official sources).

B. Rationale for Selection of Newspapers

The two Malaysian newspapers selected for this research are the New Straits Times and Utusan Malaysia. The rationale for selecting these newspapers are: a) both are quality and leading newspapers that set the agenda and help form public opinion, b) both have the highest circulation among other English and Malay language newspapers, and c) both cater to a different target audience. While NST is read more by the English-speaking community which is generally found in the urban areas, Utusan caters to the Malay-speaking masses.

NST and Utusan are known as pro-establishment and mainstream newspapers. The researcher acknowledges that the selection of both newspapers which support the government may be arguable. However, this would have to be viewed as a limitation because a) all leading newspapers in Malaysia are pro-establishment. It has to be reiterated that the mass media are a controlled entity where the government, to a certain degree, still controls media production, b) there is no daily opposition newspaper. Publications that are in opposition to the ruling government are tabloid-size newspapers that are published fortnightly or monthly by opposition parties and interest groups. Though the circulation is not high, notable among these newspapers are the Rocket (published by the Democratic Action Party), Harakah (the Islamic party) and Aliran (published by a socialist/humanist group). All these publications, being party organs, are inevitably more political in nature, c) these opposition publications do not represent all the major ethnic groups in Malaysia as do NST and Utusan; each publication represents one
ethnic group, e.g. Harakah is associated with the Malays and the Rocket, the Chinese.

Thus, due to the difference in the frequency of the publications and the representativeness of the newspapers (based on the assumption that the higher the circulation of the newspaper, the more representative it is), NST and Utusan were chosen because they are daily newspapers and are read by a wider spectrum of the public.

C. Rationale for Selection of Case Studies

Three case studies were chosen for this analysis: the Pergau dam conflict, the Rahim Thamby Chik scandal, and the Al-Arqam ban. All three issues were selected not just because they were the major issues in discussion over a certain period of time in 1994, but more because they have the ingredients that would help shed light on the numerous factors, i.e. internal and external, that intertwine to influence media content. These factors also explain the influences that affect the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of news production.

Rahim Thamby Chik scandal (August 1994 - December 1994)

Rahim was the chief minister of Malacca (a southern state in Malaysia) and the Youth leader of UMNO (the Malay-based component party of the ruling coalition government). In August 1994, the newspapers got wind and highlighted his alleged involvement with a 15-year-old girl; this coverage intensified till December 1994. Though the issue continued to be covered in the newspapers until July 1995, the frequency of the coverage declined considerably after December 1994 when Rahim was acquitted of the charge. For the purpose of this research, the analysis stops at the point where Rahim was acquitted because, not only was he the focal point of the scandal by virtue of his political standing, but also that from then on, the issue became another human interest story involving a teenager and her social problems.

The scandal involving a minister and a minor was a significant event in the Malay political scene, especially in the light of the general election which was held in April 1995. The case study was chosen to analyse how NST and Utusan covered an issue of a political, social and religious nature that involved a minister. Apart from the political implication, the social and religious implication of such a scandal involving a Malay / Muslim leader is grave.

The case study was also significant when the prime minister made two unprecedented moves: one, at the beginning when the issue was highlighted, the prime minister told the
police to carry on with the investigations even though no formal complaint had been lodged by the girl or her family, and two, the prime minister later appealed to the public to let justice take its own course and not to discuss the scandal especially in the media. These moves triggered numerous speculations, especially on the internal strive and factions within the UMNO fold.

Al-Arqam ban (June 1994 - December 1994)

Arqam was an Islamic religious group which was banned by the government in August 1994 because of its teachings which deviated from the conventional beliefs of Islam. This issue caught national interest because Islam is the official religion of the country and of the majority of the population (the Malays), and because the government, which had been monitoring the development of Arqam since it was founded in 1968, was finally handed a reason to clamp down on the Arqam activities which in recent years have become "more or less a threat" (to quote the prime minister).

Arqam evoked mixed feelings from the public: while some people support the group for its apparent success in the realms of religion, social and economy, others are suspicious of its cult-like and leader-worship tendency. The leader, Asaari Mohamad, though on self-imposed exile to Thailand since the late 1980s, had a considerable influence on his followers so much so that he told the prime minister that he (Asaari) should be the premier. The Arqam issue became significant because of the religious factor. Like the Rahim scandal, the analysis of this case study would shed light on media-government relations.

Pergau Dam Conflict (January 1994 - December 1994)

The Pergau dam which was the central element in the Malaysia-British conflict first came to light in January 1994 when the British Sunday Times reported that the Malaysian prime minister and his government were corrupt in their dealings with the British government over aids for the building of the Pergau dam in Malaysia. The Times also reported that the British government had wrongly awarded £234 million of British taxpayers' money to a development project that had been found to be economically not viable. This conflict culminated in the Malaysian government imposing an embargo on trade with Britain which was only lifted in September 1994 after negotiations.

The analysis of this case study as reported in the Times was also carried out. The Times was chosen because it was the first newspaper to report the story and the subsequent Anglo-Malaysian conflict was centred around and was the result of the coverage of the issue in the Times. In fact, as the conflict took on a more serious scale and Malaysia
imposed the trade ban, the British-Malaysia conflict became more the 'Malaysia-Andrew Neil / *Times* conflict' (Andrew Neil was the *Sunday Times* editor at the time of the conflict whom the Malaysian government and media took a dislike of because of his 'scathing remarks' [to quote the Malaysian newspapers] on Malaysia).

It has to be made clear at the outset that the analysis of the *Times* is more a heuristic device, only in so far as it helps to uncover the trends and characteristics of the news writing style in the two Malaysian newspapers. The analysis of this issue is to give an insight into how newspapers in two different countries (with other inherent differences like culture, religion, politics and press-government relations) cover a controversial story that eventually affected bilateral relations. The main objective of the *Times* analysis is not to compare it with NST or *Utusan*, but more to use the analysis to point out the features of the Malaysian press. One obvious feature that is seen in the *Times* and simultaneously not seen in the same intensity in the Malaysian newspapers is the role played by the press: while the former is more adversarial, the latter tempers this role with a social responsibility.

The three case studies were carefully chosen from other major events that happened in 1994 as they fulfilled certain criteria needed for the objectives of the research: they are issues of a political, religious and social nature that would help throw light on press-government relations. At the same time, these issues would also give an insight into the factors that affect the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of gathering and writing the news. It has to be made clear at the outset that though these case studies are not representative to show the ethical conduct of the news workers, they are, generally, indicative of the journalistic practices of the news workers in producing stories of a social, cultural and political nature like the three case studies. If factors like the characteristics of the government and the news media remain constant, these case studies are representative in showing the press-government relations. Central to this relationship is the symbiotic role that the media play in relations to the government, i.e. working in tandem with the government toward nation-building. The content analysis in this chapter will show that this press-government relations is a significant tool in understanding the journalistic practices of the Malaysian news workers.

**D. Analysis According to Categories**

Altogether 888 stories were analysed, with 359 stories on the Pergau dam issue, 347 Al-Arqam and 182 on the Rahim Thamby Chik scandal. The news coverage of the three case studies in NST and *Utusan* totalled 729 stories. The breakdown of the stories according to the coverage in the newspapers is as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pergau Dam</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahim Thamby Chik</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Arqam</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference in the number of stories of the three issues covered in NST and Utusan suggests the communal orientation of the press. Utusan carried more stories on Rahim and the Arqam ban because these two issues are seen as 'Malay and Islamic issues' compared to the Pergau dam issue which is general in nature. The two factors - Malay and Islam - would always be significant elements to be considered by the Malay-oriented newspapers because of the predominantly Malay and Muslim population. Utusan has always been associated, even from the days of pre-independence, with highlighting more issues of concern to the Malay and Muslim community. Because of this orientation, Utusan consequently gave more coverage to these Malay issues compared to NST.

The fact that there are fewer stories on the Rahim scandal than there are on the Arqam ban shows that the press heeded the appeal made by the prime minister not to discuss the issue in the media. This acquiescence could be attributed to two factors: one, because the appeal came from the prime minister, the highest authority, and two, it is the culture of the land that looks upon a leader as someone to be revered, and therefore, an appeal from this leader would almost always be respected. This is part of the ethics of the culture. Had the appeal not been made, Utusan could have devoted more coverage to the Rahim scandal as is evident in its coverage of the Arqam ban with 236 stories.

As stated earlier, the analysis of the Pergau dam issue in the Times was also carried out. For better organisation, the comparative analysis of this conflict in the two Malaysian newspapers and the Times is put in a separate section toward the end of this chapter. The rest of the analysis preceding this NST / Utusan / Times analysis consists of the analysis of the three case studies in NST and Utusan. The Pergau coverage in NST and Utusan, though it has been analysed at the end (in the comparative analysis with the Times) is still being analysed with the other two case studies to give an overall comparative picture of the coverage of the three case studies in NST and Utusan. However, though the analysis includes all three case studies, the emphasis is on the Rahim and Arqam issues. The analysis of the Pergau issue would only be mentioned when there is a significant finding in relation with the analysis of the Rahim and Arqam case studies.
D.1 Placement of News

A majority of the stories (77.6 per cent) were placed in the inside pages of the newspapers, under the relevant heading - domestic news, national news, world news, etc. Going by the individual newspaper, NST had 18.7 per cent of its stories (of 299 stories) on the front page. Utusan had 24.9 percent (of 430 stories). These percentages give an indication of how the newspaper management views the importance of the stories, especially those that are put as the lead story on the front page as the attention-grabber. Stories are normally put on the front page for a dual purpose: because it is important and newsworthy and to attract the readers’ attention like a headline does. Otherwise, the stories would be treated as normal and routine stories and would be placed in the inside pages.

Many factors are taken into consideration to decide the placement of news. The editorial meetings in the evenings in NST and Utusan decide on the news to be put on the front page. The content analysis (and the participant observation at NST and Utusan) showed that political and government news are the over-riding factors taken into account when deciding placement of news - all the news placed on the front page were of important people in the public arena (most often politicians or personalities related to the government in sectors like the economy, international relations etc.). The case studies analysed were either issues related to the government, politics or human interest (e.g. the Rahim scandal met all these three criteria). Another important criterion used to decide the placement of news is the public interest factor. When Rahim quit all his positions, when Arqam was banned and when Malaysia imposed the trade sanction on Britain, all these breaks in the news were reported on the front page to give prominence.

The placement of news can be exploited to sensationalise a certain issue as can so often be seen in the tabloids. From the ethics point of view, NST and Utusan are seen to have conducted themselves in a ‘sedate’ manner by not exploiting the three issues by unnecessarily placing them on the front page. The papers could so easily have tried to sensationalise especially the Rahim scandal which had enough elements of sensationalism. Instead, most of the stories were placed in the inside pages, and those on the front pages, were toned down with headlines which were more matter-of-fact than catchy. News editors can minimise the attention such an event receive by placing it in the back pages. The mere appearance of an item in the inside pages may indicate to the readers that the story is either insignificant (Cirino, 1971) or less significant.

D.2 Headlines / Sub headlines

The primary objective of a headline is to attract the readers' attention to the story, apart
from giving an indication of what is in the story at a glance. A good headline has been said to not only give a reader a gist of the story, but also the attitude about the event. The headline establishes the mood and the value system of the newspaper (Cirino, 1971). It also suggests the interpretative frame within which it should be read (Hansen and Murdock, 1985).

The analysis of the three case studies in the two Malaysian newspapers showed that the headlines are generally matter-of-fact, informative and are not evaluative. Examples of headlines that are straight to the point are:

Quit Arqam or Get Sacked, Says Najib
Nazri Apologises
UMNO Youth Support PM
No New Contracts For Britain
Rahim Gives Up Duties

It is a common feature for the headlines in NST and Utusan to "reinforce the general-authority orientation" (Hansen and Murdock, 1985:246) where comments by and the voice of the authorities would be highlighted. The authorities commonly quoted in the headlines are the prime minister, the police, other authorised officials and the people directly involved in the issue. This practice, while giving an air of authority to the headline and the story, simultaneously shows the stance of the newspapers which tend to be government and official-oriented.

Nevertheless, though the headlines are generally neutral and not evaluative, the fact that headlines perform an important framing task should not be overlooked. Through framing which involves selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality" and making them salient in a communication text, the news story "promotes a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and / or treatment recommendation" for the news item described (Entman, 1993:52). The headlines quoted above each has its own agenda to highlight, for example, "Rahim Gives Up Duties" suggests that the sex scandal allegation against Rahim was serious enough as to warrant his resignation. The salient message is framed within the headlines, thus defining what should be taken notice of. This framing to elevate the salience of specific messages is further reinforced with the use of evaluative words that Fowler (1991) calls as "terms of abuse or terms of endearment" (p 100) that show explicit judgements on people. Examples of these are:

Asaari A Coward
Only the Sinful and Debt-full Join Arqam
Women are Sex-Slaves in Arqam - PM
Is Arqam Sincere?
Words like 'coward', 'sinful' and 'debt-full' clearly portray Asaari and Arqam negatively, thus legitimising the government’s banning of the movement. The message framed within the headlines simultaneously directs attention away from other aspects of Arqam (for example, the Arqam followers were also known to be happy with their lifestyle which shunned the modern materialistic trappings in favour of a rustic way of life). Between NST and Utusan, the latter is analysed as being more biased in its headlines on the Arqam issue. Religion was also used by Utusan in its headline to discredit the Arqam followers, again showing the employment of the framing device where "culturally familiar symbols" (Entman, 1993) and in this case, the Islamic symbols, were used. A headline which implies that the wives of the Arqam followers were 'bitching' about one another may evoke a negative reaction as the Malay and Muslim culture frowns upon such an act, and being wives of religious people, such behaviours are unacceptable.

The headlines have been used as the initial point to captivate the reader's attention in the press' attempt to discredit the extremist movement. This bias is also apparent when both newspapers seemed to lose their decorum when Malaysia came under attack in the Pergau dam issue (more in analysis on the Pergau dam coverage).

D.3 News Type and Sources

Of the 729 news stories analysed in NST and Utusan, 39.1 per cent were the main news in the inside pages and 7.3 per cent were the lead story on the front page (see Table 5.1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Type</th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N   %</td>
<td>N   %</td>
<td>N   %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Story</td>
<td>20 6.7</td>
<td>33 7.7</td>
<td>53 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main News</td>
<td>115 38.5</td>
<td>170 39.5</td>
<td>285 39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorials</td>
<td>7 2.3</td>
<td>14 3.3</td>
<td>21 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>17 5.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>9 3.0</td>
<td>50 11.6</td>
<td>59 8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>131 43.8</td>
<td>163 37.9</td>
<td>294 40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>299 100.0</td>
<td>430 100.0</td>
<td>729 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the rest of the stories are categorised as either editorials, letters or comments, the 'other' category is made up of secondary or subsidiary stories which are neither the main news in the inside pages nor the lead story on the front page. These are news stories which are either the second or third main stories on the front or inside pages. While the editorials are defined and identified as where the viewpoints or stance of the newspapers on issues are made apparent, the comments category includes the features and analyses written by journalists and non-journalists (e.g. political, economic or international relations experts) to air their views, ideas and opinions on issues currently in discussion. The three case studies analysed had 8.1 per cent of this type of comments and analyses where journalists include their viewpoints (negative or positive) in the news report. This type of articles is separated from the conventional news report because the latter is defined as straight news which does not have the reporter's viewpoints included in the report.

All the features, analyses, comments and leading articles on the three case studies are seen as adopting or supporting the official stance (the stance held by the government; this would also almost always be the stance held by the mainstream newspapers) (see also analysis on number of viewpoints). An example of this is a feature on the Arqam issue (NST, 5 Nov. 1994) which criticised the Arqam leader for "taking advantage of men's eagerness to find the true path..by exploiting their shallow knowledge of Islam to suit his own purposes". The writer's stance supports that of the government which views Arqam as an extremist movement. Similarly, Utusan in an article critical of Arqam and its leaders, echoed the government position that Arqam is deviationist and should be banned.

That the newspapers and contributors (of articles) to the newspapers would echo the stance and sentiment held by the authorities on issues of public interest reinforces the characteristic of the Malaysian press which has been said to be the voice of the government (Lent, 1988, 1984). This characteristic is evident in all the three case studies analysed. What is also evident from the support given to the official position is the negligence on the part of the newspapers to accord some degree of blame for the deviation of Arqam on the shoulders of the relevant authorities in the government. Arqam had been in existence since 1968, the authorities (the Religious Affairs Department) must have realised its extremist tendencies had they closely monitored the movement. This negligence is what the newspapers did not take the authorities to task for, but instead, adopt the official position of condemning Arqam. The newspapers' biases are evident in this respect. These biases are made apparent in the features and opinion pieces, especially in Utusan which had 24 features on the Arqam group (NST had only two features).

Most of the news (85.5 per cent - see Table 5.2 on p.135) in NST and Utusan have attributable sources. This category has a two-pronged objective: one, analysing the source
of a news item is important because producing stories with known sources is one of the ethical principles to be observed, and two, this category will show the journalistic routine practised by journalists in Malaysia pertaining to the type of sources usually used in the news stories. To this end, the type of sources has been categorised as official governmental sources (i.e. prime minister, other ministers and government officials), non-governmental sources, opposition leaders and unidentified sources (the latter could be from any of the categories mentioned). The analysis shows that stories with attributable sources originated from the prime minister, other ministers, opposition leaders and other officials or sources who are acting in their official capacity (e.g. law enforcement officers or religious officials). It is common for some news reports (about a quarter of the total number of news stories in NST and Utusan) to have more than one source. NST and Utusan have a heavy reliance on attributable sources, both official governmental sources or non-governmental sources. (NST: 82.9 per cent, Utusan: 84.3 per cent). What these figures point out is that not only do NST and Utusan rely on official sources ('general authority orientation' [Hansen and Murdock, 1985: 240]), these newspapers also have the tendency to highlight the viewpoints of only one source (more on this later). This finding reinforces what has been mentioned several times before, i.e. because of the press-government symbiotic relationship, the Malaysian press cooperates with the government in giving access to the agenda of the latter. The non-governmental sources here refer to the sources that are quoted in relation to the main protagonists/actors in the three case studies: the non-governmental sources in the Rahim affair are the family members of the underaged girl Rahim was alleged to have an affair with, members of political parties especially Rahim's colleagues in UMNO, the Bar Council, the Malaysian Youth Council, leaders of women's movements, etc.; in the Arqam ban, non-governmental sources include existing and former followers and leaders of Arqam, the Bar Council, religious organisations, youth groups, parents of Arqam followers, etc.; and the non-governmental sources in the Pergau conflict are the Malaysian and British industrialists, Malaysian Youth Council, journalists from other countries, etc.

The analysis of sources quoted in NST and Utusan shows that both newspapers tend to use the same authoritative sources, again reinforcing what has become common knowledge that the Malaysian press is government-oriented. The Rahim coverage, for example, in both NST and Utusan frequently used the same sources. For instance, over a one-week period of the coverage (30 August - 5 Sept. 1994), the sources regularly quoted are the police, UMNO officials, the prime minister and the deputy prime minister. The forum where the information was gathered was also similar: press conferences and interviews. On 'dry days' (a journalistic jargon to show there is no breaking story on a particular day) like the 4th and 5th of September, there was no coverage in NST; Utusan, however, interviewed the father of the girl involved in the sex scandal and also wrote a story based
Table 5.2: News Sources In NST and Utusan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Sources</th>
<th>NST N</th>
<th>NST %</th>
<th>Utusan N</th>
<th>Utusan %</th>
<th>Row Total N</th>
<th>Row Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ministers</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Officials</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition Leaders</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified Sources</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Governmental Sources</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

on a reporter's observation. The reporter (perhaps acting on a tip from a source) had observed Rahim entering and leaving the prime minister's office and this observation was the main point in the news story. In fact, many news stories in Utusan are from the human interest angle which sometimes seemed trivial, for example, reports on the type of car Rahim was driving, or several observations on the Arqam commune after the movement was banned.

The tendency of the straight news reports to frequently use attributable sources has prompted media researchers to dub the Malaysian journalism as "say-so journalism" because the media heavily quoted what official sources said. Relying on information from official sources is a common feature of the press in Malaysia, especially the mainstream newspapers (Parker, 1982, Lent, 1988). This is because the mass media have an unwritten policy and agreement to cooperate with the government toward nation-building. This is the symbiotic relationship the media have with the ruling government which defines the role the media play in the society. Because of this commitment, the media are obliged to highlight more positive and government-related news, hence, the dependence on information from official sources (see also Chapter Three on background of Malaysia).

One percent of the total number of sources in NST and Utusan are unidentified sources; this percentage is low due to the journalistic practice in Malaysia which does not encourage the use of unidentified sources like 'An Arqam member told Utusan that..' or 'This NST
The findings also show that an average of 13 per cent of the sources in NST (13.8 per cent) and Utusan (12.5 per cent) do not fall under the category of attributable sources. These sources have been classified as 'other' which are letters from interested individuals, observations, analysis, editorials and features by the editors and journalists. Some features and analysis also originated from interested individuals like academicians.

Several types of quotation are frequently used in the news stories - direct quotation and indirect quotation. A direct quotation gives the stories authenticity and credibility. The sources are either quoted directly or the information given would be paraphrased depending on the standing of the sources and the import of what he/she says. It is noticed that what the prime minister says would almost always be put in direct quotes, while other less important sources would have the information they gave, paraphrased, or indirectly quoted (IQ) or simply referred to (SRT - see Table 5.3 below). Stories are put in direct quotation not only to give them authenticity and credibility, but also because of the import of the sources, especially the prime minister, the information given is always considered important. Information given by other ministers and officials would be used more as an indirect quotation with partial quotation or phrases. The "simply referred to" category means that the source is merely mentioned in passing while discussing other issues.

Table 5.3: News Source By Type of Quotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources/Quotations</th>
<th>Direct Quotation</th>
<th>Indirect Quotation</th>
<th>Simply Referred To</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ministers</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Officials</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition Leaders</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified Sources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Governmental Sources</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though the voices of the opposition are not totally shut out (NST: 2.3 per cent; Utusan: 1.5 per cent), they are, all the same, carefully screened so that harsh criticisms against the status quo will be toned down (this was explained during the interviews). In NST and Utusan, the opposition was quoted because it supported the government's action (for example: the opposition commended the government for its timely move to ban Arqam) or it urged the government to take a more assertive action (for example: the opposition urging the government to sue the Times over the Pergau dam issue). In both instances, the inclusion of viewpoints from the opposition could be seen more as a move to show it (the opposition) supports the government, rather than to genuinely give the opposition the forum to air their views. As a general practice, the opposition would not be given space, but will be quoted when what they say, support the government. Nevertheless, to say that the press is not giving the opposition some leeway to air their views, is being unfair to the press, as in recent years there have been obvious efforts to allow the opposition to say their piece. The democratisation of the media has over the years seen some improvements where criticisms seem to be tolerated more (Lent, 1988, Hamdan, 1992).

This category has shown the emphasis and dependence of NST and Utusan on official sources; this emphasis suggests that the official sources may be a factor that could inevitably influence media content. Though the reporters do not merely rehash what they acquired from the sources, it is also not uncommon for them to use a substantial portion of the information given by the sources.

From the interviews with the reporters, it is learnt that media/organisational routines compelled the reporters to rely on official sources. For instance, editors are known to be unhappy if a story is not properly attributed to a quotable source; attributions like "according to a source close to the prime minister" or "according to sources who do not want to be named", though permissible, are not encouraged. The pressures of the deadlines also made it more convenient for the reporters to depend on official sources that have elements of authenticity and accountability attached to them. The information from these sources, too, has been packaged in such a way (no doubt by the publicity and public relations department) that reporters do not have much to process, making it all the more convenient for them.

How do stories which have been attributed translate into the ethical conduct of the news workers? To answer this question, the principles of ethics derived from the various codes of ethics are taken into context: one of the principles requires that news stories are tagged to an attributable source to show that the stories are not fabricated. Nevertheless, while on one hand the journalistic practice of adhering to this principle shows the ethical tendency of news workers, on the other hand, this dependency of the news workers on attributable
sources, also points out the possibility that the ethics of the profession or the reporters does not rest on the autonomy of the reporters. Instead, external factors like the sources, not only influence media content, but also constitutes one of the factors that may influence the ethics of the profession. This reliance on official sources suggests that the autonomy of the news workers to make ethical decision in the gathering and news writing process is very much limited.

D.4 Bylined Stories

This category is included to analyse how many of the stories written have the identity of the writer made known to the public. A story with a byline helps not just the reporter to "sell" himself or herself (as a byline can help establish the reporters' identity and recognition as a reporter), but more importantly, a byline also establishes the responsibility and accountability of the reporter to the written story. Table 5.4 below shows that 42.1 percent of the stories written are bylined while 43.4 percent are not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bylined Reporters</td>
<td>131 (43.8%)</td>
<td>176 (40.9%)</td>
<td>307 (42.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed Reporters</td>
<td>123 (41.1%)</td>
<td>193 (44.9%)</td>
<td>316 (43.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>45 (15.1%)</td>
<td>61 (14.2%)</td>
<td>106 (14.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>299 (100.0%)</td>
<td>430 (100.0%)</td>
<td>729 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The "other" category constitutes letters to the editor or stories written by non-journalists like academicians or experts in the field. Examples of these are academicians writing commentary pieces on why some members of the society are easily swayed by cult movements (the Arqam issue) or an analysis on the future of the Malay component party in the Malaysian politics (the Rahim affair).

NST and Utusan both have a relatively equal percentage of bylined and unnamed reporters. It is also not uncommon for these two newspapers to use a BERNAMA story (the Malaysian national news agency). A BERNAMA story is used for several reasons a) the newspaper has missed the story for various reasons like a reporter was not assigned to cover it, b) the BERNAMA angle is more newsworthy, and c) if the issue is controversial, using a BERNAMA story safeguards against the possibility of being criticised or sued.
Using a BERNAMA label provides a buffer, though not totally diminishing the accountability of the newspapers themselves, should the story have any legal implications. However, as far as can be helped, reporters would rather not use a BERNAMA story to avoid being ridiculed by their peers. Using a BERNAMA story instead of their own when they themselves had attended the event, would not only open them to criticisms by their peers, but more importantly, would be a blight on their own professionalism.

It is observed from the findings that most of the bylines in the *Times* are written with the beat the reporter works and writes for, i.e., the reporter is identified as a political correspondent. There is specialisation in the beat where one or several specialised reporters (political correspondents) write the news. This is not the practice in *NST* and *Utusan* where reporters on the general desk beat would be assigned to write the stories; thus the stories are not written by specialised reporters. Nevertheless, because the same one or several reporters were regularly assigned to cover the issues, in a way, they too became "specialised".

As has been briefly mentioned earlier, a byline establishes the responsibility and accountability of the reporters to the story. From the ethical and professionalism standpoint, this accountability is important to relay the implicit message that the newspaper organisation and the reporter is responsible for what they put into print. In an interview during the participant observation, an *Utusan* reporter narrated an incident where he was contacted by a source who was not satisfied with the way he was portrayed in a story. The source had known whom to look for from the byline. Though the encounter was an unpleasant one, it highlighted the significance of the byline, i.e., it openly acknowledges to the public the reporter responsible and accountable for the story.

### D.5 Number of Viewpoints

A majority of the news analysed (80.9 per cent) in *NST* and *Utusan* used only one viewpoint (see Table 5.5 overleaf), i.e. the viewpoint from the attributable sources. The analysis showed that though a news story may use two or three attributable sources, the viewpoints they put forth are similar and supportive of the main stance taken on the issue being discussed. The position taken is usually the official stance of the government or the authorities.

Bearing in mind the difference in the total number of stories in *Utusan* and *NST*, it is observed that *NST* has more multiple-viewpoint stories than does *Utusan*. To illustrate, an example is quoted from the coverage of the Rahim affair in *NST*. In a story on Rahim's resignation from his responsibilities, the *NST* report had six sources who either expressed
their surprise at Rahim's resignation, or described it as the "only correct thing for him to do under such circumstances" (NST, 7 Oct. 1994). The reporters even included the viewpoint of an opposition leader who said that Rahim should vacate his positions. The overall agenda of these multiple viewpoints is to support the mainstream thinking that Rahim should resign from all government and party positions while under investigation.

In fact, the analysis shows that the inclusion of several sources giving similar viewpoints on the same issue is a common practice in NST and Utusan. Utusan, for example, in a report on the Arqam ban (11 August 1994), had four sources who said that some of the beliefs of some religious movements in Malaysia were in conflict with the mainstream beliefs in Islam. Again, the agenda here is to support and legitimise the stance taken by the government on this issue.

Apart from the difference in the number of viewpoints between NST and Utusan, this category does not show any other significant difference in the NST and Utusan coverage. In fact, both newspapers are similar in that they used more government/official viewpoints, regardless of whether there is only one viewpoint or several.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.5: Number of Viewpoints in NST and Utusan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason that the same viewpoints are included in one article is due to the fact that similar viewpoints not only enhance the validity of the stance and the report, but also could be seen as legitimising and justifying that viewpoint. Thus the multiple viewpoints do not necessarily mean they are conflicting viewpoints, but rather that there are more than one opinion being put forward.

From this category, it is concluded that a majority of stories do not normally carry multiple viewpoints from sources. This could be attributed to the fact that: a) due to the pressure of deadlines, the reporters do not have time to gather as many contradictory viewpoints as ideally required, and b) even if time permits, every newspaper organisation has its own
personal agenda to fulfil, and concentrating and highlighting certain viewpoints may be the organisation's strategy to realise that agenda.

The tendency of the newspapers and the reporters to give access to the viewpoints of the people and the groups in the mainstream gives evidence to several existing characteristics of the Malaysian press. Firstly, this tendency is testimony to the characteristic of the Malaysian press as working in tandem with the government as part of its social responsibility. Secondly, this tendency also pays little attention or marginalises the voice of the minority, i.e. the opposition. The analysis of the three case studies clearly showed the exclusion of the minority voice from the mainstream agenda.

D.6 Where News Was Gathered

News can be gathered through various ways, the most common in the journalism profession are the press conferences, personal interviews and press releases. The analysis shows that the most frequently used method for NST (27.1 per cent) and Utusan (21.4 per cent) to gather information is during or after a ministerial function (see Table 5.6 overleaf). This method entails the reporters waiting for the ministers before or after a function to get a response or statement on the function the minister had just officiated, or on an issue currently in discussion. In NST and Utusan, the majority of the news stories have been gathered through the proper channels.

On an average day, ministerial functions are numerous, for example, the ministers officiating a seminar or delivering a keynote address at an international business conference or giving speeches at a Family Day or other similar events that ministers are asked to officiate. It is common for the journalists in Malaysia to be given copies of the speech (this can be part of the "press kit" that is given to journalists - a kit containing information about the company/organiser of the event or product that the company produces) that the ministers will be delivering during the event. Since all journalists attending the event are given the same press kit\(^1\), they know that they need to get the "extra" bit of information. Hence, the effort to "waylay" the ministers or officials (the sources) after the function in the hope of getting a "scoop". Some of the reporters interviewed agreed that this method (waiting and getting the sources to talk after the function), at times, is the best method to get a scoop.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Journalists know that a press kit is more a public relations and propaganda tool to 'sell' the company than to aid journalists in their daily routines.

\(^2\) A scoop is defined as a story that only one newspaper / reporter has that the others do not. A reporter does not like to be scooped by other rival newspapers as being scooped hurts her/his professional integrity.
Some sources complained about this method as they are sometimes taken unawares and may make a blunder in the information they give out under such pressure. However, more "veteran" sources (especially the ministers, politicians and other sources who deal with the press on a regular basis) seemed to relish such opportunities. Most times, these sources "expect" to be waylaid or "ambushed" (as commonly known in the journalism profession) by the journalists after their official functions. In fact, the reporters interviewed said that some sources deliberately look out and ask to talk to the journalists; thus there is a kind of symbiotic relationship between the press and the sources where both parties seek out each other to give or to receive information respectively.

Table 5.6: Forum Where News Was Gathered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Conference</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During or After Ministerial Function</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Statements Issued</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Parliamentary Sessions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interviews</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One limitation of the analysis of this category is that many times the origin of some stories cannot be determined; this percentage is rather high for both NST (39.8 per cent) and Utusan (44.4 per cent). Where in some stories it was clearly stated how the news was gathered (press conference, official statement issued, personal interviews, etc.), in others, the method was not made clear. Some information are excerpts from journals, communiqués or the journalists and other writers write their comments, analyses and features, quoting the sources, but again, the method in which the information was gathered was not made clear. These methods are included in the 'other' category. At best, assumptions can only be made that the information was collected through personal interviews (either face-to-face or through a phone conversation, either way of which, is common).
It can be seen from the table that *Utusan* (16.5 per cent, *NST*: 8.7 per cent) has a higher percentage of stories where the information was gathered through personal interviews. This is typical of the journalistic practice in *Utusan*: the analysis shows that the *Utusan* reporters initiated several stories from personal interviews they conducted with people involved in the news. The *Arqam* and *Rahim* issues had several stories written from the human interest angle, e.g. *Utusan* regularly interviewed the uncle, father and grandmother of the under-aged girl allegedly involved in the scandal, or *Utusan* interviewed several former or existing members of *Arqam* to get their views on the movement. The analysis showed that *NST* did not get that 'personal' and mostly used stories from official/government sources.

The methods of news gathering can be related to the ethical conduct of reporters as they are one of the ethical principles of journalism. Only four reports of the three case studies analysed suggested that the reporters had been unethical in the way they gathered the information. In a report on the *Rahim* scandal, the prime minister reproached the newspapers for the manner in which they conducted themselves in the *Rahim* affair. In another news story, several UMNO members also criticised the reporters for their conduct. However, no details were given on the nature of the conduct of the reporters. In one report, *Rahim* rebuked the reporters for encroaching into the privacy of his family, and asked that they be left alone while they were on holiday. Again, the nature of the encroachment was not detailed. The *Arqam* followers once asked the reporters who had been constantly present around the *Arqam* commune since the break of the issue, to leave the premises as their presence was seen as "disturbing the followers" daily routine (*Utusan*, 29 Aug. 1994).

As has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, news gathering methods employed by reporters constitute one of the principle concerns in journalism ethics. With this ethical principle as a guideline, the news gathering methods used by the *NST* and *Utusan* reporters have been analysed as generally ethical as far as can be ascertained that the reporters have not used unethical means to gather information. It has to be pointed out that it is a common and universal journalistic practice for reporters to follow and closely observe the movements of individuals who have been thrust into the public glare, especially public figures. Nevertheless, the fact that it is common and universal does not make it right; in fact, the literature on media ethics find this behaviour of encroaching on an individual's privacy as unethical (Goldstein, 1982, Meyer, 1987, Swain, 1978, Schafer, 1981). Several codes of ethics, for example the American Society of Newspaper Editors or the Declaration of Rights and Obligations of Journalists of the European Community require reporters to respect the privacy of individuals and to use fair methods to obtain news (Jones, 1980).
However, it is difficult to draw the line between what is accepted behaviour of news gathering and what is not; and even if a line can be drawn, justification for crossing that line can still be found (e.g. the ends justify the means).

D.7 News Accuracy

Accuracy is one of the major principles to be observed in news writing, and more often than not, when one complains about the degradation of quality in the journalism profession, accuracy would be one of the areas most criticised. For the purpose of this research, accuracy is analysed based on the consistency of the facts, figures and quotations presented in the news over the period of time the issues were discussed.

