Prejudice and Pride: News Media's Role in Promoting Tolerance
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"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men where the defenses for peace must be constructed."
UNESCO Charter

I.   Introduction

This is an issue paper that traces the relationship of mass media and prejudice and mass media's role in establishing a more pluralist and tolerant society. It examines the roots of prejudice and the social, cultural, and economic considerations that have affected media's performance and proposes an agenda for policies and action.

There are several assumptions in this paper:

1. The issue of the so-called Muslim-Christian divide has been with us for decades but there does not seem to be much progress in improving understanding and working out solutions to the critical issues affecting the relationship between the two groups.

2. Past peace processes have made short shrift of the importance of mass media in establishing consensus among protagonists.

3. The media has primarily functioned as a purveyor of events. Thus, it has neglected the more important role of investigating facts and issues, providing a forum for dialogue, examining processes, and providing needed information for problem-solving.

4. Several developments both at the global and local fronts are affecting the nature of relationships between cultures and religions. These include international agreements on cultural diversity and initiatives toward interfaith dialogue. On the other hand, there are developments that have exacerbated conflict or what is described as a "clash among civilizations." These developments have not been adequately reported because of several factors – the nature of media ownership, commercialism, and the level of knowledge and attitudes among media practitioners. The latter refers to access to information on these issues, mindsets, and inadequate skills in handling issues that are culturally sensitive.

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5. While this paper examines the so-called "Christian-Muslim divide," we also take note of the incisive views on identity expressed by 1998 Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen in his book, *Identity and Violence* (2006). According to Sen, a major source of potential conflict today is the presumption that people can be uniquely categorized based on religion or culture, ignoring the other identities that people have and value, involving class, gender, profession, language, science, moral and politics. The Nobel laureate warned that "to focus on the grand religious classification is not only to miss other significant concerns and ideas that move people, it also has the effect of generally magnifying the voice of religious authority" (p. 13). He further warned that the insistence on a choiceless singularity of human identity makes the world much more flammable. For Sen, "the prospect of peace in the contemporary world may well lie in the recognition of the plurality of our affiliations and identities which cut across each other and work against sharp divisions around one single hardened line of vehement division that allegedly cannot be resisted" (pp.16-17).

    Discussing further the issue, Sen reminded everyone that "one's religious faith does not itself resolve all the decisions we have to make in our lives, including those concerning our political and social priorities and the corresponding issues of conduct and action….But being Islamic can hardly be the only identity a Muslim has…a Muslim can choose among several different positions on matters involving political, moral, and social judgments without ceasing to be, for that reason, a Muslim" (p. 67).

6. Because of media's power to condition minds and to shape the direction of events, it is crucial that we examine policies, methodologies, strategies and practices that can enhance media's performance in the attainment of desired goals. We refer to policies on right to information, ethnic reporting, and media behavior such as what is found in both the manifest and latent content of media.

7. Setting the agenda on critical issues that now divide society should be a priority of media. In the local scene, there are two core issues in the conflict. One is the Bangsamoro and sovereignty issue, which to this day has not gained much headway in terms of public debate. The other is the adversarial discourse that is built on the assumption that nation and region are in conflict over resources and heritage, that the interest of one is the loss of the other. In the adversarial tone, the region perceives itself as being milked by the national government, while the national government regards regional assertiveness as a threat to national unity or sovereignty (Hornedo, l991).

    At the global front, there is a growing perception that media appears to give attention to Muslims of extremist views which are not representative of the majority of Muslims. The internal diversity of Islam is often overlooked in media where Islam is depicted as a "monolithic and one-dimensional religion" that threatens western democratic values. A large percentage of those surveyed (80

percent of interviewees in Germany after 2001) associated Islam with terrorism and oppression of women. Unless the more balanced voices of Muslim scholars or moderates shall have been heard, the media battle – and therefore the chance of understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims – is lost (Ahmed, 1992).

8. That there is lack of positive coverage of the contributions by Muslims in the social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological fields (which flourished in Islamic civilization during the pre-Enlightenment centuries) is a common perception.

   On the other hand, there is a perception that the Christian faith is more open to their Muslim brothers as evidenced by mosques that have been built in Christian societies including Rome, whereas Christians are not allowed to build churches or practice their faith in Muslim countries. In the Philippines, however, it seems that Muslims are more tolerant of Christians than Christians of Muslims.

9. Most of the prejudices and misconceptions can be attributed to the mis-education and misinformation of many Filipinos. Existing training institutions and schools of journalism, including basic education, have not given emphasis to teaching intercultural communication or interdisciplinary studies on culture.

10. The present culture has been shaped by images and content found in the media environment. Media has perpetuated the negative stereotypes, biases and limited view of the world. However, while media can breed prejudice, it can also be a potent force in counteracting this mindset.

Why focus on the mass media? With the advent of new information and communication technologies that give media its omnipresence, the power of media has been multiplied many times over. Among communication channels, media, with its widest reach and penetration and its ability to condition mindsets and shape the direction of events, is regarded as the primary and most credible source of news and information.

Harold Laswell (1948) was one of the earliest communication theorists who identified three functions of the mass media: providing information about the environment (surveillance), presenting options for problem-solving (correlation), and socialization and education. The "educative" power of the media has been extensively discussed in several cognitive and behavioral theories.

In its problem-solving role, media must first examine how it plays a significant part in human society by acting as "narrators of our story as human beings" and by providing the "first cut of history" even before social scientists and experts can study issues and events (Carlos, 2003). The journalist chooses what to write or report about depending on his/her consideration of what is relevant. In most cases, the journalist's stories are

the sole basis for the reader or viewer to make a decision or adopt an attitude toward an issue.

Today, media needs to take up its problem-solving function seriously. It must proactively serve as a powerful medium and forum in constructing ways toward achieving a more lasting solution to the conflict in Mindanao and in reducing further bias and discrimination, rather than pitting personalities and cultures against each other.

To begin with, media should do a reality check on how it portrays society. For instance, the view that the Philippines is a monolithic society is definitely flawed. In development parlance, beneficiaries of projects in Mindanao would be usually grouped into Muslims, Christians, and indigenous peoples (IPs). However, such pluralist view is still largely absent in media portrayal in the country.

It is commonly believed that the misunderstanding in and about Mindanao is due to biases, prejudices and misconceptions brought about by decades of domination by the majority group over other groups. Such cultural dominance can spark intercultural conflicts because it inhibits the development of the other groups' indigenous popular culture, stunts their economic development and self-image and foists majority values on the other cultures. These effects, in turn, often lead to resentment and conflict.

The mis-education and misinformation, a result of cultural domination, are abetted by the use of the terms "Muslim" and "Christian." An anthropological perspective is that we have overworked the term "Muslim" to such an extent that ethnicity and nationalism have been subsumed into the religious terminology and stereotypes. Yet, this is what the Muslims resent: the gross injustice of being neglected, set aside and overlooked, remaining outside the mainstream of Philippine society and eking out an existence in the periphery. Specifically, human development factors such as literacy and economic productivity are, as a rule, lowest in Muslim-dominated areas (Santanina Rasul, 2003, p 24).

Three roadblocks are perceived as preventing Muslims from being in the mainstream: (1) a colonial heritage and bias against non-Christians that have not yet been reduced or meaningfully altered but on the contrary have increased in importance; (2) increasing level of frustration of the marginalized sectors, on account of the State's inability to fully redress their grievances and satisfy their needs; and (3) the unwillingness of the individual and corporate sectors that control the economic resources and potentials of the region from within and without to equitably share the greater part of their profits and incomes with the masses (Tan, 2003, pp 6-7).

In this paper, the role of media in reducing or furthering prejudice and pride is examined in relation to the internal conflict in the country, particularly in Mindanao. The common term for this conflict has been inappropriately dubbed the "Muslim problem," which may be more accurately referred to as the "Bangsamoro issue," seemingly the core of all conflicts surrounding "Muslim affairs."

Using secondary empirical data as well as anecdotal examples, the paper aims to illustrate the manifest and latent biases of media in portraying the "Muslim" conflict and the way these biases contribute to further discrimination by one party against another. It also shows how media has been remiss in serving as a forum for discussing or reducing such conflict. Third, the paper attempts to outline and analyze the possible factors and root causes of such biases in the media. Finally, it presents talking points for further dialogue and a suggested action agenda.

II.   Engendering Pride and Prejudice in Media

To make sense out of the overwhelming amount of information received, one categorizes and generalizes from this information, which is mainly from mainstream media. The important role of the journalist is to present broad and diverse perspectives to enable the reader or viewer to arrive at the truth after processing and analyzing these perspectives. The pluralistic presentation of perspectives and contextual presentation of events especially relating to conflict and terror are areas that are wanting in media reporting on "Muslim affairs."

Failing to depict a pluralist view of society, media consequently frames a dominant culture or identity – resulting in illusory *pride* and *prejudice*. Littlejohn (1999) refers to this as "hegemony," alluding to "the process of domination, in which one set of ideas, subverts or co-opts another."

Pride as described by Johan Galtung, is a zero-sum concept, a non-negotiable adherence to beliefs – where "winning is not the only thing but everything" as in sports journalism (Kempf and Luostarinen, 2002, pp 259-260). In the presentation of facts, an argument favoring one party and sticking to that belief, when brought to the extreme, can lead to pride, then to fanaticism or fundamentalism.

Fr. Jerry Orbos provides this helpful insight, "Someone once defined the three forms of pride: pride of race; pride of face; and pride of grace. Pride of race involves people who think they are genetically superior to others. Pride of face deals with arrogance because of attributes connected to one's person. Pride of grace is the mistaken belief that one is more righteous or more spiritual than others" (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Sept. 24, 2006).

Meanwhile *prejudice* is a negative attitude which economist Kenneth Boulding (1999) describes as a "disintegrative power that is achieved through hatred, fear and threat of a common enemy." It can stem from pride – when one defends his or her opinion at all costs – and disregards or looks down on others' beliefs or opinion.

The behaviors that result from stereotyping or prejudice – overt actions to exclude or avoid – are called discrimination, which may be based on race, religion, gender or any trait of other identity groups. It may range from very subtle nonverbal behavior (lack of

eye contact or excluding someone from a conversation) to verbal insults, exclusion from jobs or other economic or political opportunities, to physical violence and systematic exclusion. Discrimination may be interpersonal, collective or institutional.

In the pride and prejudice spectrum, therefore, one can locate oneself in an *"us"* as an expression of **pride,** and *"they"* as a manifestation of **prejudice** toward others. A problem arises when one party dominates the other and becomes the dominant or standard source of information for others in society. For instance, a media report on the conflict in Mindanao has social meaning. In what is termed a "halo effect," the more powerfully media conveys the message, the more the information becomes the standard opinion of the greater majority of society. Whoever is strongly portrayed as protagonist becomes the dominant figure in the mindset of the readers.

When the Spaniards encountered Muslims in the Philippines three or more centuries ago, they immediately called them "Moros," the same name they used for the Arab conquerors of Spain. The non-Moro inhabitants were called *indios* or *naturales*. When the Americans came, they ruled the Moros separately from the *indios*, who by that time had already appropriated the term "Filipino" from the resident Spaniards.

The Moros were portrayed in Orientalist terms in the *indio*/Filipino arts and literature, including zarzuelas, moro-moro and even films, while Christian Filipinos were taking on the values of the West. Muslim Filipinos therefore have been considered "the Other," different from the majority in many exotic ways (Rara 2004). Christian Filipinos, who comprise about 90 percent of the country's population, relate more to their former colonizers, Spain and United States, than to the Moros of Mindanao. Thus began name-calling and labeling.