As has been discussed at the beginning of this chapter, accuracy is a difficult concept to pin down and analyse as there are too many possible kinds of errors to apply a uniform approach (McQuail, 1992). However, because of the obvious importance of accuracy in gauging media credibility, many media researchers have studied this concept from several angles to determine the real causes of news story inaccuracies (Charnley, 1936; Berry, 1967, Blackenburg, 1970). Blackenberg (1970) for instance, listed 14 categories of error which include omission, under- and over-emphasis, misspelling, incorrect ages, names, dates, faulty headlines, misquotes, etc. Another method to analyse accuracy is to check points in a news article against an external, reliable version of the same information (or with the original source).

To begin with, news inaccuracy is defined as the "deviation of a reported observation of an event from the reality or the truth of the event" (Lawrence, 1969: 753). Beginning with Charnley's inaccuracy study in 1936 that used mail questionnaires to ask persons mentioned in news stories their opinions of the article's accuracy, most accuracy studies after this analysed news reports according to two categories: "subjective inaccuracy" and "objective inaccuracy". Berry defines the latter as "deviations from objective facts" (incorrect spelling of a name, incorrect date, etc.) while Blackenburg defines the former as "...mistakes of judgement on the part of the reporter..." (errors of meaning which include over- or underemphasis, misquoting and omitting of salient facts).

This present analysis is based on Berry’s and Charnley’s classification of subjective and objective inaccuracies in news stories. The inaccuracies in NST and Utusan were operationalised as ‘subjective’ when these errors occur: errors of meaning, omission, over-emphasis and under-emphasis; and ‘objective’ inaccuracy means the news stories had errors in the spelling, names, ages, other names, titles, address, other locations, times and
The findings show that NST and Utusan each had 1 per cent of inaccuracy in their coverage of the three case studies (see Table 5.7 below). The analysis shows that 99 per cent of the coverage was accurate and the incidences of inaccuracies are not seen as of a serious nature as they were objective inaccuracies, i.e. NST and Utusan misspelt the name of the Arqam leader, Asaari Mohamad several times. The two newspapers were once criticised by a source in the Rahim affair for misinterpreting (NST, 11 Oct. 1994) certain parts of his statements. However, neither the source nor the newspapers elaborated on the nature of this misinterpretation. It was a passing statement not picked up or elaborated by any quarter. Moreover, the source did not specifically mention NST and Utusan, but instead had said that the "press" misinterpreted his statements.

Berry in his 1966 study of accuracy in local news stories of three dailies, quoted the reporters' reasons for the errors of meaning as a) time constraint between gathering and writing of news, b) massive information that need to be sieved, c) complex issues that need to be written in a way understandable to most readers, and this oversimplification breeds inaccuracy, and d) the journalists blamed the sources for the inaccuracy.

It is later revealed in the interviews with the reporters and other news workers of NST and Utusan that, not only were the same reasons given for the errors, more interestingly, the reporters also blame the sources for some of the inaccuracies in the news report (especially inaccuracies because of misquotation or misinterpretation). The reporters interviewed lamented that sources did not explain complex issues coherently or that some sources (particularly politicians) say a lot of things (for the sake of publicity) which they may regret the next day. Short of apologising for their mistakes, these sources used the reporters as easy targets for blame. Berry's study echoed the same sentiment when he said:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Accuracy</th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts Accurate</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts Inaccurate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7: News Accuracy in NST and Utusan
Their (sources) response is surely tempered by their perception of how the news story depicts them. If it enhances them or agree with their self-perception, they are more likely to agree with the story's accuracy than if they are deprecated or ridicule. (1966: 484).

How useful has the analysis of this concept been in uncovering the ethical tendencies of the news workers? As far as Berry's classification of the subjective and objective inaccuracies can be taken as a measurement, the 99 per cent accuracy in the news coverage in NST and Utusan shows that both the newspapers have been ethical. Accuracy is an ethical principle constantly upheld by media academics, media practitioners and codes of conduct when discussing the ethics of news production (Jones, 1980, Belsey and Chadwick, 1992, Lambeth, 1986, Klaidman and Beauchamp, 1987). More importantly, though, this accuracy analysis also highlights the point raised by Heffner (1973) that accuracy studies should consider the question "accuracy according to whom?" (p1). It is clear from the analysis of the three case studies in NST and Utusan that a major point that attributes to the tendency of the reporters to be accurate is that most news stories are attributable to an official source, be the source a cabinet minister, government official or a person in an official position or authority. This is evident in all three case studies where the news originated from official sources.

This finding should also be seen in the context of the moral-philosophical framework that views ethics as a personal choice. If accuracy is indeed a personal choice, the real test of accuracy then depends on the individual reporters - whether they are responsible enough to produce stories which are accurate or whether they produce stories in a slipshod manner, paying scant attention to the principles of ethics. However, this analysis has also pointed out the fact that both personal choice and other external factors (in this case, news organisation routines and news sources) also play a role in determining ethical conduct.

D.8 Overall Tone of News

At the very outset, one has to acknowledge the fact that the news that is daily served to readers and viewers in the mass media has never been value-free. Harold Lansky (cited in Cirino, 1971) calls this the "real power of the press" which

...comes from the effect of its continuous repetition of an attitude reflected in facts which its readers have no chance to check, or by its ability to surround those facts by an environment of suggestion, which, often half-consciously, seeps its way into the mind of the reader and forms his premises for him without his even being aware that they are really prejudices to which he has scarcely given a moment of thought (p135).
The messages relayed in the media are implanted with the views and attitudes of the media favouring or otherwise one establishment or another. McQuail (1977) suggests several ways in which the tone of the news may be manifested: a) the use of language (words, phrases, etc.) which 'colours' a report and conveys an implicit but clear value judgement, b) by explicit argument and compilation of evidence favouring one view, and c) by the way the news is selected and shaped where there is concentration on the negative aspects.

Based on these guidelines, the analysis has shown that both NST and Utusan, while they have tried to be neutral by giving as much access as possible to Rahim and the Arqam members to air their views, were biased in other aspects, i.e. they concentrated more on the negative elements of the issues. These newspapers put forth their own personal agendas and stance on the issues by highlighting only certain aspects. For example, the analysis of the Arqam issue in Utusan showed that, by slanting the news to the negative aspects of the movement (the group being preoccupied with sex and degrading women to the status of sex-slaves; the leader being portrayed as a "coward" for not coming back to Malaysia to confront the authorities), the newspaper had legitimated the government's move to ban Arqam. In fact, the treatment of the Arqam issue in Utusan was analysed as more critical than in NST.

The difference in the number of stories that appeared in NST (111 stories) and Utusan (236 stories) alone shows the fervour of the newspapers in stating their agendas. NST, though equally critical of this movement, is seen as more staid and not as aggressive in its coverage. Of the 111 stories, NST had only two commentaries on the issue compared to Utusan which had 24. While the commentaries (features, opinion articles) in NST focused on the aspects of the teaching that Islam finds objectionable, the Utusan commentaries take a more human interest angle by discussing issues like the wives of the Arqam followers who are viewed more as sex slaves and toys, the anguish of parents whose children had been lured into the Arqam fold, the modus operandi used by the Arqam leaders to attract people into Arqam, etc. The Utusan opinion articles are analysed as more negative and critical of this movement.

Similarly, Utusan's treatment of the Rahim scandal is analysed as more critical than NST's, but very much toned down compared to its coverage of Arqam. This could be due to the appeal made by the prime minister to let the courts and not the media judge the guilt or innocence of Rahim. Because the newspapers, especially Utusan, had played up the issue almost on a daily basis, this became a public agenda, so much so that the prime minister felt he had to make an unprecedented move to request the media not to further discuss the scandal as he did not want this to be a "trial by the media". This appeal could have stopped the newspapers from dredging up and exposing a previous scandal that Rahim was
alleged to have had.

Bias in a story can also be detected by analysing the sources chosen for the story. The coverage of the three case studies in the three newspapers has shown that the choice of the sources helped to colour the stance of the newspaper on the issue discussed. Though the majority of the sources for the stories are official sources who would try to give a more balanced view of the situation, it is the choice of other sources that show the newspaper's inclination and hidden agenda. For example, in the Arqam coverage, a half-page feature that highlighted the mishaps of a well-known local artist who was 'lured' by Arqam, could discredit Arqam. The occasional portrayal of the negative aspects of Arqam constitutes the framing of the news through events which "give the dominant/primary meaning than another" (Morley, 1976:246). This way the newspapers not only showed their stance on the issue but also simultaneously direct attention to only certain aspects of the issue that they want to be set as the agenda.

Language in the news also conveys the tone and the agenda of the media: the media can discredit people and organisations they dislike, or exalt those they want the public to respect. Cirino (1971) describes the strategy of this technique of implanting bias in the news by choosing the right adjective or verb to sum up a situation or a person that evokes a response the communicator feels should be adopted toward a story. Hansen and Murdock (1985) in their analysis of several riots which occurred in England in 1981, found that the newspapers analysed used language and terms from a series of linguistic paradigms (one of them being the paradigm of warfare and insurgency) to set the tone and agenda of the newspapers. This research has shown how language has been used to convey the discourses through the news making process.

Similarly, the diction used in NST and Utusan for the Arqam ban and the Rahim scandal is derived from several paradigms. The Arqam issue in Utusan was viewed from the religious angle; consequently the vocabulary used shows the preoccupation of the Arqam followers with the Arqam leaders and the deviant nature of the movement. In NST, though, the religious angle is not taken all the time; the language used shows the group as more a threat to national security. Both NST and Utusan used the words 'deviant' and 'danger' numerous times to depict the group as a threat, not only to the security of the country but also to the mainstream beliefs of Islam as practised in Malaysia. Below are words frequently used in NST and Utusan to describe the Arqam movement and its leader, Asaari.

Utusan

danger

NST

deviant

148
The words 'deviant', 'danger' and 'ban' were frequently used to portray this 'movement' as dangerous and implicitly justifying the action of the government to ban Arqam. Compared to NST which took the security angle with words like 'armed unit', 'military force' (Arqam had its own armed unit), 'coup' (a former member said that Asaari had asked him to stage a coup against the government) and 'outlawed leader', Utusan used several Arabic words to evoke the feelings of fear and awareness that Arqam has deviated from the correct Islamic path and it is the duty of the government to 'correct the faith' of the followers. The phrase 'authorities in control of Arqam situation' shows how the government is above this dangerous movement, implicitly telling the public not to worry, the government is 'in control of the situation'. These words show the agenda of the two newspapers in legitimising the government's action on banning the Arqam group.

The coverage of the Rahim scandal showed a different tone in that, while the newspapers wanted to portray Rahim for what he was (it is common knowledge that Rahim is alleged as having had a previous personal scandal), they had to be guarded in their coverage as several parties (the prime minister, the UMNO members and the attorney-general) had appealed for them not to be "overzealous" and excessive in their reporting. Only NST had made a reference to Rahim's alleged previous scandal ("Promising Political Career Mired in Personal Scandal"); Utusan, on the other hand, was uncharacteristically mild in its treatment of an issue that directly pertains to the Islamic religion and the Malay culture.

The only criticism that both newspapers had of Rahim was in the editorials, NST had two and Utusan, three. For example, in an editorial headlined "Politicians Bound By Social, Moral Laws" (NST, 23 Oct. 1994), the editorial writer talked about Rahim’s acquittal of the charge of being involved with a minor because the police investigation had failed to produce sufficient evidence. Nevertheless, the writer also pointed out the fact that though
the evidence is not sufficient and strong enough, it did suggest that there was an involvement. Criticising Rahim for this involvement, the editorial stressed that such conduct of sexual indiscretion is unacceptable in a country like Malaysia where Islam is the official religion and where values and propriety are held in high regard.

An Utusan editorial interestingly headlined "Alahai Rahim" ("Oh my, Rahim" - 9 Oct. 1994) was a thoughtful piece on the 'rise' and 'fall' of Rahim. 'Alahai' is a Malay expression that carries several implicit meanings like exasperation, ridiculing or teasing; in this instance, the editorial sounded exasperated with Rahim for putting the blame on others for his downfall (Rahim has always maintained his innocence and said that the sandal is a political ploy to topple him). Apart from the usage of the expression 'alahai' which is catchy, the editorial uses an analogy in the form of a Malay proverb that says that a bird with a broken wing would eventually fall to the ground. This is a criticism of Rahim who at the height of his popularity was soaring high, but had his wings clipped not by other people, but by his own doing. This criticism was cleverly cloaked in a Malay proverb, the meaning of which a person can easily overlook if one is not adept at reading between the lines. Herein lies the norm of the Malay culture that prefers to 'dull' the effect of a criticism by way of a proverb or an analogy.

This category has given a significant contribution to the objective of this analysis - i.e. the tone of the news which indicates the stance of NST and Utusan on the Arqam ban and Rahim scandal, also echoes the stance held by the government and the mainstream thinking. This clearly shows that the press is in tandem with the government on major issues to set the agenda. The press's support of the government's position may also be taken to mean that the press does not wish to confuse, complicate or create misunderstandings amongst the public by being in contradiction with the government on issues of the day. This is especially true in the Arqam ban - initially many people still believed that Arqam was a missionary movement in line with Islam and had criticised the government for suppressing an Islamic movement. The press felt that it carries the responsibility to educate and inform the public about the nature of the movement.

D.9 How Individuals Were Covered

This category analyses how the news treats individuals covered in the news, i.e. whether they were covered favourably or unfavourably. This category of the analysis gauges the stance of the newspapers and their treatment of people in the news: favourable means the coverage is positive and not critical of the individuals mentioned and unfavourable means the individuals or groups are portrayed negatively. The option 'other' in this category
means that the news was neither favourable nor unfavourable of the individual or groups covered; the news was, overall, informative and no individual was negatively portrayed. The 'individuals' covered in the news items are not only the main protagonists/actors in the case studies (i.e. Rahim in the Rahim affair, Asaari in the Arqam ban and several Malaysian and British ministers in the Pergau conflict) but also other individuals who were the main focus in particular news items. These individuals were the main sources of information for that particular piece of news or they were the main focus of attention. For example, in all three case studies, other individuals directly or indirectly involved in the issues were also analysed for how they were treated. Among these were the parents of the under-aged girl in the Rahim affair, Andrew Neil in the Pergau conflict and other senior officials and followers in the Arqam ban. Thus, the primary concern of this category is to analyse how the newspapers treated the individuals in that particular news story. For the purpose of this research, the favourable or unfavourable portrayal of the individuals is viewed from the standpoint of the government. This stand is taken to show the significance of the press-government relations, the roles the press play in such a relationship and the influence of the government on issues that directly relate to it as is clearly seen in the three case studies. The content analysis thus far has shown and will continue to show that the government is the central figure in the news gathering and writing process of the three case studies.

Images created through the use of words can be used to persuade readers to hate, condemn, disapprove or laugh at persons or evoke an attitude of respect and approval toward those who represent a position favoured by the presenter (Cirino, 1971). For example, the Cuban leader Fidel Castro, considered 'a villain of the piece' by the American media, is constantly negatively portrayed. In one instance, he was portrayed in this light: "Fidel Castro boarded his Soviet hand-me-down airliner followed by his bearded entourage - his admirers, their cardboard boxes, and their teddy bears" (Cirino, 1971: 161).

Table 5.8 on the following page shows that while the majority of the coverage in NST (89.7 per cent) and Utusan (87.9 per cent) are neutral, both newspapers have an almost equal amount of unfavourable reportage. Except for several instances discussed below which show a significant difference in the way the two newspapers covered the three case studies, generally the analysis of the case studies was not done individually. This is because from the analysis, it was realised that the newspapers have been neutral in their treatment of individuals in the case studies. Because the finding did not show a significant difference in the way the two newspapers treated the main actors in the individual case studies, this researcher thought it more significant to give an aggregate analysis of how the individuals were covered rather than giving individual tables of how each case study was treated.
An important point that emerged from this finding is that because of the journalistic culture the newspapers adhere to, because of the kind of relationship and covenant they have entered into with the government and because of the nature of the case studies, the coverage is generally neutral. Though the finding in this category shows that the portrayal of the individuals is generally neutral, the implication from the finding is what is more important, i.e. it further reinforces the characteristic of the Malaysian press in that they are not adversarial (to the government, in particular, and to other social forces, in general). While they want to legitimise the agenda of the government, at the same time, they do not want to be overly critical of the other parties involved in the issues. Table 5.8 shows that 10 percent of NST's reportage was unfavourable; similarly, 11.9 per cent of Utusan's coverage was unfavourable, (especially in the comments/features/opinion articles). Most of the unfavourable coverage is of the Pergau and Arqam stories and this is in sharp contrast to both newspapers' treatment of Rahim which was very mild and neutral given the nature of the issue which had put Rahim in the news.

Though the coverage of the Arqam ban and Rahim was generally neutral in NST and Utusan, there were two instances where both newspapers negatively portrayed Rahim and the Arqam leader, Asaari. Though it would be logical to expect the newspapers to negatively portray a politician who was alleged to be involved in an extramarital affair (let alone having an affair with a minor), NST and Utusan, however, did not rise up to that expectation with negative images of Rahim. The only instance which came close to a criticism of Rahim was an editorial in NST (23 Oct 1994) which chided Rahim for taking the easy way out of the scandal he had put himself in, by asking the prime minister to decide on his (Rahim's) political future. The editorial criticised Rahim for putting this unnecessary pressure on the prime minister; it said that if Rahim is convinced that he still has a chance in politics, he must prove it himself. In fact, the editorial used the John Profumo-Christine Keeler scandal in England as an analogy to insinuate that Rahim should

<table>
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<th>NST</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8: How Individuals Were Covered

152
"redeem and rehabilitate" himself before getting back into mainstream politics.1

Except for one editorial (Utusan, 9 Oct 1994) which advised Rahim not to blame others but himself for the scandal he found himself in, Utusan was analysed as being 'easier' on Rahim, even though Utusan was reprimanded by several UMNO members for being unfair on Rahim (Utusan was the first newspaper to break the news and this was subsequently criticised by the UMNO members who said Utusan had exploited this issue to increase sales). On the other hand, Utusan's coverage of Asaari was found to be more critical. With words like 'coward', 'arrogant' and 'wants to be worshipped', Utusan (and also NST) portrayed Asaari negatively. This negative image was enhanced when both NST and Utusan highlighted Asaari's claim that he was more popular than the prime minister and would be the next leader of the country.

Though the Arqam followers were generally given the image of a 'good decent people', they were also portrayed as a gullible group that was easily swayed by Asaari and the other Arqam leaders. Some of them were also several times portrayed as resisting the 'fatwa' (a religious ruling) by continuing to sell and distribute materials on Arqam which had been made illegal. Their resistance was also shown when they said they would sue the authorities (the Religious Affairs Department) for some of the statements the authorities made on them.

As discussed in the previous category on the tone of news, the negative portrayal of the Arqam leader and Rahim is a way of legitimising the mainstream agenda. Because of this stance, the newspapers' portrayal of the individuals (whether favourable or unfavourable) is taken from the government's viewpoint. Both newspapers adopt the stance of the government not merely because the latter expects such support and allegiance from the former, but more significantly, the newspapers themselves believe supporting the government on these issues is justified. The newspapers believe that informing the public about the wrong-doing of Rahim and the extremism of Arqam is more important than the privacy of Rahim and the right of the Arqam group to spread its teaching. While executing their responsibility toward the public by highlighting the Rahim and Arqam events, the news people generally maintained their sense of ethics of the profession by not going overboard in their coverage. In fact, they honoured the wishes of both Rahim and the Arqam followers who had requested to be left alone. Thus, where press responsibility is

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1 John Profumo, the British War Minister in the 1960s, resigned in disgrace when his relationship with call-girl Christine Keeler became public. It took Profumo more than two decades to redeem himself by doing charitable work in London. Even then, he was never totally accepted back into the mainstream of British politics. The parallel made by the editorial writer between the Profumo affair and the Rahim scandal has to be viewed with caution as the former scandal is not exclusively a sex scandal. It also had national security implications as Profumo was involved with Keeler who had liaisons with a KGB agent.
concerned, the analysis has shown that the coverage of the two issues in NST and Utusan is generally neutral as seen in the 'other' option which means that the stories did not fit the "unfavourable" or "unfavourable" labels. As mentioned earlier, the 'other' means the stories are generally informative rather than being favourable or unfavourable in their portrayal of the individuals. Since the portrayal of the individuals in the news is an ethical concern, it can thus be assumed from the neutrality in the coverage of NST and Utusan that the newspapers had been ethical in their treatment of individuals.

To summarise, it has to be noted that several distinct features could be learned from the analysis of the three case studies that would throw light on the journalistic practices in Malaysia. A recurring feature that emerges in the analysis is the symbiotic link that exists between the newspapers and the government/political leaders. This could be seen in the fact that more government and official sources were used, and the stance taken by the newspapers on specific issues would support that of the government. This close rapport seems to be the culture in the journalism profession in Malaysia, and if the ethical dimension of the thesis could be read from this culture, it is that cooperating with the government seems to be part of the ethics of the profession.

An objective of the content analysis was to make a comparison of how NST and Utusan covered the three case studies. Because the two newspapers cater to different target audiences, it was assumed that the comparative analysis would show significant differences. Interestingly enough, apart from a couple of instances where the analysis is different (i.e. some opinion articles showed that Utusan was more critical of the Arqam movement and the Rahim scandal than NST), the rest of the analysis showed similarities between the NST and Utusan coverage. Since Utusan is a Malay-oriented newspaper, two assumptions were made about its coverage of the Rahim scandal and Arqam ban: one, Utusan, because it wants to champion the interests of the Malays, would 'cover up' an embarrassing incident like the Rahim affair and a sensitive issue like the deviationist Arqam, and at the other extreme, Utusan would 'go to town' with such stories to show that it is professional and would not cover up or be party to any social misconduct. In actuality, though, both assumptions were wrong: not only did Utusan not cover up the incidents, but Utusan was the first newspaper to break the news on the Rahim scandal. On the other hand, Utusan also did not 'go to town' with the stories.

Though Utusan had more stories on the Rahim and Arqam issues than NST (and this may be taken to mean that Utusan does pay more attention to Malay issues), the analysis showed that the treatment of the news in the two newspapers was the same. Thus, the different audience that the newspapers target does not determine the style of reporting.
A more discernible explanation to understand how two newspapers with different features, like language and target audience, could be so similar in disposition lies in the management of the newspaper organisations. The fact that the higher echelon in NST and Utusan managements has close links with the government/political leadership has been pointed out repeatedly. This close link has a strong bearing on how both newspapers treat issues and events, specifically those relating to the leaders of the country. It is therefore not surprising for the newspapers to be similar. This similarity is in itself a significant finding as it again strengthens the knowledge that the Malaysian press works in tandem with the government to realise the objectives and agendas of the latter.

E. Pergau Dam Coverage in the Times, NST and Utusan

As has been stated earlier, the coverage of the Pergau dam controversy in the Times was also analysed for the purpose of uncovering certain features that would help in better understanding the factors that influence news writing in two different environment settings. Altogether 159 stories were analysed in the Times, 121 in NST and 79 in Utusan.

Though the same categories used for the analysis of the Malaysian newspapers were used for the Times analysis, only certain relevant categories are highlighted below. These highlights would help in the comprehension of the news writing culture between the Malaysian newspapers and the Times and, simultaneously, throw light on the influences on the mass media and the ethics of news workers.

E.1 Headlines / Subheadlines in the Pergau Coverage

NST and Utusan which are generally staid in their headlines, changed their tone and like the Times used evaluative expressions which made apparent their bias tendencies. All three newspapers which are known as quality mainstream newspapers seemed to lose their sedateness and used their media space to attack one another (the Malaysian newspapers versus the Times). While the British newspaper attacked both the British and Malaysian governments in its headlines, its Malaysian counterparts followed suit, the only difference being that, while the main target of the British press is the government, the focus of the criticism by the former is the British press itself. Below are examples of headlines that appeared in the three newspapers:
The headlines in the *Times* punned on the word "dam" twice - "Dam deceit" and "Dam business" - the construction of the headlines insinuates the usage of the word 'damn'. If this assumption is accurate, then the usage of the word 'damn', whether implicitly or explicitly (and in this case, cunningly camouflaged by the central element of the controversy - the dam) would be unacceptable in Malaysia. The Malaysian culture (both the culture of the newspapers and the wider social context) frowns upon such language. The British press further drove its point and sentiment home by using headlines like "The Pergau Curse" and "Pergautory" (purgatory). This analysis points out the difference in not only the writing culture between the Malaysian newspapers and the *Times*, but on a wider scale, shows the difference in the tolerance and acceptance of the cultural values of the two countries.

Similarly, the headlines in *NST* and *Utusan* are equally critical, but are understandably (because of the role the press plays in the Malaysian environment) more critical of the British government and the British press than they are of Malaysia itself. The headlines made reference to the arrogance of the British ("Stiff Upper Lip Showing") and also their ignorance (the use of the adjective "tinpot" to describe this arrogance shows the emotive extent of the press).

In any translated work from the original to the adoptive language, the culture of the original language has to be taken into consideration when translating. One has to bear in mind that
in the process of translating, some of the essence of the original meaning would inevitably be lost. This happened when the Utusan headlines were translated, though care was taken to retain the culture surrounding the expressions, some of the impact was felt to have diminished. The three examples of the Utusan headlines (especially the original version) showed the exasperation of the press with the arrogance of the British press. The emotion behind the headlines is that of mockery of the former colonial masters for their high-handed treatment of Malaysia. Hence, the usage of the name "Malaya" (pre-independence name for Malaysia) - "Between the Whites and Malaya" - indicates the weariness of the Malaysian press at still being treated by the British press as the backward Malaya of 40 years ago (Malaya achieved its independence from the British in 1957).

In fact, the usage of the name 'mat saleh' in the Malay headline is very revealing in showing this exasperation. 'Mat saleh' is a nickname (believed to have originated from the colonial days) given to the 'Whites', and depending on the context of the usage, it could be either negative or positive. The usage in this particular headline is evidently negative. The article deplores the attitude of the 'Whites' (the English) who think that Malaysia, despite having achieved economic success and being heralded a newly-industrialised nation, is still a struggling Third World country not worthy of being treated as an equal.

What is made apparent from this analysis is that all three newspapers use evaluative headlines to get the message across. The arrogance of all parties was clear in these headlines - Times: "Make Malaysia Pay for its Arrogance", NST: "British Stiff Upper Lip Showing" and Utusan: "The Stupid Will Not Change". Though one may argue that this is just a style of writing, a good device to attract readers' attention and to set the agenda, the ethics of the profession should, all the same, be questioned. The Pergau project headlined as a "curse" and a "deceit" by the Times is in reality a source of employment to many people in and around the project side in Malaysia. Labelling each other as 'stupid' or 'ignorant' also shows an attitude that is swayed more by emotions than responsibility.

Though it may be rather far-fetched to say that the use of such emotive and evaluative headlines caused the escalation of the conflict to the point of the trade ban, it is not unrealistic to conclude that negative feelings may be evoked and harboured by such wordings. (The analysis, in fact, did show that the collective coverage of this issue in the English press which was seen as overly critical by the Malaysian government - the Times and Andrew Neil were singled out as the most critical - caused the displeasure of the Malaysian government and the subsequent imposition of the trade embargo).
E.2 News Type and Sources in the Pergau Coverage

Three types of news in this category reflect the tone and the stance of the newspapers on the issue: the editorial, letters and comments (which include features, opinions and analyses). Table 5.9 overleaf shows that all three newspapers have a significant number of letters and comments: Times (45), NST (24) and Utusan (23). Utusan, however, does not have any letter, but made up for that lack in the number of comments. The analysis of the letters reflect how some members of the publics - both the Malaysian and British publics - view each other based on the strength of the reports they read in the newspapers (which may or may not reinforce the stereotypes and prejudices already preconceived). For example, reports in the Times that the £234 million loan for the Pergau dam which was said to be "unequivocally unsound" (Times, 18 Jan. 1994) and had come from the British taxpayers' money, triggered the interest of the public to respond to the editor and air their views for or against the dam project, per se, and the Malaysians, in general (more analysis below on tone of news).

The main type of news in the three newspapers are the main news which are usually written in the conventional straight news reporting style. 1 A significant point from this category is the difference in the news writing style between the Malaysian newspapers and the Times. In the Times, it was difficult at times to identify whether the report is a straight news or a comment/opinion piece; this is because a report that ought to be a straight news report sometimes has value-laden words in it. This, however, is not the news writing culture in NST and Utusan which adhere to the traditional and conventional style of writing where words hinting at the writer's opinions or comments are not allowed. The traditional style of NST and Utusan emphasises the 'who-says what' (i.e. what the sources say) than what / how the reporter views the news as seen in the Times reportage. An example is quoted from an article in the Times on 10 November 1994: "10 MPs Plan Attack on Hurd Over Aid" - the writer used loaded words like "will face a concerted assault", "leaders are gearing up for a fierce Commons debate", "will lead the charge" (emphasis added). The words in bold show the writing style of the reporter and also the newspaper where the stance of the writer and the newspaper is allowed to be made apparent. This is a common feature of the Times where news items are peppered with the journalist's comments and opinions. This is the practice of newspapers of the new genre, the New Journalism. 2

1 The conventional straight news report usually has the lead followed by the main elements of an event written in the descending order of importance. The main elements usually answer the 5Ws and 1H. Straight news reports do not normally have the writer's ideas and opinions in them.

2 The New Journalism is a term coined in the 1960s where the "voice of the narrator" is included in the story (Wolfe, 1973). Unlike the traditional method where the writer maintains a "neutral background" and assumes a "calm, cultivated and genteel voice", the New Journalist is "subjective" and keeps himself /
Table 5.9: News Type in NST, Utusan and Times

<table>
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<th>News Type</th>
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</table>

Though the usage of loaded words in news writing is just a style of writing to make the story interesting, at the same time, the way it was written may also suggest a hidden agenda. In this example, Douglas Hurd was blamed for the Pergau loan which was said to be a "bad buy", and had a close link between the funding of the dam and Malaysia's decision to buy arms from Britain (aid-for-arms deal has been deemed internationally illegal). Thus, it was logical for the report to convey the message that Hurd was under attack from his colleagues in parliament for his part in approving the loan.

The analysis of the sources in the three newspapers shows that a majority of the sources are attributable sources: NST (67.3 per cent), Utusan (81.6 per cent) and Times (71.5 per cent). These attributable sources are divided into two groups: official government sources (prime minister, other ministers and government officials) and non-governmental sources (British and Malaysian industrialists, environmentalists and British journalists, particularly the former Sunday Times editor, Andrew Neil). A significant percentage of the findings (see Table 5.10 overleaf) shows that some of the sources are non-governmental. The table also shows that a fair percentage of the sources (NST: 31 per cent, Utusan: 17 per cent and Times: 25 per cent) fell into the 'other' category that consists of letters to the editor, analysis, features, observation and editorials by the journalists. These analysis, observations and editorials are sometimes bylined so the origin of the views put forth are made known; at other times, however, no byline is given but it can be safely assumed that

herself "in the foreground at all times". In short, literary device is used in journalistic writing.
the views are the news workers'.

Table 5.10: News Sources in NST, Utusan and Times

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<td>193 100.0</td>
<td>427 100.0</td>
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</table>

There were also news reports where the sources were mentioned but the names and designations were not stated. Instead such phrases like "according to unnamed sources" or "sources close to the minister" were used. The Times had 4.1 per cent, NST: 2 per cent and Utusan: 1.2 per cent of stories with unidentified sources. Though unnamed sources are not widely encouraged in journalistic writing, they are still being used for several reasons: 1) to honour / respect the request of the source not to be named (to safeguard his/her position) and 2) the information given by the source is important and crucial to be known by the public. Therefore, even though the source requests for anonymity and the story cannot be attributed, the news worker may still decide to run the story by using such phrases.

In several of its reports, the Times used unnamed sources such as a leading Malaysian politician who asked not to be identified", "one person close to the British side in the controversy conceded", "a Malaysian close to the centre of power said", "another Malaysian insider said", "said a senior committee source", "foreign diplomats hoped", "one observer said". Comparatively, the Times used more unnamed sources than NST or Utusan. This may be due to the fact that many stories in NST and Utusan were picked from news agencies like AP, Reuters and the Malaysian news agency (BERNAMA). Both the NST and the Utusan correspondents in London also frequently wrote articles based on
their analysis of news reports in the British press.

It is interesting to note that when an unnamed source is used, the information he/she gave can be quite 'damaging' to the other party in the conflict. For instance, all the sources above gave evidence that put either the Malaysian or British government in a negative light. An example of this is: "Asked if there were likely to have been kickbacks or other corruption involved, another Malaysian insider said there might have been 'some slicing off here and there'". The 'Malaysian insider' was talking about some form of corruption in the Malaysian business dealings.

To quote or not to quote a source who has asked not to be named has always been a dilemma a news worker faces. To name the source would sever the source-reporter trust, and not to name the source would make the story seemed less credible as readers may perceive that the information may have been fabricated to suit the story and discredit the other party. Either way, news workers face a dilemma as their ethical integrity may be questioned.

The reliance of the Malaysian newspapers on official and attributable sources is again apparent in this analysis. The Times, despite having more stories and more sources, has a lower percentage (36.3 per cent) of official sources than NST (48.9 per cent) or Utusan (47.1 per cent). Related to the reliance on official sources, Table 5.11 below shows that NST (75.2 per cent) and Utusan (77.2 per cent) have more one-viewpoint stories than the Times (67.3 per cent), again despite the fact that the latter has comparatively more stories. Since both NST and Utusan have more official sources, the one-viewpoint analysis suggests that the Malaysian newspapers not only rely on official and attributable sources, but also marginalise other viewpoints not in the mainstream.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Viewpoint</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Viewpoints</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.11: Number of Viewpoints in NST, Utusan and Times
The analysis of this category has shown that as far as ethics can be linked to the practice of attributing stories to a legitimate source, the Malaysian newspapers are ethical in so far as most of their stories are attributed. The risk that may arise from an unattributed story is that a thinking reader may question the credibility of both the writer and the newspaper. Doubts may also arise regarding the authenticity of the story. This is the justification in the ethical principle that requires truth-telling in the journalism profession.

E.3 Where News Was Gathered In the Pergau Coverage

Like NST and Utusan where the method of news gathering could not be ascertained for more than half of the stories (NST: 70.2 per cent, Utusan: 62 per cent), the origin of the majority of the news in the Times (88.1 per cent) could also not be determined (see 'other' in Table 5.12 overleaf). This is because the method where news was gathered was not mentioned in the news. Moreover, much of the news comes in the form of letters, opinions, comments and features where methods of news gathering is rarely stated. Nevertheless, based on the identifiable methods of information gathering, the analysis shows that NST (29.8 per cent) and Utusan (38 per cent) relied on conventional methods of news gathering more than the Times (11.9 per cent). The table shows that, of the identified methods, ministerial functions and press conferences (in the respective countries) and official statements issued are the most popular methods of news gathering.

An important point that emerged from this analysis is that several times, the Times gathered information for the Pergau coverage through investigation. Four of the reports analysed had the information through "secret documents obtained" or "confidential company documents obtained". However, how the confidential documents were obtained was understandably not mentioned. This is another difference found in the journalistic practice between the Malaysian and Times reporters. A couple of implications could be read from this difference: a) the Malaysian newspapers, because they have adopted the position of the government on the Pergau issue, did not feel the need to investigate into the alleged corruption of the parties involved, and b) the Times, on the other hand, relentlessly probed into the controversy because it did not align itself to any party. In fact, the Times coverage of the Pergau issue is seen as both positive and negative of all parties involved - the British government, the Malaysian government and Malaysia in general (unlike the Malaysian newspapers which were at times negative of Britain, but neutral toward Malaysia in its coverage).