An offshoot of such colonial mentality is media bias. This paper looks mainly at bias in the print news media although historical antecedents of media bias in TV and radio are analyzed as well. While the paper writers/researchers recognize the existence of a new media landscape where the broadcast media, specifically television, has emerged as a powerful channel because of its visual impact, newspapers and news magazines remain important because of permanency (due to their textual form) and impact on opinion makers. Studying television also requires more complicated methodology, time and resources.

Manifest bias of media refers to concrete portrayals of the "us" and "they," especially illustrations of stereotyping in print media, labeling, inaccurate, imbalanced, distorted reporting, and negative reporting or "demonizing."

Latent bias refers to the attitudes and perceptions of journalists and the public in general. It includes a lack or absence of coverage of certain news, *eg* on the Bangsamoro issue, ancestral domain and news on outstanding Muslims, and "context avoidance" by ignoring, obscuring or trivializing events and issues.

Latent bias also refers to a lack of a Moro perspective in news and public affairs reporting, referred to as "excising" (strategy of portraying a conflict without showing the other side, ignoring or even obscuring it, wherein the adversary becomes the "absent enemy," usually symbolized but not seen), or "sanitizing" or understating the extent of the violence or damage in a given situation (Liebes, cited by Rara 2004).

The opposite of pride and prejudice is *tolerance*. UNESCO defines tolerance in Article I of its *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* (1995): "Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace."

Among Muslims in the Philippines, *tasamo* is an Islamic synonym for **tolerance**, according to Wadja K. Esmula, former Dean of the U.P. Institute for Islamic Studies. "It is used when one easily forgives a person who has done him or her a personal wrong. It applies too when one gives 'other people the chance to practice their own beliefs and traditions in their own way'" (Philippine Psychology Research and Training House, cited in Sta. Maria, 1996, p 15).

The Tausug, a Muslim group in Sulu, have a synonym for *tasamo*. This word is *kamaapan,* which Esmula explains as "sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices different or conflicting with one's own" (Philippine Psychology Research and Training House).

III.   Media Prejudice against Muslim Filipinos: Some Historical Antecedents

The perception, understanding and articulations on Muslim Filipinos in media manifest the dominant culture of the majority, the Christianized Filipinos, whose history goes back to centuries of colonial rule. Mainstream history books reinforce the limited imagery of minorities, who themselves do not have written narratives and therefore have become excluded from civilized discourse. These materials have been passed on through generations as they are used as standard text in schools, starting from the elementary level to college.

The mass media was introduced by colonizing powers, *ie* print by the Spaniards and radio and television by the Americans. The first print material, *Doctrina Cristiana*, was a Catholic document written in the native syllabary and in Latin. On the other hand, radio was introduced as a commercial enterprise, while TV was brought in essentially for entertainment.

A.   Mouthpiece of Colonizers

Mainstream media has been voiced from the central government and not the periphery. The first newsletter, *Succesos Felices*, was produced in 1637 by Tomas Pinpin, the father of Philippine printing. The major stor*ies* in the fourteen-page issue were a Spanish naval victory over the Dutch off Ternate and a successful campaign against Muslim Filipinos and invoked the Almighty and the faith (Castro 1967).

In 1811, the first newspaper, *Del Superior Govierno,* was published with the Spanish Governor General himself as editor. It provided the Spaniards in the Philippines with information on the Spanish Cortes and the war between Spain and France. The first daily newspaper, *La Esperanza* (1846), also catered to the Spanish elite with long articles on history, science and religion.

The American r*eg*ime saw the introduction of newspapers published mostly by American journalists: *The Manila Times* (1898), *The Bounding Billow* and *Official Gazette* (1898), *Manila Daily Bulletin* (1900), and *Philippine Free Press* (1908).

These newspapers expectedly served as a mouthpiece of the colonizers. As documented by John Lent (1971), the Spanish period was marked by tight control and strict censorship by both the government and the church. Historian Teodoro Agoncillo writes that the Spanish colonists imposed prior censorship of the press "which the Church had been exercising without the official sanction of the civil government" and which "kept the writers, mostly Spanish ecclesiastics, within the confines of the Catholic religion." With the creation of the Permanent Commission of Censors in 1856, "censorship of almost everything under the sun was strictly enforced."

During the American regime, the editorial content of newspapers was pro-American and based on religious and political partisanship (Lent 1971).

It is impossible to expect a colonialist-controlled media to report positively about the Moro people when the latter were in continuous resistance to Spanish and American rule. Thus, accounts of Moro-Spanish or Moro-American confrontations were always presented from the viewpoint of the Spaniards or the Americans.

As Prof. Datu Amilusin A. Jumaani points out (in an Inter*n*et article, 2000, "Calling the Muslims as Moros was an effective means of rallying the Filipinos to fight on the side of the Spaniards in their military campaigns against the former. So was the labeling of the Christianized Filipinos as Bisaya (meaning, slaves) by the Moros." The same observation could easily be applied to the American colonizers.

Newspapers, therefore, became ready instruments in the divide and rule stratagem of the Spaniards and later in the "pacification" campaign of the Americans.

B.   Radio and Americanization

The history of radio in the Philippines is traced to American businessmen who brought in the medium in the 1920s to Manila as a commercial enterprise and as a medium for the introduction of American consumer goods to Filipinos. Broadcasting in the English language with the American accent, radio "was an important agent for the Americanization of the Filipino consciousness" (Enriquez 2003, p 6).

Religious groups with their goal of propagating the Christian faith set up their own radio stations. In 1948, a Protestant missionary group, the Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC), started a nationwide network of radio stations. DZRV of the Catholic Church started as a radio station of the University of Santo Tomas in 1950 until its turnover to the church in 1968.

The first radio station in Mindanao was established in 1949 in Davao when the University of Mindanao Broadcasting Network (UMBN) started operations. UMBN put up the first Muslim station in the Philippines, DXMV in Cotabato City. The longest running radio program on Muslims in Davao entitled "Ukay" started in DZXG in 1974. The first commercial radio station that was able to reach Muslim Mindanao was established in Digos only in the 1980s.

Aside from the mention of the first Muslim radio station and the reach of one radio network to Tawi-Tawi, there are no references to the coverage of Muslim Filipinos or of Muslim issues in the documentation of the history of radio in the Philippines. The most that can be done is to infer from the available data that radio during the American colonial period had an American orientation and that this orientation reflected the prevailing anti-Moro sentiments of the colonial regime, even after independence. Furthermore, radio was used to continue the "crusading spirit" of the Spanish and American colonizers, that is, to convert the rest of the country to the Christian faith.

The historical silence may also reflect the general neglect or omission of the Moro people and their concerns from the mainstream of Philippine affairs. Whenever it featured the Moro people, radio manifested the more superficial aspects of their culture, as it portrayed nothing more than dances, songs and other physical aspects of their society.

C.   Policy and Prejudice

Prejudice against Muslims in the Philippines, which was unmistakable in the editorial content and implicit in the censorship of the press, was put to life by policies that expressed "a fanatical hatred of Moros" (Gowing 1979, p. 30), first by the Spaniards and later by the Americans.

Among the instructions that Governor Francisco de Sande issued in 1578 to the commander of the first Spanish military expedition to Mindanao and Sulu was to order

the Moro chiefs not to admit any more "preachers of the doctrine of Mahoma, since it is evil and false, and that of the Christians alone is good." The commander was further ordered to destroy any mosque "where that accursed doctrine has been preached and you shall order that it be not rebuilt." He was to punish the Moros, "taking special care not to trust them."

Anti-Muslim belligerence was just as evident among the American colonizers. An American military report in 1903 annexed an essay, "The Moros in the Philippines" by a Spanish Jesuit missionary, Father Pio Pi. The essay described Moro history as "a series of treacheries" and the Moros as "unexcelled pirates." Pi advised the Americans to become "convinced of the existence of the obstacle to civilization we have here denounced and of the possibility and necessity of removing it for the common welfare of the country." An American general commended the essay as "a critical analysis of Moro character…replete with sensible observations…"

Samuel S. Sumner, the American general who commanded troops in Mindanao and Sulu in 1903, declared that "it will be necessary to eradicate all the customs that have heretofore governed (the Moros') habits of life." General Leonard Wood, the first Governor of the Moro Province, after a year's study of Moro legal codes, concluded, "The Moros and other savage peoples have no laws—simply a few customs which are nowhere general…" The third Governor of the Moro Province, John J. Pershing, declared that the Moro was a "savage."

The Spanish colonizers' policy of subjugating, Hispanizing and Christianizing the Muslims of Mindanao resulted in three centuries of sporadic Moro wars. This was followed closely by the American policy of Moro "pacification" not dissimilar to the Spanish military campaigns.

Thus with the hostility and antipathy bred by centuries of armed conflict between the Moros on one side and the colonizers and the Christianized natives on the other, what has been created in the minds of non-Muslim Filipinos is the image of the Moro as "a cunning, ruthless, cruel, treacherous savage; a pirate; a raider; a slaver" and "backward and stubbornly unprogressive" (Gowing 1979, p 41).

D.   Rizal and the Propagandists

While the pioneering journalists were trained in the intellectual traditions of the colonizers, it is interesting to note that Jose Rizal, the leading light of the Propaganda Movement, "in part expressed his own nationalist view within the Moro wars framework" (Mastura 1999).

Rizal saw the pacification of the Moros as "fatal expeditions that wasted all the moral and material energies of the country," leading to "the fostering of hostility between the provinces themselves." He correctly understood that pitting converted Filipinos against the Moros weakened Moro power and further strengthened Spanish rule.

As for the other Filipino intellectuals and expatriates in Spain who made up the Propaganda Movement, Mastura observes that "the picture of the Moro situation had begun to enter the writings of the publicists in Madrid and then later in the revolutionary documents themselves." He also identifies "the sense of solidarity that was forming beyond kinship and blood ties."

E.   Western Paradigms in Journalism

The media was (and still is) dominated by journalists from the mainstream culture (and religion) who were educated in the western journalistic tradition. The western paradigm in Philippine journalism has been expressed in the "framing" of news stories, where the perspective of the dominant group prevails. The basis of the framing theory is that media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. The core assumption is that media draws public attention to certain topics and depicts what people think about, while it is the journalists who select the topics.
Leading (senior) journalists in the 1960s to the 1980s were beneficiaries of US journalism fellowships, *ie* Neiman, Humphrey, Jefferson, among others. This may have further reinforced the western bias of local journalists.

While a "western perspective" does not automatically translate into an anti-Muslim bias, it may narrow the presentation of viewpoints from other groups, *ie* Asian or Arab worldviews. News sources are limited to major western news sources.

Historically, very few Muslims were given the opportunity to work in major media companies (which had no policies on hiring ethnics). A few Muslim journalists can be mentioned. One local journalist, Ibrahim A. Jubaira, distinguished himself nationally and internationally as a fictionist, winning such awards as the Smith-Mundt Leader Grant (1956), Golden Jubilee Award of the University of the Philippines (1959), and Republic Heritage Award (1978). In college, he was editor-in-chief of the *Zamboanga Collegian* while also contributing to the local newspapers. He later worked as a regular columnist for the *Zamboanga Inquirer* and served as editor of the *Crescent Review*, a monthly magazine for Muslims.

While there has been no critique of Jubaira's journalistic work, his short stories have been described thus, "(T)hrough his characters, the reader is given an insight into the mind and soul of a people very little understood by the rest of the Filipinos."

Atty. Michael Mastura, former congressman, distinguished himself as a radio broadcaster and a columnist of the *Mindanao Cross* based in Cotabato City. He moved on to the House of Representatives where he chaired the Committee on Public Information.

In recent times, *The Manila Bulletin* has been able to employ more Muslim journalists through its pioneering Muslim Affairs beat that was introduced by its former editor-in-chief Ben Rodriguez. Edd Usman was the first beat reporter. Reporters Ali Macabalang, Asa Madale and Bong Karno Rodriguez write regularly for the Mindanao

section of the daily. Al Tillah, a Tausug, has published more than 500 columns in his decades-long journalistic career in *The Manila Bulletin*.