Because of the different roles played by these newspapers and the different environment setting they operate in, press-government relations also differ. While the Malaysian
newspapers work with the government in many aspects, the British press adopts an adversarial relationship with its government.

Table 5.12: Where News was Gathered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Source</th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Conference</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Function</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Statements</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Sessions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interviews</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E.4 News Accuracy in the Pergau Coverage

The analysis of this category uses Berry's (1967) and Charnley's (1936) categorisation of "subjective" and "objective" inaccuracies to gauge the ethical tendencies of the three newspapers in the coverage of the Pergau conflict. Table 5.13 below shows that overall 3.3 per cent of the stories in NST and the Times reportage had inaccuracies in them: the Times: 5.7 per cent, NST: 2.5 percent, Utusan had none.

Table 5.13: News Accuracy in NST, Utusan and Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Type</th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts Accurate</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts Inaccurate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though the coverage in the Times is generally accurate, the inaccuracies that did occur can be considered serious errors (subjective inaccuracies) by those directly affected because these are matters of difference of interpretation or alleged misrepresentation rather than indubitable fact (McQuail, 1992):

* The Times published a headline "Wimpey offered contract bribes to Malaysian prime minister" (20 February 1994). While the headline openly accused Dr. Mahathir of being offered contract bribes, the body of the report alleged that "From the middle man, Wimpey got the impression that Mahathir would receive some of the money." Though Wimpey later issued a complete denial of the allegation (in a Building magazine on 25 March 1994), Times did not correct the error.

* An article written by a reader, Anatole Kaletsky ("A way to break the dam" - 4 March 1994) had stated that "..Pergau dam has not even been started". A chairman of a British firm wrote (4 March 1994) correcting this inaccuracy : "..the dam is now over 50 percent completed..."

* Baroness Chalker, the British overseas aid minister, while giving evidence to the Select Committee on the Pergau investigation, said that she had "2 pages of inaccuracies (in the British press) in relations to the Pergau dam". However, there was no mention nor query on where the inaccuracies occurred or what they were. The Times too did not elaborate on these inaccuracies.

* Misleading facts about the Pergau dam soft loan being used by Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB - which owns the dam) to boost the price of its shares ("Mahathir's men made millions from British taxpayers' money - 13 March 1994, and "Get rich quick" - 13 March 1994). Both articles alleged that TNB had used the loan to boost the share prices when it went into privatisation after obtaining the loan. In another article on 3 April 1994 - "Malaysia did not misuse Pergau dam money"), a reader wrote that there was no evidence that the British loan made any impact on the TNB flotation. The two articles (in March) failed to mention that TNB also received loans from other sources like America, Japan and the World Bank, totalling 40 percent of its equity. The articles also alleged that the TNB privatisation programme was "the biggest capitalisation in Malaysian history. Shares were oversubscribed three- and- a- half times...Many who benefited were supporters of the ruling party." Again, the newspaper failed to establish that privatisations carried out by the Malaysian government have all been heavily oversubscribed (sometimes as much as five times). The article did not acknowledge that "supporters of the ruling party" were institutional investors that would be subjected to strong criticisms if they do not take advantage of the opportunity to make profits.
Though the articles in the Times on the TNB shares were not blatantly inaccurate, the facts were, all the same, misleading. Though the misconceptions were eventually answered and the other side of the arguments was addressed, some damage, nevertheless, could be done and an indelible mark could be left on the credibility of the Malaysian government. Similarly, when Neil refused to apologise to the Malaysian government as he said he did not state that Dr. Mahathir had accepted any bribes, the refusal did not account to much since a blight on the integrity of the government had long been stamped with the allegations.

In NST, an error occurred at one stage of the conflict about the terms 'soft loan' and 'aid' used in the news. The Times used the latter term which NST took to mean a grant that does not have to be paid back. NST retaliated by saying that the British press should be very clear and use "loan" instead of "aid" as Malaysia still has to pay back the loan with interest (contrary to the implication in the British press that the loan was an "aid" and therefore a waste of British taxpayers' money). This incident shows how simple terms like 'loan' and 'aid' can be the cause of misunderstanding between two cultures that view things differently.

Another instance of inaccuracy was when Dr. Mahathir said he did not want an apology from the Sunday Times before considering to lift the trade ban; all he had asked for was accurate and truthful reporting in the British press. The Times instead had said that Dr. Mahathir had asked for the apology. The analysis shows that Dr. Mahathir did not ask for the apology; some other Malaysian ministers had said the British press should apologise, and over the period of the time the conflict progressed, the news had developed in such a way that Dr. Mahathir was said to want an apology. Thus, Dr. Mahathir was right when he said he did not ask for the apology, and the Times, too, was right when it said the Malaysian government wanted an apology, but was inaccurate in pointing out that it was Dr. Mahathir who had asked for that apology.

It cannot be ascertained whether the inaccuracies in this particular case study are genuine mistakes or a deliberate strategy to discredit the party in conflict with. While one must accept the fact that genuine mistakes do occur in the daily process of news production, one must also, in all fairness, not accept inaccuracies due to lack of attention to the principles of ethical journalism. Moreover, in this instance, the magnitude or the frequency of the error is not the main concern, rather, it is the impact or the implication of the printed error on the individuals in the news that should be the prime concern.

One interpretation from the occurrences of inaccuracy in the Times is that this is a strategy by the newspaper organisation as part of its journalistic professional routines and
convention to frame the news into a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, Gamson and Modigliani, 1987) according to the agenda of the news organisation. These frames would provide the cues with which the receiver would interpret events and makes sense of his/her social world (Edelman, 1993).

E.5 Tone of News In the Pergau Coverage

In the Pergau conflict, both the Times and the Malaysian newspapers did not mince words when criticising the British and Malaysian governments and other individuals. The wrath (especially in the Malaysian coverage) that was hinted at in the headlines was clearly felt in the body of the stories. Going by the diction and slant in the reports, it is analysed that all three newspapers fully exploited the space to drive their points home. The slant taken by NST and Utusan to criticise Andrew Neil and the British public is the "ignorance and paternalism" and the "condescending attitude" with which Malaysia is being treated. The Malaysian press is especially piqued that "all kinds of concocted rubbish", "vociferous criticism" and "Rottweiller-like savagery" are reported in the British press with little attempt to "correct slipshod and unverifiable facts".

NST's and Utusan's line of criticism is that the British still have the "arrogance of the colonial master" in viewing Malaysia like any other Third World "banana" republic with the assumption that corruption is a way of life. Both newspapers were defensive in their reporting in that they seldom started an "attack" on Neil or the British press, but rather answered such attacks with an equally harsh criticism.

The analysis showed that while the Times had started reporting on the Pergau issue in January 1994, the Malaysian newspapers did not pick it up until a month later. This is because it was reported that the Malaysian government had expressed its dissatisfaction to the British government with the way the British press was covering the issue. The latter gave its Malaysian counterpart the assurance that the critical, but unwarranted, coverage would stop. However, when the criticism continued, the Malaysian newspapers decided to retaliate with an equally critical coverage. Below are some examples of the evaluative words used by the three newspapers to indicate their tone, stance and agenda on the issue:

Times: murky business, paranoia, dubious dam, unequivocally unsound (referring to the Pergau dam), affair, war, corruption, corruption and bribes, confidential/secret documents obtained, Malaysia will soften its position, Malaysian government's prickly reaction.
Utusan: lies, allegations, accusations, insulting, arrogance, bashing, irresponsible press.

NST: Sunday Times has been spearheading a scathing attack on Malaysia, allegations unkind and disgusting, malicious allegations, the British press has been short on truth and long on unmitigated lies, British broadsheet...have become as sensational as their trashy tabloid sisters, the Rottweiller-savagery being inflicted on Malaysia and Britain.

(see Table 5.14 on the following page for more examples of evaluative expressions)

The words used by the individual newspaper vividly show the different stance taken. The Times usage of words like 'murky', 'dubious', 'corruption and bribes' show how it views the Pergau deal and the Malaysian government. The target of the criticism is the project itself and the British and Malaysian governments. On the other hand, NST and Utusan found no fault with the Pergau deal, but instead focused their criticisms on the Times for its "malicious" and "tendentious" reporting. They legitimised the banning of trade with Britain by saying that the ban is "sensible" and Malaysia "has a right to protect its interests".

The tone of the newspapers is further apparent when Times and Utusan reported on the lifting of the trade ban. The Times showed Malaysia's arrogance by saying it "demands" an apology from the Times for its critical reporting, and the Malaysian government "rebuffs" peace moves made by Britain. In retaliation, Utusan accused the Times of being arrogant when Neil "refused" to apologise to the Malaysian prime minister. Both the Times and the Malaysian newspapers said the other party was more hurt by the trade ban: the Malaysians said the British "heaved a sigh of relief", Major "welcomed" the lift which is a "lesson" to Britain; the Times instead said Malaysia will "soften" its position on the ban once it knows that the ban had "backfired". The Malaysian newspapers and the Times continuously tried to be one up over the other and tried to put the other party down.

Bias is also apparent in the reports in the Times; the injection of the writer's thoughts and opinions in his / her writing may be regarded as implying an attitude or judgement on the part of the writer or newspaper. The following phrases (in bold) are seen as manifestations of the writer's bias in the Pergau dam coverage:

* "...Mr. Lim, a lawyer who has spent years in detention for his earlier trenchant criticism of Malaysian government policies." (emphasis added)

* Asked whether he perceived a racist element in some coverage of the Pergau dam affair, Dr. Mahathir, who seems to be relishing his row with the British press, said that he did. (emphasis added)
Table 14: Evaluative Expressions in NST and Utusan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>swirl of speculative allegations..</td>
<td>arrogant in throwing accusations at leaders of Third World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scurrilous attack on Malaysia by the British press..</td>
<td>the media in the UK..naive about us..they look at us with prejudice and jealousy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the press will have a field day concocting all kinds of concocted rubbish</td>
<td>the master and mistress mentality is still in them..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the British media..made the wild and baseless allegations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil..believed in hard-boiled journalism..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it seemed like a good idea to bash the colonies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost no foreign correspondents are actually based in Malaysia. The country is reported by remote-sensing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ignorance and paternalism that exists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the British continues to adopt a condescending attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These British must be utterly moronic to think that we will remain indifferent to the whole issue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil's pugnacious &quot;slash and burn journalism&quot;..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil is a &quot;giant&quot; at distorting information and a &quot;pygmy&quot; in telling the truth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the reporting has been highly vindictive and totally uncalled-for..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diabolical freedom..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rottweiller-like savagery being inflicted on Britain and Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysians..are not used to having their leaders rubbished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sickening behaviour of the British press..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kua Kia Soong, the opposition spokesman on energy, who spent more than a year in detention after offending the government, said: "There are vital questions of accountability that must be answered..." (emphasis added)

Like Pergau, the Sarawak dam contract was awarded without...Ting won it after wooing Sarawak's eccentric chief minister, who travels in vintage Rolls-Royces and has the late Liberace's all-white piano in his mansion. (emphasis added)

These phrases are analysed as bias because not only do they not have a bearing with what was being discussed, but in the cases of the opposition spokesmen, the writers did not attempt to explain the nature of their "offending the government". Instead, the writers left it to the readers to make their own interpretations, and in all likelihood, after reading such phrases, one cannot help but think negatively of the Malaysian government for detaining people just on the basis of their being critical.

Another example of bias is through the slanting of the facts in a story: in a short write-up (June 1994), a journalist wrote about Dr. Mahathir reprimanding politicians in his ruling party UMNO (the United Malays National Organisation) for indulging in money politics and buying votes during the UMNO party elections. Dr. Mahathir's admission that some members of his party are corrupt is immediately linked to the Pergau controversy where the Sunday Times alleged (March 1994) that "members of Dr. Mahathir's ruling coalition had made huge profits from a multi-million pounds privatisation of the electricity firm that owns the controversial Pergau dam, built with the help of pounds 234 million of British aid". The association of the two things which are not inter-related - the admission and the allegation - is seen as a strategy by the Times to discredit the Malaysian government.

These opinions do not bode well for the objectivity (previously defined as unbiased reporting by balancing diverse points of view, by presenting all sides fairly, and by maintaining a clear distinction between news reporting and editorial opinion [Nelkin, 1995]) of the story as they have no bearing to the story and are seen as evaluative or interpretative comments that may lead to a particular judgement. This again shows the difference in the writing style in the Malaysian newspapers and the Times where phrases like the above would as a general practice, not be allowed in the writings in NST and Utusan. The inclusion of the writer's and the news organisation's biases in these phrases shows how the news is framed so that those selected elements would become salient and would subsequently influence judgements or inference-making (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, Kahneman and Tversky, 1984).
E.6 How Individuals Were Covered in the Pergau Reportage

The news in the three newspapers is generally neutral (this is seen in the 'other' option which means the coverage is neither favourable nor unfavourable) in their portrayal of individuals in the news (see Table 5.15 below). Nevertheless, even though there is more neutral coverage than there is unfavourable coverage, the latter should not be taken lightly as those concerned about ethical reporting fear that the stories that are unfavourable are critical and could leave a negative impression of the individuals portrayed. In instances where the individuals were covered unfavourably, the tone of the news was analysed as "scathing" and the implication damaging to the reputation. An example of this is the portrayal of Dr. Mahathir in the Times: power mad, petulant, short-sighted, peculiarly sensitive, furious, prickly reaction, contempt for judiciary, vigorously attacked members of the opposition, savage the constitution, mad mullah, always sensitive to criticism, General Amin of South-East Asia, Hitler, and mercurial prime minister. The British government officials too did not escape the lashing from the Times: the then British trade minister, Needham, was called an "insignificant, unknown politician who had been delegated to please the Malaysians" and he wore "knee pads" "kowtowing and grovelling" to the Malaysians. The Times had 24.5 per cent of this negative coverage of the individuals in the news.

Apart from criticising Dr. Mahathir and other ministers, the Malaysians were also portrayed negatively as seen in these excerpts: '.."amok"..the sheer passion and murderous frenzy of which Malays are suddenly capable when provoked', and '..struggling with the disparate nature of multi-ethnic Malaysia', 'the Malays..rather than being content to pick mangoes and papayas from the trees..' (Times, 6 Feb. 1994). In response, NST with 18.2 per cent and Utusan 22.8 per cent of unfavourable coverage answered the personal attacks on Dr. Mahathir by focusing their criticism on Neil. The NST called Neil 'a giant at

Table 5.15: How Individuals were Covered in NST, Utusan and Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourably</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>7 4.4</td>
<td>7 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavourably</td>
<td>22 18.2</td>
<td>18 22.8</td>
<td>39 24.5</td>
<td>79 22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>99 81.8</td>
<td>61 77.2</td>
<td>113 71.1</td>
<td>273 76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>121 100.0</td>
<td>79 100.0</td>
<td>159 100.0</td>
<td>359 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
distorting information and a pygmy in telling the truth'. His association with Pamela Bordes, a social escort who shot to prominence in England in the 1980s by a "series of deft manipulation and old-fashioned seduction", was also delved into. However, this was the only instance when the Malaysian press dug into Neil's private sphere ("Bordes moved on from Neil to other pursuits, but not before she succumbed to a fit of pique and cut off the crotch from a few pairs of trousers in Neil's wardrobe"). The rest of the criticisms of Neil in NST are limited to his "fixation" over the Pergau episode, his belittling and discrediting of the Malaysian leaders and his idea of the freedom of the press in Britain.

Utusan, too, apart from calling Neil arrogant, focused its comments on criticism of the British press freedom. The freedom of the British press to write as it pleases as practised by Neil is the bone of contention of NST and Utusan. Hence, their criticism is not so much of individuals or groups, but instead of the concept of press freedom in Britain. The words 'irresponsible', "arrogant", "fabricating lies" and "malicious reporting" were frequently used by NST and Utusan to show their displeasure of the British press in general and the Times and Neil, in particular. Utusan used the word 'stupid' once to refer to the British who still considered Malaysia a backward country.

Thus, through linguistic choices in the text that carry ideological meaning, the newspapers relay their discourse. This discourse is a systematically organised set of statements which give expressions to the meanings and values of an organisation (Fowler, 1991). In this case, regular reference to Dr. Mahathir as "sensitive" and the dam as "murky", has a cognitive role in that these words would provide an organised mental representation for the readers' experience (Fowler, 1991). Such framing of the news (as also seen in the headlines, news sources, tone of news and portrayal of individuals) shows the Times's strategy in highlighting its agenda by constructing and determining the news discourse. On the other hand, this framing also demonstrates what Hall (1982) calls the "limited ideological matrix" (p72) and the Glasgow Media Group calls the "dominant social ideologies" (1980:402) whereby journalists highlight particular accounts based on a set of rules and concepts for making sense of the world which is systematically limited by its social and historical context. In fact, these scholars (also Hackett, 1985) argue that such framing is not necessarily a conscious process on the part of the journalist, but more the result of the "unconscious absorption of assumptions about the social world in which news must be embedded in order to be intelligible to its intended audience" (Hackett, 1985:263).

It is not the intention of this thesis to analyse who is right or wrong in the Pergau controversy as to do so would be succumbing to the phenomenon of ethnocentrism where there is no conscious awareness to understand how different cultures dictate meanings and interpretations (Zaharna, 1995, Hall, 1982). The primary objective of the comparative
analysis is to analyse the style of reporting. The anger of the Malaysian press is directed at Neil and the Times for singling out Dr. Mahathir for their attacks which included likening him to Idi Amin and Hitler. Though the 'attack' style of journalistic writing makes the story interesting and adds life and colour to the reporting, at the end of the day when the episode has become water under the bridge, one has to wonder if this style is really necessary from the ethical viewpoint. A reporter and a news organisation has to be more responsible in their reporting rather than putting down in print what they want to write, all in the name of journalistic freedom.

Here again, in the difference in the writing culture between the Malaysian newspapers and the Times, could be seen the different approach to normative ethics. The practice and interpretation of ethics, very much subjective and situational, depends largely on the norms and practices of a given society. This has been amply illustrated in the Pergau coverage in NST, Utusan and the Times : what is acceptable in the Times (and the British culture, in general) would be seen as going against the ethical norms in the culture of NST and Utusan. Because of the fundamental differences in the two cultures, the study of ethics becomes complex. This difficulty, however, can be made less complex if ethics is viewed from the cultural context where meaning and context is seen as ‘inextricably bound up with each other’ (Hall, 1982 : 18). Thus, to understand the ‘meaning’, one must first understand the norms and practices of the culture.

NST and Utusan strongly objected to the Times's style of reporting and direct affront because this style of reporting goes very much against the reporting culture in Malaysia. Direct and open criticism in the press of anybody, let alone of the national leaders, is uncommon. Though leaders do get criticised in the media, the style of criticism would not be as direct as that practised by the Times. It merits mention here that the culture of the society is such that when a person is openly and unfairly criticised (especially a renowned and revered leader, and particularly by a foreign agent), national pride and integrity dictates that the society rally support to protect the person. Thus, when the Times alleged that Dr. Mahathir and his government were corrupt, and when his image was smeared due to the likening to Hitler and Idi Amin, this raised the hackles of the press.

Whatever its motives, the Times was relentless in its criticisms of both the Malaysian and British governments. How far the Malaysian theory was right, that the Times' sole aim was to discredit John Major by using Malaysia as a scapegoat, and that the Times was hitting out at Dr. Mahathir for being critical of the Star channel (which belongs to Rupert Murdoch) only Neil, Murdoch and the Times could verify. Thus, the Times criticised Dr. Mahathir, his government and those close to him as authoritarian and corrupt. The British ministers and other interested groups who were in support of Malaysia were also put down
This comparative analysis of the Malaysian newspapers and the *Times* is important as it highlighted the difference in the writing style and the role played by the Malaysian newspapers and the *Times*. Where the *Times* is highly critical not just of its own leaders, but also the Malaysian leaders, the Malaysian press is the anti-thesis of the *Times*. This different approach practised by the two sets of newspapers is attributed to the fact that they function in different socio-political and cultural environments. While the *Times* obviously practices and relishes the freedom of open expression, that freedom is apparently not the norm of *Utusan* and *NST*. The British press does not have the same function as do the Malaysian newspapers, especially where press-government relations are concerned. While the latter work with the government than against it and takes into consideration the sensitivities of many parties in the environment, the British press plays the adversarial role.

If the view that the press is a reflection of the society (Gans, 1979, Gitlin, 1980) is to be accepted, then in the case of Malaysia, the press does mirror the norm of the society where openness is not yet a virtue nor a practice. Thus, the society is still sensitive to open criticism, not because it does not believe at all in open criticism, but rather the culture dictates that criticism not be meted out in a direct and confrontational manner.

A case in point is the Rahim scandal. Rahim was not only the chief minister of Malacca (a state in southern Malaysia), but also the head of the UMNO youth wing (UMNO being the component party of the ruling National Front government). Because of the alleged scandal, Rahim quit all his government and party positions and was subsequently told by the head of the Malacca UMNO Youth that he would not be considered as a candidate for the country's general election (which was held in April 1995). The acting UMNO Youth leader, Nazri Aziz, supported the decision by the Malacca UMNO Youth to reject Rahim's leadership and simultaneously criticised Dr. Mahathir for defending Rahim (Dr. Mahathir had earlier said that Rahim should be treated fairly and not condemned before proven guilty). Nazri's criticism of Dr. Mahathir immediately received a backlashing from other senior UMNO leaders who said his comments were "rude, uncalled for and disrespectful" (*NST*, Oct. 10, 1994). To cut a long story short, after more criticisms, Nazri apologised to Dr. Mahathir, saying that he had acted out of hand. Dr. Mahathir told the press the apology had been accepted and not to openly discuss the matter any more.

This incident has been narrated to show not that Dr. Mahathir and other leaders cannot be criticised, but instead, the society prefers that in a "family affair" (UMNO), such criticism should be channelled through the proper forum (UMNO meetings) and not through the media. The incident pointed out the culture of the society that is closed-knit and that
frowns upon open criticisms.

What became apparent from the analysis of the Pergau dam conflict is that both parties view things from tangential viewpoints. Dr. Mahathir is not used to bluntness and outrightness in the media and likewise NST and Utusan do not have the reputation as newspapers that 'shoot from the mouth'. On the other hand, the Times and Andrew Neil are products of their culture - they call a spade a spade. Thus, when confronted with what they perceived as blatancy, the Malaysian media and the government cried foul. It is evident here that language is constitutive of a) social identities, b) social relations, and c) systems of knowledge and beliefs. The text contributes in one small way or another to shaping these aspects of society and culture (Fowler, 1995).

The Anglo-Malaysian conflict was not just an arms-for-aid controversy, but represent more of a cultural clash between the Malaysian and British media. If anything, this should be seen as a fitting example of two different cultures with differing norms and values that just do not speak the same language. This is a classic example of what Dr. Mahathir always talks about - i.e. the recognition of the Asian values especially in matters of international relations where people of different cultures attempt to speak a common language. In the Asian/Malaysian culture, outright criticism of one another, let alone the leaders, is not 'socially correct behaviour'. Leaders can be criticised and while the media are now increasingly being used for this end, the manner in which this criticism is meted out, still remains Asian/Malaysian. Nowhere else, than Malaysia, is the idiom "beating about the bush" more applicable and relevant. Hence, bluntness and out-rightness is not a virtue to show assertiveness that can produce results. Rather, subtlety is the preferred way.

What had angered the Malaysian press was that the "scurrilous and malicious" reporting was eventually found to be baseless and unfounded, and yet Neil, who had started the war of words, had refused to apologise and used the excuse that he had no reason to apologise for something he did not say. Though it was true that he did not openly accuse Dr. Mahathir of asking for or taking any contract bribes, the Times reportage blatantly alleged that he was offered the bribe. A Malaysian reporter aptly surmised the situation when he said, "The damage to a national leader's reputation or integrity need not necessarily come from hard facts or evidence acceptable in court proceedings. It could stem merely from a string of unsubstantiated allegations, which would raise in a reader's mind a variety of inferences, doubts and possibilities." This was perceived by Malaysia to have happened, and to have the editor responsible for the whole episode not taking the responsibility to apologise for the spate of negative reporting did not bode well for the ethical integrity of the Times and Neil.
SUMMARY

NST and Utusan, being pro-establishment newspapers, have always been known as safe and mild newspapers that would generally cooperate with the government to help towards building the society and the nation. Thus, against this backdrop, several assumptions could and have been drawn up about these Malaysian newspapers, i.e., the new stories would almost always use official sources who can be easily attributed, and the viewpoints put forth would support and legitimise the stance of the government. The overall tone of the news is neutral rather than skewed towards criticising any individual or group.

Being newspapers that function on the developmental journalism premise, NST and Utusan used a lot of official sources who can be easily attributed. Automatically, the problem and dilemma of unattributable stories can be overcome. This is the striking feature of news production in Malaysia, i.e. the overwhelming reliance of journalists on "tightly delimited set of official and legitimised sources which are systematically drawn upon, through a network of contacts and procedures" (Fowler, 1995 : 49). Organisations which are not perceived as legitimate (e.g. opposition groups) are excluded or more rarely referred to.

However, while the assumption that the overall tone of news in NST and Utusan is neutral, this attitude may change according to the needs of the situation. This is seen in both the newspapers' approach to the Pergau dam issue, an issue involving a foreign country. Then, words bearing more meaning and impact were used to drive a point home and simultaneously show the stance of the newspapers. The tone of a story was measured by analysing the diction and the expressions used and the slant to the story. In the Pergau dam controversy, the use of emotive words showed the extent of the anger, exasperation and disgust in which both parties (the British and Malaysian press) hold each other. In fact, the ethical principle of reporting objectively and leaving one's biases and prejudices aside, became the first casualty. This could be attributed to the fact that both the Malaysian and the British newspapers have their own agenda to fulfil. Where the Times was more critical in its style of writing as only a newspaper with the tradition of having freedom of expression can do, the Malaysian newspapers were more guarded in their criticisms which is typical of newspapers that function in an environment with numerous constraints.

Another phenomenon that emerged from the analysis is that both NST and Utusan have their own agenda and policy to highlight. Because of the Malay and religious factors (Malay being the majority group and Islam being the religion of this group), Utusan which has traditionally been the Malay-based newspaper, has always highlighted more Malay issues. As a result, the Arqam coverage in Utusan seemed more critical and emotive.
compared to NST which, due to its more elite disposition, highlighted the Pergau issue.
In the Arqam and Pergau analysis, the Malaysian newspapers (and also the Times for the
Pergau analysis) used the news frame device to highlight certain aspects of the issues so
that the newspapers’ stance and agenda could be set.

The categories were drawn up to gauge how news was reported by the journalists and
other news workers with the specific aim of analysing their ethical conduct in the
production of news. As has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, these
categories are based on several principles of ethics, for instance, codes of ethics equate
ethical reporting to objective reporting where truth-telling should be adhered to and
multiple viewpoints (preferably conflicting viewpoints) are included in the story.
Similarly, the use of emotive words that do not hide the stance of the newspapers is seen as
unethical as the printed words may leave a negative impact on the person or persons they
are intended for, what more if the words are unwarranted. Though this journalistic practice
is seen as just another news writing style to capture the reader's attention, the concern for
ethics has deemed this style questionable due to its implication. It is again reiterated here
that ethics is viewed from two premises: one, from the ethical principles mentioned in
various codes of ethics, and two, from the norms and values of the Malaysian culture.

Based on the ethical principles derived from more popular codes of ethics, the coverage of
the three case studies in NST and Utusan is analysed as generally ethical. The study of the
ethical conduct of news workers may be hampered if such a study is not founded on ethical
principles commonly used as guidelines in codes of ethics. This is because ethics, being
subjective, does not have a universally accepted premise/ framework on which analysis
could be pegged. In lieu of this, commonly and regularly quoted ethical principles are used
as a basis for this analysis.

Though the analysis shows that the journalistic practices of the news workers of NST and
Utusan are generally ethical, the few instances of unethical reporting should not be
overlooked and dismissed. These instances include the slanting of the news to show bias,
encroaching into the privacy of Rahim and the Arqam members to the point that these
individuals had to request to be left alone. But herein also is seen the ethics of the news
workers: when the individuals concerned asked for privacy, the reporters heeded that
request. One must also appreciate the dilemma the news workers face where on one hand,
they have their personal convictions, and on the other, they have the organisational
obligations. One inevitable organisational obligation is to support the agenda of the
organisation and to shape the story to highlight that agenda.

Again, this is an ethical concern that only stresses the fact that ethic is not just the result of
personal choices but more importantly, the influence of other compelling internal and external forces. The interviews with the reporters (following chapter) showed that they sometimes feel uncomfortable about writing a story assigned to them, but because of their obligations to the company, personal convictions would have to be put aside. This is the dilemma news workers find themselves in when personal convictions come into conflict with organisational goals. More often than not, when faced with that predicament, ethical considerations become the casualty.

Maybe what several of the reporters said about the press-government relationship being like kite-flying, would throw light on how the reporters found a compromise on this dilemma. Just like flying a kite where the player will gradually let go of the string and then pull back to control the kite, a reporter will similarly approach a story by trying his luck at writing a critical piece, and should the government or the authorities criticise their style of writing, the reporter will be on guard and control his style.
CHAPTER SIX

ORGANISATIONAL AND JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES THAT INFLUENCE ETHICAL CONDUCT IN NST AND UTUSAN

This chapter analyses the data gathered from: a) participation observation and b) interviews.

A. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

The method has been employed as it provides the researcher direct and observational access to the insiders' (in this case, the newspaper's) 'world of meaning' (Jorgensen, 1989). While content analysis yields information like news production techniques, participation observation gives an insight into matters relating to policies of the newspaper organisation, attitudes of newspaper personnel, and more significantly, the structure and relationship of the organisation with the wider context that may influence media content.

The initial point to participant observation is getting access to the setting or intended organisation. Since the newspapers chosen for the content analysis were the New Straits Times and Utusan Malaysia, the observation was also carried out at these newspapers. For this purpose, I wrote to the Group Editors of NST and Utusan requesting for access several months before the actual observation was to take place. Though the approval was not difficult to obtain, it did come with a cautionary statement for me to follow the newspaper organisation's security and other in-house rules.

A.1 NEW STRAITS TIMES

NST in Brief

The New Straits Times Press Group, the oldest and largest newspaper company in Malaysia, had its beginning in 1845. Then called the Straits Times, it was initially published by a British editor and proprietor as a business and intelligence newspaper in Singapore. A Straits Times office was set up in Malaysia in 1928, but not until 1956 was the first Malaysian edition of the Straits Times printed. A reconstruction of the company in 1959 led to the formation of the Straits Times (Malaya) and Straits Times (Singapore). Over the years, more newspapers were launched by the company, and it continued to serve Malaysia and Singapore into the early Seventies even though Singapore had withdrawn from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965. However, Singapore's withdrawal created the
need for the company's newspapers to identify more closely with the two newly emerging nations (Malaysia and Singapore) and this eventually forced shareholders to accept the fact that a separation was unavoidable. The separation finally took place in 1972 when all operational links with Singapore were severed. The Malaysian company is now called the New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Limited.

The New Straits Times Group today publishes eight newspapers in the Malay, English and Chinese languages. The flagship of the Group is the English-language New Straits Times and its Sunday edition, the New Sunday Times. The Group also publishes a mid-morning tabloid, the Malay Mail, and the country's only business daily, Business Times and other periodicals and specialised publications. The Group currently employs over 2000 people, including over 400 journalists. From a publishing base, the Group has also diversified into other business interests like power generations, electronic and computer-based activities, broadcasting, banking and insurance.

From its largely foreign ownership when it began in the 1840s, the company has been wholly-owned by Malaysians since the 1970s when it separated from the Singapore company. Over the years, the ownership of the NSTP Group has changed several times from Fleet Group Limited, Renong Limited to Realmild Limited. The latter which is owned by four senior executives of the NSTP Group created corporate history in 1993 when it bought over the control of the NSTP Group (which also included Malaysia's private television station, TV3), the largest ever management buy-out in Malaysia. One of the four executives behind Realmild is Datuk A. Kadir Jasin, the current Group Editor of NST. Together with the other executives, they own slightly more than 48 per cent shares of the NSTP Group; the remaining shares are in the hands of institutions and individuals.

The management buy-out not only created history but also caused speculations in the business circle as to how a company with a paid-up capital of just over RM100,000 (equivalent to £25,000) and with hardly any asset base, could manage an RM800 million (about £200 million) buy-out (Gomez, 1993). A few days later, Malaysian Resources Corporation (MRC), a company with strong political connections, announced it would undertake Realmild's RM800 million rights and obligations. One persistent speculation to explain this buy-out is the involvement of a certain high-ranking minister who, because of political aspirations, was behind this corporate reshuffling exercise involving public-listed and media-related companies. The motive behind this political-business linkage appears to be this minister's strategy for patronage and ascendancy up the country's political ladder (Gomez, 1993). It also suggests that certain political parties have direct or indirect editorial control over influential media organisations (like the NSTP Group which controls not only the leading English, Malay and Chinese dailies, but also a private television station).
Though the company has come under the tutelage of several corporate bodies, the editorial policy has remained unchanged since its inception - the policy is based on the premise that as a leading media company capable of influencing public opinion, it has to be responsible in using its power and freedom. Positive elements in the multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural community are given prominence over sensationalism (NST Backgrounder, 1995). One positive element (which has also become an unwritten policy) that Datuk Kadir has tried to enforce in NST is avoiding ethnic stereotyping. Tan (an NST reporter, in an interview with the Group Editor in May, 1995) said that Datuk Kadir is "relentlessly vigilant about this aspect of Malaysian society in his role as the Group Editor of NST". This vigilance is perhaps best illustrated in an incident that Datuk Kadir related:

A photograph of a jaywalker being booked by a policeman reached my desk. It was a good photograph with story potential, except for one thing - the policeman was Malay and the person being booked was Chinese. We debated for some time and decided that we would not use the photograph. It would only perpetuate stereotypes.¹

Operating in an environment where the media have a symbiotic relationship with the government, NST has been said to be the voice of the ruling elite (Lent, 1984, 1987). Lent, in his scholarship on the Malaysian mass media, makes no bones about criticising NST as being "tied by ownership and management to UMNO through a complicated network of nominee companies and individuals affiliated with UMNO" (Lent, 1984: 28). The Deputy Prime Minister himself, Datuk Anwar Ibrahim admitted these close links when he said,

UMNO should have no business in dealing with business. It should remain a political party...but it is accepted that the relationship between political leaders and business leaders are often close. (Gomez, 1993: 2)

Datuk Kadir, as the present Group Editor and major shareholder of NST, does not deny nor apologise for being close to the country's political leadership. Acknowledging the fact

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¹ Such a photograph, innocent though it may seem, may be misconstrued by the two races. A couple of interpretations could be made: if a Malay were to see it, the Malay would think the action of the Malay policeman was justified as, being a law enforcement officer, he has the right to book somebody who has violated the law. However, the stereotype attached to the scenario is that the Chinese is not law-abiding and has lived up to the 'Chinese secret society' stereotype (i.e. they are violent and have no respect for the law). If a Chinese were to see the photograph, he/she may think that the Malay is again out to get the Chinese, even over a minor offence as jaywalking.
that NST has been labelled as a "government paper or UMNO paper" (Tan, 1995), Datuk Kadir justifies his close association with the leadership:

There is nothing wrong about it. It does not make me uncomfortable...as long as it can be put to the use of the good of the majority. Had I not had that kind of relationship, do you think I can write as I do? (Tan, 1995)

It is a popular opinion among the news workers (at least within NST, if not elsewhere), that Datuk Kadir is one of the 'boldest' editors around (Tan, 1995). This boldness can be seen in his weekly column "Other Thots" where he regularly criticises members of the government and other bureaucracies for any injustice (for example, corruption or abuse of power by police personnel). NST has evolved over the years, despite its pro-establishment standpoints, as a newspaper that highlights the plight of the people - hence reports on poverty, droughts and floods, falling commodity prices, the plight of the farmers, corruption, abuse of power, etc. As Datuk Kadir said, the paper should not only be judged by its political reporting, but more importantly, by what it does on behalf of the people.

A.1.1 Participant Observation: 16 May 1995 - 4 June 1995

The three-week observation at NST started with introductions to the Group Editor and several key personnel including the Chief and Deputy News Editor who were to be the contact persons during my attachment there. It was observed that at any one time, either one of the chief or the deputy news editor would be constantly available at the editor's desk/computer terminals, to not only check incoming stories but also be present to handle queries from reporters. In the event that both editors had to be away, one of the assistant news editors or a senior reporter (e.g. Specialist Writer) would be assigned to 'man' the editor's desk.

The daily tempo of the news workers begin after 9 in the morning when the reporters started trickling in. They normally start off the morning with perusing the news in NST and other main rival newspapers, especially to analyse stories they themselves had written. Then preparations would be made for the assignments to be covered, e.g. preparing a list of questions to ask or getting tips from the news editors as to which angle to approach an issue from. If an issue has already been covered and a follow-up is to be done, the reporter concerned would usually go to the library to check the facts of the story. It is also common for them to discuss these issues and events with their colleagues to get their ideas. The newsroom would always be empty between 11 am and 4 pm as this is the peak period for news workers to gather news. Reporters seldom leave before 7 pm, or certainly not before
It is important for the observer to decide and define at the outset the role he/she will play to be able to operate within the field context. Several roles could be adopted by the researchers while doing participant observation: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant or complete observer (McCall and Simmons, 1969). I would classify my role during the three weeks as a complete observer since most of the time, I observed the news production process. Though I interacted frequently with the reporters about news gathering and news writing techniques and other social interaction, I did not participate in the way they wrote their stories. I made a point to keep out of the editors’ and reporters’ way during peak times when I knew they would be very busy. The peak time for the editors is toward the later part of the afternoon when the stories started pouring in and just before the editorial meeting at 6 pm. The reporters, too, are normally busy before the deadline at 6 pm, especially if their assignments are toward the later part of the afternoon.

The first days of the observational period were awkward as I felt that I was ‘on display’. Many reporters would just eye the ‘outsider’ from afar, not making any attempt to ask me the reason for my presence. While I introduced myself to as many reporters as I could, I also wanted to remain ‘unobtrusive’ and not call attention to myself (Jorgensen, 1989). Being able to keep a distance in the relationship with the newsroom personnel is important to maintain the possibility of unbiased collection of data. Because several reporters had thought that I was the latest addition to the editorial staff, I had to clarify the purpose of my presence. The topic of my research usually evoked mixed reactions from the reporters: while many thought it was interesting and wished me luck, one or two were cynical and said that there are "better things to think about than ethics".

While I initially ignored such reactions, I kept in mind the persons who hold this sentiment and over the next few days, closely observed them. At the end of my personal observation, I surmised that one of the two reporters was just plain arrogant as he totally ignored me the whole three weeks I was there, even though I was sitting right opposite him most of the time. On the other hand, the other reporter whom I managed to communicate with after the initial rebuff, believes that reporters do not "hold the key to ethics". To him, reporters merely "report stories that have been assigned to them, and in the manner that have been given to them by the news sources". As far as he is concerned, getting the story and meeting the deadline are the most important routines in his daily rhythm; he said he does not "think about ethics".

The attitude of these two reporters alerted and directed me toward observing the morale of
the news workers. In general, I observed that the news workers function in a pleasant ambience and good working conditions. The morale of news workers is determined by the amount of control they have over their work and the ways in which the superiors treat their work. News workers can easily get discouraged when their superiors are unwilling to listen to them or when there is undue interference with their autonomy (Gans, 1980). Though the news workers in NST know that they have limited autonomy, nevertheless, they seem happy as they know the superiors will give them the leeway as long as they work within the limitations of their profession (these limitations are discussed in the interviews).

**Story Selection and Gate-keeping in NST**

On an average day, a media organisation is bombarded with endless issues and events that clamour for media attention and which the media organisation has to routinise to make them manageable. Several news workers in NST explained that the issues and events (scheduled and non-scheduled) are usually routinised based on three approaches: the journalist-centred approach where the importance of the issues and events would be determined by the professional news judgement of the editors and reporters, the issue-centred approach where the import of an issue or event is too significant to be ignored, and the media organisation-centred approach where media requirements like time, space and policy determine story selection (Gans, 1980). On an average day, most stories are scheduled events where the news organisations have been notified by sources in advance through press releases and phone calls of the day's activities. Many stories too are follow-ups from the previous days. Sigal (1973) called these stories as originating from "routine channels" or regular institutional sources who inform media organisations of future events and activities (see discussion on sources in Chapter Two).

Once an issue or an event has been selected, a reporter would be assigned to it; and depending on the nature and significance of the issue/event, the appropriate reporter would be assigned. A news editor explained that he would normally assign a more senior reporter to cover a more significant issue (for instance, when the deputy prime minister called for a press conference to announce the trade ban on Britain in the Pergau dam conflict, or when the prime minister announced the new cabinet line-up after the 1995 general election). Gans calls this the "seniority principle" (1980:107) where senior reporters are usually assigned the stories that are most likely to survive, while younger reporters are assigned those most likely to be spaced out. Again, depending on the import of the issue/event, a reporter has limited autonomy to decide on the angle of a story. It was observed that with stories of less significance, the reporters have more autonomy to decide on the angle. Otherwise, a news editor would either tell the reporter what to look for or suggest
questions to be asked, or the reporter is required to brief the news editor after the assignment so that an angle could be decided on.

Asked if **NST** follows any set policy on story selection, a news editor explained that there is no policy manual to guide story selection and production as this is seen as inhibiting a journalist's flexibility and ability. Nevertheless, it is an understood and accepted policy that "sensitive" stories of a racial nature would have to be treated with caution. Stories of a political nature too (for example, when the media first got to know about Rahim's alleged illegal affair) have to be "cleared" by the "boss" (in obvious reference to the Group Editor).

Though the reporters have the initial autonomy to decide on the angle of a story, the news department has several gatekeeping processes through which the story passes before it goes into print. Though the news does not necessarily have to pass through each gatekeeper on a daily basis, the gatekeepers at the upper level of the organisational hierarchy may edit the news depending on its import. The hierarchical structure in the news department is as follows:

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Group Editor
    |    Assistant Group Editor
    |    Associate Editor
    |    Chief News Editor
    |    Deputy News Editor
    |    Assistant News Editor
    |    Reporters
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On a normal day, the news is edited by either the Chief News Editor or Deputy news editor who then discusses the important news in the 6 pm editorial meeting which is usually chaired by the Group Editor.

Story selection in **NST** is decided during the editorial meetings: there are two daily editorial meetings in **NST** to discuss administrative and editorial matters, one at 11am and the other at 6pm. I was granted permission and access to attend the editorial meetings in the evenings. Though initially the management hesitated about giving this permission, they
later relented after being assured that the information garnered during the editorial meetings will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will only be used for this research and other academic purposes. These meetings yielded invaluable insight into the decision-making process of news production in NST. This is where decisions are made as to which news is to be given prominence or down-played, and the rationale for those decisions. On an average day, the conventional news criteria (people of prominence, human interest, proximity, etc.) are the guidelines used to determine which story becomes the lead story, and so forth. News criteria have been discussed in Chapter Two. In the Malaysian context, news which originates from the two key figures in the country - the prime minister and deputy prime minister - would almost always be placed on the front page, if not as the lead story then as the second main story. This is especially true of stories of a political or economic nature. For instance, when the prime minister announced Rahim's resignation from all cabinet and party positions and when the deputy prime minister announced the trade embargo on Britain in the Pergau conflict, these were highlighted. The Knowns (Gans, 1980) are usually given prominence by the Malaysian newspapers.

The morning editorial meeting is normally chaired by either the Associate Editor or one of the senior news editors, and the evening meeting is usually chaired by the Group Editor. The meetings review the stories that had been published in that day's newspaper and comparisons would be made with stories that appeared in other newspapers. Stories are reviewed and comparisons with other newspapers are made as to the angles of the stories, layout of the front page and subsequent pages, the number of sources used and emphasis given to the information from the sources and so on. A news editor told me that these editorial conferences pay particular attention to stories which other newspapers have and theirs do not (the concern about being scooped). The types of stories or the menu for that day is also discussed in preparation for the 6pm meeting where discussions will be centred on which stories are to be given prominence on the front page and so forth.

Where the policy of the organisation relating to press-government relations is concerned, these editorial meetings threw light on a pre-conceived assumption. The general assumption made about NST is that it is a pro-establishment newspaper that supports the government. While it is generally true that NST does back the government in its (the government's) activities, this support is not automatic and NST does not follow the government blindly. At least twice during the editorial meetings attended, the Group Editor decided on a story angle contrary to the popular trend of thought. This could be taken to mean that NST has and exercises its autonomy to decide its stance on central social issues. Its position and stance does not always echo that of the establishment.

It was observed from these editorial meetings that the final say on the angle of the stories
and the significance of the stories rests with the Group Editor. The editors of the various
desks (for example, the crime desk, sports desk, women’s page and the economy desk)
would highlight the main issues for that day. The Group Editor was twice observed
asking the relevant editors to down-play their stories, simultaneously showing his stance
on these issues. One was a foreign issue involving America and Japan where the story was
to be given prominence on the front page (though not the lead story) with a bigger
typeface. The Group Editor did not agree with this and said that only national news should
be given prominence on the front page; foreign news should be in the international news
section. He also did not agree that a bigger typeface be used as he did not see the reason
for highlighting either America or Japan. On another occasion, the Group Editor told the
news editor to stop highlighting a new water-sport when there was an accident involving
two ski-jet drivers. He said it was not in the interest of the public for the media to continue
serving it with such news. These two incidents highlighted the fact that the final decision
is made by the top executive. The editors were observed not to argue with the decisions
made by the Group Editor.

In fact, an editor had earlier on (at the end of the first editorial meeting I attended) warned
me that I was going to be very bored in the editorial meetings as these meetings were more
a ‘one-way communication’, not because the Group Editor does not tolerate dissenting
voices, but more because the editors themselves seldom speak out. He told me not to
expect the kind of verbal exchanges that are common in the Western tradition, as in reality
(in NST, that is), the media workers are more receptive of and respect the directives and
instructions from the top. Editors were observed not to be critical of the stance of the
Group Editor. When asked about this, an editor I was in constant communication with
during the period of observation, said that he does not see the point in arguing as he agrees
with the Group Editor especially when he (the latter) rationalises his stance in the interest of
the public. A senior reporter who has been with the organisation for more than two
decades said that their (his colleagues and him) support for the Group Editor and the
policies of the organisation is the result of their long association with him which has made
them understand his views and stance. They generally support his stance, for example, on
backing the government:

So what is wrong with being the voice of the government, if you are
helping development, progress? For freedom of the press, does that mean
that you have to speak out against the government all the time? I don't think
so.

The hierarchical chart above shows the gate-keeping and decision-making structure in
NST. To reiterate, this structure shows that while every news worker has some degree of
autonomy at his or her level, the Group Editor has the final say to decide on what and how
the story is to be printed. However, though he has the power to select and veto the stories, the editors and several reporters said that he does not exercise this power on a day-to-day basis. Instead, they said that the present Group Editor is receptive and open to other people's opinions. A reporter said that what finally gets into print depends very much on the editors' and Group Editor's "openness" and "daringness":

Who decides on the angle of a story? I think it is we the reporters. We get to write, but of course at the end of the day, the editors may ask us to reangle the story. The news production in NST...there has been changes at the news desk. Those days when a certain news editor was running the show, don't bother about writing a 12-paragraph story about squatters being evicted or our right to use land, for example. This editor was a very safe person and he viewed these stories as controversial. But with a new news editor now, we are able to write critical stories because he is more open. At the micro-level, it is the attitude of the editors. I think NST in recent years has learned to be more open and not so uptight about things.

What was said by this reporter seems to be the general gate-keeping and decision-making process in NST. The reporters have the initial autonomy to decide on the angle of the story, and upon consultation with the editors, this decision may or may not be refuted. What is apparent from the observation is that reporters have more autonomy to decide on human interest or social issues. Major issues relating to politics will be decided by the editors or the Group Editor.

Another reporter, while agreeing that the Group Editor has the final say, said that reporters themselves have to be brave in putting forth what they believe in:

When I first came in, I wasn't as vocal as I am now. I was good, I did what they want. I did stories that were predictable, mainstream, conventional. You use operative words, for example, when writing a Ministry of National Development assignment, you use words like "a caring society", or when you write about the environment, superficial words like "save the environment", "plant a tree", are used. You go along with that line because you are not sure whether you should venture further. It is only with experience, confidence, that you push a little bit further. So far I have been able to write what I want and to speak out my mind. This is also made possible by a supportive editor who believes that there should be alternative views on certain issues. At the same time, NST is also becoming more open. But on a personal level, you have to try to push the limit. As long as you are not called up by the Group Editor and told that you can't write this or that stuff, or that your story will be killed, then you try pushing a little further every time.

Collecting data: Apart from learning newsroom routines through direct observation of the working structure of the reporters and editors, I also collected data through numerous informal and formal interviews with these newsroom personnel and through perusal of documents on the organisation. As per the discussion on the advantages of doing
participant observation in Chapter Four, through direct observation, I learned the laborious task that a reporter has to undergo regularly to verify a fact before committing it down into print. Contrary to the misconception that due to the pressure of the deadline, a reporter seldom takes the time to check the facts, I observed the reporters being meticulous in checking minute details like the accuracy in names and spellings. The telephone directory, the yellow pages and other directories are constantly referred to for accurate spelling of names and addresses. The reporters were also perpetually on the telephone trying to get verified information and attributable sources on an issue in discussion. It would sometimes take a reporter a whole morning, if not longer, to track down a source - only to have the source sometimes either being completely uncooperative or not wanting to be quoted. With a deadline looming and with other assignments to cover, such delays were observed as being very frustrating for the reporters. A reporter who faced a dilemma of having received information that could not be verified to a source, consulted the news editor and was told to continue looking for a source that could be attributed. Though NST occasionally uses information that cannot be attributed, this practice is not encouraged.

Formal and informal interviews: Useful insights were also acquired through informal chats and formal interviews with the reporters and editors. The chats over coffee/tea or a meal, enabled me to have a better understanding of the journalists: their views on numerous topics, especially on ethics and press-government relations. Spending three weeks amongst them, observing them work, breaking the ice and bridging the ever-present researcher-practitioner wedge, made it easier for the reporters to give me candid answers to my queries. Had the interviews been conducted without the period of observation, the answers obtained may not have been as meaningful and honest.

It has to be noted, however, that while many reporters whom I approached for the interviews were willing and cooperative, a handful either rejected me outright or plainly avoided me after having said yes to the interview. Though I do acknowledge that they could not spare the time due to the daily constraints and pressures, I also criticise such uncooperativeness, especially as I made myself available any time of the day for three weeks. For a professional whose job entails a lot of interviewing of sources, this uncooperativeness when the table is turned where he/she is the one to be interviewed, is disappointing.

Documents: My daily observation in NST also included doing research in the resource centre (library) to look for documents which would help in understanding the organisation better. Among the documents essential for this thesis are the policy of the organisation, the organisational chart of the news department, the historical background of NST and the organisational code of ethics. Unfortunately, most of the information needed was not
NST does not have a written and formal policy, nor does it have a formal code of ethics. The policies of the organisation which originate and generate from the management board are 'passed down' to the workers through newsroom socialisation. Through socialisation, news workers learn the unwritten policies, the do's and don'ts of news production from their editors, other senior news workers and their peers. Several documents on the historical background of NST were the only documents available in the library.

A.2 UTUSAN MALAYSIA

Utusan Malaysia in Brief

Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Limited began its corporate life in May 1939 in Singapore with its first newspaper - Utusan Melayu - in Arabic script. Within the next few years, a weekly newspaper and a magazine were started by the company. The real expansion, however, began in the late 1950s when the company moved its headquarters from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur in 1952. This growth also saw the company starting a new venture - the publication of its first Romanised weekly and daily newspapers. The Utusan Malaysia daily was first published in 1967. That same year the company was incorporated in Malaysia.

To understand Utusan Malaysia today, one has to delve into its history. Like other Malay-based newspapers of that generation, Utusan Melayu was the channel through which Malay nationalism was kindled and fostered. In the periods immediately before and following World War II, Utusan Melayu and other Malay-language newspapers, were the primary agent in building a Malay consciousness and identity (Syed Arabi, 1989). In fact, the inception of Utusan Melayu in 1939 was based on three pillars which Utusan Melayu (in Arabic script) and later, Utusan Malaysia (in the Malay language) uphold till today - to serve the nation, Islam and the Malays. Today, Utusan Malaysia (and to a lesser extent, Utusan Melayu), continues to be known as the champion of Malay issues as it highlights the plight of the rural community who are mainly farmers and fishermen. Utusan Melayu now is not as popular as Utusan Malaysia in terms of circulation because being in Arabic script, the readership is limited to the older generation (those in the 50's and above) who can still read Malay in Arabic script; the younger generation prefers Utusan Malaysia because of the script used.

Unlike NST which was started and initially owned by a foreigner, Utusan had humble beginnings: its shareholders were not the rich Malays at that time, but rather the poor
Malay fishermen, labourers and other equally average individuals. In fact, Utusan in its early years was plagued by financial insecurities. This disposition to serve the grassroot Malays has been Utusan's policy ever since. Utusan Melayu not only championed the rights of the Malays and spoke out against some attitudes of the Malays that hindered progress, it also agitated against the British on issues it thought detrimental to the Malays and Malaya at that time. When Malay leaders championed these causes, this saw the beginning of the symbiotic relationship between the Utusan newspapers and the Malay leaders. In fact, the development of the Malay political parties would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of the Malay press (Syed Arabi, 1989).

The Utusan company today publishes five newspapers and six magazines and employs 1336 people, of which 20 per cent are news workers (UM, 1994). Though the company is mainly into publication and distributing of newspapers and magazines, it also diversified into other business interests like insurance, security printing, manufacturing, advertising and film/audio and poster production.

The early structure of the ownership of Utusan has changed since the 1930s. Then the shareholders were from the proletariat group, today the ownership is in the hands of the ruling elite, UMNO. Because of it being the 'voice of the Malays', Utusan has naturally evolved from being non-partisan to any group or individual, to being aligned and owned by a political party that has the Malay interests at heart. This affiliation has led to Utusan being labelled as 'the government's newspaper' by media researchers (e.g. Lent, 1984). It has become common knowledge and a common practice for the Group Editor of Utusan to be a political-appointee. However, the policy and philosophy of the newspaper has remained steadfast since the early days. In the words of the Executive Chairman of the company, Datuk Khalid Abdullah:

The Utusan Melayu group will lead other newspapers to fight against all the ills and problems of the Malay community, the religion and the country. (UM, Dec. 1994)

Though owned by UMNO, the editorial management is generally free to function most of the time. Nevertheless, Utusan cannot deny the external and internal constraints that it faces from time to time. After all, media anywhere in this world, do not function in a social vacuum. The external constraints include demands and pressure from the owners and numerous laws passed by Parliament to guide publication (e.g. the Internal Security Act and the Official Secrets Act). External pressure from the political masters, though not a common occurrence, nevertheless does happen. Stalwarts of Utusan would testify to an incident of political interference of the freedom of the press in 1959. In that year, the board of directors resolved that the policy of Utusan should follow several guidelines: a) give full
support to the party in power as this would be more profitable from the business point of view, b) support the ruling party when the deed was done and criticise it constructively when a bad decision was made, and c) give more news to the ruling party wherever possible including important policy statements. Though this policy was then met with a lot of resistance, the news workers today are concerned that because Utusan is owned by UMNO and that the Group Editor is a political appointee, Utusan would have to resist intermittent efforts at editorial interference. In addition to these external constraints, there are also internal limitations to face. For example, being a business enterprise, there is always the pressure of making profit at the expense of professional journalism. Utusan reporter, Chamil Wariya (1988), tracing the development of the organisation since its inception in 1939, said that news workers have to strike a balance between feeding the public what it wants (which at times borders on the sensational) and offering it fares which help toward mental development. A criticism often heard about Utusan from the public is that the newspaper regularly features the private lives (about sex, scandals, etc.) of the 'rich and famous' (at the local and international levels) in its entertainment section. Chamil rationalises the fares in the entertainment section by saying that Utusan, apart from offering 'serious' news that could stimulate the mind (but which people may not want to read all the time), has to offer human interest stories to attract readers to initially buy the newspaper. The fact that Utusan today is noted for its informative coverage of domestic politics (Parker, 1982) may be a testimony of the fact that it has managed to strike a balance between what the public wants and the agenda the newspaper has to set.


Though the routines are almost the same as in NST, there were differences observed. To begin with, the atmosphere in Utusan was friendlier and the news personnel more cooperative. The observation started the same way as in NST with introductions to the key personnel in the organisation. Newsroom routines are similar in NST and Utusan, the morning would see reporters perusing the newspapers for their own stories and stories written in competitor newspapers. The reaction of the 'insiders' to my presence, too, was similar : while some thought I was a new staff, others who already knew me as an academician, thought my research topic either interesting or something to jest about. Reactions like 'what ethics?' were common.

Like NST, Utusan too does not have a formal written policy or a set of policies that is binding in every situation. Rather, Utusan "plays it by ear", and follows the flow of the current developments (according to a key personnel of the organisation). This is the biggest limitation I encountered during the participant observation : when asked what policies
Utusan (the situation was the same in NST) uses as guidelines in its journalistic practices, the answer would almost always be that there are no set policies. Further enquiries into whether the absence of these policies has caused the reporters any difficulty or uncertainty in their daily routines, the news workers said that the process of newsroom socialisation has been the best teacher. The senior reporters said that their years of experience have helped them tremendously in their work, and they try whenever possible to help the more junior reporters. This was observed constantly during the three-week period where the senior editor and senior reporters would call the ‘younger’ (in terms of age and experience) reporters up to advise them (and vice versa, these reporters would consult the more senior ones for advice, for example, on news writing techniques or the angle to approach a story from).

Even though it has been mentioned earlier that Utusan "plays it by ear", the one constant policy that Utusan reasonably adheres to is to work and be in cooperation with the government for the benefit of the public and the country. Traditionally, this has been the stance Utusan adopts since the pre-independent days, and the management today thinks it unnecessary for Utusan to change this policy. Nevertheless, having said that Utusan generally supports the government, Utusan also criticises the government on the feasibility of its development projects. This is what the news worker meant by ‘playing it by ear’: i.e. though Utusan generally supports the government, it would not hesitate to criticise the ministers or officials concerned because of the dysfunctioning of development projects. These criticisms, however, are sometimes misconstrued by certain leaders who label Utusan as being a "traitor" to the government. The news worker went on to say that this is the difficulty that confronts Utusan at times: because Utusan is a government newspaper (i.e. by virtue of the fact that the major shareholder is UMNO), certain ministers assume that it has to give full support to UMNO in particular and to the government, in general.

The start of the observation at Utusan saw the reporters getting a bit agitated because a new policy was implemented in Parliament where reporters had been barred from waiting in the lobby area of Parliament to see their sources. They were instructed to remain in the press room where the sources would seek the reporters out, and not vice versa. Many reporters called this move 'undemocratic' of Parliament to restrict their journalistic activities. After numerous protests by the media, Parliament relented and rescinded the ban.

**Story Selection and Gate-Keeping Process in Utusan**

Though the daily routines in NST and Utusan are almost similar, Utusan practices two
organisational routines which makes it different from NST. One routine is that Utusan puts
a reporter in charge on a daily basis to be a 'monitor' - this reporter would be responsible
for office administration like going through all the correspondence for the day and
assigning reporters to cover particular events. The reporter was also observed as coming in
earlier than others where he / she would peruse the newspapers and suggest when and how
follow-up stories could be done. Reporters in NST and Utusan would usually refer to the
'log book' regularly to see what events they have been assigned to cover the next day.

Another difference is the editorial meetings held in Utusan. Unlike NST, Utusan does not
routinely hold formal editorial meetings in the mornings or evenings. The Editor-in-Chief
or the Deputy Editor-in-Chief calls the relevant news editor or chief reporter into his room
to discuss the news for the day, or at times either one of the two executives would come to
the news editor's desk and check or edit the stories on the terminal. The Deputy Editor-in-
Chief explained that editorial meetings are not a routine in Utusan because the management
does not want to take the editors away from the news desk especially during the peak hours
in the evenings. Every now and then (no particular structure) the Editor-in-Chief would
call all news editors and chief reporters for a discussion.

When editorial conferences are held, the morning meetings would be conducted by the
Deputy Group Editor and the evening meetings by the Group Editor. The morning
meetings will review the news in the newspapers on that day, for example, stories picked
by other newspapers that Utusan had missed, why a particular story was on the front page
in NST and on page 24 in Utusan, etc. The significance and the direction of follow-up
stories were also discussed. The evening sessions discuss the layout and contents on page
one and other main issues on other pages. These sessions are more "exclusive" as only a
small group (the key figures on the news desk) are involved in the decision-making. A
news editor said that:

A newspaper is basically run by only one person (the Group Editor). This
is very dictatorial, but we cannot afford to have too many voices. One
person makes all the decisions. Of course he will be advised...

Since I was not given the opportunity to sit in and observe the editorial discussions, the
Editor-in-Chief made up for this by calling me in to his office a few times during the three
weeks for "a chat". The informal chats were useful insights into the policy of the
organisation particularly pertaining to press-government relations. Again, the
misconception that Utusan is a 'voice of the government' was clarified where I was made
to understand that while Utusan generally supports the government, it would also not
hesitate to criticise it where censure is deemed necessary, for example, when the country
experienced a major electricity /power failure in 1993 and when houses in residential areas
collapsed because too much land clearing is taking place, the relevant ministries were heavily criticised.

This aspect of the journalistic practice where Utusan does not always toe the party line was not apparent during the participant observation mainly because the issues prevalent then did not present the opportunity for such a practice to emerge. Instead, this journalistic practice of Utusan was learnt more through the conversations with the media personnel than through direct observation. The news workers narrated an incident which involved an Utusan correspondent in Indonesia which gives a clearer perspective to press-government relations. In 1992, the Utusan Correspondent questioned why the Malaysian prime minister, during a press conference while on a state visit to Indonesia, spoke in English and not the Indonesian/Malay language since he was in a country where Malay is the official language (the Indonesian and Malay languages are almost similar). Dr. Mahathir explained that he had spoken in English because several foreign reporters had requested him to do so. This incident (which insinuated that Dr. Mahathir was not being patriotic for not speaking the Malay language) incurred the displeasure of the UMNO party members and the executive managers of Utusan. This culminated in the Correspondent being recalled back to Malaysia. The then Group Editor was also transferred out of Utusan, but was later reinstated as its advisor. This incident has two interpretations: while on one hand Utusan will not hesitate to criticise the actions of politicians and government leaders, on the other hand, the incident also shows that the government again has the upper hand. While it cannot be said for certain if the government in any way pressurised the Utusan manager to recall the foreign correspondent or to transfer the Group Editor, the consequences are, nevertheless, felt by these individuals and Utusan.

It is a common observation in Utusan where the reporters (especially the more junior ones), after coming back from their assignments, would brief the chief reporter or news editor and tell him which angle they would take to write the story. This rapport is not very obvious in NST where reporters were observed as inputting their stories straight into the computer upon coming back from their assignments. Utusan reporters were also observed as being 'reference points' for reporters from non-Malay newspapers; these reporters would call the Utusan reporters to clarify or confirm a piece of information obtained during an event they had attended together. This is understandable as all official events involving the government and government-related departments would use Malay as the medium of communication. Non-Malay reporters from the vernacular press (i.e. the Indian and Chinese press) regularly find the diction used by several cabinet ministers or government officials beyond their comprehension.

Like in NST, the autonomy of the reporters in Utusan is also limited. Generally they are
free to cover and write the story, however, the final say that decides whether the story gets into print, will be the editors' or Group Editor's. The Rahim scandal is a case in point where when the story broke, the Deputy Group Editor called the Group Editor who was then out of the country, to decide on the story. Stories, like the Rahim scandal, which have great significance will highlight the gate-keeping and decision-making process in the organisation.

The structure of the news flow is similar to that of NST where those at the higher rung of the hierarchy would only scrutinise a story depending on its significance. Otherwise, the reporter and the news editors would normally have the autonomy to decide the story. The gatekeeping process in Utusan is as follows:

```
Group Editor-in-chief
  
Deputy Editor-in-chief
  
Senior News Editor
  
News Editor
  
Assistant News Editor
  
Chief Sub-editor
  
Assistant Chief Sub-editor
  
Reporters
```

Similar to the NST gate-keeping and decision-making structure, the reporters in Utusan too have limited autonomy in deciding news angles. The final decision lies in the hands of the editors and Group Editor, and because the Group Editor (of both Utusan and NST) are appointed by the political masters, these decisions at times mirror the stance of the political / government elites. An Utusan news editor put the journalistic practice in perspective when he said that under normal circumstances, the editors are not so concerned with the angle taken as long as the salient facts are given, but important stories (e.g. the UMNO party election) would be scrutinised. In such an event, the angle taken by the Group Editor is said to support the party that put him in his position:
During the 1981 battle royale between Musa and Razaleigh, Utusan was able to give both sides of the story. I remember my Editor-in-Chief at that time was fond of Razaleigh, but the other editors were for Musa. As a group in Utusan, the majority was for Musa, but we still reported what both said. The only thing we did was perhaps when using Musa's photos, we used those of him smiling, and Razaleigh's were less smiling, but we published both sides of the story. Under the former Editor-in-Chief, we tried to be balanced. But not now...for example, during an important literary election in 1993, our Editor-in-Chief was for one candidate, so we could not even publish the photo of the other candidate. What story we published on this other candidate would only be bad things. This made me angry.

This is the general impression given by the news workers during the participant observation - i.e. the decision made on a particular story depends heavily on the type of event/issue, and the attitude of the editors and the Group Editor toward that event/issue.

Collecting data: Basically, the mode of data collection was the same as employed in the NST observation - direct observation, formal and informal interviews and document search. It has to be noted that the Utusan reporters were more eager to be interviewed and to share their knowledge; only one reporter was observed as not being cooperative by making the time for the interview after having agreed to be interviewed. Though the staff in the library (especially the chief librarian) was very cooperative and helpful, the document search did not yield much as the materials needed were not available. The materials which were requested were the history of the organisation, organisation hierarchical chart, the newspaper codes of conduct and any documented materials that would help in understanding Utusan. Due to space constraint (Utusan is waiting to move to a bigger and more sophisticated building), the library could not stock much. Like NST, the policies and code of ethics are not available in writing.

This absence of written codes and policies was discussed with Utusan's executive editors (senior editors, Group and Deputy Group Editors): the general consensus is that Utusan has functioned well thus far without a documented code or policy because the news workers, both the younger and the senior, have managed to learn through socialisation what can and cannot be broached in their news writing practices. Moreover, the National Union of Journalists code of ethics, and more recently the MPI Canons of Journalism, are there as guidelines. However, the news workers said that not many people would even bother to look this code up largely for two reasons: one, the need has not arisen, and two,

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1 Datuk Musa Hitam and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister respectively, were locked in a fierce battle for the Deputy President post in the UMNO party election. This position is a 'hot seat' because it is the tradition for the holder to be elected the Deputy Prime Minister of the country.
the code is too general to be of much help in the event that guidance is really needed.

Summary

Generally, it was both easy and difficult to do participant observation at the two newspaper companies. It was easy because in both places, I was a familiar face as I had, over the years, paid several visits to these organisations. Several people took me under their wings and rendered help whenever needed. However, having said that, it was also difficult to function because however familiar I was, I was still 'an alien in the midst'. After the initial and inevitable phase where both parties (the observer and the observed) sized one another up, I still sensed that many were suspicious of my presence there. This made several reporters either indifferent or unfriendly toward me.

This suspicion may be attributed to the fact that having researchers 'sharing' their territory and being observed is still very much a novelty and not a tradition yet in this culture. The situation was not helped much when they found out the subject being studied - ethics - a subject sensitive or touchy to some news workers. It was quite normal (and initially disconcerting) to get spontaneous reactions like "Haven't you academics got anything better to study than ethics?", or "What ethics?", or "I have other important things to think about than ethics", or a few would just laugh out cynically.

Nevertheless, despite this mild form of hostility, the three-week observation at each newspaper was helpful to get a better understanding of the journalistic practices of NST and Utusan. The direct observation gave a better inkling of the decision-making process, the hierarchical structure and the degree of autonomy that news workers have. Observing first hand the daily work culture has helped to negate or support certain stereotypes or generalisations that are held about news workers. For example, some opinions believe that because of the pressure of the deadline, a journalist would throw caution to the winds and would cross the ethical boundary if the situation dictates it. Though in reality violating the ethical principles does occur, this is done as the last resort when ethical means do not yield the information needed. The anecdotes and incidents narrated by the news workers also indicate the scenario for the press-government relations that exist in the media environment today.

The participant observations at NST and Utusan showed that the gate-keeping process in both newsrooms is basically the same. Several features emerged from the observations that characterised the practice in Malaysian journalism: i.e. the reporters have the initial autonomy to decide on the stories, but the final decision is made by either the editors or the Group Editors. While the reporters are generally free to write on matters of human interest,
this freedom is automatically curtailed when the event/issue is of a political nature. Even though both newspapers cater to different target audiences (NST is read by English-speaking readers who are mostly in the urban areas, while Utusan is widely read by the Malays in the rural areas), the journalistic practice is still the same where newsroom hierarchy dictates the decision-making process. The only difference is that Utusan, being a newspaper with a policy of catering to the Malay readers and Malay interests, gives more emphasis and focus on Malay issues/events.

Another salient point that emerged from the observations in both the newspapers, is that the news workers believe that the slant of a story taken by the newspapers would depend on the political group that the Group Editors are 'aligned' to. The general consensus among the reporters is that the Group Editors have the final say and because they are political appointees, the orientation of the newspapers on specific issues would echo the stance of the political masters. An editor in Utusan declined to be interviewed on the policies of the newspaper because he did not want to contradict what the Group Editor said. He said that interviewing the Group Editor would be sufficient to understand the policies, journalistic routines and structure in Utusan. In fact, several news workers in NST and Utusan, when approached for an interview, said that it would be best for me to interview the "big bosses" as they hold the policies of the newspapers. In general, the news workers (reporters and editors) acknowledge the existence of "a line of hierarchy" in the newsroom that is the basis for gate-keeping and decision-making.

The participant observation yielded data that directly answers certain objectives of this thesis - i.e. to understand the work culture of the news workers that can be used as an indication to understand their ethical conduct, to find out the existence or absence of codes of ethics and how this affects the news workers, and to learn about the policy of the organisations and how these policies are derived at. However, it is incumbent to be pointed out that the observation is limited to what can be observed at that period in time. Because the period of observation did not present issues or events that could be called sensitive or controversial as to unravel some other salient aspects of the journalistic practices of the news workers, what was observed represents the normal routine of the news writing and decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, despite this limitation, the observational period was useful as a method to collect data as it offered me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the news workers (and vice versa) and the journalistic practices. Discussions with the news workers gave me a better insight into the culture of the journalism profession and specifically the structure of the decision-making process in NST and Utusan. This knowledge was put to good use when the actual interviews of the news workers were carried out.
The structure of decision-making existing in NST and Utusan also suggests the possibility that the autonomy to be ethical or not in the process of news gathering and news writing may not entirely rest on the news worker themselves, especially the reporters who have the least autonomy to decide in the gate-keeping and decision-making hierarchy. The journalistic practices in NST and Utusan would be better understood if the wider context in which the media function, is also taken into consideration.
B. INTERVIEWS

Interviewing is a useful technique for collecting data as it helps the interviewer to understand the reality or the meanings of a chosen topic which reside within the respondents being interviewed (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). As discussed in Chapter Four, interviews were employed for the research for the basic reason that they help to get an insight into the perception and understanding of the media workers in NST and Utusan especially pertaining to their views on ethics, factors that influence their ethical conduct in the process of news production and press-government relations. The interviews have been used to understand the feelings, attitudes and beliefs that the news workers hold and how these attributes influence their conduct in the journalism profession.