F.   Journalism Education

The journalism curriculum adopted by journalism schools has been influenced by western paradigms. Dependence on the traditional news formula, including news media's events orientation and compliance to the dictum "no news is good news," has narrowed down coverage of Mindanao to "bad" stories, *eg* conflicts, natural and man-made disasters. This has reinforced a negative image of Mindanao and its people.

Moro distrust of the Western educational system, perceived as an instrument for Christianization, prevented the formation of a Muslim intellectual corps that could communicate the Moro worldview and, much more, establish publications to cater to powerful authorities, intellectual elite and the outside world.

The lack, if not absence, of Muslim journalists can also be traced to the limited educational opportunities available to Muslim Filipinos at that time. Thus, there were few "role models" for budding journalists.

The colonial education of journalists, and the rest of the Filipinos, has contributed to prejudice against Muslim Filipinos. Our colonial education has given us little understanding, if any, of Muslim society and its history and culture. Still, the very few articles that we read about in our history books present Muslims in a bad light and use disparaging images and messages. Thus, the ignorance of early Filipino journalists on Moro issues made it difficult if not impossible for them to present stories from a broader and balanced perspective.

Then, as now, Philippine history has been presented from the "Christian" perspective and has ignored or downplayed the role of the Moro people in the evolution of the Filipino identity. Historian Cesar Adib Majul (1973) as quoted by Abbas laments that history books in the Philippines tend to emphasize events in other islands and glorify national heroes from such places, as if the history of the Philippines is only that of people who had been conquered while the history of the unconquered ones (*ie* Moros) does not merit a share in the history of the Philippines.

The languages used by major media companies have been English and Filipino. This has several implications. First, only those who were competent in these languages could work in the major media companies. Second, only those who were proficient (*ie* able to read, write, and understand) in these languages could access the media outputs. The low educational attainment among marginalized groups like the Moro people prevented them from achieving competency in these two languages.

G.   Manila-Centric Content

Media content was Manila-centric, and this could be partly attributed to poor telecommunication facilities. Stories from the regions (assuming there were local correspondents) took days if not weeks to arrive at the news desks of newspapers and broadcast stations located in Manila. Unlike today, it was difficult for the Manila gatekeepers to contact their local correspondents if there was a need for more background or explanatory information.

Thus, media content which reached Mindanao was dominated by Manila stories. Conversely, Manila media consumers read and heard very little about the regions (especially Mindanao). It was also difficult to get in-depth stories and to adequately contextualize them.

As a result, up to today, media continues to depict Muslim Filipinos as synonymous with extremist, secessionist, rebel, terrorist, kidnapper, and the like. Headlines using the word "Muslim" attached to the crime is said to sell. How to balance commercialism and cultural sensitivity remains a challenge. It is high time media redeems itself to serve as a catalyst for fostering understanding and building peace among all Filipinos.

IV.   Portrayals of Prejudice and Pride in News Media

A.   Manifest Biases

1.   Stereotyping: General Practices

Portrayals of knowledge and understanding on Muslim issues

According to *Philippine Daily Inquirer* publisher Isagani Yambot, the mass media tend to perpetuate stereotype images of Muslim Filipinos (AIJC questionnaire, October 2006). Former chair of the Journalism Department of the U.P. College of Mass Communication Danilo A. Arao adds, "Given that mass media tend to promote popular culture, the stereotypes and biases against Muslims tend to be strengthened." He cites news reports "that sometimes have racist undertones" (AIJC questionnaire, January 2007).

Labels and representations associated with Muslims, as shown in past studies, glaringly indicate the prejudices of the news storywriters or, worse, their lack of education and ignorance about Muslims.

In her article "Telling about the Other" (2000), Rufa Guiam, editor-in-chief of a Central Mindanao weekly tabloid from 1991-1996, points out that many journalists use the label "Muslims" to refer to any item, food, design or dance that is associated with the various ethno-linguistic groups in Mindanao, such as a "Muslim dress," referring to a hand-woven cloth from Maguindanao or "singkil" as a "Muslim dance." However, the

term "Muslim" connotes a universal religious identity. Moreover, Muslims are of different ethnic groups, speak different languages and have diverse ethnic customs and traditions.

Media practices depicting Muslim biases

<u>Reporting on cultural communities</u>

Media coverage of culture in general and cultural communities in particular has been described as focusing primarily on the so-called externalities and highlighting the exotic and different. Thus, culture is narrowly seen in terms of food, dances, clothing and accessories, among others. Such coverage leaves values, beliefs, practices, and other essential elements of culture out of the picture.

As a result, there is little understanding, appreciation and tolerance of what the "others" represent, thereby reinforcing the "cultural divide," obscuring the beauty and impact of cultural diversity, and neglecting the value of pluralism.

<u>Reporting on Muslims</u>

The prejudices and attitudes of the general population about Muslims are projected in the print media, and the same biases are perpetuated by journalists who are expected to be impartial. According to Guiam, the worst abuse of the word Muslim is its use as a marker for a criminal: a thief, a kidnapper, or a corrupt politician. Guiam says she runs into arguments with reporters in her office when they use the term Muslim to label a suspect in a crime, but these same reporters would not dare attach this term if it were a Christian involved.

The worst argument Guiam gets for this insistence is what reporters say as "an expression of our freedom of speech." And even when Guiam sees to it that the word "Muslim" is not abused when attached to the name of a suspect, such as Abdul, Jaafar or Alikhan, who are invariably described as thieves or rebels, she gets exasperated when it still appears in national dailies. When this controversy is taken up in discussions in national meetings of the Philippine Press Institute, Guiam says Manila-based editors have countered that the word (Muslim) sells the story. The acts of a few politicized, even criminal-intentioned – the bomber, kidnapper, even terrorist – is headlined to be "Muslim" as identification of the doer in local media. Such is carried by international news agencies and even vice versa (Gutoc, 2003).

Studies on media portrayals on Muslims

A graduate study done by Federico Café (1985) at the Institute for Islamic Stud*i*es of the University of the Philippines reveals that stereotyping has portrayed the Muslims most usually in a bad light. The predominance of unfavorable over favorable themes is shown through simple quantification in the portrayals about Mindanao in a national daily. The stereotyped categorization of the Muslims through persistence, consistency

and repetitive patterns was seen in the earlier years in the similar usage of the labels "rebel," "terrorist," "killer" and "outlaw." In his study, Café reveals that these four negative categories topped all other unfavorable categorization in the national daily covered in his study from 1971, 1976 until 1981.

In a similar study on media portrayals on Muslims by Samira Gutoc (1995) at the College of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines, a news article used "Muslim" as a label for a gunman and "Muslim" was attached to a kidnapper. Gutoc observes that other articles used "Muslim" to label separatists, rebels or guerillas. Only two articles used "Moro" instead or "Muslim" to refer to a rebel.

2. Labeling

Unconscious or conscious tools used as "othering" and "labeling" or "terrorist tagging" bode policy implications that also spill over to relationships between the internal populace and external actors. When used by the powerful such as the superpower United States or the concerned State, it means defining a certain policy toward the labeled group. For instance, terrorist tagging is meant to threaten an anti-state actor to "mend its ways."

In the Philippine case, the tag is supposed to stop the flow of foreign funds and support to the rebel group and give the military the green light to launch a sustained offensive. Such policies also have implications on the relationship of Muslims and Christians, who are both citizens of the country, since labeling and lumping together rebel groups from a religious community such as the Muslims alienate the Muslim community from supporting nationalist government goals and may further generate support for the Muslim independence initiative (Gutoc 2003).

The local "global war on terror" has also made the armed conflict on the Moro front more intractable as there has been increased discrimination against Muslims in Mindanao through reports on the Al-Qaeda and Jemah Islamiyah operations in the Philippines. In this regard, counter-terrorism should be targeted carefully and not used against the political opposition; it should also uphold fundamental human rights.

It is the media's role to provide in-depth analysis on this issue of "labeling" and terrorist tagging in a broader political context while providing local context on the state's policies which breed prejudice and discrimination by one culture or ideology toward another.

3. Inaccurate and Imbalanced Reporting / Distortions in Media

Danilo A. Arao of the U.P. College of Mass Communication observes, "There is not only a weakness in reporting the Mindanao issues by the national media, there is also a misrepresentation of the said island group. This is most especially true in reporting conflicts in certain areas of Mindanao where media consumers are given the impression that it is the whole of Mindanao that is affected." (AIJC questionnaire, January 2007)

Gutoc's study on the portrayal of Muslims in two national newspapers in 1989 and 1994 reveals that value-laden terms, such as fundamentalism and extremism, were used interchangeably – reflecting the lack of knowledge on and contextual account of the issues. An example is a news item which reported that "the Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim fundamentalist group, is engaged in terrorism in Basilan." This, she says, implies that the unclear distinctions meant that the Abu Sayyaf embodied not only terrorism but also a religious cause, which was fundamentalism.

She, therefore, points to the need for reporters and journalists to be educated on such topics as fundamentalism and extremism and related issues on Muslims so that they could understand the difference between "religious assertion" and "religious fanaticism."

Religious assertion, a response to the perception of Western moral culture as bankrupt, is merely a call to return to the basics of the Islamic faith, whereas religious fanaticism, condemnable even by major *ulama* (religious scholars), is using violence to justify religious propagation and resorted to by a minority in the Muslim world. *Jihad*, also a misperceived concept in its primary form, is a call for cleansing oneself, whereas *jihad* as a means of physical defense can only be used when an aggression is done.

Gutoc's study further shows that only 10 percent of the newspaper articles she reviewed dealt with socio-economic development programs such as economic aid in the South and accomplishments by Muslims. More reports were written about controversies. Moreover, most of the articles on Muslims placed on the front pages were on rebellion and the Abu Sayyaf, while prominence was not accorded to socio-economic development programs and achievements by the Muslims.

The 1988 Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE) media study by Maslog and Ponteñila, however, shows that the newspapers studied contained more stories on economics and business and socio-cultural-educational development than those on common crimes and peace and order.

In general, the PACE study found that newspapers were more objective than sensational. While a slight bias against the Muslims still persisted, it was largely offset by pro-Muslim bias, the study reports. The study also notes that no newspaper showed any anti-Christian bias, while some newspapers even showed pro-Christian bias.

According to the PACE study, the trend seems to be that the reporting of Metro Manila dailies was pro-Muslim, sometimes bordering on advocacy. This appears to counter the findings of previous studies that show that media portrayed Muslims in a bad light, and should be an encouraging sign.

The issue of inaccurate reportage (including distortion) is discussed in broader context in the essay "Islam and Civilization," which is included in the book *Dialogue of Civilizations* (2003) by Daisaku Ikeda and Majid Teheranian. According to the authors, the early contributions of Islam were in science, language and religious works. The linguistic revolution was considered the most important cultural transformation and stimulated the growth of a scientific culture. But through a process of translation of works in Arabic, the Muslim contributions to science were systematically "plagiarized." Quoting Childers (1997, p. 136-7), they note:

> Western religious and political leaders alike have wished to press below the conscious anything remotely positive about Islam. Generation after generation have been educated by omission and conditioned by media to believe that nothing comes from the world of Islam and the Arabs except guns, daggers, camels, harems and fanaticism.

The net effect of this relentless campaign of distortion and disinformation, according to the authors, was "to create a culture of exclusivism and defensiveness among Muslims, a psychology that was partly responsible for moving the Muslim *ummah* from the center to the periphery of scientific research, innovation and scholarship."