The interviews were conducted to gather information to answer specific objectives of this research: where the content analysis produced quantitative evidence, the interviews gave qualitative information that throws light on the factors that compel media workers toward a certain ethical conduct in the process of news production. Equally important, the interviews also help in understanding how the social system in Malaysia with its cultural and religious norms and values influence ethical behaviour. The interviews, too, shed light on the Western libertarian moral-philosophical approach that views ethics as a result of the individual's personal choices and convictions: the interviews showed that ethical obligations are not just innate, but also nurtured or imposed.

B.1 PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEES

Altogether 31 interviews were conducted with news workers of NST and Utusan, the breakdown of which is as follows:

Table 6.1: Designations of News Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>NST</th>
<th>Utusan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Editor-in-Chief</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Editor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Writer / Senior Reporter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Editor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Reporter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17 = 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in the table on the previous page, NST and Utusan have different designated positions to suit their editorial needs: NST has a specialist writer (who specialises on specific issues/topics like politics) which Utusan does not have, and on the other hand, Utusan has the position of a chief reporter that NST does not have. By interviewing the news workers from different levels of the editorial hierarchy, the researcher has tried to get an insight into how the key personnel involved in the process of news production value news. The reporters interviewed were not chosen at random, but instead were picked from the list of reporters who covered the three case studies selected for this thesis. Table 6.2 on the following page shows the profile of the news workers as to age, education and length of working experience.

What is apparent from the table is that more Utusan reporters are in the younger age group (in the 20's) than the NST reporters who are in the 20's, 30's and 40's. This has several implications: one, because of their age, the reporters could be more idealistic and could have a different style in dealing with situations (e.g. they may be more brash) compared to older journalists who are more 'settled' and more experienced, or two, on the other hand, due to their inexperience, the younger journalists may tend to give in to the instructions handed down to them rather than stand their ground. Though age and experience may not necessarily be the determining factors that influence ethical conduct, they are nevertheless, contributing factors. Of the 31 news workers interviewed, 21 were males and 10 females.

A majority (9 out of 17) of the reporters in Utusan (and 6 in NST) are graduates of the same journalism school (Institut Teknologi MARA) - other reporters and the editorial staff either do not have tertiary education or are graduates of other disciplines (Economy, Creative Writing). It is learned from the interviews that both newspapers are starting an unwritten policy of recruiting reporters with tertiary-level education. This practice of recruiting graduates is in tune with the unwritten policy of the media organisation to enhance the journalism profession as it is assumed that after a 3-4 year communication/journalism programme, the graduates would have a wider exposure and knowledge which would help in the profession. As has been mentioned in Chapter Three, the communication/journalism studies in Malaysia would include both the theories and the practical aspects of journalism. The professionalism of the news workers is further developed by exposing them to courses/seminars/workshops (both at the national and international levels) to hone not only their writing skills, but more importantly, their worldviews.

To keep up with the emergence of more varied subjects that constantly confront the society today and because newspapers in general face a problem of the lack of specialised writers, the management is beginning to favour graduates with non-journalism backgrounds (e.g. economics, business, management, science) to fill the gap and enrich the journalism
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
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<td><strong>NST</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Editor-in-Chief</td>
<td>40's - 1*</td>
<td>Non-tertiary</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>News Editor</td>
<td>40's - 1</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30's - 1</td>
<td>Diploma in Comm.</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Specialist Writer /Senior Reporter</td>
<td>30's - 1</td>
<td>Non-tertiary</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Reporters</td>
<td>40's - 2</td>
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<td>30's - 4</td>
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<td><strong>Utusan</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>BA Creative Writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>40's - 2</td>
<td>BSc Economics</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Editor</td>
<td>30's - 1</td>
<td>Non-tertiary</td>
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<td>Chief Reporter</td>
<td>20's - 3</td>
<td>Diploma in Comm.</td>
<td>4, 6, 7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Non-tertiary - 2</td>
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<td>B. Sc. Economics - 1</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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*These numbers show the number of people in the age group / level of education / level of experience.

profession. NST, for instance, recruits non-journalism graduates and gives them the Pre-Entry Training Scheme (PETS) where news writing skills are emphasised. One of the objectives of the PETS programme is to attract graduates from specialised disciplines like
the natural sciences, teach them the writing skills so that they can decipher more complex issues and process them into news stories the layman can understand.

Apart from these formal interviews, numerous informal chats were also conducted with other key personnel to better understand the journalism profession in Malaysia. The most significant among these chats were with the former Group Editor, and a senior editor of NST, the Deputy Group Editor of Utusan and an editor of the national news agency, Bernama.

B.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Though the interviews went smoothly, it has to be noted that they also posed two major limitations: one being that the journalists are not the easiest people to interview. One would think that because interviewing is part and parcel of their profession, they would be more understanding and cooperative. However, when they are at the receiving end, this was not to be: not only was it difficult to get some of them to agree to an interview, it was also frustrating to get them to sit down for the interview (due to the nature of their unpredictable schedule), and while being interviewed, several of them had to be prodded to give answers.

Another limitation is that the news workers (except for the two Group Editors) had requested anonymity. Thus, in order to honour and respect this request so as not to put the news workers in any untoward situation, the analysis is limited to quotations without attributions. This agreement to retain anonymity was to enable the interviewees to speak freely on wide-ranging issues pertaining to this research especially on press-government relations. Even so, one or two interviewees seemed reluctant to express their feelings or to talk freely, resulting in less than meaningful or informative answers.

The analysis of the interviews (as follows) is done according to several categories relating to the objectives of the research: to study the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of news production.

B.3 ETHICS DISCOURSE

B.3.1 Definition

To begin with, the news workers were asked their definitions and interpretations of ethics.
While several found it difficult to articulate the meaning according to the formal definition and also because the term is difficult to define due to its subjective nature, many defined ethics as "guidelines to govern one's daily operations", "things that we should do or things that we should not do", or "code of discipline", or "our sense of right and wrong", "positive principles, for example, trustworthiness, that one has to uphold" and "aspects of morality and principles of justice".

Though some of the definitions given by the reporters support the moral-philosophical position that ethics is a personal choice between one's "sense of right or wrong", other reporters also defined ethics in terms of the "needs of the time", "following what has been defined by the organisation" and "working within the social, cultural and political framework". These definitions take the view of ethics as being a step beyond just personal obligation and choice, more importantly, ethics is defined by the needs of the time (situational ethics) and the organisation. The Group Editor of *Utusan* made a similar point when he defined and said that ethics has to be "appropriated to the Malaysian context". By this he meant that the needs and sensitivities of the society have to be taken into consideration when making ethical decisions. Thus, the news workers' (both reporters and the executives) notion of ethics can be compartmentalised into two frameworks: that ethics is a personal choice between what is right/wrong, good/bad, and that the organisation and other external factors also define the ethics of the profession.

Universal principles frequently quoted to define the pillars of ethics are: being truthful (not lying), fairness, impartial, balanced, trustworthiness, integrity, credibility and professionalism. Many equate ethics to adhering to professional values like respecting people's privacy and other rights and interests, being objective in reporting, honouring source's wish for anonymity and writing without favour or fear. However, many reporters also acknowledged that the last principle (writing without favour or fear) is seen as an ideal aspiration because at times, this has to be compromised in the face of the realities of the trade. In the words of the Group Editor of *NST*, one compelling reality is that ethics in journalism be "teamed with responsibility toward the sensitivities...the welfare...and the interests of others". Given the social make-up of the society, the sensitivities, welfare and interests of the different cultures and races in the environment have to be taken seriously into consideration in news writing.

Thus, while the news workers aspire to practise professional journalism, they have to balance this with the 'social, cultural and political framework' that prevails in the society. In fact, a reporter said that one of the ethics of journalism in Malaysia which is as important as adhering to professional values is to ensure that the government *does work* (writer's emphasis). To that end, support has to be rallied behind the government in its policies and
development programmes. Much as ethics is defined by personal choice, it is also defined and affected by other external influences in the environment.

B.3.2 Code of Ethics

The interviews with the news workers of NST and Utusan show that both newspapers do not have a formal code of ethics that is given to the reporters when they enter the profession. Most news workers (except the more senior personnel - Group Editors, editors and senior reporters) said that they are not aware of the existence of codes of ethics, either of the company or of the Malaysian National Union of Journalists (NUJ), as they were not shown any code. A handful of reporters (about 5) are aware of the NUJ code of ethics because they were at one time involved as committee members of NUJ or other media associations. All the same, though most of the reporters had never seen the company's code of ethics (or the NUJ code), ethics is not an alien subject to them as the profession poses ethical issues from time to time. Only a few news workers mentioned the MPI Canons of Journalism launched in 1989, again showing that news workers are not aware of the code's existence. This also suggests that codes of ethics do not play a significant role in the journalism profession in Malaysia.

The reporters said that the ethics of the profession is learnt through socialisation and on the job as the reporters carry out their duties. Some may learn these ethics the hard way, for example, when they or their colleagues, face a legal suit. For instance, at the time of the interview, an Utusan chief reporter was waiting a court hearing for a story he had written a couple of years earlier. He had been asked to name the source of the information for his story, which if he were to relent, would constitute a breach of source confidentiality. Instead of formalised code of ethics, the newspapers have 'house rules' or conventions that are passed down to the reporters. An example of a house rule in which ethics can also be discerned, concerns the writing of a story which may have a negative impact on somebody: the newspapers have a rule that not only should the story be properly attributed, but the person implicated should also be given the chance to tell his side of the story.

Both newspaper companies send reporters for training, seminars or conferences where ethics are mentioned, but generally, ethics would not be the main focus. Instead, these trainings emphasise various aspects of reporting, like reporting style or other legal aspects. Several reporters described their initial experience upon entering the profession as being "thrown into the deep and will have to learn how to swim in the journalistic sea". Traditionally, guidance is given by the senior reporters to those junior to them, and the desk editors too would regularly counsel reporters on which pitfalls to avoid.
Reporters who are graduates of journalism schools said they have a better inkling of ethics as they were introduced to the subject at the tertiary level. However, once they entered the profession, they realised that not only are some of the ethical principles not easily applicable in practice, these principles also have to be appropriated to the "Malaysian context".

As discussed in Chapter Three, codes of ethics do not have a significant impact on the media profession in Malaysia. This was made apparent during the interviews where not only were the reporters not aware of the existence of the codes, even if they were, many felt that a common code (a national code) would not be as helpful as a code drawn up by the media organisation itself to act as an internal guideline. An NST reporter, for instance, said the NUJ code of ethics has guidelines which are too general to be helpful:

It does not talk about treatment of news. The treatment of news would have to come from the in-house style.

Another NST reporter who was involved in NUJ said that the codes of ethics existing currently seems to be there only in theory, as in reality people practise the very opposite of what is written in the codes:

When I was in the Union, we did come up with a list of ethics where you have to be fair, you cannot show favouritism...but you can't deny that there is favouritism in our reporting...To say that a person conforms 100 per cent to ethics is not true. At times we have to compromise.

The discussion on codes of ethics with the news workers of NST and Utusan can be summarised into several main points. Many news workers are not aware or have not seen the company code of ethics or any other media association's code of ethics. There are a few who are aware of the existence of the codes, but have only heard about them and not read them. Few reporters take the initiative to find out about the codes. The statements below by two reporters of NST and Utusan perhaps summed up the prevalent sentiment on the subject of codes of ethics:

NUJ does give us some guidelines, but I don't think people read them or pay much attention to them. (NST reporter)

I believe most of my colleagues do not know about the codes of ethics. Even if they know, they would not be bothered. Ethics is already engraved in your mind right from the day you were born - the do's and don'ts. Then when you work, your bosses will tell you about what can be done or cannot be done. Your own experience too will make you realise that some things are wrong, so you set that as a guideline. (Utusan reporter).
Apart from the reason mentioned earlier as to why codes of ethics do not play an important role in the journalism profession in Malaysia, a stronger explanation can be seen in the fact that the codes of ethics are not mandatory. Both people from within and outside the media circle view ethics codes as lacking "punch" or "teeth". An Utusan reporter believes that the NUJ code has not affected the journalism profession because:

Malaysian reporters have not accepted NUJ as a professional body. In fact, NUJ is not a professional body, and as long as it remains so, unlike the professional bodies for the doctors, lawyers and accountants, whatever ethics NUJ makes, many people will just ignore NUJ.

The lack of mandatory power has made it difficult for NUJ (or any other media association) to implement the code. Two former NUJ committee members of NST and Utusan said that NUJ sometimes receives complaints from the journalists about being man-handled, or that their cameras had been smashed or they are being threatened by the people they cover. The most that NUJ could do would be to write a letter of complain or protest to the parties concerned. More often than not, the matter would just die down after some time. A good example was during the 1995 general election campaign where two opposition political parties had "roughened up" several reporters and photographers from the print and electronic media. NUJ protested to the political parties concerned about the treatment; the matter settled when the heat of the elections cooled off (except for the fact that it is pending hearing in the court). Even in the incident mentioned earlier (about the Utusan reporter who was awaiting trial for refusing to disclose his sources of information), NUJ does not play any significant role.

Another important point that emerged from the discussions on the codes of ethics again reinforced the line of hierarchy in NST and Utusan. Several reporters of the two newspapers said that the ethics of the media organisations depend on the Group Editors and editors and what the policies are at the moment in time. An Utusan reporter said that with or without a formal code, the ethics of a newspaper organisation would depend "on the Editor-in-Chief; if the Editor-in-Chief has a strong belief in ethics, then the newspaper will have strong ethics". Thus, the analysis shows that codes of ethics are not a very useful mechanism as a guideline or a professional framework for the news workers in Malaysia.

**B.4 INFLUENCES ON ETHICAL CONDUCT**

**B.4.1 The 'Self' and Cultural Values**

From the definitions of ethics above, it can be concluded that all news workers interviewed
perceive ethics as being the result of both external and internal factors. The internal factor is the 'self' that initially determines how the individual behaves; this is in line with the Western libertarian and moral-philosophical concept that the individual has the autonomy to decide whether to be ethical or not. This self is also very much influenced by what the Group Editor of Utusan calls the "personal baggage" that a person has been brought up with and acquired in his/her lifetime. Asked what a "personal baggage" constitutes, news workers said that these are the cultural and religious values that have been imbibed in an individual since his/her birth.

The news workers believe that the cultural values especially are a significant influence on the conduct of news workers. Some of the cultural values quoted by the reporters that influence their journalistic performance are respecting people's privacy by not exposing their weaknesses in public, and if criticism has to be levied at a person, the manner in which that is done is also very much influenced by the culture of the society. The news workers agree that criticisms are not done 'openly and directly' as in the West. In Malaysia, writing indirectly and reading between the lines has become a cultural skill in communication. A news editor of Utusan who had experienced working in Europe and the United States of America said that Malaysian journalists have a better culture in terms of respecting people:

We do not criticise people openly; we have a different way of doing this. This is what I tell my friends in America, being a journalist in Malaysia, you have to be skilful in reading between the lines and in not criticising people openly. I think culture and religion stop people from being unethical. Ethical principles may be the same everywhere, but how one exercises these principles would be influenced by culture.

Due to this cultural characteristic, several reporters were not happy with UMNO and the media for the direct manner in which the Rahim scandal was exposed. An Utusan reporter said that the Islamic way to reproach an individual would have been to talk to the person in private instead of using the media to expose her/him.

Many of the cultural values in the society are derived from the religions of the news workers - the main religions being Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. However, the two factors - culture and religion - may not necessarily be concomitant as there are certain cultural practices which are frowned upon by the Islamic beliefs. Moreover, it is a general understanding and acceptance in the society that a person who is not religious may still strictly adhere to some religious values and practices. One does not

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1 A religious person is defined as one who believes in God and is known and recognised as knowledgeable in the teachings of his/her religion. This person is not only a strong believer but also practises the tenets of the religion.
have to be religious (i.e. practising) to believe in the values of the religions. For example, in the major religions which teach moral values of right and wrong like abortion being illegal, or respecting people’s privacy, a non-practising Muslim, Buddhist or Christian may still adhere to these moral principles. The point that is being stressed here is that a media worker in Malaysia either has his/her religious or cultural obligations, or both, to act as internal controls on his/her ethical conduct. In fact, several reporters who admitted that they are not religious said that they still observe certain cultural or religious obligations. For those who are more religiously-inclined, adherence to religious obligations are stronger. Two reporters who are in their 40's said that because they adhere strictly to their religions, they find that their ethical behaviours are very much influenced by their religions. The younger reporters, even though less religious, said that they are still influenced by religious and cultural values. Thus, the cultural and religious values which have been imbued in the reporters since birth play a significant impact on the ethical conduct of news workers.

Mahathir (1970) in describing the characteristics of the Malays, said that the two strongest influences on the Malay value system and ethical codes are Islam and the adat (the customs). Both the Islamic principles and the adat form the premise that guide or determine the social conduct and interactions of the Malays. The adat, for instance, puts great stock in formality and rituals which rate very high in the Malay concept of values. To depart from this formality and rituals is considered unbecoming and rude, for example, the elders, the learned and the leaders are accorded the greatest respect in society, thus there is an aversion and unwillingness to embarrass or have an open confrontation with these groups in particular and other members of the society in general. Another customary practice is the observance of rank and the accordance of respect to people of a higher social rank/ status (e.g. people with hereditary ranks like the royalty or descendants of the Prophets in Islam). Interactions with people of a higher rank are marked with politeness, formality and respect; hierarchy in the Malay society, where people have varying degrees of authority and rights and where communications are accordingly carried out, is an accepted way of life. Mahathir (1970) summed up the disposition of the Malay race as:

There is always a proper way to do things and it is not expected that there should be a logical explanation of why the prescribed way is correct and acceptable. (p157)

Nevertheless, most of the news workers admitted that these cultural and religious values at times get into conflict with professional values; it is common for ethical choices to involve conflict in values. For example, several reporters (of both NST and Utusan) revealed how they had to choose between the dictates of professionalism (which is almost always the dictates of the media organisation) and their personal values. Examples could be seen in
all the three cases studies where the reporters' personal decisions had to be put aside in favour of the decisions / stance of the media organisations. The above example where several reporters were not happy with the exposé on Rahim is a case in point. In fact, a few reporters of NST and Utusan said that it is quite common for them to be expected to adopt (at the expense of their own personal choices) the media organisations' policy/stance especially on political matters. An NST reporter said it is quite difficult to say "no" to the "boss" once the "do it" instruction has been given:

We have to bear in mind that we are working for a company, and as such, have to adopt the policies of the company. At times we have to tell ourselves that our work should not be coloured by our own feelings.

The sentiment expressed above is echoed by all reporters interviewed who said that it is common in the journalism profession to feel "torn" between personal convictions and media demands. An NST reporter resolves such conflicts this way:

Things may go against our feelings, our personal beliefs, but what choice do we have? We have to work within certain constraints. There is no point antagonising the bosses...

Thus, instructions (in the form of corporate policy or practices) have a profound impact on the ethical practices of their members (Day, 1991).

B.4.2 Society and Social responsibility

The Group Editor of NST, on the other hand, thinks that the society plays an important role in influencing the ethical considerations of news workers. He believes that taking the multi-racial and multi-religious society into consideration would compel a reporter to be responsible and ethical:

We are living in a multi-racial society. I think it is not ethical for me to continue to portray the Malays as lazy, the Chinese as being greedy or prone to gangsterism or triad, or the Indians as being quarrelsome; this is racial stereotyping. I think this constitutes ethics. Ethics has to start with responsibility and this responsibility has to be defined in the context of the society that you operate. (Datuk Kadir Jasin, 3 June, 1995).

The society is one of the external factors that the news workers confront in the environment. To say that ethics is a personal choice and the sole determinant of how one behaves, is to deny these external realities. The news editors of Utusan narrated a couple of incidents which again show how the society is a determining element in ethical decision-making. Both incidents involved ethnic skirmishes between the Malays, Chinese and
Indians. In one incident, a group of Chinese threw pork into the vicinity of a mosque. In Islam (which is the religion of the majority Malays), pork is not allowed to be touched or consumed and to have pork thrown into the mosque (even in the compound), a sacred place of worship, is considered an insult to the religion. In another incident, a similar thing happened where a group of Indians threw cow-dung into a mosque. Going by any standard news criteria, such incidents of a racial nature with a promise of racial tension would make a good story. In fact, the second incident was reported in a Malay tabloid which created some unnecessary tension among the races. Utusan, however, choosing instead to exercise caution and responsibility, did not report the incident on the rationale that even though it was small, it could be "sensitive and could trigger all kinds of backlash and consequences". As news editors, they said that they would rather ignore such incidents than be a conduit of information that may fan racial sentiments.

Apart from these social and religious-related issues, matters pertaining to the economy too have to be broached with caution. For example, discussions on social imbalance and distribution of wealth among the major ethnic groups could very easily become a sensitive and volatile subject (the 13 May 1969 riots, for instance, were largely a result of dissatisfaction over these social imbalances). Thus, a news worker who wishes to highlight such issues would have to be careful about the sensitivities of the society. The Group Editor of Utusan summed up this social responsibility when he said that this is the "Malaysian experience" and the "Malaysian context" where the society is one of the underpinning factors that affects ethical decision-making. Media workers are made aware of this feature of the Malaysian mass media, especially through news room socialisation.

B.4.3 Press-Government Relations

Being the mainstream newspapers with the highest circulations among the English and Malay readers in a newly industrialised country, both NST and Utusan realise they are a powerful force that could help the government to mobilise the society toward further development. This realisation has made them adopted the stance and policy of working more with the government than playing the traditional adversarial role of a newspaper in a society. Nevertheless, though they may work in tandem with the government, this support does not necessarily translate into total acquiescence. Though they do practise some degree of freedom, this freedom is tempered with a sense of social responsibility to do what they think is right for the society in which they are operating.

With this philosophy as the basis of their working policy, NST and Utusan are seen more as "establishment-oriented newspapers in the sense that we represent what is generally
followed by the society and what is generally preached by the powers-that-be" (Datuk Kadir Jasin, 3 June, 1995). Not surprisingly then, to a certain extent, the policy of the newspaper is influenced, though not necessarily determined, by the ruling elites. The Group Editor of Utusan rationalised the philosophy upheld by the newspapers by saying that since the government is elected by the people, the media do not have the mandate to do as they please where their relations with the government are concerned including being adversarial and only criticising the government and focusing on all the negative elements. He further said that, being part of the society, the responsibility of the media should be only as far as to act as checks and balances on government issues and policies. The newspapers should disseminate positive information about the government while also ensuring that it is accountable for negative outcomes.

Working in unison with the government by adopting its stance and standpoint on certain issues (as seen in the content analysis of the three case studies) has been the trademark of the mainstream newspapers. This trademark has been stamped from the early days of both Utusan and NST. The executive managers of the two newspapers acknowledged the newspapers' working philosophy: calling NST an "establishment-oriented newspaper", Datuk Kadir said that NST has always maintained a very close relationship with the government since the "Malaysianisation" of the newspaper in the 1970's. Similarly, the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Utusan has this to say about Utusan and the government:

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Traditionally, Utusan Malaysia has always supported the government. This is rooted in the struggles of Malay nationalists like Yusuf Ishak, Rahim Kajai and Pak Sako, who not only fought for independence, but also used the newspaper as a basis for their struggle. Utusan Malaysia today deems it unnecessary to change that policy. (Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Utusan Malaysia, 5 June, 1995)
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The symbiotic relationship between the government and the press is sometimes seen as a limitation to press freedom. Not only is this the common theme of the scholarship on the mass media in Malaysia by foreign scholars (like Lent, 1988, 1984; Parker, 1982), the news workers themselves when interviewed view this relationship as a hindrance sometimes. Several reporters of both NST and Utusan said that in their years of service, they had had some of their stories "killed" because the angles they took were not aligned to the policy of the newspapers. An NST reporter recalled how a story she had written about two contenders for the presidency of a chamber of commerce, was 'spiked' because one of

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1 Refer to Chapter Six where the history of NST was discussed. The government at that time was not comfortable with having NST not only being owned by a foreigner but also managed by Singapore. Efforts were made to bring NST into Malaysian-ownership. This marked the beginning of the close relationship between the government and NST.
the contenders was "linked to the powers-that-be":

I was told indirectly that he is one of our paymasters, and that because he is linked to the powers-that-be, he cannot be touched. It all goes back to the idea of patronage.

Though incidents like this are not common, they do happen from time to time depending on the nature of the issue. Another area of dissatisfaction for the reporters is when they write stories about the opposition political parties or groups not in the mainstream. As a general rule, the voice of the opposition is not regularly heard. In general, the reporters view this policy of the newspapers in not giving too much access to the opposition as a source of dilemma. An Utusan reporter said that as part of the organisation, reporters have to follow the company's policy even *"if you bleed inside"* (emphasis added). The dilemma stems from the knowledge that not all that the opposition says is wrong, and likewise, the government is not right all the time. Yet, despite this knowledge, the reporters are not free to support the opposition sometimes. An NST reporter feels that the mainstream newspapers should give the opposition a "fair hearing" especially during the general elections.

The reporters feel that it is a fair comment to say that though ethics does originate from within the individual, as long as the reporter is under the employment of the company (a term several reporters used to mean the media organisations), it has the final say. Thus, the philosophy and policies of the company have to be respected and adhered to. Many reporters said that they have internalised this philosophy of the newspapers working in cooperation with the government. The newspapers, after all, openly admit that they are 'establishment newspapers', and because of this, are free to support the establishment, just like the opposition party organs back the opposition and heavily criticise the government.

Nevertheless, an Utusan news editor, while agreeing that Utusan in general either supports the ruling party or certain groups in the coalition government, said that her position as a senior reporter and a news editor, has enabled her to put forward her ideas to the Group Editor. She recalled how twice after the country's general elections in the 1980's and the 1990's, she managed to persuade the Group Editor to allow her to write in-depth interviews with two prominent opposition leaders. The interviews were published in the newspapers verbatim, which surprised the opposition leaders themselves. The reporter also said that this move to publish the view of the opposition is, in part, to salvage the guilt felt at having to throw away, especially during the general election, every ethic we hold. I consider this (election time) as war time, and during war time, you either kill or be killed. You have limited choice.
Other reporters, too, echo the Utusan reporter's sentiment that though the press-
government relations have to be maintained, they do not have to blindly follow all the
instructions meted out by the newspaper organisations. Many reporters feel that they are
given the freedom to air their views. For example, an Utusan reporter said that when the
Rahim scandal first came to light, she was not too happy with the stand Utusan was taking
in exposing Rahim. Being a Malay and a Muslim, she thought it was unethical of Utusan
to disgrace an individual publicly. However, after discussions with the chief executive of
the newspaper, she realised that the standpoint taken by Utusan was not because it had to
toe the party line, but more importantly, Utusan itself believes in its causes.

In fact, the reporters said that this 'belief in causes' is the factor that keeps them in the
journalism profession. Were it the case that the Malaysian press is not free and has to
constantly succumb to the political masters, they would have been driven to leave the
profession in frustration and dissatisfaction. Several reporters said while they do criticise
the government from time to time depending on current developments, they generally
support the government. Among others, an NST reporter said that she has no strong reason
to be anti-establishment:

Why should we be anti-establishment? We have a government which is
forward-looking, which has a vision, which does not want any racial riot
like what is happening in so many other countries. We can ask the Western
media why we can't be tools of the government when we have a
government that wants to eradicate poverty. The Western media love bad
news because bad news make news, but why can't good news make news?

Nevertheless, though they agree that reporters have a certain degree of autonomy and the
newspapers are generally free in their daily operations and management, the reporters also
hold the general impression and perception that the newspapers do receive instructions
from the political masters from time to time. Perceptions on this characteristic of the
Malaysian press - i.e. getting instructions from the political masters - differ slightly
between the three groups of news workers. While the reporters and the news editors
generally perceive that such instructions do come from the top, the chief executives rejected
that impression. Three news editors used different terms to refer to these instructions -
"signals", "cues" and "directives" - that the newspapers would use as guidelines in
deciding the stance to be taken on an important issue. However, the news editors agreed
that these signals and cues are very rarely given, certainly not enough as to be called an
"interference into the newspaper management". Moreover, the signals and cues are taken
in "good spirit":

If the editors are being called in order to be given a certain line of reporting,
generally speaking, it is for the betterment of the larger section of the
society. They (those who give the instructions) have good intentions. They
have the interest of the country at heart. They do not want the press to go overboard, or to play up certain issues unnecessarily.

The two Group Editors, however, said that they do not get regular instructions from the political masters or other elites who wield power in society (for instance, major corporations). While they do meet policy-makers for discussions from time to time, and while these policy-makers do voice their opinions on issues raised by the media, the newspapers are under no pressure to succumb to these viewpoints or to toe the party line. On their own accord, they may or may not pick up on these suggestions, which when they do, could be interpreted as giving in to political or other pressures. The Group Editor of Utusan said:

There has never been any instance where the Prime Minister or his deputy would call me to say that certain things I do are wrong or not to their liking. The point is we are given a free hand. There are many instances where the PM was not happy with what we did, but he will never exercise his power to inform us. We are free to decide on our own. We don't get phone calls, contrary to common beliefs. Even some people here in Utusan believe that I get phone calls almost every day from the PM or his deputy. No, this is not true. I try to convince them that it is not the way things get done in Malaysia. They give me the freedom. (Interview with the Group Editor, Utusan Malaysia, 10 June 1995)

From the comments of the three different groups of news workers on press-government relations, it can be concluded that the newspapers are generally free in their daily process of news production. Even though there may be signals from the ruling elites, the signals are not strong enough to be called an "interference" in the management of the newspapers. It can also be analysed from what the chief executives said that the signals did not come from the highest authority (the PM or his deputy). Signals, however, do come from other ministers or chief ministers who are not happy when the newspapers criticised certain government projects or policies at the Federal or state level. For example, a senior editor in Utusan said that:

Unfortunately, some Barisan National (the National Front, the coalition ruling government) leaders have either become arrogant or narrow-minded and accused Utusan of being 'traitors' for criticising certain government projects, especially state development projects that are not doing well. This makes it difficult for the media to function if leaders cannot accept criticism.

The Utusan news editor (mentioned earlier) who interviewed the opposition leaders, made a similar point when she said her interview stories incurred the criticism not of the Prime Minister, but other UMNO leaders. The 'arrogance' of several government ministers and chief ministers prompted the chief executives of NST and Utusan to write editorials on the "morals of UMNO leaders". The Group Editor of Utusan sums up the press-government
relations when he said, "We are an UMNO paper, if we cannot become the watchdog to UMNO, then there is no use".

Nevertheless, though there is no interference from the highest authorities on how the newspapers should be run daily, many of the reporters believe that the newspapers, because they are establishment-oriented, are expected to garner and rally support behind the government under "unprecedented or special circumstances" like the country's general elections or when it comes into conflict with the opposition parties or with a foreign government. During the April 1995 general elections, for example, NST and Utusan (and other mainstream establishment-oriented newspapers) were heavily criticised for putting aside fairness, objectivity and other characteristics of ethical reporting. Another example is the Pergau dam conflict: the content analysis has shown how Utusan and NST put aside objectivity to criticise the Times and Britain (the concept of objectivity as defined and operationalised by the news workers is discussed later in the chapter).

Almost all news workers interviewed perceived this practice of supporting the government during unprecedented occasions as an accepted norm. In fact, all groups in the society, especially the government and the opposition, have been known to make full use of the print and electronic media during such occasions. As mentioned earlier, this is like "war time, and during war time, you either kill or be killed". The news workers pointed out the fact that the opposition, for all its criticisms of the media for not being fair and objective, was not seen to be any fairer or objective in its own party publications (e.g. Harakah, Rocket, Aliran).

It is fair to surmise that the government and other interest groups do not habitually attempt to inject their ideologies and agenda into the management and routines of the newspapers. The newspapers are reasonably free, but this non-intervention may be broken by the government if it perceives the press to have gone "overboard" in its reporting. The reporters believe that, more often than not, issues pertaining to politics or other area directly involving the government, may see the government giving signals to the press: the government has little interest in other realms like sports or entertainment. A news editor of BERNAMA analysed the situation as such: "..if it serves the government's interests, the political interests, they (the ruling elite) do not mind the press continuing with what it does, but if they don't, then the press had better be careful". An example of a request hailing from the ruling elite was when the prime minister himself, requested that the media decrease the frequency of discussing the Rahim Thamby Chik scandal. This happened when it was perceived that the press had over-exposed the issue to the detriment of both the accused, who was then a political figure, and the victim.
The analysis of the opinions of news workers on press-government relations shows that this relationship may be regarded as an influence on ethical behaviour. The influence could be both positive or negative. An errant reporter who may want to go overboard in exposing a political figure may receive signals from the top (from within the organisation or from outside influences), as seen in the Rahim scandal. On the other hand, if a reporter wants to be non-partisan and objective (these are universal ethical principles), the policy of the organisation, especially pertaining to press-government relations, would not allow her/him to be so - examples of this would be the reportage during the general election and the Pergau dam conflict with Britain. All reporters believe that while the autonomous self is the starting point in ethical decision-making, the policy of the organisation sometimes overrides personal choices. Several reporters feel that as far as the Pergau issue is concerned, more investigation should have been done to find out whether the allegations of corruption "in high places" (especially against the prime minister) had any foundation. Instead, the reporters had to accept "the official version" that the allegations were baseless and that the British press was just "being malicious". A few of them personally feel that the newspapers should have probed into the matter, in fairness to all parties involved in the conflict. An NST reporter feels that that decision was taken out of his hands as he had to go with the stance of the organisation which was to support the government against Andrew Neil and the British press.

B.5 ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES

It is a common assumption among people involved in journalism to inextricably relate 'journalism professionalism' and 'journalism ethics' (Black and Barney, 1990). This is because many professional values are derived from ethical principles, for instance writing fair, accurate and balanced news. Autonomy, which is an important criterion for professionalism, is also regularly mentioned in numerous codes of ethics as a feature which journalists must safeguard from encroachment from external forces like the government.

Nevertheless, though ethics and professionalism are intertwined, some scholars (for example, Kultgen, 1988) questioned as to whether it is a moral obligation to be as professional as possible in one's work. Is it also a mark of professionalism to act morally? Should one always do one's work in a professional conduct? Must professionals remain scrupulously moral in order to adhere to the standards of professionalism? These are some of the discussions raised in the interviews on the subject of news production. The news workers said that the news production process at times poses several ethical quandaries that put them in a dilemma between professionalism and personal ethics.
B.5.1 Unethical Methods in News-Gathering

One area where journalists always get criticised is when they use unethical methods to gather news. While the codes of ethics and the journalism profession generally view methods such as lying, snooping, cheating or sneaking to gather news as unethical and should be avoided no matter what the situation, the journalists view this matter of unethical methods in not quite the same light. Where they also generally agree that such methods are unethical, the demands of their profession compel them to bend the ethical rule should the need arise. All the journalists interviewed, while admitting that their personal ethical convictions would discourage any use of unethical methods, would not hesitate to use these methods as a last resort when other means do not yield any result.

Succumbing to an unethical way to gather information is the last resort at gathering information. An NST senior reporter explains why reporters sometimes use unethical methods: in the news business where every newspaper aims to be the "pace setter and the news breaker by being the first to come up with first-hand news or a scoop", the methods used to get that information become of secondary importance. All the reporters feel that the objective of the story outweighs the method used. Many rationalised the use of such methods by quoting the "public interest" - i.e. if the information is to benefit the public, then they would use that as the paramount reason to use underhanded means to get the information.

It cannot be ascertained from the interviews if all the reporters who quoted the "public interest" rationale for using unethical methods to gather news, have a genuine notion of what the 'public interest' is or who the public is. Two impressions were left by the reporters when they quoted the 'public interest' as an explanation for using unethical methods: one, several reporters seem to have an apparently genuine concern for the public. A case in point is the Arqam ban where the reporters felt that the public and the Arqam members themselves have to be educated and made aware of the extremist tendencies of Arqam. Two, on the other hand, several reporters who also quoted the "public interest" seem to have used this as a convenient explanation to rationalise their unethical conduct. Because others around them use the "for the good of the public"

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1 People who are interested in or who deal with the media (for example, the ministers, media academics or other interest groups), have from time to time criticised the media for what they perceived as behaviour that goes beyond the boundaries of social norms, for instance, sensationalising the private lives of public figures.

2 This is in line with Machievelli's philosophy of the 'ends justifying the means' where the 'ends' is the public good. If the 'ends' benefit the public, then this would override the methods used to gather information.
explanation, they too joined the bandwagon and quoted the 'public interest' rationale to expedite their work.

However, having said that the ends justify the means, the reporters said that they would not resort to just any means to get the story: for instance, they would not go overboard to blatantly fabricate a story or cause bodily harm or go to the extent of "jeopardising a person's position or integrity". This is the dilemma that most of them find themselves in - having to weigh between the public interest and the interest of the sources of information. An NST reporter narrated a story she wrote where a source had given information about a multi-national company that had flouted the law. The newspaper decided to blow up the story, with the consequence of putting the source into trouble where she could have lost her job. The reporters said the burden of such a dilemma - weighing between public interest and the safety of the source - can at times be difficult to handle.

Another reason given by reporters to justify the use of underhanded measures to collect information is the Malaysian culture itself. Unlike other countries like America or Sweden which have a more open system, access to information in Malaysia is not a right as enjoyed in the United States with the Freedom of Information Act, the Sunshine Law (which allows a record to be made public after a certain period), or other laws which give the public access to records. In fact, the reporters said they suspected that certain public records in Malaysia have been known to be unnecessarily stamped "private", "confidential" or "secret" (even if they do not have any security implications if they were to fall into the wrong hands), just to keep the public out (and especially the reporters). The society (particularly the government officials) is too protocol-conscious where only certain officials in the department are permitted to relay information to the media.

Thus, in the face of such inaccessibility and lack of cooperation, or when doors are not automatically opened when the direct approach is used, reporters have to use their ingenuity and resourcefulness and may resort to a measure some would label as unethical. A senior journalist of NST said that the ethical conduct of the Malaysian news workers is not something to be unduly worried about as they have not reached that level where they would go to any length to get the story. Another NST reporter rationalised this by saying that:

We are just reporting what other people say. We don't really probe and camp (in the Rahim scandal) outside Rahim's house, or talk to his relatives because somehow that kind of behaviour won't be allowed. We are unlike the British press which is ferocious, which totally dissects everything. We are quite a decent lot.
Making the same point, a senior editor of Utusan quoted the Janet Cooke scandal in America (where a Washington Post reporter had to return the Pulitzer Prize she had won when she was found to have fabricated her winning story of an 10-year-old drug addict) to show that the Malaysian reporters would not resort to those lengths to win a coveted award. The journalism awards in Malaysia do not carry such material nor promotional rewards of the magnitude of the Pulitzer Prize. Some lying or cheating maybe resorted to for practical reasons, but that would be the extent they would stoop to.

Many reporters said that the type of story too determines the method of news gathering. Official stories where the information comes from official sources do not merit unethical methods. However, other stories, especially crime stories, are difficult to obtain and would compel a reporter to masquerade as a relative to see a patient in the hospital or as a police officer to get some facts on a criminal.

While a majority think that some form of unethical measures are unavoidable in the process of gathering news, a few would prefer to stick to the proper channels and would rather go back and "face the music" than resort to any unethical conduct. Adhering to the principle that nothing justifies cheating or lying, etc., they said the decision to be ethical or otherwise "boils down to the conscience of the reporters". An NST reporter, on the other hand, opines that going back to the newsroom without a story can also be viewed as unethical, as resorting to an unethical means, because they would be failing in their duty to inform the public. Thus, the notion of ethics differ from reporter to reporter.

Opinions on the news gathering method differ between the reporters who go out to get the stories and the news editors and managers who edit the stories. While the reporters in general feel it is a necessity and justifiable at times to use unethical methods ("We have to be resourceful because the bottom line is we have to go back with our story"), the news editors and group editors of both NST and Utusan do not condone such acts. While some reporters even applaud the use of unethical methods as the reporter's "wit, ingenuity and resourcefulness", the executives said penalties will be imposed on a reporter found to have used unethical methods.

'Unethical methods' are defined by the management executives as means that violate the accepted norms of the multi-racial society, and the norms of the journalism practice in NST and Utusan. To illustrate, a few reporters narrated an incident involving one of their colleagues who was put in "cold storage" when the management executives found out that he had masqueraded as a rescue worker to get first-hand information after a high-rise building collapsed. In December, 1993, Malaysia experienced a social tragedy when a 20-storey condominium building in an affluent area in Kuala Lumpur collapsed. For days
rescue workers worked round the clock to get people (dead or alive) out of the wreckage. An NST reporter donned a hard hat, crossed the cordoned area and joined other rescue workers with the intention of helping (as he himself told this researcher) and simultaneously getting first-hand information. However, his intention (and ‘ingenuity’, as he put it) was not viewed kindly by the executives who thought that he had acted without prior approval from his editors, and he had disregarded his safety which the media organisation has to be accountable for as long as he is on duty. The Group Editor of NST does not agree totally with the ends-justifying-the-means rationale:

Even when your objective is noble (say if I want to bring down a corrupt politician), I still feel it is not right. I think you cannot lose track ..all the noble things do not justify the evil that you do.

From the responses of the different news workers, it is analysed that ethics is viewed as subjective. While many condone resorting to unethical methods depending on the situation and the context and because it is necessary, others reject the usage on the rationale that nothing justifies unethical conduct. This is the difficulty in analysing ethics - it is subjective and situational - and both proponents and opposers of this ethical/unethical methods of news gathering have rationales to support their stance.

B.5.2 Acceptance of Free Gifts

Another area which causes a dilemma in news workers in the course of their profession comes in the form of freebies. Examples of freebies frequently mentioned by the reporters are t-shirts, pens, cassettes, paid-for trips to new holiday destinations, etc. The freebies can be a source of dilemma because certain opinions view the acceptance of these gifts as "selling one's soul". While almost all news workers interviewed said they have been accepting these gifts as they view these as "being part and parcel of the process of news gathering", they also take into account the value of these gifts before accepting them.

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1 The term ‘freebie’ was initially used by the researcher while introducing and then discussing the subject of ethics with the news workers. This term was initially used because the researcher assumed it to be a journalistic jargon that would be familiar to the news workers. However, after several interviews had been conducted, this researcher realised that the word is not immediately understood. Several reporters asked for the definition of the word, and when the researcher gave the meaning as 'free gifts', the word was subsequently used by the reporters. The more senior news workers, i.e. the Group Editors, editors and reporters, understood the term immediately. However, several reporters from the younger generation (those who have been in the profession between 2-5 years) found difficulties in understanding the jargon even though they have tertiary level education where the concept had already been learned. This lack of immediate understanding, however, is not attributed to ignorance, but more to language. Some of the Malay-language reporters (of the Utusan newspaper) are not conversant in English, and since ‘freebie’ is an English term, the difficulty stems from here.
Reporters believe that door gifts like pens and t-shirts which are given and accepted more for the "building of rapport" would not compromise nor cloud a journalist's objectivity. In fact, several news workers seemed offended that some opinions claim that the gifts can influence their objectivity as they stressed that these freebies are more "gestures of goodwill". A senior NST reporter said: "To say that a journalist could sell his soul after accepting these gifts is to make a sweeping statement. There are, naturally, isolated examples of bad apples who have taken more than just a pen or a meal, but to say the rest would be selling their souls is a mere exaggeration".

Almost all the news workers view the freebies given during functions as a public relations gimmick that should be seen more as a gesture of goodwill than an attempt to bribe the journalists into giving the source of information favourable coverage. Moreover, in the Malaysian context where giving has become a culture, not accepting would be considered insulting the giver or being rude. The journalists do not ask for these gifts and when given, are normally culture-bound to accept. The Group Editor of NST said that one must take cognisance of the "intention" for which these gifts are given - are they bribes or simply a token of appreciation for the journalist's presence? Even if the giver's intention in offering these freebies is short of honourable, there is no guarantee that the journalists who have accepted would be able to promise a favourable coverage as the final say to decide on the news as to how it is written or even or if it used at all, would depend on the editors.

Both NST and Utusan have an unwritten policy that requires the journalists to declare what they have been offered while covering a function if the gift is considered valuable or expensive. Though no monetary value was mentioned to constitute what is expensive and what is not, the reporters learn through experience how to draw the line. Examples of gifts considered valuable are a gold watch or an all-expenses paid trip to a new destination. Offers of cash in any amount too have to be declared.

The Group Editor of Utusan narrated how the year 1993 which saw "envelope journalism" and money politics becoming quite rampant in political party elections, was a test of the journalists' honesty and integrity. Politicians were said to make several attempts to bribe journalists by giving them cash or other rewards in kind in return for the journalist's support in the form of news coverage and news space in the press. The management executives of NST and Utusan view this practice of sources buying journalists with cash and kind and correspondingly, journalists accepting these gifts, as a serious breach of the journalistic code of ethics. Nevertheless, while acknowledging that there were one or two isolated cases of journalists being "bought over", the news editors and group editors surmise that the Malaysian journalists are by and large, still ethical in their conduct regarding acceptance of freebies. Several reporters said that "money journalism" or
"envelope journalism" has not become a rampant practice in Malaysia as is happening in Indonesia (where it is called 'envelope culture') and Nigeria ("brown envelope culture"). The Group Editor of Utusan said, to some journalists who have lost their integrity in the onslaught of these gifts, "the size of the story depends on the size of the envelope".

Several Utusan reporters who had been to Indonesia either as the Utusan correspondent or to cover assignments, said that the envelope culture there is a common occurrence where several reporters would be handed an envelope with cash by interested parties in the hope of getting positive coverage and publicity. A Correspondent, narrating his experience in Indonesia, said that some of his colleagues there were culture-bound to accept the envelopes (as the social norm dictates that it is rude to refuse a gift). However, once back in the office, the cash would be put into a "collection box" (set up specifically for this purpose) and the money collected would be used to buy office equipment, among other things. Another Utusan reporter who had attended a journalism conference in Sweden in 1995, said that during a debate on the professionalism of journalism, the conference heard from the Nigerian delegates that the "brown envelope culture" is quite common in Nigeria. This practice has become a culture because some reporters accept the cash offers to supplement their income.

Several journalists interviewed said that no matter what form it comes in or what the value is, they would not accept any freebie for the simple reason that journalists have to maintain their integrity to avoid the risk of being indebted to the giver. The reporters said that it is difficult to draw the line between what is considered acceptable and what is seen as jeopardising or compromising the journalist's profession. To be on the safe side, they adhere to a personal policy of not accepting any, unlike those who do accept a freebie and said that they draw a clear line between what is acceptable and what is regarded as a bribe or a "softener" for the journalists into giving good coverage.

In summary, in the Malaysian context, the giving and the accepting of freebies is seen by the news workers not as an attempt to bribe or an incident of unethical conduct, but rather as a feature of the norms and the practices of that particular culture. As long as the gifts are reasonable, no demands were made for them to be given, no strings are attached once they are accepted and as long as the journalists are not singled out as the only recipients, they should be seen as a public relations practice and not an attempt at bribery. The reporters said that certain organisational or company events/functions are also attended by other people apart from those from the media. However, if the free gifts are only given to the reporters and not to other participants, several reporters said that they would not accept them.
B.5.3 Privacy: Public and Private Spheres

An area of ethical concern for both news workers and the public which has put the news workers under a lot of criticism is deciding between the public and the private spheres, especially that of a public figure whose movement is constantly under public scrutiny. The Rahim scandal was a classic example of a public figure whose illegal affair with a minor was put on public scrutiny. Many reporters, when asked where or how to draw a line between what is considered private (and should be respected) and what is public, said that the boundary depends on the individual and the nature of the incident. A story that breaks involving an individual who does not have public prominence would be given the normal routine coverage. The individual involved would be pursued only as far as the story is still of interest. The main focus is the story and not so much the person involved.

On the other hand, if an incident happens involving a public figure, and depending on what the incident is, all the news workers interviewed said that, to a certain extent, the newspapers are justified if they delve into the private realm of the public figure. A good example is the Rahim scandal: news workers generally hold the view that because Rahim is a public figure and because of the nature of the scandal, the case should be opened to public scrutiny. Though some media workers themselves criticised their colleagues for not respecting Rahim's privacy, a majority of the reporters agree that the scandal with an under-aged girl was not an ordinary matter that the media should respect as Rahim's private life. Had Rahim's case been a private matter between him and his family, the news workers said they would have respected his privacy and not encroached into his private domain.

However, in this particular instance, where Rahim's alleged sexual involvement with a minor had become a police case and was under police investigation, the news workers felt that the newspapers' highlighting of the scandal was justified. Being a nationally renowned political figure who had risen in stature because of public trust and confidence, Rahim was all the more accountable for every action he made. The news workers felt that Rahim had to live by the conventions set down by the society, and since the society is predominantly Muslim, the religious factor came in. As a Muslim politician, Rahim's conduct, even though the result of police investigations finally acquitted him because of insufficient evidence, had tarnished not only his position but also the image of Islam. Several reporters felt that because Rahim was in public office where "he received aid from the tax-payers, rode a car paid for by the tax-payers and enjoyed all the benefits paid for by the tax-payers, then there is nothing private about his life". In fact, an Utusan reporter thinks that a public figure should have only one lifestyle, not two (one for the public and one private), that is bounded by the principles of religion and that could be an example to
be emulated by the public.

Though the news workers agree that a public figure is entitled to some privacy (for example, the right to enjoy privacy with his/her family), he/she cannot seek protection or defence in privacy if her/his action transgresses normal social decency. The Group Editor of NST explains the newspaper's policy on privacy of a public figure as such:

By privacy, I would say that if a man does not want to be disturbed when he is having a holiday, I think that is privacy. If a man wants to suffer in silence over his loss, he should be allowed to suffer in silence. If a man does not like to be photographed when he is weeping over a loved one, that is privacy, even though that would make a dramatic picture. But if he does something that is morally and legally wrong, I don't think we can accept it if he says that it is his privacy. It is not your privacy to have an illicit relationship, and if it is discovered, I don't think you can seek protection or defence behind privacy. Only what is proper can he seek protection from privacy.

Here again is evident that the culture and the religion of the society are the influencing factors on ethical decision-making. Where the Malaysian news workers are concerned, an individual's privacy is to be protected and respected for as long as he/she does not violate social norms and values. Another factor which helps shed light on how news workers decide between the public and the private spheres are the policy-makers themselves. At least five reporters feel that the policy-makers (whether within the organisation or outside) decide on the agenda to set for the public. Two reporters, while agreeing that the Rahim scandal should be exposed because it had become a police case, also believe that the affair had been "allowed to be made public" because of the existence of different "camps" in power:

It depends on which camp you are in. If you are not in the camp of those in power, everything about you will be exposed. I know of culprits who have never been exposed.

This sentiment was supported by another senior reporter who said:

In our system, we are not free to write everything, especially on certain political figures. Our system is such that when the government gives the green light, then the newspapers will be brave enough to write, like the Rahim case.

Current government policies also play a role in helping policy-makers in the newspapers to decide on privacy matters. The prime minister and the deputy prime minister had often said that they want Malaysia to be more open and the people in power to have a transparent way in the running of the government. Consequently, in Rahim's case, the government cannot
afford to retain a person with a tarnished image, especially if the person was alleged to have had an affair with a 15-year-old girl. The newspapers then would take the 'cue' from such policies to decide on an ethical issue like privacy.

Thus, it is seen from the analysis of the interviews on this category that the decision on privacy matters is made with the social, political and cultural framework as a guideline. This is the unique feature of the Malaysian media where the environment in which the media operate, more than the criteria for news worthiness, is the factor for ethical decision-making.

B.5.4 Quoting Sources

Source-reporter rapport is very important in the journalism profession as almost all information gathered for a story has to be attributed to a source. Hence, rapport has to be maintained to expedite the reporter's news gathering process. The common ethical problems normally heard about this source-reporter relationship are that the sources sometimes feel that they have been misquoted or quoted out of context or that the news workers have breached a trust when they quote the names or reveal the identity of the source despite the source requesting to remain anonymous.

All the reporters interviewed said that should a source request that he/she not be named, they would honour the request even if it means that the story would be spiked for lack of credibility. Several journalists said they have experienced their stories being rejected by the news editor on the basis that the information could not be verified, and rather than taking the risk of a legal action, the story would be put on hold, or altogether left out until it could be attributed. If the stories have to be used because the information is important, the reporters and the news editors come to an agreement for the stories to be attributed using phrases like "according to sources" or "according to a spokesperson".

Reporters of both NST and Utusan said that in general news editors are very understanding when reporters produce stories without attribution. The normal procedure would be for the reporters to explain to the news editors the reasons why sources had asked for anonymity. It is then up to the editors to decide whether to use the story or not; an Utusan editor said that his decision would be based on whether the stories are significant enough as to put the reporters and the sources at risk. More often than not, if running the stories involve a major risk to the source or to the reporters, the stories would be put on hold until other sources who can be attributed could be found. Many reporters said that if the news editor decides to push through the story despite the request for anonymity, they would ask that
the story be cancelled. Their promise to the source not to reveal her/his name overrides other considerations. Not only is this ethical, but also necessary in a profession where reporter-source trust is very important, for once this trust has been breached, a reporter may find it difficult to get information from these sources again.

It is a common ethical problem in the journalism profession for sources to criticise the news workers for misquoting or quoting sources out of context. From the reporters' point of view, though they admit that misquoting or quoting out of context does occur, this very rarely happens. The rationale given for this is that most interviews are recorded, thus minimising the chance of the source being misquoted. The reporters said that there have been several cases where when sources complained about being misquoted, and they were asked to listen to the tape, they found out that they had not been misquoted and they had actually said what they denied saying. However, if the reporters' mistake was genuine, and if the mistake could carry grave consequences, the newspaper company would normally print an apology.

A senior news editor of Utusan thinks that it is not so much misquotation that a journalist is guilty of as misinterpretation. Sometimes try as hard as they may, reporters do misinterpret due to several factors: a) the reporter does not understand the subject matter, b) the source does not present his ideas clearly or coherently, or c) due to space limitation, certain parts of a story that may put it into clearer focus, could be edited, thus leaving the story lacking information. An editor of BERNAMA offered this explanation to show how quoting out of context can occur:

The reporters when they go to a certain function or to a press conference, have certain targets. Sometimes their questions are tailored to meet these targets. If the answers they received are not fully satisfactory to them, they sometimes continue working on these preconceived ideas and what they had earlier planned to do. This is where certain facts, certain matters are taken out of context. However, I would like to think that these mistakes are genuinely made rather than with sinister reasons.

Another explanation given by reporters to throw light on why sources always accuse reporters of misquoting is that the sources wanted to "save their own faces, especially if what they said had backfired". Sources, especially politicians, for the sake of publicity, would say a lot of things which they may regret the next day when their statements are quoted in the media, and especially so if the statements make them look less pleasant than the desired effect, or if the statements incur the wrath of their superiors. The reporters then become the "easy scapegoats". The reasons given by the reporters for misquoting or misinterpreting are reminiscent of Berry's (1966) research on accuracy where similar reasons as the above were quoted as explanations for inaccuracy in news writing (see
B.5.5 Objective and Ethical reporting

Media researchers and analysts (e.g. Westerstahl, 1983; Rosengren, 1980; Mills, 1983) equate ethical reporting to objective reporting where both sides of an issue or multiple viewpoints are aired. Other words used by the media workers interviewed to refer to objective are 'fair', 'unbiased' and 'balanced'. Many reporters believe that as best as possible, NST and Utusan being mainstream newspapers, have tried to be objective in their coverage of issues in general, and the three case studies in particular. In both the Rahim and the Al-Arqam issues, the newspapers made attempts to include the viewpoints of the various relevant parties involved. Reporters who covered these issues said that Rahim and the Arqam officials were given every opportunity to air their opinions.

However, despite these attempts at being objective and fair, after the initial period of coverage and the subsequent chain of reactions, the newspapers seemed to be skewed in their coverage. This can be seen in the features and comments written on the case studies where the writers (be they journalists or non-journalists) made their biases apparent.

Another lamentation that the reporters have about the coverage of Rahim that shows the lack of objectivity in the reportage in NST and Utusan is why his was the only case that was reported. An Utusan senior news editor said that it is an open secret that several other politicians also have unpalatable habits, but everybody chose to turn a blind eye to such behaviour. Some reporters feel that apart from being unfair to Rahim, the newspapers were also grossly unfair to the under-aged victim. Though the name and the photograph of the girl were withheld, all other identification - the school she attended, the father's and other family members' photographs - were shown. An NST editor blamed the newspaper for not playing a more significant role in questioning "some quarters" in the government on their conduct in the Rahim scandal. For example, the newspapers should have taken to task the Attorney General for disclosing certain confidential information about the background of the 15-year-old girl. The news editor feels that this was not done because of a "directive, subtle or direct, from the powers above. Our hands are tied because we are closely linked to the political powers. We questioned, but only to a certain extent. Then we imposed our own self-censorship". It is to be recalled from the content analysis that the prime minister and several UMNO members had asked the newspapers not to be "overzealous" in their coverage of the Rahim scandal.

Opinions by news workers on the coverage of the three case studies per se, and the
objectivity of NST and Utusan in general, seem to split between the newspapers being objective and not objective. Many reporters, while saying that both newspapers have not been objective, especially in the three case studies, however think that this lack of objectivity is justified. The Rahim scandal, for instance, was felt to be justified as the press was only giving Rahim what "he was due". An Utusan news editor said that the newspaper wanted to support the government on this case as the rumour about Rahim's personal conduct has been going on for too long. Many reporters feel the coverage has to be seen as a "blessing in disguise", a warning to other politicians not to indulge in such affairs at the detriment of their political careers.

The newspapers' lack of objectivity in the Rahim scandal was also criticised by a law professor, Dr. Nik Rashid Nik Majid, who asked the prime minister in a dialogue if the government planned to stop the occurrence of a "trial by the media" (NST, 15 Oct. 1994). This prompted Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to liken the Rahim scandal to the O.J. Simpson murder trial in America where, because the case was reported widely, the court found it difficult to find uninfluenced juries. Dr. Mahathir said:

Unfortunately, in Malaysia, the media was also bent on becoming judges. They feel that they are responsible to correct the wrong situations in society. Therefore, they report and make allegations and give a lot of particulars on various cases to the extent we all get influenced and make a conclusion that so and so is guilty or not, based on press reports. (NST, 15 Oct. 1994)

The news workers were also unanimous in agreeing to the fact that NST and Utusan and other mainstream newspapers are not objective during election time. Nevertheless, news workers again justified this by saying that one has to remember the philosophy and mission of the newspapers in Malaysia. The newspapers carry a different function compared to newspapers in other environments. In fact, other newspapers, too, including opposition publications, were biased against the government in times like this. At other times, though, the reporters feel that NST and Utusan do attempt to be objective and project themselves as "national newspapers".

Many reporters are of the opinion that, apart from the policy of the newspapers that act as a limiting factor, other organisational routines also influence the disposition of the newspapers. A factor that limits the press from being objective is the deadline that every reporter has to observe. Because of this deadline, reporters are hard-pressed for time and,

1 Former American footballer and actor, O.J. Simpson was charged, and later found not guilty, for the murder of his wife and her boyfriend. The murder caught national and international interest and the hearing was telecast 'live' daily (in America).
instead of going without the story, they would go without the multiple viewpoints. Nevertheless, dissenting viewpoints are at times not included in the story as a "deliberate strategy to drive a point home". Thus, instead of giving various arguments that would put an issue in a wider perspective, various arguments of the same coin would be viewed to state the stance of the newspaper. A BERNAMA editor calls this the 'hidden agenda' or "personal agenda" of the newspapers.

Like the subject ethics itself, the concept of 'objectivity' is sometimes viewed as subjective, for instance, when one talks about being balanced (a virtue of objectivity) in reporting, one may find it difficult to pinpoint or define this principle. The varied definitions of this concept mirror the difficulties that media researchers face in deciding on a specific meaning. Among the common definitions of objectivity (which has been assumed to be a synonym for balanced, fair and unbiased reporting) are: free from interpretative and analytical reporting (Maclean, 1981), balance between competing viewpoints and free from partisan distortion of reality (Doll and Bradley, 1974), free from the use of language which colours an otherwise factual report and conveys an implicit but clear value judgement (McQuail, 1977). In general, the Malaysian news workers defined objectivity as giving the parties involved in an issue, the opportunity to air their side of the story. Because the people involved in the news were given a say, this opportunity has been operationalised to conclude that NST and Utusan had made an attempt to be objective. This also explains why a majority of the news workers think that the media have not been fair to the opposition parties during election time, per se, and generally at other times (because the opposition is not given equal opportunity to air their views). Some reporters also view objectivity as not emphasising too much on the negative aspects of an issue, and this is manifested in their opinions on the Rahim and Arqam case studies. These reporters think that NST and Utusan have not been objective on these two issues as the image portrayed of Rahim and the under-aged victim and Arqam was sometimes negative.

Nevertheless, the perception that objectivity means producing a balanced report is not necessarily held by everyone in the news business. An illustration given by the Group Editor of NST gives an insight into how this concept is viewed:

What constitutes balance? Do you mean to say that if I give 20 words to the prime minister, I must also give 20 words to the opposition? It may be balanced by way of word count, but is it balanced by way of power that the two men (referring to the prime minister and the opposition leader) have over the country? The prime minister may not feel it is fair to give him 20 words and to the opposition 20 words when he controls 70 percent of popular votes and the opposition controls only 30 percent of the popular votes...

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The Group Editor also questioned the conventional definition of being balanced, i.e. giving multiple viewpoints in a story, when he said:

I do not consider it as balanced when you highlight a good point about somebody and you feel that it is obligatory on you to highlight the bad points. I think not every situation that has good points has matching bad points. It could very well be that in a certain situation you have only the good points and no bad points, and yet in other situations, you have nothing but the bad points.

The reporters said that they always try their best to be objective and ethical in their writing, but sometimes this practice has to be compromised due to unavoidable circumstances, like deadlines or other organisational policies. What is most obvious is that ethical or objective reporting is made easier when writing on issues not directly related to the political players, the political situation or the government. Every news worker acknowledges the fact that though the newspapers are more open now compared to previous years (and subsequently more objective due to this openness), they have to always bear in mind the mission and philosophy of the newspapers they are working for and the social, political and cultural framework they are operating in.

B.5.6 News Workers' Views on Press Freedom

Many philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries like John Milton, David Hume, John Locke and John Stuart Mill heralded the concept of freedom as a necessary prerequisite for individuals to act or not to act according to the determinations of the will. Milton's *Aeropagitica* (1644), for instance, pointed out the value of freedom of expression and his 'self-righting principle' that in a free and open encounter, truth will defeat error, has been used through the centuries as a justification for a free press system. In fact, Locke, to whom liberty was very important, saw it as a natural right that should not be abridged except when it might interfere with the liberty of another.

The concept of freedom advocated by these philosophers, however, is not viewed in the same light by media practitioners in Malaysia. All news workers of *NST* and *Utusan*, while agreeing that press freedom is necessary in the journalism profession, do not think that this freedom should be total and absolute. This freedom should be tempered and teamed with a sense of responsibility, and news workers should exercise this freedom within the limitations of the social, cultural and political framework. Central to this responsibility is the obligation to work in tandem with the government for the sake of national development. This obligation, however, does not mean total support to the point of news workers not being able to criticise the government. The news workers interviewed...
said that they are generally and reasonably free to "highlight the problems and the dysfunction of the government and development projects". The government in recent years, especially under the premiership of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad is more open and allows more room for constructive criticisms. An NST reporter defines the support given to the government as:

I think this support is to ensure a stable government. Despite the flaws and problems within the government, we have been able to ensure that the public is taken care of. This is the utmost importance to me as a journalist, the well-being of the public. The government, despite its flaws, has been able to achieve that, has been able to ensure peace and harmony.

Several reporters, especially those in the senior position, said that they do not want the brand of press freedom as practised in other countries, particularly the West. The news workers view the Western press as "living on negativism" where, for example, "the British press would harp on and attack almost everybody who comes to power". Though they (the Malaysian news workers) do at times wish for more freedom to write on a wider spectrum of issues, they have to align their aspirations with the limitations and the realities in the media environment. The Group Editor of Utusan expressed the general sentiment and impression of his colleagues with the following comments on freedom and objectivity:

How do you define freedom of the press? Would you say that some of the most influential newspapers, like the Washington Post or the New York Times, have freedom of the press? But who runs these papers? How can you say that a newspaper that has a lot of biases, a lot of misunderstanding where Muslims have been misrepresented, has freedom of the press? They take sides; when they take sides, they have no complaints, but when we take sides, they complain. While I do not want a muzzled press in Malaysia, I also do not want an irresponsible media.

It has been repeatedly mentioned in this thesis that the Malaysian press works closely with the government, and this symbiotic relationship is often viewed as a constraint on press autonomy. The news workers are aware that despite the freedom to write, this freedom is also not without its limitations. These limitations, however, do not just originate from external factors; they are compounded by the "fear of censorship" that reporters themselves experience particularly in writing stories on the opposition. A news editor of NST said that sometimes it is not the "directive from the top" that discourages reporters from writing, instead it is their own "self-censorship". An Utusan reporter admitted that he sometimes worries about asking sources certain questions in case the source calls up 'his boss' to complain about him. The Group Editor of NST thinks that this can be quite a problem in the journalism profession:
Surprisingly, there is quite a lot of it among reporters. Even the junior reporters believe it is their right to exercise self-censorship to the extent that it has become a convenient excuse for not asking probing questions. This is wrong. The decision on what to use or not used should be left to the editors. My advice is - don't self-censor, ask probing questions, but ask them tactfully and intelligently. .make no apologies for what you have to write. (Tan, NST, 30 May 1995).

Though the decision to use or not to use a story or parts of a story lies on the editors and other executives, reporters have the initial autonomy to shape the news. The reporters decide on what would be highlighted in the lead and in the subsequent paragraphs. The stories then go through several gatekeepers like the editors and sub editors, and depending on the import and potential consequence of the story, it would at times be edited by the senior editors or the editor-in-chief himself. Again, depending on the type of story, the story angle would either be decided by the journalist alone, or by the journalist and the news editor, or by a higher authority. Under normal circumstances, the autonomy to decide on the story angle rests on the journalists, but the management has the final say to change or spike the story if the need arises.

Both reporters and editors said that a story is killed for several reasons, the obvious ones being that it lacks news worthiness (according to the news criteria as discussed in Chapter 2) or because of the lack of space. More importantly, a story also gets rejected if it lacks the ingredients of a good report, especially if it lacks attributable sources. The policy in journalistic writing is that when in doubt about the authenticity of the origin or source of the story after efforts have been made to confirm it, it is best to be left out. This is sometimes to avoid the risk of a legal suit. Editors would also spike a story that is seen as "sensitive". Though the country's Constitution spells out what issues are deemed sensitive and not to be discussed or questioned in the public arena (the position of the Rulers, the special position of the Malays and other natives, citizenship rights and the status of Malay as the national language), a senior editor of Utusan said that the newspaper sometimes "plays it by ear" to decide what is sensitive. 'Playing things by ear' has somewhat become a journalistic culture in Malaysia where the reporters and news editors have to be sensitive to and be aware of the limitations in the environment. This pragmatism is unique to Malaysia and other societies where the social norms and values are strong enough to influence journalistic practices. This could be seen in Cooper et al's (1989) discussions on the ethical practices of the media workers in several countries namely Spain, Netherlands, Nigeria, countries with the Islamic tradition, India, Korea, Japan, China and Peru.

A common feature from these essays is that societies steeped in cultural and political norms and values could still, to a certain extent, dictate media practices. This is in contrast to journalistic practices in the libertarian systems where the main thrust of this concept is the
freedom of the press from interference or encroachment from any governmental or societal restraints. The over-riding determinant in a libertarian system to make decisions is the media organisation itself as press freedom is valued above other considerations.

The news workers in Malaysia believe that the newspapers do not have set policies that are binding at all times apart from the unwritten policy of working with the government for the betterment of the multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. The Group Editor of NST helps put the scenario of the policy and the role of the newspapers in perspective when he said:

I don't claim to have any great vision or mission to accomplish because the trend in the New Straits Times has been set. My most fervent wish is to help mould Malaysian society to rise up to the national agenda.

SUMMARY

The interviews and the informal chats with the news workers of NST and Utusan have yielded helpful insights into the views of these news workers on issues pertinent to the thesis. The period of observation gave a better understanding of the policies and news production process of the two newspapers. It also expedited the familiarisation process between the observed and the observer which contributed to the success of the interviews. What is apparent from the interviews is that the news workers' notion of ethics is not altogether similar with the Western definition and understanding of ethics. While these two groups are similar in their understanding and upholding of several universal ethical principles on the methods of news gathering and news writing, they clearly differ in their press-government relations. The Western press views this relationship as adversarial; the Malaysian press balances between adversarial and working in unison so much so that at times this partnership is viewed as a lack of autonomy on the part of the press. The Western press would also view this union as an encroachment of the government into the freedom of the press.

The analysis has shown that all news workers believe that one of the ethics of the profession is to make sure that the government does succeed. To that end, though the press is critical of the ruling government, they also have the obligation to support the government whenever necessary. As the Group Editor of NST said, the press in Malaysia has to be responsible and has to have a certain degree of "sensitivity and consciousness" of the social make-up of the society. Ethics has to be appropriated to the "Malaysian context" and this context is spelled out and determined by the social, cultural and political framework.
Thus, with this philosophy as the working culture, it is not surprising that the referential framework for the news workers in terms of ethics is as follows: their ethics is influenced by their own personal convictions teamed with their responsibility to work with the government. In fact, asked what would be the deciding factor in the event of a conflict between personal convictions and what the organisation or the government wants, many said they would have to put their personal feelings on hold. As an NST senior reporter said, he listens to the "line of hierarchy" to expedite him in his work.