Amartya Sen (2006) cited many contributions by Muslims in Mathematics and Science including the tubular concept of structural engineering (used to build the World Trade Center) and algorithm (derived from the book *Al-Jabr wa al-Muqabalah* of 9th century mathematician al-Khwarizimi), the decimal system and some early results in trigonometry that went from India to Europe through the works of Arab and Iranian mathematicians. Sen said that "many other major developments in the history of mathematics, science and technology were carried out by the Muslim intelligentsia" (p. 69). He also confirmed the earlier observation of Ikeda and Teheranian that many of these developments reached Europe only at the beginning of the second millennium when translations from Arabic to Latin became quite common. Furthermore, Sen also noted that "many Western classics, particularly from ancient Greece, survived only through their Arabic translations to be retranslated, mostly into Latin, in their early centuries of the second millennium, preceding the European Renaissance" (p. 70).

4. Negative Reporting

Red Batario, executive director of the Center for Community Journalism and Development, observes, "Generally, discussions in news stories tend to be framed within a conflict ambit, therefore automatically relating Muslim issues to acts of violence" (AIJC questionnaire, February 2007).

Gutoc reports that the two newspapers she studied (for the period 1989 and 1994) had more unfavorable than favorable reports on Muslims. For the year 1989, she found the autonomy issue more in the headlines, with the rebel activities of rebel groups topping the news. For 1994, she found that 90 percent of the news items on Muslims in the two national dailies dealt with crime, religious fanaticism and rebellion.

In another case, the term "Muslim rebel" was freely used in the headline of a daily newspaper, typical of other stories involving the MNLF or MILF forces in Mindanao. The use of the term Muslim gives the impression of a religious conflict between Muslim rebels and a Christian army. The fact is that there are Christians among the MNLF and MILF and there are Muslims in the army. According to Gutoc, the terms "MILF" and "MNLF," which were put in the lead, should have also been used in the headline.

Gutoc contends that if two leading newspapers in the country conform to the practice of labeling Muslims as terrorists, rebels and fundamentalists, what more can we expect from other publications which have lesser circulation than the two newspapers mentioned.

The above study contrasts with the 1988 PACE study, which found that editors were giving more emphasis on positive stories (45%) than on negative news and opinion. This trend contradicts the popular notion that the only news daily newspapers publish is bad news. However, there was still a presence of negative news (28.7%), according to the PACE study.

B.   Latent Biases

1.   Stereotyping: Attitudes and Perceptions about Muslims and Christians

It appears that Christians have stronger biases and prejudices against Muslims than Muslims have against Christians. In her graduate thesis at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), Nuñez (2003) examined the roots of conflict in Mindanao. Results show that the Muslims rated the Christians positively – except in two negative attributes. The Christians, however, rated the Muslims negatively in nine out of 14 attributes.

In 1988, Ontok of the Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE) conducted a similar survey on stereotypes in four provinces of Mindanao among Christians and Muslims. The Muslim stereotypes of Christians were, in order of importance: idolaters, unbelievers *(kafir),* satan *(iblis),* flatterers, hypocrites *(munafiq),* opportunists, spoilers of Islam, sycophants and deceivers.

On the other hand, the Christian stereotypes of Muslims were, in order of importance: terrorists, rebellious and seditious; uncivilized; backward and ignorant; atheists, pagans and godless; deceivers and traitors; killers and kidnappers; lazy, procrastinators and parasites; pirates, plunderers, bandits, robbers and thieves; and trouble-makers.

Similar to the findings of Nuñez, Ontok's study shows that the Muslims rated the Christians more favorably since majority (75%) of the respondents said the Christians are very hardworking, educated (89%), modern (81%) and broadminded (68%).

The Muslims' unfavorable rating for Christians was: very unpatriotic (80%), very unfriendly (68%), very violent (60%) and very authoritarian (51%). Christians, on the other hand, rated the Muslims in extremely unfavorable terms as follows: very untrustworthy (77%); very unpatriotic (60%), very unfriendly (57%), very violent (55%); very authoritarian (55%); and very fanatic (75%).

A UNDP Project was conducted in 2005 to find out if non-Muslim Filipinos are biased against Muslims. This recent study validated the results of previous studies mentioned earlier (*ie* Nunez and Ontok). The UNDP study focused on four areas: proximity, personal traits, stereotypes and sources of information on Muslims.

The study concluded that a considerable percentage of non-Muslim Filipinos are biased against Muslims, notwithstanding the fact that only about 14 percent of the former have had direct dealings with Muslims.

When asked to choose between two persons with roughly the same qualifications, but with one having a Christian name and the other having a Muslim-sounding name, slightly less than half of the Filipino adults interviewed said that either person will do. About the same percentage chose the person with the Christian name. Interestingly, less than 10 percent chose the person with the Muslim-sounding name. Those from Luzon appeared to be the most indifferent about choosing between the two.

In terms of personal traits of Muslims, the majority of the respondents (56% to 64 %) exhibited indecision about personal traits that best describe Muslims. Indecision is seen highest in Luzon (67 % to 76%) and lowest in Mindanao (37% to 40%). A majority of the respondents also think that Muslims are probably more prone to run amok (55%) although probably they are not oppressive to women (59%). A plurality believe that Muslims are probably terrorists or extremists (47%) and that they probably consider themselves as Filipinos (49%).

Television emerged as the main source of information of the majority (78%) of the interviewees. This was followed by radio (44%) and newspapers (29%). Only 14 percent cited their own experience with Muslims.

2.   Lack or Absence of Coverage on Muslim Affairs

Latent prejudices can be "manifested" in the lack or absence of coverage of critical issues affecting Muslims in the Philippines. Such omission can be partly explained by inadequate knowledge and understanding of Muslim history, culture and socio-political structures among mainstream journalists, leading to lack of recognition of the importance of these issues.

Among the critical national issues in need of media discussion are the quest for Bangsamoro independence, ancestral domain vs. regalian doctrine, introduction of Muslim law into the Philippine legal system, and traditional socio-political structures (*eg* datus and sultans).

Not too many mainstream newspapers report on the Bangsamoro issue. The "Muslim" problem is a misnomer and quite often can be misleading and deceiving for it underlies other sensitive issues. Upon closer look and through informed analysis, the conflict would fundamentally refer to the Bangsamoro concern, involving the dispossession of ancestral territory of the unconquered natives of our land, who proudly refer to themselves as "Moros." To quote Madale (1999) on the Bangsamoro issue:

> The Americans co-opted the datus and sultans by awarding them grants and scholarships. The middle class who used to be loyal to their own traditional leaders began to shift their loyalty from their own leaders to the Americans. The slave class was emancipated through legislation. Since the power base of the Moros was already weakened and destroyed because of polarization of the natives, there was continued war between these two groups. Those who were coopted were the *amigos* while those who continued to resist were branded as *rebeldes*. The principle of divide and rule was effectively utilized. ....The opening up of new settlements brought about massive migration which eventually resulted in the displacement of the natives: the tribals and the Moros....The migrants who were more productive and creative eventually dislodged the natives both from their land and from political power.

Muhammad al-Hasan (quoted by Gowing, 1978) articulates the view in these words:

> We (Moros and Filipinos) are two different peoples adhering to different ideologies, having different cultures, and nurtured by different historical experiences. We have contradistinct conceptions of sovereignty. Filipinos believe that sovereignty resides in them, but we believe that sovereignty belongs to God alone. Our culture, imbued with Islamic beliefs, tenets and principles is diametrically in contrast with the Filipino culture which is the amalgamation of the residues of the colonizers' cultures. The core issue of the public is the Bangsamoro assertion for their right to self-determination. The Agreement of Peace between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front - or the Tripoli Agreement on Peace in 2001 signed June 22, 2001 in Tripoli Libya - unambiguously recognizes the identity and states that both are "determined to establish a powerful environment and normal condition of life in the Bangsamoro homeland."

A poll showed that independence and self-rule was the preferred solution (52%) vs. federalism (28%) (Linga, 2004). During a forum on "Political and Governance Options for the Bangsamoro" held in July 2006 and convened by the Diliman Governance Forum and Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy Forum, three options were discussed, *ie* autonomy, federalism and independence. The speakers agreed that given a choice, the Moro people would prefer independence.

The issue of ancestral domain remains one of the most sensitive issues in the peace process in the Cordilleras and Mindanao, but hardly analyzed in the mainstream media.

The regalian doctrine, in spite of its being regarded as legal fiction as no such law ever existed, constitutes the core of the Philippine land property system and is enshrined in the Philippine Constitutions of 1935, 1973 and 1987. It provides that the state declares itself sole owner of what is called state domain and reserves the right to classify it for

purposes of proper disposition to its citizens. Critics point to several discriminatory provisions of public land and other related laws.

For example, according to peace scholar B.R. Rodil, "it must be reiterated that the US acquisition of sovereignty over the Philippines did not carry with it the recognition of communal ancestral domains of the indigenous communities. Neither did it recognize that of the moro, least of all the legitimacy of their sultanates" (Rodil, 2003, p 32). He also cites a Philippine Commission law passed in 1903 voiding "land grants from Moro *sultans* or *datus* or from chiefs of non-Christian tribes when made without governmental authority and consent." The same provision is still in effect to this day.

Yvonne T. Chua, investigative reporter and faculty member of the U.P. College of Mass Communication, observes, "The national media almost always focuses on the official line – government's. When the national media incorporates perspectives of Filipino Muslims on Muslim/Mindanao issues, it tends to limit itself to a small number of individuals or organizations. Many other go unreported" (AIJC questionnaire, February 2007).

At the global setting, there is concern on the near absence in media reporting of current international trends such as the growing number of converts to Islam, contribution of other religions in enriching social and cultural life, and cultural diversity. The failure of journalists to provide space and time to these global trends may be explained by the nature of media ownership, training and orientation of journalists, and even national information policies (*Time*, August 28, 2006).

Still within the global context, the reason given for the increasing percentage of Europeans and Americans who have converted to Islam is the religion's well-defined moral map and strict adherence to such issues as environmental protection and other critical moral and ethical national and global issues. This is in contrast with the secularization and commercialism of western Christian society (*Time*, August 2, 2006). Hardly is this issue being covered in media.

3. **"Context Avoidance"**

U.P. professor Danilo A. Arao pinpoints the mass media's weakness in providing the necessary context to stories as contributing to the reinforcement of biases against Muslims (AIJC questionnaire, January 2007).

As an example of lack of context in news reporting, Rara cites the bombing of the *Superferry* 14 on Feb. 27, 2004 The Abu Sayyaf had immediately claimed responsibility, giving the name of Abu Muadz as the bomber's name. However, the government denied this report saying that "this allegation came from pranksters and non-do-gooders" in a press statement reported in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (March 1, 2004). On March 20, in an inside page (A4), an article was written entitled, "Abu Sayyaf man in Schilling kidnapping arrested in Zambo," yet the last paragraph stated,

"But authorities said they were investigating a claim by the Abu Sayyaf that it put a suicide bomber on board a ferry that caught fire on Feb. 27…"

On March 31, on the front page of a national daily, an article was written, "GMA announces arrest of 4 Sayyaf terrorists," which featured the Superferry bomber who was one of those arrested. However, it was a wonder that a certain Redendo Cain Dellosa, a Muslim convert, allegedly confessed that he had planted a TNT bomb in the *Superferry* and that he was a member of the Abu Sayyaf.

Rara's study points out that these incidents raise more questions – pointing to lack of context and displaying latent bias: (1) Did the reporters bother to find out when Dellosa was arrested? We can surmise that he must have been arrested long before to be able to confess to the bombing incident. (2) Dellosa did not voluntarily surrender but was arrested. Could there have been a warrant for his arrest? (3) Why was his name different from the Abu Sayyaf member, Muadz (also named as Arnulfo Alvarado), who voluntarily confessed to the bombing in Feb. 27.