This "line of hierarchy" is a common feature that characterises the newsroom practice of NST and Utusan and media-government relations. As seen in the section on the participant observation at the beginning of this chapter and later reinforced in the analysis of the interviews, news workers know, through socialisation and the daily routine of their work, that though they have some say in deciding what or how to write a story, the final decision lies in the office of the Group Editor. The Group Editor, in consultation with senior personnel in the news department, decides on the stance and policy the media organisation would uphold on specific issues and events. Decisions, however, are not made in a vacuum or merely within the boundaries of the media organisation, but are influenced by the wider socio-political context. Because the Group Editors of NST and Utusan are political appointees, the slant the newspapers take on issues and events, is said to mirror and support the stance of the political/government elites. Though on one hand, the Group Editors denied that the political masters interfere in their management of the news organisations, they did not deny the close relationship. The reporters and news editors believe that though direct intervention is not common, "cues", "directives", and "signals" were given from time to time, if not directly from the prime minister or his deputy, at least from other cabinet ministers.

Another significant point that emerged from the interviews is the fact that the cultures and the religions of the land influence ethical conduct. The values and norms embraced from an early age will shape the behaviour of the journalists in the manner they gather the information and write the stories. An example of this is the difference in the manner journalists ask questions: the Malaysian news workers said while their Western counterparts use the "direct and attack" approach, they are more "gentle" in their mannerisms. An Utusan reporter who was a correspondent in Indonesia for a few years, narrated how Indonesian reporters (and some other parts of Asia including Malaysia) ask questions: they would usually start with "Sir, I am sorry, I want to ask you this..." The news workers said such respect and humility is no longer common in the journalism profession.

The analysis of the interviews shows that the cultural and social context in which the media
function has a strong influence on the ethical orientation of news workers. The cultural and religious values and norms form a basis on which journalism is practised; at times even the universal values of professional journalism (which emphasises press freedom) became secondary. Great importance is put on the religious values, norms and the adat which dictate how social interactions are to be conducted. In fact, there is a saying in the Malay culture that an individual would "rather see the death of his own child, than the death of the adat ". Though this is arguably an extreme case, it nevertheless captures the importance of the role played by the adat in the Malay psychology. It is this adat, more than anything else, that explains why news workers are reluctant to openly criticise individuals in the news or why a directive from the prime minister (that the media not over-play the Rahim issue) was easily heeded. It is not so much the fear of incurring the displeasure of the prime minister as the respect for the values of the adat.

Thus, the major influences on ethics in the Malaysian context can be found in the political and socio-cultural framework in which the media operate. The findings which explored how the wider socio-cultural and political context influence ethical decision-making differentiate this thesis from the dominant scholarship on media ethics which asserts that ethics is a personal choice. The findings have shown that where ethics in the Western libertarian tradition is the result of the individual being a moral master, in other media systems like Malaysia, the deciding factor is not necessarily the individual but rather other underpinning influences. Together with other factors like codes of ethics and media laws and regulations, the sources of ethics (whether ethics are innate, nurtured or imposed) are given a clearer insight.

The three methodologies used - content analysis, participant observation and interviews - have elicited different sets of findings that contribute to the objectives of the thesis. Though the findings are different, they reinforce or complement each other. The content analysis was necessary to analyse what and how the three case studies were covered in the three newspapers so that meanings could be drawn that relate to ethics. For example, the analysis of the case studies shows that the news workers used mostly ethical methods to gather news or that they did not overly criticise a public figure. The participant observation and the interviews explained the hierarchy in a newsroom and gave an insight into how decisions are made. Where the content analysis shows the news workers had been mostly ethical, the participant observation and interviews explained how and why a certain ethical or unethical course of action is taken. The participant observation and the interviews provide an insight into news workers' views and attitudes on ethics which are translated into the stories they produce.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

To recapitulate, the main thrust of the research is to study the factors that influence the ethical conduct of news workers in news gathering and writing. The two major components of the study are the influences on ethical behaviour and the news production process. The news production process has been chosen as the premise and context for the study of ethical conduct for the obvious reason that news workers are faced with numerous ethical issues and dilemmas in the course of news gathering and writing. Other influences on ethical conduct have been analysed to look beyond the popular notion of the Western libertarian framework that ethics is the result of personal moralising, convictions and choices. The thesis does not in any way refute the viewpoint that ethical decision-making is a personal choice. However, it also argues that other factors also come into play to affect ethical behaviour. The preceding chapters have demonstrated that other factors of a social, cultural and political nature also influence a news worker toward a certain ethical decision; and in the Malaysian context, these factors are more compelling than personal choice.

To summarise this concept, the Western libertarian perspective contends that individuals have the autonomy to be their own 'moral masters' where it is assumed that an individual is a 'moral agent' who has a high standard of responsibility to the society. A literature review of ethical practices in journalism shows that many communication scholars and analysts view the ethical conduct and practices of news workers from this philosophical-moral framework. However, one obvious weakness of this framework is that it is a distinctly Western tradition of media ethics, and apparently not applicable to other media traditions and cultures. It is necessary to use other approaches to understand ethics, besides the dominant ethics framework, because this framework alone is inadequate to explain the influences on ethics. Though there is literature which addresses other motivations which affect ethical decision-making (e.g. Singletary et al, 1990, Cooper et al, 1989), the dominant framework still remains the Western libertarian moral-philosophical approach. The thesis has discussed the viewpoint that the 'self as the moral master' is insufficient to explain the influences on ethics in the context of the news workers in Malaysia.

Though the Malaysian news workers do not reject the popular belief in the individual autonomy because at the end of the day it is still the 'self' that makes the final decision, this choice to be their own moral master is not clear cut. They know that they have to contend with other factors which come into effect to influence the ethical decisions they make. This
explains why the dominant ethics framework is not totally applicable in the Malaysian context and why some media professionals reacted cynically toward the subject of ethics. As seen in Chapters Three and Six, ethics is not widely discussed within the media circle because a regulatory framework already existed to ensure that news workers act responsibly and within accepted boundaries. Simultaneously, the regulatory forces take the 'individual autonomy' out of the hands of the news workers.

It has been argued in the previous chapters that the influences on ethical conduct in news production can be analysed by using a combination of theoretical approaches. Since the subjects of the thesis are the news workers and the mass media organisations, it is pertinent to study the mass media organisations at both the micro and macro levels for a more holistic insight. On the macro-level, two theoretical approaches were adopted: the political economy approach and the cultural studies perspective. On the micro-level, the sociology of news was examined to study the influences that shape raw material into news. The empirical data to analyse the ethical conduct of news workers in the process of news production was gathered through several methodologies: content analysis, participant observation and interviews.

It is incumbent to note here that though the three methodologies employed for the research were mostly helpful in eliciting the data to support the objectives of the thesis, they are not without limitations. The limitations are apart from the weaknesses commonly encountered when using these methodologies (as discussed in Chapter Four); instead the limitations are inherent in the environment where the research is carried out. For example, one disadvantage of doing participant observation in Malaysia is the novelty of the method to the people under study. This is compounded by the fact that the people are culturally closed-knit and not comfortable with 'being studied'. Another handicap to the data collection process is the lack of documented materials that are necessary for a review of literature to be done. There is no one main resource centre (apart from the National Archives that does not have much data on communication) that houses data on various topics of interest; and a search in the libraries of the media organisations and the universities that offer communication studies did not yield much. Though media/communication studies have become an increasingly popular area of study, the documentation of data on this subject is still not extensive, largely due to lack of resources. Thus, in the face of these limitations, a researcher would have to seriously reflect on the methods of data collection and the culture and environment that surrounds the data in order to choose the method effective enough to elicit the required information.
A. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH

The central theme of the political economy approach which has its roots in the works of Karl Marx is that the centres of power in politics / government and the economy interact with one another and subsequently influence the autonomy and contents of the mass media. This theoretical approach, as advocated by Marx, centres around the view that a ruling class, i.e. a small group of powerful people who, through their ownership of the means of production, dominates other groups. This scenario is made more complicated today when the dominant class with the economic power starts buying into different markets which may or may not be related (Murdock, 1986). In America, for instance, the mass media are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few large companies. This has triggered a growing concern about how far a communication system dominated by private ownership, especially when this is concentrated in the hands of a few companies, can guarantee the diversity of information and argument (Murdock, 1990). Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model which contributes to the discussion on political economy views the media as tools of the status quo where they produce news that supports or reinforces the stances held by the political / economic elite.

How do the empirical data gathered from the three methodologies relate to the concept of the political economy framework? It has been made clear at the outset that the political economy concept cannot be taken in totality and without qualifications when discussing the mass media scenario in Malaysia. Contrary to the original view of this concept which gives more emphasis to the economic power rather than the political power in the domination of the public, in the context of Malaysia, the political masters are more influential than those who control the economy (this is Schudson's (1991) criticism of the political economy framework in that it is more 'economic' than 'political'). The literature review and the interviews have shown that the business elite cooperates with the political leaders to influence the public.

Even though Malaysia is not a liberal capitalist society in which Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model and political economy approach is effected, some of the dynamics of this approach are still very much at play. All three methodologies employed in this research explicitly or implicitly show that the government and political elite can wield the power to control the media should the need arise. Previous chapters (especially the chapters on the interviews and the discussion on the Malaysian mass media) have shown how the political elite at times 'call the shots' on specific issues of interest. The Group Editors of NST and Utusan, in separate personal interviews with this researcher, while agreeing that the press in general is free from outside interference, acknowledged that the
newspapers are "...establishment-oriented newspapers in the sense that they represent what is generally followed by the society and what is generally preached by the powers-that-be" (interview with the Editor-in-Chief of NST, April 1995).

The 'powers-that-be' obviously refers to the political elite who constitutes the strongest voice in the society. Though the statement may not necessarily translate to mean that these powers control the media, it does suggest some form of compromise by the media to follow the mainstream thinking. This is apparent in the unwritten policy of the newspaper companies where they would rather work in tandem with the government to mobilise the society toward development. Interviews with other news workers (journalists and editors) echo the same line of thinking where the general consensus is that the press is free, but this freedom can be tempered with occasional "directives" or "signals" from the political leaders. This has led Lent (1982), who has traced the development of the press in Malaysia since the 1970s, to conclude that the press are conveyors of information from the government and have become propaganda outlets for the elite. The acknowledgement by the executive managers of the two newspaper organisations support the view of the political economy that managers of newspapers maintain detailed control over the press as engines of propaganda and instruments of political power (Curran, 1991).

The control by the government on the press is apparent in two forms: a) ownership and management, and b) legal constraints (see Chapter Three for the discussion on these legal constraints). It is possible for the government to control the media through ownership of the media; the media are either private or public enterprises. While the media under the public enterprise is directly under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Information and would have obligations to fulfil (e.g. the media are obliged to play an educative role), the media owned by private corporations are in actuality owned by government-related corporations. NST and Utusan are both tied by management and ownership to either component parties or are close associates of the ruling National Front government. Till today, the board members of these newspaper companies are political appointees. The government still maintains some form of control on the press through this network of ownership and control.

One of Herman and Chomsky's (1988) "news filters" which is outlined in their propaganda model - i.e. the reliance of the media on official sources: information provided by government, business, other bureaucracies and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power - aptly describes one of the journalistic practices in Malaysia. The reliance of the journalists in Malaysia on official
sources has been documented in the chapters on the content analysis and the interviews where it was shown that this dependence is considerable. In fact, getting official attributable sources for the stories has become one of the media routines to show the reporters practise the principles of professionalism by getting information viewed as objective and accurate. The journalistic practice in Malaysia where the mainstream press legitimises the government, political-economic order is reminiscent of what Herman and Chomsky (see also Fiske, 1980) called:

"The elite domination of the media...that results from the operation of these filters occurs so naturally that the media news people, frequently operating with complete integrity and goodwill, are able to convince themselves that they choose and interpret the news "objectively" and on the basis of professional news values." (1988 : 2)

The symbiotic relationship that the media have with the status quo also suggests that media owners have a vested interest in seeing the status quo continue because they are committed to their own political and economic advantage. Thus, although the media will criticise the status quo, to establish their own legitimacy as a news organisation, they will not criticise it enough to threaten it. This interest at times will result in the press being pulled in conflicting directions: at one moment toward the institutions of political and economic power, at another toward alternative and even oppositional movements, depending on political circumstance (Gitlin, 1980). This conflict has been amply discussed in the interview chapter where news workers voiced their discomfort in having to regularly marginalise minority voices in their adherence to the policy of working with the ruling class.

The Group Editor and a senior reporter of NST also echoed this conflict when they said the press cannot afford to toe the line of one party all the time as this may alienate certain quarters in the society, and the newspapers, being a commercial entity, cannot afford this alienation. Nevertheless, even when there are conflicts of interest or policy between these forces (the press and political elite), these conflicts are ironed out within a field of terms and premises which does not overstep the hegemonic boundary (Gitlin, 1980). Herman and Chomsky call this "hegemonic boundary" as "within the limits of the filter constraints" (1988:2).

Thus, a major feature of the political economy framework which is apparent in the press-government relations in the Malaysian context is the subtle or direct domination of the political and government elite over the masses. Both NST and Utusan work in unison
with the ruling elite and occasionally adopt and legitimise its stance and agenda. It has been stated in the interviews that the working philosophy and policy of the two newspapers has been internalised by the news workers through the process of newsroom socialisation. The discussion on press-government relations in the interview chapter and the findings of the content analysis lend testimony to the fact that the symbiotic partnership which the press and the government/political elite share expedites the workings of the political economy concept.

An interesting finding which emerged from the interviews that give an insight into the influence of the political masters on the mass media in Malaysia, could be seen in the phrases "the powers-that-be" and "play it by ear". The phrase "the powers that be" in fact was used by three news workers to refer to the political masters, while one reporter used it to mean both the newspaper's executives and the political masters. "Playing it by ear" also reflects a unique journalistic practice in Malaysia where the news workers learned through practice what can or cannot be reported depending on the political, social and cultural developments at a given time. This is where the 'cues' and 'signals' come into play to guide the news workers.

Despite the weaknesses of the political economy approach as discussed in Chapter Two, this approach has been helpful to explain the dominance of the political elite over some journalistic practices in Malaysia. To reiterate, this dominance is made possible through ownership and management and media laws. This influence negates the power that the news workers have to exercise their autonomy in ethical decision-making as advocated by the Western libertarian concept. The press-government relations that exist in Malaysia limit the autonomy of the news workers and the news organisations to exercise their professionalism as do news workers in a Western libertarian environment. Thus, because of the weakness of the ethics framework to take into account the formidable political/government dominance over the media, other approaches would have to be taken on board to understand ethical influences on news production.

B. THE PRESS IN A SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Because cultural studies takes different forms, the approach adopted for the purpose of this research is from an anthropological perspective where the focus is on how culture determines the construction of meaning in the press. The cultural studies perspective addresses the relationship between the news production and the wider cultural environment. There has been much literature (Hoggart, 1982; Gans, 1979; Hall, 1973,
1977; Schudson, 1991; Gitlin, 1980) to show how the cultural studies approach has given an insight into the generalised images and stereotypes in the news media. Gans, for example, contends that because of the cultural symbols prevalent in a given culture (for instance, the British cultural tradition contains elements derogatory to foreigners), the media which operate within this culture are obliged to use these cultural symbols. Cooper et al’s (1989) book, *Communication Ethics and Global Change* (as discussed several times in this thesis) is another insightful contribution toward understanding how different cultures from which the media workers originate influence their ethical orientation in communication. Because of the different social, political, religious and ideological backgrounds, these media workers possess a "hierarchy of loyalties" that would affect their thinking and subsequently influence media content.

As mentioned before, Malaysia is a plural society with a multi-racial and multi-religious community. Media operators are constantly mindful of this social fabric and the sensitivities of the various groups. In fact, certain sensitivities are written into the Federal Constitution as subject matters which should not be discussed in the public arena. Media workers are very well aware of these taboo subjects and have been known to steer clear of subjects that touch on racial and religious sensitivities. The interviews have shown that the cultural and religious values of the reporters influence their outlook and subsequently their ethical conduct. The news workers' personal values are derived from and are affected by the wider cultural environment. A common social value that the Malays hold is to try their utmost 'not to hurt people's feelings'. This explains why they are not open in their criticisms or why criticisms are not done openly, and especially not through the media. As mentioned several times before, though the reporters do criticise, especially the public figures, the manner in which this is done is not similar to that of Western journalism. Rather than using the media for criticism, the culture dictates that interpersonal communication be used to mete out the criticism. The logic behind this custom is the people's unwillingness to embarrass one another publicly. This was the objection raised by several journalists against the exposé of the Rahim scandal in the media. The unwillingness to embarrass people publicly is one of the religious norms or one of the *adat* (i.e. customs, as discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Six) that form the social boundaries where public morals are maintained. The concept of doing good is akin to Kant's Categorical Imperative which asserts that moral obligations are binding under any circumstance (discussed in Chapter Two). The concept of good/bad, wrong/right is laid out in the strict religious codes of Islam and the *adat*, and social interactions are guided by these codes.
The content analysis chapter reveals that the way the journalists reported the Rahim and Arqam stories has a bearing on the norms and values of the Malay and Malaysian cultures. In the case of the Rahim scandal, the culture dictates that the media workers do not over-expose the affair. Cultural values like respect for the leaders and not publicly exposing people's (especially public figures) weaknesses, determine how news workers gather and write news. Prolonged open conflict between two or more parties or prolonged condemnation of a public figure's wayward social behaviour in the media is not an accepted social or religious conduct. The Malaysian culture (and in the Rahim affair, the Malay culture particularly) frowns upon open and public discussion of a person's misconduct. The culture, because of its nature of being closed-knit and private, instead demands that such behaviour or problem be solved privately. Thus, when Dr. Mahathir told the media to leave Rahim alone and to let the legal system decide on his guilt or innocence, the prime minister's instruction has both political and cultural connotations.

The coverage of the Pergau conflict in the Malaysian newspapers and the Times shows how different cultures influence news coverage. Where the Times openly and directly criticised the British and the Malaysian ministers involved in the controversy, the Malaysian newspapers acted with more "decorum" (to use the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister's word). The difference in the coverage suggests two possibilities: a) the cultures which influence the news coverage are different, and b) press freedom is also different with the Times having the greater leeway to write as it wishes. Only when counter-attacking the Times (and especially Andrew Neil) did NST and Utusan lose their 'decorum' and used several uncharacteristically strong words (see Chapter Five).

The cultural sensitivities act as boundaries or limitations within which news workers gather and write news. They also help news workers toward identifying what can be reported on and how the news can be reported. These cultural sensitivities are akin to Gitlin's (1980) "media frames" and Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) "set of interpretative packages" within which the meaning of the text can be interpreted. This is what the news workers of NST and Utusan meant by working within the "social, cultural and political framework" where they take cues from the cultural and political context to guide them in the news production process. The fact that certain issues and events automatically become news while others are either put on hold or altogether 'killed' supports Gamson and Modigliani's assertion that certain packages have an advantage over others because their ideas and language resonate with larger cultural themes. This is evident in the reportage of political and race-related news in Malaysia: the interviews have shown that news workers are very cautious about reporting on issues and events with racial and religious connotations; at times deciding instead to exercise caution rather than reporting an event or
issue that could fan racial sentiments. As far as political news go, news that support or coincide with the mainstream agenda will become part of the media frame, compared to news that lacks cultural resonance (e.g. news on the opposition political parties).

The tendency for the press to favour news packages which resonate can also be seen in the content analysis where it was found that the features, analyses and comment articles would almost always echo the official stance on a given issue. A fitting example is news on the Arqam ban - all feature articles written by journalists and non-journalists alike support the government's move to ban Arqam and portray it as a deviationist movement. Examples from the other two case studies also support this point. The strength of the cultural studies approach in that it takes into account how patterns and practices in a given culture affect the construction of meaning, is helpful in explaining the influences on ethics. It compels one to examine the intrinsic values and norms of a society to see how those values affect ethical communication instead of narrowing the focus on the individual as the key to understanding ethical conduct. Using the cultural studies perspective to complement the dominant ethics framework will give a more realistic picture of the influences on ethical conduct in the Malaysian social and media context.

In summary, the political economy and the cultural studies approaches are useful frameworks to understand the press in the Malaysian context as both the political masters and the cultural system intertwine to reflect and make sense of the influences on the media. In the words of the media workers of NST and Utusan, though the political masters do not exert their influence and ideology on the newspapers all the time, they (the media workers) are very well aware of this influence. However, this influence (which several reporters analogised as a thick cloud looming above the media organisation) is only made apparent and manifested in events, incidents and issues that the government and the political masters have a vested interest in. The Rahim scandal which directly involved the government and the politics of the country, is a pertinent example of the "intervention" by the political masters. Together with the ethics framework, these two approaches help to highlight the dimensions needed to further understand the influences on ethics.

C. THE SOCIOLOGY OF NEWS PRODUCTION

To examine aspects of the research questions not covered by the political economy and cultural studies approaches, the social organisation of news production has been taken as a theoretical approach to study the internal process of news production. As discussed in the literature review, news production begins with identifying news from a range of events,
topics and issues according to a socially constructed set of categories (Hall et al, 1981). An important contribution by Galtung and Ruge (1965) to defining news is their assertion that in an elite-centred news communication system, the more the event concerns elite people, the more the probability that it will become news. The emphasis given to elites in the news was seen in the content analysis and the interviews where the key figures in the political and government sectors were almost always given prominence. The review chapter also discusses various influences on news content. What is apparent from these discussions is that media content is affected by different factors, from the internal to the external (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980), from the journalist's "professional ideology" (Hall et al, 1978) to other "field of social forces" (McQuail, 1992). This is important to support the contention of the thesis that because media content is influenced by various factors, these factors too would affect the ethical decision-making process of news workers. Thus, the autonomous self is not the only factor that would compel a news worker toward ethical or unethical behaviour in news production.

Studying the structure of media organisations is necessary to understand the internal process of news production and to see how this relates to the ethical component of the thesis. The thesis has set out to study the factors that influence the ethical decision-making and conduct of news workers in the process of news gathering and writing. To that end, several ethical principles from journalism codes or canons of ethics have been taken as guidelines. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this concluding chapter will discuss the ethical principles in the context of the findings of the content analysis and the interviews to see the link between ethical principles and ethical behaviour.

Discussions and studies on ethical issues in journalism have scrutinised the principles that govern or may result in ethical behaviour. Lambeth (1986), for instance, attempted to develop a framework of principles for journalism ethics. He calls it a "system" where the principles are intimately related and can be considered a useful guide in weighing matters of right and wrong:

i. The principle of truth-telling
ii. The principle of humaneness
iii. The principle of justice
iv. The principle of freedom
v. The principle of stewardship
C.1 The Principle of Truth-telling

To Lambeth, the principle entails inculcating the need for and the habit of accuracy, of checking and rechecking facts to establish the accuracy of questionable information. He cited the American Society of Newspaper Editors' (ASNE) Code of Ethics that "every effort must be made to assure that the news content is accurate, free from bias and in context, and that all sides are presented fairly". Though it has been argued in the content analysis that accuracy is a difficult concept to analyse, a lot of research has been generated to study it from several angles. For this present research, it is concluded from the findings of the content analysis, the participant observation and the interviews, that the news workers in Malaysia are generally ethical where accuracy is concerned. To be ethical here means that the principles of accuracy are observed when writing news. This study uses Charnley's (1936) and Berry's (1967) classifications of 'subjective' and 'objective' inaccuracies to examine accuracy. Subjective inaccuracies are errors of meaning, omission, over- or under-emphasis; and objective inaccuracies mean errors in spelling, names, ages, titles, addresses, times, dates and locations.

Apart from the content, the principle of truth-telling also demands that there should be truthfulness in the news gathering process. Only truthful means should be used and in instances where deception, whether active or passive, is employed, the method should be fully described in the news story, along with the justification. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in its 44th ordinary session (1993) passed a resolution on the ethics of journalism that information must be obtained by legal and ethical means and the profession does not allow for the "end justifying the means".

A review of the literature on the ethical practice of journalists shows that, more often than not, the journalists would use the end-justifying-the-means and the maximising-the-good-for-all-concerned arguments to justify their actions to use methods that media critics would decry as unethical. Similarly, almost all media workers interviewed for this research admitted that they would and have used, willingly or unwillingly, an unethical method to get information in the interest of the public. For some, succumbing to an unethical way to gather information is done as the last resort rather than as a means to an end. They said that they have and will inevitably continue to use under-handed methods should the situation call for them. Several journalists of both NST and Utusan admitted that they had, on several occasions, to disguise as police officers to get police or hospital-related information as access to this information is difficult. Nevertheless, they said they would not use any unethical method if they know that they would put the parties concerned in jeopardy,
physically or work-wise.

Klaidman and Beauchamp (1987) look at truth-telling as more than just deception or intrusion of bias. Despite the constraints of time and space, a journalist should attempt to produce stories that are substantially complete, encourage an objective understanding and are as balanced as possible. They view the concept of substantial completeness as the point at which a reasonable reader's requirements for information is satisfied. To present a story objectively entails writing and organising the material so as not to express or suggest a preference for one set of values over another. Nevertheless, Klaidman and Beauchamp said that fairness and objectivity does not merely mean giving equal weight to the views of those on either side of an issue because some views might be absurd, uninformed, framed or calculated to political ends. Like accuracy, objectivity as an ethical principle is a concept difficult to reconcile because while some researchers hail objectivity as attainable in news writing (Westerstahl, 1993; Dickson, 1994; Rosengren, 1980), others view objectivity as an impractical goal because human beings are by nature not objective (P. Ricoeur [cited in Belsey and Chadwick, 1992] and Meyer, 1987).

Subscribers to objectivity as a news writing value, often equate objective reporting with ethical reporting. Westerstahl (1993) maintains that objectivity in the dissemination of news can be guarded by adhering to certain norms and standards. The standards in objective writing are the attribution rule (attributing important facts to source/s), get both sides of a story, equal-space rule (conflicting groups should be given equal space) and equal-access rule (all interests in the community should have an equal opportunity to have their views and situations made known). These tenets are similar to Westerstahl's scheme of the concept of objectivity which displays the components of objectivity: factuality (the information must be truthful and relevant) and impartiality (balance/non-partisan and neutral presentation). Westerstahl views a truthful report as a report that presents arguments of the parties concerned accurately. The relevance of the news involve presenting various news items that relate to each other. By the same token, the inclusion of information that is not relevant to the main issue in the news could be taken to mean unobjective reporting (as seen in the Times coverage on the Pergau dam).

Nevertheless, as stated earlier, objectivity, too, is a difficult concept to study as, like ethics, it is subjective. Ricoeur attempts to explain this subjectivity when he said that the interpretation of a text is never complete or perfect. A text is characterised by its "plurivocity" such that it is "open to several readings and to several interpretations" (1992: 113). Meyer, too, feels that the notion of objectivity is itself a "fiction" - what is fair to one
group will feel like bias to another. A case in point is the difference in the Pergau coverage by the Malaysian newspapers and the Times. Where the Times felt that its coverage of the issue is justified because the freedom of expression merits that it exposes any alleged corruption, its Malaysian counterparts were unhappy and said that the Times was unobjective and "patronising" (NST, 24th Feb., 1994). It is quite apparent here how two different cultures view the concept of objectivity.

Perhaps the interview with the editor-in-chief of NST offers the best illustration to show how objectivity can be viewed as subjective. Asked how he would define objectivity, the editor-in-chief who used 'balanced' to mean objectivity, said "...nobody can really define balance. What constitutes balance? Do you mean to say that if I give 20 words to the prime minister, I must also give 20 words to the opposition? It may be balanced by way of word count, but is it balanced by way of power that the two men (referring to the prime minister and the opposition leader) have over the country? The prime minister may not feel it is fair to give him 20 words and to the opposition 20 words when he controls 70 percent of popular votes and the opposition controls only 30 percent of the popular votes..."

This sentiment then is manifested in the way NST and Utusan function where government-related news is extensively covered in the newspapers, while news on the opposition is uncommon. By any Western standard, this is a violation of press freedom and freedom of expression where access has to be given to all voices in the environment and the press should function as a forum for such voices to be heard. NST and Utusan, however, legitimise their stance by rationalising that since the government was put into power by the people, the press should work with the government for the betterment of the people, and too much dissenting voice would retard this process of development. Thus, several considerations have to be borne in mind when discussing objectivity. As far as the findings of the research have shown, even a universal principle like objectivity has to look to the wider social, political and cultural environment and context for a more appropriate definition. Every social context presents its own realities that should not be ignored if reality is to be obtained about a culture.

C.2 The Principle of Humaneness

This principle requires a journalist to obey "natural duties" like giving assistance to another in need and not doing direct, intentional harm to others. Though an indisputably worthy principle, this is not something easy to achieve because a journalist is not always confronted with a clear, uncomplicated scenario. In the routine of their jobs, journalists,
intentionally or otherwise, regularly harm individuals, e.g. corrupt officials, unsuccessful athletes, actors and many others. Matters are made worse when parties not directly involved also get embroiled and hurt in the process.

John Stuart Mill (in his monograph *On Liberty* cited in Klaidman and Beauchamp, 1987: 95) advocated the Harm Principle that says that a "person's liberty may justifiably be restricted to prevent harm that the person's actions would cause to others". Thus, no matter how much freedom of expression a journalist is given, this freedom should stop at the point and instant where that freedom would cause harm to an individual. But again, in reality, this is difficult to practise and achieve and media workers have been known to step on many toes in the process of producing news. Many news workers of *NST* and *Utusan* said that though they have to be resourceful in the methods they used to gather information, they would not deliberately use a method that would harm the sources of information, physically or work-wise.

The nature of harm itself needs to be made clear. Feinberg (cited in Lambeth, 1986) defines harm as involving thwarting, defeating or setting back an interest which is of these specific kinds: property, privacy, confidentiality, friendship, reputation, health and career. By this definition then, defamation would be considered as causing harm as is so often seen when a newspaper article discloses information about a person's life that causes serious embarrassment or financial loss.

Klaidman and Beauchamp shed some light on the vagueness surrounding whether something qualifies as a harm. They said that this vagueness often results from a lack of clarity about the cause or a failure to differentiate between "causal and moral responsibility". For example, the media's expose of several public figures' extra-marital affairs or other socially-unacceptable behaviour, have led to their resignation. Klaidman and Beauchamp argue that a distinction has to be made between the harm caused by the journalist's act and the harm that resulted from these individuals' actions. It cannot be argued reasonably that such exposes were not justified because the substantial basis for some of the harm already existed before the stories were reported. Therefore, the blame for the exposure should rest, not so much on the media workers who are after all executing their responsibility as a watchdog, as on the individuals involved in the scandal for disregarding the consequences of their actions. A fitting example from this research is the alleged Rahim affair where many news workers of *NST* and *Utusan* felt that the expose of this scandal was justified as it was Rahim who had disregarded public decency and put himself into public shame by having an affair with a "minor".
Depending on how the information has been gathered and the justification for it, media critics may view exposés as invasion of privacy. As per the discussions during the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the ethics of journalism, the right of individuals to privacy must be respected, and this includes the rights of persons in public office except where their private life may have an effect on their public life. The fact that a person holds a public position does not deprive him or her of the right to respect for his/her privacy.

The decision to print or not to print a story that may impinge on an individual's privacy and subsequently cause harm, has never been an easy decision to make. Media workers interviewed for this research said the attempt to strike a balance between the right to respect for private life and the freedom of expression, would almost always result in one party being frustrated. Should one adopt the position made in the British House of Commons that "...when one decides to become a public figure, one gives up in some way a little of one's right to privacy"? Or should one adhere to the ethical tenet and the Harm Principle that one's execution of his/her liberty should not go to the extent of harming a person? Bok attempts to lighten this ethical dilemma when she said, "There is no clear line surrounding private life that can demarcate regions journalists ought not to explore." (1980: 252). Similarly, this is the dilemma media workers of NST and Utusan face in their profession, particularly in the Rahim coverage.

Privacy cases involve a weighing of conflicting responsibilities: the obligation to print on the one hand, and the obligation to be compassionate toward the parties whose privacy is being violated. Thus in the absence of any clear line, to weigh whether an invasion of privacy will result in physical or emotional harm, a journalist either quotes the public interest and right-to-know-the-information, and therefore "the ends do justify the means if the utility of the ends outweighs the disutility of the means"; or falls back on his or her moral or religious obligations, or use legal, political or organisational consideration to guide him/her toward a reasonable and acceptable decision.

In the Rahim scandal, the NST and Utusan media workers were spared this dilemma when the prime minister himself appealed to the media to reduce the coverage of the issue and to let the legal system be the judge of Rahim's innocence or guilt. But had the "directive" not come from the top, the media workers would have been split in their decision to continue with the exposé. While many during the interviews said they would go ahead with the story because the public has the right to know about its elected leaders, others said they would not print as their religious obligations do not allow harming a person's reputation.
publicly; other means would have been thought of. Yet others would leave it to the editorial and management executives to decide on the next course of action, and more often than not, the stance taken by the company's higher echelon would mirror or support the stance of the political masters.

C.3 The Principle of Justice

This principle is reflected in the media workers' concern for fairness. To that end, several practices of the Washington Post code of ethics that not only defines fairness but also guides toward fairness, is quoted:

i Fairness means not omitting facts of major importance or significance
ii Fairness means not including irrelevant information at the expense of significant facts
iii Fairness means not consciously or unconsciously misleading or even deceiving readers
iv Fairness means not hiding biases or emotions behind pejorative words

One may notice that this concept of fairness overlaps with other principles mentioned, especially the principle of truth-telling which also entails fairness. In fact, all these principles which are moral values are inextricably linked and act as guideposts for discovering moral obligations. Common key words regularly used by media researchers to mean truth-telling and fairness are balanced, neutrality, impartiality, objectivity and unbiased.

The most widely discussed form of bias in journalism is when personal beliefs or values intrude into news coverage. These personal views often blend with and may distort factual accounts. There are several forms in which bias may be manifested: a) use of language which colours an otherwise factual report and conveys an implicit but clear value judgement, b) explicit argument and compilation of evidence favouring one view, c) the omission of points on one "side" in a straight news report, and d) news is selected and shaped where there is concentration on the negative aspects (McQuail, 1979).

Of the three case studies analysed, the Pergau dam reportage is seen to be the most biased as it not only used pejorative or emotive words (as discussed in the content analysis), but it also misled the readers by not giving them all the relevant information (as in the Times reportage). The content analysis has shown that the Pergau dam and the Arqam coverage at

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times focused more on the negative aspects than the positive, and this may result in the formation of valued judgements in the readers.

However, not everyone subscribes to the viewpoint or the theory that statements of fact and value (i.e. use of pejorative words) can be kept neatly separate, as if there were no relation of dependence or any similarity between them. Klaidman and Beauchamp (1987) are of the opinion that many values are supported by facts, and similarly, factual statements are often presented as if they were values. They argued that an evaluation can also be a fact and therefore value-based language should not necessarily be avoided if it provided the most accurate description of what is being reported. Though acknowledging that the uncritical use of evaluative words makes it easier for bias to emerge, they maintain that evaluative language can be used in news stories when there is a substantial factual base to support it. In fact, evaluative language can expedite reader's understanding of what actually happened. The use of evaluative words as seen in the content analysis of the three case studies, particularly the Pergau issue, not only helps to paint the story more vividly, but it shows the difference in the style of writing between the Malaysian newspapers and the Times. Where the former generally separates facts from opinions, the latter used value-based language to drive a fact home.

On the other hand, media analysts concerned with bias and fairness view bias as largely in the eye not of the journalist, but rather, the consumer. Stevenson and Green (1980) argued that "what news consumers see as biased news is often material which is discrepant with the information already in their hands, material which evokes an evaluative response. News bias is less a function of reporters' accuracy or fairness and more a function of what readers and viewers think the situation is or ought to be". McQuail (1992) attributes the interpretation of meaning (which results in bias) to culture which organises meaning and allocates values, by means of symbols, in a consistent way so that what counts as positive or negative can be readily deciphered by those who share the value. Thus, objectivity or fairness should be seen as relative (Glasser, 1988; Rosengren, 1980), it varies from one society to another and even from one theme or issue to another depending on the overall balance of view in the society.