For weeks, the government had played down the Abu Sayyaf claim of having caused the ferry tragedy. This inconsistency of the "bomber" names and those arrested were not given importance. Besides, the fact that at least two of the alleged bombers were converts to Islam – and therefore were not Moros – was not even discussed. Again, this is a classic example of contextual avoidance, says Rara.

At a more fundamental level, the "rebellion" of the Moros, as explained in 1905 (Saleeby), still holds true today:

> The Moros are a law-abiding people, provided, however, they feel that the government that rules them is their own. They do not regard the present government that rules them as their own. They look upon it as something that has been imposed upon them. They have never felt themselves a part of the Philippine Islands or of the Philippine Government and until they are made to feel this, resentment and resistance will continue.

From the Moro perspective, therefore, it is pretentious for government, academe and media to have constructed an image of a homogenized culture of Filipinos (now supposedly composed of Indios, Moros and pagans) with one history and one destiny. According to Datu Abbas (2001), by portraying that the present conflict in the South is simply due to some disgruntled Moro bandits will not solve the problem. In this context, media needs to generate more discussion on the Bangsamoro issue to inform and educate the general public.

Mayor Saudi Ampatuan Jr. of Maguindanao said Muslims should assert objectivity of presentation and warned against a "double standard" application of the word "terrorism." Bombings have been reported on the basis of a roughly drawn theory of motives rather than on the nature of the attack, and media has contributed to the creation of myths that Muslims are enemies of the state, widening the divide between

Muslims and Christians, projecting conflict as a religious war, ignoring historical context, and projecting further that war is the only solution to the problem.

4. Lack of Moro Perspective – "Sanitizing" and "Excising"

"The perspective presented in national media has always been that of the dominant Manila-centric and Catholic-influenced sectors/ classes of Philippine society," comments Noel Pangilinan, former editor-in-chief of the Cebu daily *The Freeman* (AIJC questionnaire, February 2007).

This same national media does not routinely solicit facts and opinions of Muslim Filipinos on national and Muslim/Mindanao issues, observes Yvonne T. Chua of the U.P. College of Mass Communication. She attributes this situation to several reasons: "National media is Metro Manila-centric. Few Filipino Muslims hold national positions, elective or appointive. Few big Filipino Muslim businesses operate out of Metro Manila. Few institutions in Metro Manila, including the academe, specialize in Muslim studies/affairs." (AIJC questionnaire, February 2007)

Journalist Red Batario observes that coverage of the Muslim perspective is "at best a token presentation of 'the other side' and not a real attempt to uncover the various layers that would allow the public a better understanding of Muslims in general and of Mindanao in particular" (AIJC questionnaire, February 2007).

In the 2004 study of Rara, which gathered news articles for the period March-April 2004, military and police sources were the most popular sources (43%), with government sources coming up second (23%). Together, they comprised 66 percent of the sources for news. More importantly, Rara cites, in more than half (51%) of the articles, sources were purely from the government and military/ police. Though most of the stories dealt with the government's "anti-terror" campaign aimed at the Abu Sayyaf, rarely were the victims, their relatives or the residents of the area interviewed (referred to as "sanitizing" or "excising" by Rara). She further points out that because most of the sources of the articles were military and police personnel and officials, the stories always came out as "success" or "partial success" stories for the military and government.

Such stories, Rara says, usually painted the Moros as the "villains" even when no real evidence had been found. When journalists, adopt the victory frame for such stories, the military and police are painted as victors and their failures become difficult to spot. Journalists from Mindanao who participated in the October 13, 2006 FGD also point to this limitation as a major problem in reporting news on crimes, allegedly committed by "Muslims."

Reports of the MILF ties with the Jemaah Islamiyah and with a faction of the Abu Sayyaf have received political and media attention. Little attention, however, has been given by media on the no-less important point that this "tripartite link-up" is a rational choice for the MILF leadership.

As regards the peace process, government has shown little vision for its course. Without clear direction from the top, a durable settlement is unlikely to be reached. The Manila-centric media, regrettably, has helped make the conflict worse by their choice of coverage, or lack of it, reflecting the widespread prejudice among Christian Filipinos toward Muslims.

The press must question government policies instead of focusing solely on the issue of terrorism. It should broaden its sourcing beyond military and intelligence reports. It should broaden coverage of the issues and perspectives of the Bangsamoro people, including an in-depth and analytical coverage on the peace process.

According to Conde (2002), demonizing ethnic groups and making them look insignificant make the job of dispossessing them a lot easier and less morally reprehensible. Ethnic conflicts in the country, especially in Mindanao, do not stand a chance of being reported thoroughly, sensitively, and fairly by mainstream media. Why? Because the mainstream media is, wittingly or unwittingly, a participant in the ethnic dispossession.

At the global front, there is wide concern among western policy makers whether Islamic fundamentalism may be the next millennium threat to democratic societies. However, efforts of Muslim organizations to communicate their positions have been given little coverage. There is unfortunately a lack of positive coverage of social contributions by Muslims or efforts of Muslims to engage in dialogue with members of other religious communities.

C.   Mindanao Coverage Today: More of the Same?

Has media coverage of Mindanao improved over the years, with the Café-1985, PACE-1988, Gutoc-1995, and CMFR-2000 studies as benchmarks?

In 2007, three faculty members from the Humanities Department, College of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of the Philippines in Mindanao completed their content analysis of articles on Mindanao that were published in nine national broadsheets, namely: *Business Mirror, BusinessWorld, The Daily Tribune, Malaya, Manila Bulletin, Manila Standard Today, Manila Times, Philippine Daily Inquirer,* and *Philippine Star*. The articles were published over a two-month period, from 1 June to 31 July 2006..

Over the two-month period, a total of 1,957 articles saw print in the nine national broadsheets. Of this number, 748 (38%) were published in the *Manila Bulletin,* 290 (15%) printed in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and 233 (12%) articles carried by the *Philippine Star.* The other articles were published in the following broadsheets: 200 (10%) *BusinessWorld;* 156 (8%) *Manila Standard Today;* 108 (5%) *Business Mirror;* 102 (5%) *Malaya*; 89 (4%) *Manila Times*, and 31 (1%) *The Daily Tribune*. The total

number of articles indicates an average of three articles per day for each of the nine national broadsheets over the two-month study period.

The UP Mindanao researchers noted that the 1957 figure is comparatively higher than the 1633 over a four-month period in the 2000 CMFR study.

Of the 1,957 articles, 1,805 were classified into 32 categories, with the remaining 152 articles grouped into the category "others." Of the 1,805 articles, 320 (18%) were on sports events/personalities. This finding was true across the nine broadsheets included in the study. There were 212 (12%) stories reporting on crimes and/or accidents. Again, according to the study, this was observed in all nine newspapers.

The focus on sports events/personalities somehow validates our discussion earlier that critical issues and events (on *Bangsamoro*, ancestral domain, peace process, Shari'a court system, etc.) are not accorded adequate coverage compared with events and personality-oriented stories. On the other hand, the preference for crime stories, according to the UP Mindanao researchers, is attributed to the "tendency of media practitioners to focus on events or other issues that lend themselves to sensational treatment."

The total number of business or economy-related articles was 181 (10%). Most of these articles were published in the two business dailies, *BusinessWorld* and *Business Mirror*. These write-ups were followed by stories on development/infrastructure including economic development projects.

It is unfortunate that articles relevant to sustainable development of Mindanao were not given adequate exposure. Consider the following figures: agriculture (50 articles), environment (43); foreign aid/investment (43), education (42); health (39), legislative/legal issues (26), Mindanao situation (24), ARMM (17), mining (15), food security (5), and tribal leaders (3).

The UP Mindanao study concluded that there has been no radical change in reporting Mindanao as stories on conflicts still dominated the coverage of the nine broadsheets. Among the 1,805 articles classified, 365 (20%) featured conflict, of which 63 were on MILF/MNLF, 62 on NPA insurgency, 55 on AFP/PNP, 51 on military conflicts, 46 on the Abu Sayyaf/Abu Sofia, 46 on peace process, and 42 on bombings/kidnappings/ killings.

In terms of placement, only 87 articles (4%) of all Mindanao-related articles made it to the front pages of the broadsheets. Most of these front-page stories, as expected, were on crime and violence "that lend themselves to sensational treatment."

It was difficult to contextualize or provide background information and in-depth treatment for the articles, since a significant number (1,221 or 62%) of the 1,957 articles were news reports and 315 (16%) were news briefs. The other types were 100 (5%) news features, 72 (4%) features, 61 (3.1%) opinion pieces (including letters to

the editors), and 188 (10%) captioned photos. The researchers claimed that only 191 (10%) articles included background materials. This finding therefore supports Prof. Arao's observation cited earlier of media's weakness in providing necessary context to stories, therefore contributing to bias against Muslims.

The 2007 study also validated the observation by UP journalism professor and investigative journalist Yvonne Chua that information sources are dominated by formal (official) sources, especially government. Of the 1,957 articles, 446 (23%) were sourced from the AFP/PNP and most of these were on crime/accidents, bombings/kidnappings/killings, military conflicts and activities. Second main source were government agencies/officials for 408 (21%) articles. Other sources were: unspecified sources for 285 (14%); sports personalities/organizers, 234 (12%); business sector, 143 (7%); political figures/groups, 130 (7%); and MILF/MNLF/OIC, 79 (4%). The most unlikely sources were "others" for 70 (3%) articles; foreign agencies/groups for 69 (3%) articles; civil society groups/NGOs for 58 (3%) articles; and Muslim/ARMM leaders for 43 (2%) articles. This finding shows that in writing the Mindanao story, there are still many missing perspectives and worldviews, especially so-called "ordinary" people of Mindanao who have long been marginalized.

In terms of treatment, of the total number of articles, 799 (41%) had positive treatment. These included mostly stories on business/economy, agriculture, the environment, education, sports personalities, the ARMM, and some military activities. A total of 606 (31%) articles had neutral treatment, with facts and details presented in a straightforward manner. These were mostly stories about sports events and social events/people and events. The four hundred (20%) articles with negative treatment were mostly those involving crime/accidents, bombings/kidnappings/killings, military conflicts, etc. A total of 152 (8%) articles were classified as balanced.

V.   Defining the Rules

Are there editorial policies in the coverage of Muslim issues?

The above question leads to more questions: Should there be "special" guidelines in covering affairs or issues related to specific religious, ethnic and cultural groups? Are the universally accepted yardsticks of good journalism such as truth, accuracy, balance and impartiality, among others, not enough?

The coverage of Muslim issues in the Philippines and even elsewhere in the world deserves special attention because it involves not only religious and cultural concerns but, in contemporary times, also political (geopolitical) and economic considerations. In fact, even global media organizations such as the CNN and BBC have wrestled with the need for editorial policies in the coverage of such issues.

The coverage of Muslim issues has been infused with religious undertones because many news stories focus on the so-called Christian-Muslim divide. Such undertones can be also traced to labeling, stereotyping and the other forms of prejudices as discussed earlier.

According to Malaysian scholar Chandra Muzaffar (2005), with religion playing a much more prominent role today in the public sphere, it is no longer possible for journalists to stay away from the topic. He says that if the exploitation of religion through the media has become serious, it is because the impact of both religion and the media upon society is much greater today than it was a few decades ago.

One observation is that European media appears to have a more analytical coverage on the Christian-Muslim issue than the U.S. media.

Editorial guidelines and policies are sensitive topics in "democratic" societies such as the Philippines. Setting standards and guidelines is perceived by some sectors as anathema to a free society. The more guidelines, the narrower the range of press freedom. On the other hand, some sectors contend that guidelines are needed to "protect" the public from abuse by those who exercise their right of expression. Freedom is not absolute.

Self-Regulation through Codes

The Philippine media is largely independent of government control, restrained only by laws on libel, sedition, obscene publications and invasion of privacy. It has adopted the self-regulatory framework. Media companies, through their professional associations and ombudsmen, police their ranks, *ie* Philippine Press Institute/ Philippine Press Council, Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP)/ Standards Authority and Advertising Standards Council, and the Advertising Board. Self-regulation is pursued through the adoption of codes at the level of either the industry or the individual media organization.

There are at least three "national" media codes adopted by professional media associations, *ie* The Philippine Journalist's Code of Ethics, Broadcast Code of the Philippines and Advertising Code of the KBP. The Journalist's Code was adopted in 1988 by major national media associations, *ie* the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), National Press Club (NPC), Publishers Association of the Philippines Inc. (PAPI) and National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP). Many regional and provincial press clubs have since crafted their own codes. Also, a number of national and provincial newspapers and broadcast companies have adopted their own codes of ethical standards.

Most of the provisions of the 11-paragraph Philippine Journalist's Code of Ethics have a bearing on the coverage of Muslim issues as they are quite broad (and therefore applies to all areas of reportage). But one provision that explicitly impacts on Muslim coverage is stated as follows:

I shall not, in any manner, ridicule, cast aspersions on, or degrade any person by reason of sex, creed, religious belief, political conviction, and cultural and ethnic origin.

Similarly, many of the provisions of the Broadcast Code apply to all types of broadcast programming and areas of reportage. But there are also a number of provisions that directly relate to the coverage of Muslim issues. Among these are the following:

On Culture and Tradition (Article 20)

The mores, culture, traditions, and characteristics of people must be respected. Maliciously ridiculing, denigrating or disparaging culture, customs and traditions are prohibited.

Broadcasters must acquaint themselves with the culture, mores, traditions, needs and other characteristics of the locality and its people to best serve the community.

On Discrimination (Article 22)

A person's race, religion, color, ethnicity, gender, or physical and mental disability shall not be used in a way that would embarrass, denigrate, or ridicule him.

Enforcing the Guidelines

Based on the standards set at the national level, it appears that the guidelines are adequate (although in some instances too broad) to promote greater religious and cultural sensitivity. A common criticism is that these general standards are difficult to enforce notwithstanding bodies such as the Philippine Press Council (for the print media) and Standards Authority (for the broadcast media). The KBP Standards Authority has well-defined sanctions that can be imposed on erring member broadcast stations.

The common reason for non-enforcement, or the lack of it, is an inadequate monitoring system. To illustrate, the KBP Standards Authority has no full-time unit to monitor compliance with the Broadcast Code. In the case of the Philippine Press Council (PPC), its current chairman admits that "the most the Press Council can do is to require the offending publication to publish the complainant's reply. There is always a possibility of non-compliance" (Mariano, 2005). The Council has authority only over nearly 100 PPI-member publications nationwide and has no control over three Manila-based broadsheets and the vast majority of tabloids that are not PPI members (Mariano).

The Philippine Press Council is a body created by the PPI primarily to ensure a news subject's right to reply. Recently, it has agreed to hear cases involving questions of professional or ethical behavior.

If the national standards are "broad," it is hoped that these standards or guidelines can be specified or concretized in the editorial policies adopted by each media company. For example, media companies may adopt the policy not to label rebels and criminal elements according to their religious belief or ethnic origin. This policy is explicit in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer's Manual of Editorial Policies* (Appendix A) and *ABS-CBN Standards Ethics Manual* (Appendix B)*.* Unfortunately, many media companies (both print and broadcast) have no written policies. Some even depend on "tradition" or practice and ad hoc decisions (*ie* as the need arises) as basis for making editorial judgments.

That the number of media companies that have (or do not have) editorial policies remains unknown to PPI and KBP is a research agenda worth pursuing.

Model Editorial Policies

In its Basic Statement of Editorial Policy, the *Inquirer Manual* states that:

> The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* believes in God, the Supreme Being of the Universe**. But while the Inquirer believes in God, it also tolerates all religious beliefs. It does not advocate a particular religion or discriminate against those who have none** (underscoring provided).

For the broadcast media, *ABS-CBN's Standards Ethics Manual* may compare with those of global media companies in terms of depth and breadth. Defining the vision of ABS-CBN News, Maria Ressa, head of the News and Current Affairs Division, quotes from the Manual a statement which emphasizes the network's commitment to peace:

> Excellent journalism to make the world a better place. We want to take the news beyond coverage; to search for truth, work for conflict-resolution and fulfill media's role in nation-building.

The network's Manual is divided into guidelines on news gathering and news production. Relevant provisions on coverage of religious and cultural issues are found in covering crime, threats and claims of responsibility, hostage and barricade situations, terrorism/riots, contagious diseases, religion, stereotyping, hostile situations, and war.

Guidelines on news production have provisions on objectivity, balance, sister company disclaimers, advertisements, live coverage, requests to withhold information, public safety, among others.

The other major broadcast network, GMA Radio-Television, has a comprehensive *Ethics and Editorial Manual* that covers such topics as accuracy, fairness/ fair play, honesty in news gathering and news reporting, impartiality/ independence, and coverage of dangerous or sensitive issues. There is a section on providing context and background to the news and a proviso on avoiding "words, phrases and expressions that tend to pass judgment, or those that may slant or color the news and convey bias

or partiality." However, there are no provisions whatsoever on how to deal with topics on race, religion, or ethnicity.

Provincial Press Codes

Some provincial newspapers have also crafted their own codes. *Sun.Star Cebu*, one of the leading provincial dailies in Cebu, has adopted its *Code of Standards and Ethics* (1991, 2004) and *Policy and Protocol on Protecting Sun.Star Journalists* (2005).

1. The *Code of Standards* enjoins *Sun Star* journalists to, among others, exercise:

    > Respect for rules, codes, laws and arrangements that give a sense of community, instead of dividing people into hostile groups, classes or races.

2. The *Code of Ethics* of the northern Mindanao-based Cagayan de Oro Press Club Inc. has provisions related to accuracy, advocacy, honesty, personal interest and influence, attribution, rectification and right of reply, privacy, discrimination and sensitivity. The provision on discrimination appears more comprehensive than the guidelines adopted by the national media organizations. The reason perhaps is that being Mindanao-based, local journalists realize (and may in fact have experienced) the problem of discriminatory language and images in media. The specific provision reads:

    > We shall not engage in discrimination or stereotyping by placing undue emphases on gender, religion, minority groups, sexual orientation, race, color, political conviction, cultural or ethnic origin or physical or mental disability unless the description is in the public interest. We shall not normally identify victims of sexual assault or domestic violence or publish material likely to lead to the identification or public ridicule of crime even when free by law to do so.

A reading of the national and provincial media companies' codes highlights the need to adopt more concrete editorial policies, albeit recognizing at all times the principle of press freedom. It is also possible that some of these policies can be adopted ad interim as the country pursues its quest for peace characterized by cultural tolerance, harmony and understanding. Some concrete editorial policy guidelines have been proposed in several workshops since the late 1980s convened by the PPI, KBP, AIJC, and Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, among others.

Proposed Editorial Policies

From past conferences and symposia, among the proposed policies are the following:

- The word "Muslim" or "Christian" should be used only with reference to religion, religious rites, traditions or practices, thereby avoiding unnecessary and sensational uses of the terms.

- Reference to the rebel movement (in Mindanao), for want of something to differentiate it from the communist movement, should be "Moro" and not "Muslim."

- Rebels, kidnappers and other criminal elements should be simply labeled as such.

- Prejudice may sell newspapers but newspapers should resist the temptation to exploit human fears for commercial gain.

- In mixed societies, editors should be aware of the danger of feeding, by selective reporting, common prejudicial stereotypes about groups. Generalizations based on the behavior of an individual or a small group of individuals are invariably unjust.

- There should be a deliberate attempt to break false stereotypes by publishing stories that run counter to common prejudice.

- All stories of communal, racial or religious nature should be scrupulously ascribed to their source. The authority of the source should be properly evaluated.

- News editors must be given an orientation on the peace process and give their reporters time and resources to develop stories on the peace process.

- Editors/ news desks must be open and oriented toward news as a process rather than a mere event or series of events and news as issues rather than personalities.

The specific recommendations of these workshops are included in *Appendices C* to *E*.

Global Media Guidelines

Even the global media has taken cognizance of the need for editorial guidelines (in the coverage of religious and cultural issues). According to Elizabeth Smith (2005), Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association based in the United Kingdom, guidelines are drawn to be widely acceptable, but in some areas they may need to be modified to fit with local sensitivities. She recommends that the process of defining the parameters should involve the frontline producers. Ms. Smith cites the following CBA Broadcasting Guidelines on the coverage of religion:

> Programs which contain profane expressions or other references to religion which could cause offence should not be broadcast before the watershed[*] and broadcasters should give warnings of material which could cause offense to an aud*i*ence.
>
> Reference to religion should be presented accurately and in a dignif*i*ed manner.

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[*]"Watershed" refers to a time at night after which progressively adult material, all within the bounds of legal and r*e*gulatory limits, can be shown. In Canada and the U.K., it is set at 21.00, although throughout most of the rest of Europe it is at the later time of 22.00. ("Guidelines for Broadcasting R*e*gulation," by Eve Salomon, for the CBA and UNESCO, September 2005)

Programs that denigrate or satirize any racial or religious group should not be broadcast.

Programs that feature the views or beliefs of any race or religion must be acceptable to the target audience and should not be proselytizing in nature.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has adopted the following editorial policies for the coverage of religion:

We will ensure that the beliefs and practices of the great world faiths are described accurately and impartially.

We will ensure the religious views and beliefs of an individual, a religion or religious denomination are not misrepresented, abused or discriminated against, as judged against generally accepted standards.

We will reflect an awareness of the religious sensitivity of references to, or uses of, names, images, the historic deities, rituals, scriptures and language at the heart of the different faiths and ensure that any use of, or verbal or visual reference to them are treated with care and editorially justified. Examples include the Crucifixion, Holy Communion, the Koran, and the Jewish Sabbath.

We will respect the religious sensitivity surrounding the observance of holy days and the principal festivals of the various faiths so that unnecessary offence is avoided by material that might be more acceptable at other times.

Media Guidelines and Media Reforms

Editorial policies (adopted by professional organizations such as the PPI and KBP or by individual media companies) tend to focus on the don'ts – what should be avoided or forbidden. But this may be a narrow interpretation of editorial policies. There is also need for policies that provide rewards and incentives and that promote certain behaviors and practices. Examples of the latter are policies that encourage investigative and interpretative reporting.

There is need to "contextualize" the crafting of editorial policies. These guidelines cannot be divorced from the broader milieu or setting within which media companies operate. For example, editorial policies on culture and religion should be framed within the broader framework of peace and the promotion of cultural pluralism, tolerance and harmony. Contextualization enables media gatekeepers to be conscious of the country's historical past and its impact on the present, the weaknesses of our (colonial) educational system, etc.

Moreover, no amount of editorial policies can address media prejudices unless reforms in specific media operations are made. For example, the events-orientation of media would perpetuate a continued preference for sensational stories to the disadvantage of issues such as ancestral domain (vs regalian principle of land ownership), the quest for Bangsamoro, etc. Media ownership also needs to be democratized to facilitate access and participation even by marginalized groups and sectors. Community media should be encouraged and supported. Programming

should be made more interactive or two-way rather than Manila-centric, to facilitate exchange of perspectives, promote cultural understanding and appreciation and remove stereotyping.

The community as a "countervailing force" to media inadequacies or as a reform advocate should be promoted. In some communities such as Cebu City, Baguio City and Palawan, community media councils have proven to be an effective venue and mechanism for redress of grievances against media. These media councils have multi-sectoral membership including representatives from local media.