Going by the definition and the guidelines for the concept of fairness, objectivity and balance, the two Malaysian newspapers can be surmised as being partial and unobjective in some of their coverage of the three case studies. Where the Times may be seen as objective because it often included both sides of the story, it also shows its partiality with the usage of pejorative words and instances of misleading facts and concentration on
negative aspects of the news. Similarly, NST and Utusan, while generally seen as objective because they adhere to the conventional news writing tradition where opinions and personal comments are not included in the news, are also biased as conflicting viewpoints (the opposition, per se) are seldom put forth.

C.4 The Principle of Freedom

This principle guides journalists to safeguard the freedom of the press. The ASNE code of ethics stated that this freedom must be "defended against encroachment or assault from any quarter, public or private". There are numerous documented examples of how the public and private quarters have tried to impinge on this freedom; the most classic among them being the case of the Pentagon Papers in America where the New York Times and the Washington Post successfully overturned a federal court injunction that prevented publication of a massive series of articles based on secret official records describing the origin and conduct of the Vietnam War. In a country where freedom of the press is legally guaranteed or well-defined in the constitution, the task of protecting this freedom is expedited compared to societies that do not have such constitutional guarantees and which depend very much on and are at the mercy of the ruling government of the day. To the latter (like Malaysia), the task of defending press freedom is greater and more taxing because of the conflicting roles the media have to play: between the traditional adversarial role the media would like to play and the development journalism role the government wants them to play.

This freedom also means freedom in the sense of the media's autonomy and independence. As the ASNE code asserts, "Journalists must avoid impropriety...as well as conflict of interest. They should neither accept anything nor pursue any activity that might compromise or seem to compromise their integrity". A journalist faces both overt, tangible and subtle threats to her/his independence. Threats can come in many forms, most common among them being the free gifts (commonly known as 'freebies' in the journalism circle).

The taking of freebies - which Meyer (1986) calls the financial conflict of interest - has always been an area of ethical concern in journalism as it is largely viewed that these gifts of value are given by people who want to influence the content of the paper. For example, an airline giving travel writers free passage to a destination with the hope of getting positive review or coverage of its services. An absolutist ethicist (see below) who holds strongly to ethical principles would put a total ban on the taking of such free gifts based on the
This ethical ruling elicits different responses from media researchers and media practitioners alike. These responses, whether supporting or opposing the ruling, would fall into either one of three categories of ethical theories: a) the absolutist ethics, b) the antinomian ethics and c) the situationist ethics (Brooks et al, 1988). As mentioned above, the absolutist ethicist would rigidly follow ethical moral principles to the letter, regardless of the situation. At the other extreme is the antinomian ethicist who does not believe in or abide by any rule, standard or principle. The situationist, as the name suggests, weighs the situation before embarking on a decision or action. Many would view the absolutist as foolhardy since in life there are a lot of grey areas that would compel one to not follow any or all moral principles unquestioningly. The antinomian too is similarly regarded because, a person, more so a journalist who should have a sense of social responsibility, who would stop at nothing in the pursuit of news, is dangerous. The most acceptable ethicist then would be the situationist who weighs the merits and demerits of a situation before embarking upon an action or decision.

A majority of the journalists interviewed for this research fall into the situationist category while a handful are found at the two extremes. Almost all the news workers said that as a general practice, they do accept the freebies given as they view these gifts as being part and parcel of the news gathering process. But, the journalists also take into account the value of these freebies before accepting them. Through an unwritten policy, both newspaper companies made it known to the journalists that freebies considered valuable or expensive would have to be declared and would almost always not be accepted. Freebies in the form of cash are never accepted.

The offering of these free gifts can at times be a cause of dilemma in the journalists. This is because some opinions view the acceptance of these gifts as "selling one's soul", and yet not to accept them could be considered rude as in the Malaysian context, giving is part of the culture to show goodwill. On the other hand, those who accept these freebies do so on the rationale that the gifts will not compromise nor cloud their objectivity; and those who do not take, do so out of a sense of moral obligations. Nevertheless, the ruling on not accepting the free gifts should not be too cut and dry as due consideration should be given to small newspapers that may not have sufficient resources as do their bigger competitors. Must the former always have to lose out on big assignments just because of the ruling?

**NST** and **Utusan** both adopt the policy that only freebies and junkets of a certain value can be taken without any qualms; others will have to be carefully weighed and reviewed.
Like the financial conflict of interest, the non-financial conflict of interest too can pose an ethical problem. An example of this is when a reporter is assigned to cover a court case where his or her sibling is on trial. Or a more common example is when a religious or moralistic reporter is asked to write a balanced story on AIDS and homosexuality. The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, code states that, "Journalists must be free from obligation to any interest than the public's right to know". This stance assumes a state of total detachment with the "submergence of prejudice and personal conviction". This, however, is an idealistic assumption, a black-or-white approach that denies or ignores the many shadowy areas in reality where the real ethical struggles are waged. Catherine Carlton (cited in Meyer, 1986) realistically noted that, "It is hoped that all personal loyalties are set aside when one is performing in a professional role, but...journalists can never be sure to what extent they are influenced by personal factors which control perceptions and predispositions".

It is a basic principle of any ethical consideration of journalism to make a distinction between news and opinions, making it impossible to confuse them. News is information about facts and data, while opinions convey thoughts, ideas, beliefs or value judgements of the media workers and the media companies. Though it is ideal to expect the detachment of personal thoughts and value judgements from the writing, in reality news and opinions ever so often get entangled, thus echoing Klaidman and Beauchamp's (1987) view that statements of facts and values cannot be clearly compartmentalised. This is apparent in the Pergau dam reportage in the newspapers where (especially in the Times coverage) this researcher saw only a thin line drawn between straight news and opinions, with the latter occasionally encroaching into the former.

C.5 The Principle of Stewardship

The concept of social responsibility where a journalist manages his resources of communication with due regard for the rights of others, the rights of the public and the moral health of the journalism profession itself, is central to the principle of stewardship. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines stewardship as the "individual's responsibility to manage his life and property with proper regard to the rights of others". The Commission for a Free and Responsible Press, the Hutchins Commission, 1947, develops the idea of the social responsibility with these requirements:

i A truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning
ii A forum for the exchange of comment and criticism
iii Vigorous editorial leadership, by presenting and clarifying the goals and values of society
iv Full access to the day's intelligence

Martin (1981) views the most important requirement of media performance in respect of freedom and responsibility as a standing up for the interest of the citizens in the face of pressures, especially those which come from the government. The press plays numerous roles - advocacy, participative, active, investigative and critical - which compels it to go further than just observe and report.

This principle of stewardship, while very honourable and altruistic on one hand, may also be the very principle that may lead journalists to be unethical. This is because media workers, in their enthusiasm to safeguard that freedom from being violated by various forces in the environment where the media operate, may go overboard in the manner they gather and process the news, subsequently resulting in ethical issues being raised. In fact, the main criticism against the constitutional provision for freedom of the press is that, while this freedom is guaranteed, nowhere is there a proviso or cautionary statement to oblige a journalist to act responsibly as ethics would demand. And it may be this very freedom that could erode the ethical principles that a journalist should practise.

Where Malaysia is concerned, the principle of stewardship is not viewed in the same context as that of the West. Where in the West, the principle of stewardship means safeguarding the freedom of the press from internal and external pressures and thus making the media play an adversarial role, in Malaysia this freedom includes a social responsibility concept. This sees the media working hand in hand with the government and other social forces for the betterment of the society. The participant observation at the two newspapers and the interviews with the media workers, particularly interviews with the newspaper executives, show that while the press does bow to special requests from the government which in reality are few and far between, it is free to function most of the time. It becomes the watchdog of the government and other social forces, but at the same time, the newspapers, because they realise the socio-economic-political environment they are in, would not hesitate to work with the government whenever the need arises. This is the Malaysian definition of the principle of stewardship. The participant observation and the interviews have amply shown how concern for the state and the society often over-rules other considerations like journalism professionalism in news production process.
In summary, the five ethical principles discussed here encompass moral values and virtues that a media worker should adhere and practise to be seen as ethical in the journalism profession. These principles are universal principles that codes of ethics, media researchers and analysts use as guideposts for discovering the moral obligations of media workers. The fact that these principles overlap emphasises the importance of these virtues, but more importantly, that they are linked and inter-related. Based on these ethical principles, the news workers in Malaysia can be concluded to be generally ethical in their news gathering and writing conduct. A significant point that emerges from the analysis of the data is that though many ethical principles are universal, in reality they have to be also appropriated to the social, cultural and political framework that media workers operate in.

A recurring point that was apparent in the thesis is the tendency of the Malaysian press to work closely with the government for racial harmony and national development. This can be seen in the emphasis given to the voice of the government which features heavily in most stories covered by the press. The majority of the sources used by the reporters are official government sources. Giving access to government/political elite and making sure that the government succeeds in its undertakings is part of the ethics of the profession and a feature of the journalistic routines. This is the social responsibility of the press in Malaysia, i.e. to work with the government for the betterment of the society. The loyalty to the government has compelled the media to adopt a philosophy favouring certain parties over others. Subsequently, ethical principles like 'objectivity' or 'fairness' would be oriented to this policy of the media organisations.

Studying the sociology of news production in NST and Utusan has also shed light on the journalistic practice pertaining to the acceptance of free gifts. Here again one sees the role played by cultural values and norms in influencing the conduct of news workers. Where in other media systems accepting a freebie would be considered unethical as it may compromise the news worker's objectivity, in the Malaysian culture not accepting a free gift tantamounts to insulting the giver. Perhaps what most differentiates the Malaysian media practice from the routines of other media systems is the influence of the adat that dictates how people interact socially. It is thus part of the adat to revere a leader or to abhor open confrontation. Understanding the values and norms would put a clearer perspective on media practices.
D. SUMMARY

This thesis set out to examine the factors and influences unique to the Malaysian environment that affect ethical decision-making in the process of news production. These factors and influences were analysed at both the macro and micro levels where the latter examines the specific internal and external elements in the media environment that influence news workers' ethical conduct when they gather and write news. The usage of codes of ethics in the Malaysian media system was also examined to see the extent of their influence on the ethical conduct of the news workers. The findings have shown that ethical obligations are not just innate where an individual's socio-cultural and religious upbringing and environment would influence ethical behaviour, but that an individual can also be imposed by media routines, policies, laws and regulations to undertake a specific ethical/unethical decision. An individual's socio-cultural values can be further nurtured by the wider cultural context in which he/she functions. The findings in this thesis support the approaches on media content discussed in Chapter Two, and in the Malaysian context, the organisational routines approach, the communication/journalist centred approach, the external influence approach and the ideological/hegemony approach have all intertwined to affect ethical conduct and media output.

It is also the concern of the thesis to examine the nature of the ethical problems that confront news workers in the process of news production as understanding could result in better adherence to responsible journalism. Universal ethical principles which have been accepted as guidelines in media codes world-wide were used to gauge the ethical orientation of the news workers in Malaysia. It is also the objective of the thesis to study whether the universal ethical principles are acceptable and applicable to examine the ethical dimension of the news gathering and writing process of the Malaysian news workers.

Since there has not been extensive research done on media ethics in Malaysia, this study is an attempt to review and reassess the literature on ethics with the hope that this would be a contribution to the scholarship on the Malaysian media.

The methodologies and theoretical approaches employed have demonstrated the internal and external influences on media content and factors that affect ethical decision-making. It has been shown that though there are various factors that affect the ethical decision-making of news workers in the process of news production, in the Malaysian context, the socio-political influences are the most compelling. While the sociology of news approach examines the ethical conduct of news workers in the gathering and writing process according to several ethical principles, the political economy and cultural studies...
approaches study how other factors, i.e. the politics and cultures of the land, may also affect media workers in their profession.

The social organisation of news at the micro and macro levels was studied to find out the influences on ethical decision-making as it is found that the dominant Western framework with its emphasis on the autonomous self is insufficient to give a holistic examination of the sources of ethics. The political economy and cultural studies approaches addressed this weakness by looking into the socio-cultural and political dimensions to explain influences on news content. It is concluded that the libertarian moral-philosophical perspective should not be adopted exclusively to explain the influences on ethics, or at least not in the Malaysian context which has other underlying factors that equally demand media consideration.

Some of the findings of the news production process for the thesis may not differ much from those of studies of Western journalism and news production: these studies show the influence of organisational rules and policies and the dominant ideology. The fact that some parallels and similarities exist between the Western and Malaysian journalistic practices (e.g. newsroom hierarchy where there is descending order on autonomy) cannot be denied. However, this research differs from other Western studies in that it highlights the press-government (or state-media) symbiotic relations and the strong influence of cultural norms and values on ethics. The Western ethics framework limits the sources of ethical decision-making to the autonomous self, thus reflecting how personal freedom is paramount in that society. Similarly, the findings here have shown that the more commanding influences on ethical conduct on the Malaysian society are the political/government elites and the cultural values and norms. This is the aspect of ethics in news production that the Western ethics framework does not uncover. Without drawing on these alternative frameworks, it would be inadequate to understand ethical practices in the Malaysian society.

The strength of the thesis is its findings which examined how the political and socio-cultural structure in which the media operate, affects the daily performance of media organisations. Though media organisations everywhere in this world are influenced in one way or another by the political and economic power that runs the country, the Malaysian experience is unique in that this political power is coupled with the socio-cultural obligations to affect ethical conduct. Only by understanding these two forces and their influence on media routines would the study on the Malaysian media be holistic.
This thesis on media ethics is about understanding how a society (and for that matter, every society in this world) has its own parochial values to serve its people for its own purposes (Gerbner, 1989). It attempts to find an alternative framework in the study of ethics to complement the dominant Western concept of viewing ethics as the 'right' of the individual to be ethical or not. In the Malaysian context, this individual right is not always apparent or clear cut, instead the media people encounter conflicting pressures and loyalties that take the "individual autonomy" out of their hands. The preceding chapters have shown that the study on ethics cannot be viewed 'universally', a 'native' perspective is imperative to understand ethics in the Malaysian environment.

To recapitulate, where the Western concept of ethics emphasises individual freedom to make ethical choices, media ethics in Malaysia distinguishes between the rights of the individual and social responsibility. The Western concept of freedom is characterised by freedom from external and arbitrary restraint; the focus of this concept is on "individualism". John Merrill, for instance, promotes an uncompromising autonomy as the first imperative and warns against the collectivistic tendencies of social responsibility (Christians, 1989). A media worker in Malaysia, on the other hand, faces a "hierarchy of loyalties" - to government/country, to employers, to society, to religious beliefs, to cultural beliefs - and the ranking of this hierarchy varies from person to person, from issue to issue, etc. More often than not, a media worker in Malaysia has to put aside his personal freedom in favour of these loyalties. Thus, studying and viewing ethics in its indigenous environment will elicit the real meaning of ethics and the influences on it.

It is hoped that the findings of the thesis are a helpful contribution to the understanding of the influences on ethics and news production, not only in general but particularly in the Malaysian media studies. The extremely rapid development in media technology that the world is witnessing today has resulted in the media being seen as homogenous, thus ignoring or not making accommodations for differences in historical experiences, social structures, philosophies and concepts of freedom and responsibility that are found in every environment that the media operate. The Third World countries in general, and several South-East Asian leaders in particular, have repeatedly criticised the West for not taking the above differences into consideration in international communication. Looking beyond one's own ethnocentrism is important for communication across cultures to be successful. This is where the research has contributed to the field of knowledge, i.e. it has analysed the social, cultural and political contexts to understanding influences on ethics and media content. It at least provides an exploratory, heuristic framework for explaining why the Malaysian system of communication ethics tends to emphasise certain norms and values as being more important than the dominant Western concept of communication ethics.
APPENDIX A : EXAMPLES OF FOUR CODES

1. CANONS OF JOURNALISM, MALAYSIA

WHEREAS the Malaysian Press reiterates its belief in the principles of Rukunegara and the national aspirations contained therein:

It acknowledges its role in contributing to the process of nation-building;

It recognises its duty to contribute fully to the promotion of racial harmony and national unity;

It recognises communism, racialism and religious extremism as grave threats to national well-being and security;

It believes in a liberal, tolerant, democratic society and in the traditional role of a free and responsible Press serving the people by faithfully reporting facts without fear or favour;

It believes that a credible press is an asset to the nation;

It believes in upholding standards of social morality;

It believes that there must be no restrictions on the entry of Malaysians into the profession and;

It believes that the Press has a duty to contribute to the formation of public policy.

WHEREAS The Malaysian Press does hereby adhere to the following Canons of Journalism:

1. The primary responsibility of the Malaysian journalist is to report facts accurately and faithfully and to respect the right of the public to truth;

2. In pursuance of this duty he shall uphold the fundamental freedom in the honest collection of news and the right to fair comment and criticism;

3. He shall use only proper methods to obtain news, photographs/films and documents;

4. It shall be his duty to rectify and published information found to be incorrect;
5 He shall respect the confidentiality of the source of information;

6 He shall uphold standards of morality in the performance of his duties and shall avoid plagiarism, calumny or slander, libel, sedition, unfounded accusations or acceptance of bribe in any form;

7 He shall avoid publication of news or reports, communal or extremist in nature, or contrary to the moral value of multi-racial Malaysia;

8 It shall be incumbent upon him to understand public and national policies pertaining to the profession.

(Source: Faridah and Mus Chairil, 1996)

2 JOURNALISM CODE OF ETHICS, INDONESIA

Article 1
Characteristic of the Indonesian Journalist

The Indonesian Journalist believes in God, upholds the Pancasila, is faithful to Policy Law 45, is strong and respects all aspects of basic human rights, and thereby strives toward the security of the Indonesian public as a citizen of the peoples of the world.

Article 11
Responsibility

1 The Indonesian Journalist, with a sense of responsibility and wisdom, shall consider whether it is necessary or otherwise to report a piece of news or an article. He/she shall not publish a report or an article that is of a destructive nature, that is not beneficial to the nation and the society, that will create disorder or that goes against the sensitivities of the social values or the religion of an individual or a group protected by Law.

2 The Indonesian Journalist conducts his profession with freedom and a sense of responsibility toward national security. He shall not use his profession or his expertise for his own benefit.

3 In the pursuance of his profession, his interaction with other nationalities shall be
based on national interests.

Article 111
Reporting Technique and Airing of Opinions

1 The Indonesian Journalist shall use honest means to obtain news.

2 The Indonesian Journalist shall ensure the accuracy of the news before reporting it.

3 When writing news, the Indonesian Journalist shall differentiate between fact and opinion to ensure that news that is distorted or fabricated, is not published. Headlines should mirror news content.

4 The reporting of court proceedings pertaining to an individual accused of a misconduct but has not been found guilty, shall be done wisely especially regarding the individual's name and identity.

5 When writing opinions on an event / issue, the Indonesian Journalist shall use his freedom, national and social responsibility, honesty and tolerance.

6 The Indonesian Journalist shall avoid any publication of an immoral and sensitive nature.

Article IV
Violation of Rights

1 Writings that are unfounded, that threaten or endanger national security, that deliberately distort the events of the story, the acceptance of a gift as an incentive to report or not a piece of news, are a violation of professional journalism.

2 Any reporting that is false or may endanger the nation, is of no benefit to the nation / group / individual, shall; be revoked or rectified, while the individual who has been inconvenienced, shall be given the opportunity to reply or correct the report as mentioned above.

Article V
Sources of News

1 The Indonesian Journalist shall respect and protect the position of news sources who
want to remain anonymous and shall not publish statements that are 'off the record'.

2 The Indonesian Journalist shall sincerely name the source of the news in the gathering of information or when using information from any newspaper or publication. The Indonesian Journalist shall avoid plagiarism and acknowledge that it is immoral.

3 The acceptance of money or promising to publish or not to publish anything that may benefit or otherwise an individual, group or party is a grave violation of the Code of Ethics.

Article VI
Strength of the Code

The Indonesian Code of Ethics is formulated on the principle that the observance of this code rests on the responsibility and goodwill of the Indonesian Journalist.

Article VI1

The Honorary Council Organisation of Indonesian Journalists is responsible for the monitoring of the Journalism Code of Ethics and answering any doubts arising thereof.

(Source : Faridah and Mus Chairil, 1996)

3 CODE OF ETHICS, NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS, UNITED KINGDOM

Like other trade unions formed for mutual protection and economic betterment, the National Union of Journalists desires and encourages its members to maintain good quality of workmanship and high standard of conduct.

Through years of courageous struggle for better wages and working conditions its pioneers and their successors have kept their aims in mind, and have made provisions in Union rules not only for penalties on offenders, but for the guidance and financial support of members who may suffer loss of work for conforming to Union principles.

While punishment by fine, suspension or expulsion is provided for in cases of "conduct detrimental to the interests of the Union or of the profession", any member who is victimised (Rule 20, clause (f)) for refusing to do work..."incompatible with the honour
and interests of the profession", may rely on adequate support from Union funds.

A member of the Union has two claims on his loyalty - one by his Union and one by his employer. These need not clash so long as the employer complies with the agreed Union conditions and makes no demand for forms of service incompatible with the honour of the profession or with the principles of trade unionism.

1 A member should do nothing that would bring discredit on himself, his Union, his newspaper, or his profession. He should study the rules of his Union, and should not, by commission or omission, act against the interests of the Union.

2 Unless the employer consents to a variation, a member who wishes to terminate his employment must give notice, according to agreement or professional custom.

3 No member should seek promotion or seek to obtain the position of another journalist by unfair methods. A member should not, directly or indirectly, attempt to obtain for himself or any one else any commission, regular or occasional, held by a freelance member of the Union.

4 It is unprofessional conduct to exploit the labour of another journalist by plagiarism, or by using his copy for linage purposes without permission.

5 Staff men who do linage work should be prepared to give up such work to conform with any pooling scheme approved by the National Executive Council, or any Union plan to provide a freelance member with a means of earning a living.

6 A member holding a staff appointment shall serve first the paper that employs him. In his own time a member is free to engage in other creative work, but he should not undertake any extra work in his rest time or holidays if by doing so he is depriving an out-of-work member of a chance to obtain employment. Any misuse of rest days - won by the Union on the sound argument that periods of recuperation are needed after strenuous hours of labour - is damaging to trade union aims for a shorter working week.

7 While a spirit of willingness to help other members should be encouraged at all times, members are under a special obligation of honour to help an unemployed member to obtain work.

8 Every journalist should treat subordinates as considerately as he would desire to be
treated by his superiors.

9 Freedom in the honest collection and publication of news facts, and the rights of fair comments and criticism, are principles which every journalist should defend.

10 A journalist should fully realise his personal responsibility for everything he sends to his paper or agency. He should keep Union and professional secrets, and respect all necessary confidences regarding sources of information and private documents. He should not falsify information or documents, or distort or misrepresent facts.

11 In obtaining news or pictures, reports and Press photographers should do nothing that will cause pain or humiliation to innocent, bereaved, or otherwise distressed persons. News, pictures, and documents should be acquired by honest methods only.

12 Every journalist should keep in mind the dangers in the laws of libel, contempt of court, and copyright. In reports of law court proceedings it is necessary to observe and practise the rule of fair play to all parties.

13 Whether for publication or suppression, the acceptance of a bribe by a journalist is one of the gravest professional offences.

(Source : Jones. 1980)

4 THE CODE OF THE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS, SIGMA DELTA CHI, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, believes the duty of the journalists is to serve the truth.

We believe the agencies of mass communication are carriers of public discussion and information, acting on their Constitutional mandate and freedom to learn and report the facts.

We believe in public enlightenment as the forerunner of justice, and in our Constitutional role to seek the truth as part of the public's right to know the truth.

We believe those responsibilities carry obligations that require journalists to perform with intelligence, objectivity, accuracy and fairness.
To these ends, we declare acceptance of the standards of practice here set forth:

1 **Responsibility:**
The public's right to know of events of public importance and interest is the overriding mission of the mass media. The purpose of distributing news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare. Journalists who use their professional status as representatives of the public for selfish or other unworthy motives violate a high trust.

2 **Freedom of the press:**
Freedom of the press is to be guarded as an inalienable right of people in a free society. It carries with it the freedom and the responsibility to discuss, question, and challenge action and utterances of our government and of our public and private institutions. Journalists uphold the right to speak unpopular opinions and the privilege to agree with the majority.

3 **Ethics:**
Journalists must be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

1 Gifts, favours, free travel, special treatment or privileges can compromise the integrity of journalists and their employers. Nothing of value should be accepted.

2 Secondary employment, political involvement, holding public office, and service in community organisations should be avoided if it comprises the integrity of journalists and their employers. Journalists and their employers should conduct their personal lives in a manner which protects them from conflict of interest, real or apparent. Their responsibilities to the public are paramount. That is the nature of their profession.

3 So-called news communications from private sources should not be published or broadcast without substantiation of their claims to news value.

4 Journalists will seek news that serves the public interest despite the obstacles. They will make constant efforts to assure that the public's business is conducted in public and that public records are open to public inspection.

5 Journalists acknowledge the newsman's ethic of protecting confidential sources of information.

4 **Accuracy and objectivity:**

Good faith with the public is the foundation of all worthy journalism.

1 Truth is our ultimate goal.

2 Objectivity in reporting the news is another goal which serves as the mark of an experienced professional. It is a standard of performance toward which we strive. We
honour those who achieve it.

3 There is no excuse for inaccuracy or lack of thoroughness.

4 Newspaper headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles they accompany. Photographs and telecasts should give an accurate picture of an event and not highlight a minor incident out of context.

5 Sound practice makes clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free of opinion or bias and represent all sides of an issue.

6 Partisanship in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth violates the spirit of American journalism.

7 Journalists recognise their responsibility for offering informed analysis, comment, and editorial opinion on public events and issues. They accept the obligation to present such material by individuals whose competence, experience, and judgement qualify them for it.

8 Special articles or presentations devoted to advocacy or the writer's own conclusions and interpretations should be labelled as such.

V Fair Play:

Journalists at all times must show respect for the dignity, privacy, rights, and well-being of people encountered in the course of gathering and presenting the news.

1 The news media should not communicate unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without giving the accused a chance to reply.

2 The news media must guard against invading a person's right to privacy.

3 The media should not ponder to morbid curiosity about details of vice and crime.

4 It is the duty of news media to make prompt and complete correction of their errors.

5 Journalists should be accountable to the public for their reports and the public should be encouraged to voice its grievances against the media. Open dialogue with our readers, viewers and listeners should be fostered.

VI Pledge

Journalists should actively censure and try to prevent violations of these standards, and they should encourage their observance by all newspeople. Adherence to this code of ethics is intended to preserve the bond of mutual trust and respect between American journalists and the American people.

(Source: Jones, 1980).
APPENDIX B : NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS, MALAYSIA.
CODE OF ETHICS

1 The primary duty of the journalists is to respect the truth and the right of the public to know the truth.

2 In the pursuance of this duty, the journalists are to uphold the following principles: the freedom to gather and disseminate information truthfully and the right to view their comments and criticisms justly.

3 The journalists shall only report facts with known sources. Journalists shall not conceal information or falsify documents.

4 The journalists shall use fair means to obtain news, photographs and documents.

5 The journalists shall make every effort to rectify published information found to be incorrect.

6 The journalists shall respect the professional confidentiality of the sources of information.

7 The journalists shall consider the following matters as grave professional misconduct:
   - Plagiarism
   - Slander, libel and unfounded accusations
   - Acceptance of any form of bribe, as compensation for reporting or concealing information

8 The journalists shall respect the professionalism of fellow-journalists; the journalists shall reject any form of interference from the government or other group.

(Source : Faridah and Mus Chairil, 1996)
# APPENDIX C: CODING SCHEDULE

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<th>Writer of News Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bylined reporters (name of reporter) :</td>
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2 Unnamed reporter

10 Sources of News

1 Prime Minister

2 Other ministers / chief ministers (specify)

3 Other government officials / spokespersons (specify)

4 Opposition leaders (specify political party)

5 Unidentified sources

6 Other (specify)

(NB: Type of quotes: 1- DQ: Direct Quotation 2 - IQ: Indirect Quotation 3 - SRT: Simply Referred To)

11 Overall tone of news

(Specify use of words, if any, that show / indicate tone of news)

12 Number of viewpoints

1 One viewpoint

2 Multiple viewpoints

13 The forum where news was gathered

1 Press conference

2 During or after ministerial function

3 Official statement issued

4 During or after Parliamentary session

5 Personal interview

6 Others

14 How individuals were covered

1 Individuals / groups were covered favourably where the press did not transmit negative images of them

2 Individuals / groups were not covered favourably enough where the press transmitted negative images of them
3 Other
(Brief description of what is favourable and what is not favourable enough)

15 News accuracy

1 Facts were accurate (whether facts were consistent over the period of time when the news was covered)
2 Facts were not accurate (whether there were instances where individuals in the news complained about being misquoted or quoted out of context or reporters making up quotes)
3 Other
APPENDIX D : INTERVIEWING SCHEDULE

Date and time of interview :

Section A : Personal Data

1  Name

2  Age

3  Newspaper attached to

4  Number of years employed in this newspaper

5  Number of years in print journalism

6  Level of education

Section B : Newsworkers' Understanding and Practise of Ethics

1  To define ethics is not an easy task due to its subjective nature. With this in mind, what is your understanding of ethics in the journalism profession?

2  The National Union of Journalists formulated a code of ethics in 1972 - a set of principles that act as a guideline for ethical conduct. Are you aware of this code of ethics? If you are, how has this code affected you in your profession?

3  When you joined this organisation (or at any other time in your years of service), were you given the organisation's code of ethics? If so, what do you think of this code? If not, why do you think a big organisation like NST / UM did not do so.

4  In your years of service, has the organisation conducted training sessions / courses where ethics in journalism were emphasised? If so, how useful have these courses been for you? If not, do you initiate by requesting that your organisation conduct courses of this nature?

5  Many people (practitioners and non-practitioners alike) have said that codes of ethics
with principles like honesty, objectivity, fairness, etc., are only good in theory. Do you think it is practical to have a code of ethics as sometimes principles and practice are two elements difficult to reconcile?

6 Have you ever been in a situation where you questioned yourself about whether you were acting ethically? If so, could you describe it?

7 In the course of your journalistic work, you must have been caught in several ethical dilemmas, for example, whether to tell the truth or not as sometimes the truth can hurt people; or when your personal and professional convictions clash when you were asked to cover the gay movement that you loathe. How did you resolve such dilemmas? What factors help or influence your ethical decision-making?

8 For many people, their cultural and religious values (for example, never to lie in whatever circumstance) have influenced the way they think and function as a journalist. If they do, how do you think these obligations affect you?

9 When you act or do not act ethically, for example when you go through or use the proper channels, or when you snoop and sneak to get a story, what are the factors that influence the way you act?

10 How do you feel about a body, like the NUJ, having the power to censure, fine, suspend or sanction a journalist who violates an accepted standard of ethical conduct?

11 To summarise, what do you think are the underpinning factors that influence the ethical conduct of newsworkers? Are ethics nurtured (you learn and internalise them as you go through your craft), imposed (codes of ethics or forces like the government, advertisers or owners imposing their values on you), or are they innate (the values imbued from your cultural and religious backgrounds)?

Section C : News Production

1 NST/UM is reputed to be a right-wing newspaper that works in tandem with the government for the democracy, development and harmony of the country. Because of this orientation, readers get more development news (for example the good things that the government have done) and fewer news of a critical nature (for example, investigative pieces analysing and criticising the government for a doomed project). How does this orientation affect the way you gather and write the news?
Take the examples of stories like the Pergau Dam conflict, the constitutional monarchy crisis and the RTC scandal, who decides on how the news is shaped - do the reporters autonomously write their own stories or do the editors suggest the angle the stories should be written? If the latter is the case, what do you think of this?

What do you think are the reasons whenever your story gets killed or changes made to them?

Some people feel that reporters sometimes use under-handed methods, for instance, lie, deceive, invade a person's privacy or masquerade to get a story. What is your reaction to this? Would you defend or justify or condemn such methods of gathering news? (Please elaborate on answer)

While covering sensational news, how do you make a distinction between the private and public spheres of the individuals in the news, especially public figures caught in a scandal (a case in point is the RTC scandal). What would you consider as invasion of privacy? What do you think of the opinion that a public figure's life, private or otherwise, is opened for scrutiny? In the case of an individual who is not a public figure, how would you justify reporters invading the person's personal grief?

One area where a journalist always gets criticised is the acceptance of freebies. Some people, within and outside the media, feel that the moment a reporter accepts a freebie (no matter how big or small the value), s/he has sold her/his soul. This acceptance may lead to a conflict of interest. What is your reaction to this?

The Prime Minister, as many other sources, had on several occasions lamented about being misquoted by the press. The press is said to be guilty of inaccuracy, distorting reality by making up quotes or passing off an opinion as a fact. How do you view these criticisms?

Do you normally honour a source's wish not to be named or quoted? Is it a normal practice for you to test the validity of the information obtained from one source by talking to several sources?

One code of ethics recognises that "honesty demands objectivity, the submergence of prejudice and personal convictions". Is this easy to do in practice? (Please elaborate on
10 Some media researchers equate ethical reporting to objective and balance reporting where both sides of an issue are presented, stories are attributed and multiple viewpoints are given. With the Pergau Dam issue, the Arqam ban and the RTC scandal in mind, do you think NST / UM has achieved this standard of objective reporting? As a reporter, do you find it easy to practise this style of reporting?

11 In the coverage of the constitutional monarchy crisis in 1992/1993, there was a lot of quoting of unnamed sources. What is your view of this kind of reporting? Don't you think this is a Catch 22 situation where were you to reveal the sources, you are breaking reporter-source trust, and if you do not, then readers may question the credibility of the story? How do you resolve this?

12 After all that has been said and done, how do you view ethics - how does one practise ethics? Does ethics come from within a person or from some external factors? In your opinion from your years of service in journalism, what are the characteristics of an ethical person or a report that is ethical?

Section D : Extra Questions for Editors

1 Unlike the mass media in other parts of the world that have more freedom, the mass media in Malaysia function in a more restrictive environment. What would you say are the forces that restrict or influence the management of NST/ UM ?

2 How has the policy of the newspaper been formulated? What factors / considerations were taken into account in the formulation of the policy?

3 It is inevitable for a newspaper organisation to occasionally be in collision with various powers that operate in the same environment as the media. What are the powers that frequently influence or leave an impact in the way news is processed? Do these powers also influence the policy of the organisation in any way?

4 It is a common phenomenon everywhere else, as in Malaysia, for the executives at the top echelon of the organisational hierarchy to be close to people in the government. How does this affect the way the news is processed, especially news that directly involves the government? Take the RTC scandal or the constitutional monarchy crisis, was there a tendency to suppress or omit material information to please one party and
discredit the other?

5 Every newspaper company throughout the world functions within some form of laws and regulations. How have the laws and regulations in Malaysia influence the contents of this newspaper?

6 As an editor, how do you feel about having to suppress material facts to fit in with the interests of a third party (for example advertisers, government officials, owners, etc.)? Have you found yourself in such a situation where you are party to the manipulation of the public? If so, how did you resolve this dilemma?

7 To what extent do owners and advertisers influence the editorial independence of NST/UM? Have you ever been compelled to highlight or down-play a story at the request of an advertiser/owner? How did you handle the situation? How do you feel about such interference?

8 Is it the policy of the organisation to print an apology/correction after an error has been published? How do you decide when to print or not to print an apology?

9 What actions does the organisation normally take against a reporter who has violated an ethical conduct, for example, accept a valuable freebie or blatantly invade an individual's privacy?
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