IV.　Suggested Theoretical Frameworks for Analyzing Prejudice

A.　Politics of Racism

Citing discriminatory practices in secular, Christian and Muslim countries, the report, "Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and All Forms of Discrimination: Situation of Muslims and Arab Peoples in Various Parts of the World," which was discussed during the second meeting of the UN Human Rights Council, suggests that contemporary Islamophobia is more political and ideological than religious in nature. The politicization, and sometimes the indirect legalization, of Islamophobia is one of the alarming findings of the report that touches on such issues as the Danish cartoon crisis and the membership of Turkey in the European Union.

The report argues that official statements condemning all forms of racism do not necessarily indicate that these countries do not practice racism. It notes that many countries have introduced "laws or administrative measures specifically designed to 'control' and 'monitor' such minorities, thereby stigmatizing them even further and legitimizing the discrimination they experience."

Islamophobia has deep historical roots in Europe. In many areas of the world today, there has been a serious upsurge in manifestations and expressions of discrimination against Muslims and Arab peoples. One example is the attitude expressed in an official statement regarding Turkey's proposed membership in the EU. The report further states, "To a much greater extent than any other religions, opposition to Islam has been a core element in the construction of European identity since time immemorial."

Some recommendations of the report include: (1) Start by admitting the existence of Islamophobia; (2) Revise articles regulating the freedom of expression in the light of hatred-enticing defamation of religions; (3) Encourage dialogue rather than confrontation; (4) Address the issue through education and information; and (5) Combat the continuous association of Islam with violence and terrorism.

These issues are especially addressed to media which has played a major role in spreading Islamophobia.

B. Hegemony and the Mass Media

Media coverage of Muslim affairs reflects the domination of one social group over other groups, including the Moro people in Philippine society. This theory of domination is explicated in the concept of hegemony, which is defined as the process of domination in which one set of ideas subverts or co-opts another, or a process by which one group in society exerts leadership over all others (Littlejohn, 1999). In this process, the ideology of the dominant group is presented as the "universal" ideology although it does not reflect the interests of the other groups.

Cultural studies directly relate the concept of hegemony to the mass media, the function of which is seen as maintaining the dominance of those already in positions of power. Media is therefore perceived as a powerful instrument of the dominant ideology.

Media representations of culture, which Stuart Hall calls "hegemonic encoding," reproduce social inequalities. Thus while the media presents a variety of ideas, it still tends to prop up the status quo by privileging the already accepted interpretation of reality (Hall in Griffin, 2000). In presenting opposing views, media nevertheless places these views within the frame of the dominant ideology. This is the irony, because while media presents the illusion of diversity and objectivity, it is in fact an instrument of the prevailing order (Littlejohn, 1999).

Cultural domination in the Philippine mass media is indicated in the historical antecedents and in the present portrayals of manifest and latent biases against Muslim Filipinos. This is further highlighted by the nature of media control and ownership in the country.

Media organizations have been owned and controlled by people who represent mainstream and elitist interests, making it difficult to present images and messages from the perspectives of "marginalized" groups like the Moros.

As noted by eminent journalist, scholar and former U.P. President Salvador P. Lopez, "with media owned, organized and operated by rich families or powerful corporate bodies, it followed that they were instinctively committed to the defense of their own clans' interest."

Media scholar Datu Jamal Ashley Abbas points out, "The mass media organizations are owned by non-Moros. Unlike the Chinese and the Iglesia ni Cristo, the Moros do not own any mass media organization. They have absolutely no influence in the mass media as no mass media outfit targets them as audience."

C.   From Hegemony to Cultural Assimilation

Media plays a significant and persistent factor in influencing and conditioning the mind. This is known as "cultural assimilation" and involves establishing social identities. The latter is influenced by the direction of commercialism, fashion, films, news and popular media. As a result, popular culture is formed, consisting of images and characteristics that mostly reflect one social group, usually the dominant or majority group, more than other groups, thus establishing a cultural imbalance.

It is instructive what one Philippine president in 1977 was quoted by a major newspaper as saying about assimilation (Gowing, 1979, p 216):

> If the Muslim population of the country were to be segregated into a separate region, away from the influence of the non-Muslims, and I refer to the hill tribes as well as to the Christian population, there is a possibility that this enclave may develop into a completely alien and strange culture which would not be assimilated into the national culture.

Commenting on this pronouncement, Gowing says, "Assimilation into the 'national culture,' which they perceive as predominantly Christian, is what the Moros have been trying to avoid like the plague. This assimilation objective is the great 'Christian Problem' of the Moros."

Rather than assimilation, whether cultural or political, what the Moro people seek is "tolerance for the identity, culture, way of life and aspirations of all the peoples of Mindanao" (General Framework of Agreement of Intent between the Philippine government and the MILF, 1998).

The conflict in Mindanao is basically a Moro struggle. The Moros are fighting for their lost lands, lost privileges and the right to practice their faith – Islam. For decades, the government has been maintaining that the so-called Moro problem is not a religious conflict but one that has roots in socio-economic and political conditions.

But now, government with the help of the media seems to be saying again that it is a religious problem after all. Thus, the Moros' struggle for national self-determination is now subtly being changed into an Islamic fanatics' fight against non-Muslims; in other words – terrorism. However, the Moros' perspective is that this gives the Philippine government an excuse to welcome U.S. troops in this "war of terror" and to align itself with the "Coalition of the Willing."

Given its powerful role in conditioning the mind and telling us what to think about (also called media's agenda-setting function), media must now bring to the sphere of public consciousness the genuine aspirations of the Moro people.

D.   Using Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics provides a framework for understanding how we interpret feelings, events, actions or text. It asserts that a person's interpretation usually coincides with his or her previously held beliefs. This process of interpretation usually brings in that person's biases and prejudices.

In philosophical hermeneutics, history is not separate from the present (Littlejohn). We are always simultaneously part of the past, in the present and anticipating the future. In other words, the past operates on us now in the present, and affects our conception of what is yet to come. At the same time, our present notions of reality affect how we view the past.

Thus, what most Filipinos think about the Moro people is shaped by what they have been taught in history class. Former Dean of the UP College of Arts and Sciences Cesar Adib Majul says, "History books in the Philippines tend to lay emphasis on events in other islands and glorify national heroes from such areas, as if the history of the Philippines is only that of people who had been conquered while the history of the unconquered ones do not merit a share in the history of the Philippines" (Majul 1973).

Similarly, important events in history have shaped the mindset of most Filipinos. As explained by Abbas, the long history of the Moro-Spanish wars had lasting effects on the collective memory of the *Indios* (present-day Filipinos). For almost 350 years, the *Indios* were helpless natives "caught between the Spaniards, who were the masters of the land and the *Moros*, who were the masters of the seas" (Dery, 1997, cited by Abbas).

When the Americans came, the idea that "a good *Moro* is a dead *Moro*" was given renewed currency. The *Moros* were usually referred to as uncivilized "savages" or "barbarians" by the Americans. Thus, Moro history reveals that the Moros never considered the *Indios* as sovereign people; instead they considered the *Indios* as natives who had accepted Christianity and became practically slaves of the Spanish.

As if in revenge, therefore, the history of the country's post-colonial government depicts *Moros* as the unruly Muslim inhabitants of Mindanao who are dealt with punitive expeditions from Manila every now and then.

Centuries-old texts which disparage Moros influence present attitudes. Meaning is further derived from an interpretive community, the mass media, which is owned by non-Moros. Thus, Moros or Muslim Filipinos have not had the influence in providing content to balance what is dominant and favorable to the Christian majority.

In hermeneutics, the negative portrayals of the Moros by either historical books or media can be directed positively, targeting the youth. The relative lack of knowledge about the Moros or absence of prejudice among the young people can be tapped to

present an accurate and balanced picture of the Moros, correct negative images and in effect promote peace and goodwill in Mindanao.

Hermeneutics could therefore be a powerful analytical tool in drawing out the problem-solving function of media toward building deeper understanding between Muslims and Christians. This calls for a genuine effort in cultural interpretation of the historical and contemporary issues on Muslim affairs.

E.   Emancipatory Communication

Media can play a positive role in Muslim affairs through what Jurgen Habermas of the Frankfurt School calls "emancipatory communication." In Habermas' view, power or domination leads to distorted communication, but by becoming aware of the ideologies that dominate society, groups can themselves be empowered to transform society (Littlejohn, 1999).

Habermas believes that a strong public sphere, apart from private interests, is necessary to ensure an emancipated society that is free from unnecessary domination of any one interest and where everybody has equal opportunity to participate in decision making. In this public sphere, communicative competence is necessary for effective participation.

This communicative competence is "emancipatory communication," which calls attention to problems and requires critical reflection and resolution. For critical theorists like Habermas, only when we are aware of the problems of our life-world and the ways the system influences our view of life can we become emancipated from the entanglements of the system.

Habermas argues that communicatively competent individuals are committed to reaching understanding and a consensus. Toward achieving what Pope Benedict XVI calls a genuine dialogue of cultures and religions, Habermas' theory of communicative action can provide the framework for reaching understanding and mutuality.

According to Habermas, "there is at least one end (mutuality) to which we are committed by virtue of being capable of communication." He adds, "This end is prior to personal ends" (Braaten, 1991, p 64). That is, while we each may have personal ends in mind, in the case of religion, the conversion of others to one's faith, to enter into a mutually agreed situation, both sides must first be committed to communicate.

Applying Habermas' framework, media can start by reflecting on how it reports on cultural communities, both by commission or by omission. Thus, media usually presents the superficial aspect of their culture or what is exotic or different; and puts forward integration into the national culture rather than tolerance and cultural diversity. It has also failed to focus on the commonalities or universalities, those features of Philippine culture and society that unite Muslims, indigenous peoples and the rest of the Christianized population.

Media must also take a critical look at how it has covered the conflict and peace process, focusing on personalities rather than issues, on conflict and violence rather than peace initiatives and options for resolution, and on events and fragments rather than process and context.

Another critical area that media needs to examine is its economic and commercial orientation vis-à-vis the interests and needs of the various publics of a culturally diverse country. While some media organizations have adopted certain advocacies as part of its corporate responsibility, a more aggressive stance needs to be taken regarding media reforms in such areas as the free flow of information on issues related to the Moros and Islam in the Philippines, for example.

In this aspect, the initiative of the *Manila Times* in publishing the monthly *Moro Times* is commendable. The *Manila Bulletin* pioneered a Muslim affairs beat, employs Muslim reporters, and reports on Muslim concerns in its Mindanao section. The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* for its part features a weekly Mindanao section, prints reports by Muslim writers, and has a Muslim columnist. It is hoped that other newspapers and broadcast institutions can follow with similar undertakings.

Moreover, there is considerable anxiety about what has been termed as the "clash among civilizations." Media can contribute to the discourse by examining more deeply the social, economic and political forces that either facilitate or hinder authentic dialogue and genuine understanding.

Indeed, Philippine society needs to be freed from the entanglements of bias and prejudice against Muslim Filipinos. Toward this end, media must play its "emancipatory" role of bringing into the public consciousness the perspectives of the Moro people and other cultural groups and thereby "compel" reflection of the multitudinous dimensions of the problem. In doing so, it will be empowering the various social groups, including both dominant and marginalized, in participating in the process of emancipation and contributing to the transformation of a genuinely culturally diverse Philippine community.

VII. Agenda for the Future

The issue of cultural prejudice is a deep-seated problem, the result of early social conditioning in the home, the school, and the workplace. It therefore requires a comprehensive solution and must be addressed in relation to reforms not only in the media but also in the educational and legal system.

An agenda for polic*i*es and action will depend upon the recognition of the realities of the existing media environment. Thus, the nature of media ownership, commercialization and entertainment orientation of the media, and existing media

policies will affect the implementation of a social and cultural agenda on mitigating prejudice and improving the climate of trust and dialogue among cultural groups.

Global and national trends that are now shaping the social, economic, and political environment – global terrorism, the new information technologies such as the Internet, resurgence of conflict among religious and cultural groups, growth of global learning initiatives that promote peace-making – are among the significant developments that can contribute to a road map for building tolerance.

A. Talking Points

1. A Comprehensive Framework for Media Reportage

Media coverage of Muslim affairs is akin to peace reportage. A common observation by social scientists and even among insightful journalists is the lack of a comprehensive framework in the coverage of the peace process. They assert that there is undue emphasis on the "salacious, scandalous, and sensational" in news reporting. The preference for the "bad" rather than the "good" news is taken as an age-old attribute of media reporting. Philippine media, with a few exceptions, is also known to be oriented to events and personalities rather than issues.

Previous forums on media coverage of the peace process contend that it is not only the peace process that needs a framework. (Amina Rasul, lead convenor of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, thinks the government is ignorant about the existence of prejudice, and therefore needs to be further informed – especially about the conduct of the peace process and needed action such as dismantling the government apparatus that had contributed to the escalation of violence in the South.) Media, too, needs a framework to clearly define the context of the peace process, expand coverage areas (and depart from traditional storylines and news sources), and delineate the role expected of media. One such role is to facilitate continuing dialogue among the peace actors (in contrast to the traditional "*sabong*" mentality, *ie* pitting protagonists against each other).

As Defense Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina observes, media tends to play on conflict and less on the positive social aspects of life in the community. This was the same observation during the 1996 GRP-MNLF peace process that resulted in an agreement forged between former President Fidel V. Ramos and the then head of the Office of the presidential Adviser for the Peace process, Manuel Yan on behalf of the government and the then ARRM Governor Nur Misuari.

The framework must recognize the need for a greater balance in presentation not only in terms of equal time and space but also in terms of qualitative treatment of events and processes. Media reporting also tends to be short-sighted as it operates on a day-to-day basis, while reporters are not able to build enough knowledge on the issues as they are constrained by their own beats and deadlines. As a result, it is difficult for the news media to present a coherent picture of issues.

Media reporting on Muslim affairs must learn from the lessons on peace and war reportage. Evolving a framework for media reportage is an agenda worth pursuing considering the peace dividends the country can gain from such an initiative.

2.   The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development (and News Reporting)

Of the six Human Rights Principles, mass media plays a critical and active role in at least three areas, *ie* Participation and Inclusion, Accountability and Rule of Law, and Non-Discrimination and Equality. The other principles are: Universality and Inalienability and Interdependence and Inter-Relatedness.

The Principle of Participation and Inclusion states:

> Every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized.

In many societies today, the principle of non-participation and exclusion prevails instead. There is non-participation and exclusion due to income, gender, geography, culture and ethnicity, socio-economic inequalities, and political beliefs.

Over the past few years, there have been a growing number of empirical studies which indicate that media can narrow and also erase non-participation and exclusion and promote and sustain broader democratic space or the public sphere.

The Principle of Non-Discrimination and Equality states:

> All individuals are equal as human beings and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each human person. All human beings are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind, such as race, color, sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion…or other status as explained by the human rights treaty bodies.

3.   Mass Media, Cultural Rights and Diversity

As early as two decades ago, the *MacBride Commission Report* convened by UNESCO warned about the threat of cultural homogenization brought about by one-way flow of information from the developed world (and urban centers) to underdeveloped countries (and rural areas). Cultural activists (Potter, 2002; Potter and Dann, 1996; Hall, 1995) believe that with economic globalization, the threat is no longer imagined but real.

The essence of the arguments is that cultural homogenization is a violation of the cultural rights of every individual and so*ci*ety as expressed in the *UN Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

(particularly Article 15) and *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* adopted by the organization during its 31st General Conference in 2001.

In October 2005, the 33rd General Conference of UNESCO approved the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* The Convention seeks to reaffirm the links between culture, development and dialogue and to create an innovative platform for international cultural cooperation. It reaffirms the sovereign right of States "to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions" and "to create the conditions for cultures to flourish and to freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner" (Article 1).

The Document sets some Guiding Principles (Article 2). For example, it guarantees that all measures aimed at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions does not hinder respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms "such as freedom of expression, information and communication, as well as the ability of individuals to choose (them)…." The "principle of openness and balance" ensures that when States adopt measures in favor of the diversity of cultural expressions "they should seek to promote, in an appropriate manner, openness to other cultures of the world."

B. Action Points

1. Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue

1.1   Active participation of the media in interfaith dialogue: The 35-minute discourse of Pope Benedict XVI on September 12, 2006 at Regensberg University, where he quoted these words of a 14th century Byzantine Emperor: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached," sparked the ire of many in the Muslim world.

The speech could turn out to be the most important step forward for interfaith dialogue as Pope Benedict shifted the terms of a debate that has been dominated by either feel-good truisms, victimization, complexes or hateful confrontation. He sought instead to delineate what he sees as a fundamental difference between Christianity's view that God is intrinsically linked to reason and Islam's view that "God is absolutely transcendent."

Benedict said Islam teaches that God's will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality. The risk he sees implicit in this concept of the divine is that the irrationality of violence might appear to be justified to someone who believes it is God's will. Reason and faith, he insisted, must come together in a new way.

Thomas Friedman (*New York Times,* October 7, 2006, p. 2) opines, "The pope was actually treating Islam with dignity. He was treating the faith and its community as adults who could be challenged and engaged. That is a sign of respect. What is insulting is the politically correct, oh-so-gentle view of how to deal with Muslims that is taking root in the West today."

Good news is that the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Tehran-based Center for Inter-Religious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization recently concluded in April 2008 their sixth colloquium, focused on "Faith and Reason in Christianity and Islam." The sub-themes of the forum were on the relationship of faith and reason; theology/Kalam as inquiry into the rationality of faith; and faith and reason confronted with the phenomenon of violence. At the end of the meeting, the participants affirmed that faith and reason do not contradict each other, and that though faith might in some cases be above reason, it is never against it.

They affirmed, "Neither reason nor faith should be used for violence; unfortunately, both of them have been sometimes misused to perpetrate violence. In any case, these events cannot question either reason or faith." Both sides agreed to cooperate in promoting genuine religiosity, in particular spirituality, to encourage respect for symbols considered to be sacred and to promote moral values.

The participants called on Christians and Muslims to go beyond tolerance, accepting differences, while remaining aware of commonalities and thanking God for them. "They are called to mutual respect, thereby condemning derision of religious beliefs," the concluding statement affirmed. They added, "Generalization should be avoided when speaking of religions. Differences of confessions within Christianity and Islam [and] diversity of historical contexts are important factors to be considered." In conclusion, they said, "Religious traditions cannot be judged on the basis of a single verse or a passage present in their respective holy books. A holistic vision as well as an adequate hermeneutical method is necessary for a fair understanding of them."

1.2 Involvement of youth groups in promoting intercultural dialogue: One promising project for Christian and Muslim youth is cultural exchange through regular teleconferencing such as that sponsored by the Assisi Foundation and several corporate foundations. This should be replicated and encouraged as it is an excellent methodology for encouraging the articulation of perceptions, feelings, prejudices and opinions and the discovery of commonalit*ie*s that can be the basis for future cooperation in programs and projects.

1.3 Institutions engaged in Muslim-Christian dialogue should be strengthened. Such institutions, rather than focusing on knowledge, should emphasize methodologies that facilitate dialogue and tolerance.

1.4   We need to continue building among Muslims, Christians and indigenous peoples in the country what Rep. Nerius Acosta describes as "social trust" or "social capital."

2.   Education and Training of Journalists

2.1   It is recommended that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) include a course on Muslim Studies in the standard curriculum of communication and journalism programs. The course may even be offered in other academic programs. The course shall aim to instill awareness of the history of Muslims in the Philippines, including the roots of the present conflict, and an understanding and appreciation of their religion, cultural values and traditions. This will enable future journalists to provide appropriate background in writing Muslim-related stories and in presenting the Muslim perspective on issues and to develop sensitivity in their reportage or productions.

2.2   An Inter-Cultural and Cross-Cultural Course (in the existing communication and journalism curricula) should give attention to the Mindanao issue. Such course would increase appreciation of cultural and religious diversity and pluralism, and promote tolerance, understanding and appreciation.

2.3   Continuing education of journalists, including publishers, editors, media managers, reporters and correspondents, on the history, culture and religion of the Moro people (as well as other cultural communities): This may be organized by media companies themselves, industry associations (PPI and KBP), media NGOs and academic/ training institutions. Training formats may be in-house seminars, roundtable discussions, dialogues and discussions, and in-depth discussions through case studies, among others.

2.4   Non-government organizations may take the initiative in offering "editorial clinics" on Muslim coverage by arranging visits to editorial offices of print and broadcast media companies. Similarly, media companies owned and controlled by Muslims (albeit few) may organize lessons on the Christian faith.

2.5   Journalists could benefit from specialized training on conflict reporting. An example is the course on "Peace and Conflict Journalism" offered by INWENT (Germany), Peace and Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON) and Pax Christi. Other specialized training courses could be investigative and process reporting and cultural or ethnic reporting.

3.   Media Content and Coverage

3.1   Agenda-setting role of media: Media can be an effective forum in setting the agenda for multisectoral discussion on preferred solution to the Bangsamoro issue. Soon after the Tripoli Agreement was signed in 2001, a poll was taken on the preferred solution to the Bangsamoro issue. The result of the survey

indicated that independence and self-rule was the preferred solution (52%) with federalism garnering only 28%. Another poll to validate this earlier poll can be done with media as active participant in carrying out the survey.

3.2 Providing a balanced picture of the contribution of Islam to society: The early contributions of Islam were in science, language and religious works. The linguistic revolution was considered the single most important cultural transformation and stimulated the growth of a scientific culture. But through a process of translation of works in Arabic, the Muslim contributions to science were systematically plagiarized. In the process, "western religious and political leaders alike have wished to press below the conscious anything remotely positive about Islam. Generation after generation have been educated by omission and conditioned by media to believe that nothing comes from the world of Islam and the Arabs except guns, daggers, camels, harems and fanaticism...." (Childers, 1997, cited in Tehranian and Chappell, 2004).

Since September 11 and the Iraq War, much of the information from the western media has tended to portray Arabs as the "bad guys." Even economic reporting in mainstream media is known to be conservative.

3.3 Media coverage of critical global trends: A recent trend is the increasing percentage of Europeans and Americans who have converted to Islam. The reason given is that these new converts see in Islam a well-defined moral map and strict adherence to such issues as environmental protection and other critical moral and ethical national and global issues. They do not see this in the ongoing secularization and commercialism of western Christian society.

3.4 The media, specifically, television, can provide the forum for a discussion on concepts of sovereignty. As Muhammad al Hassan, says (in Gowing, 1978), "Filipinos believe that sovereignty resides in them, but we believe that sovereignty belongs to God alone."

3.5 Media companies should give Muslim journalism (communication) graduates opportunity to work as reporters, columnists, editors, etc. This should not be undertaken as "tokenism" but given in recognition of competencies and qualifications. More Muslim journalists would also help provide the impetus for seeking out the Muslim perspective in reporting.

A positive development is what ABS-CBN vice president Maria Ressa describes as the network's efforts to recruit Muslims in its workforce.

3.6 Distinct media programs by and for Muslims should be encouraged and supported. *The Moro Times* of *The Manila Times* and the *Manila Bulletin* and *Philippine Daily Inquirer* with their Mindanao section deserve commendation for pioneering in this initiative. The broadcast media (especially free TV stations) should be encouraged to produce and air similar programs. On the other hand,

cable TV networks should be encouraged to allocate a cable TV station for Muslims. Media programs featuring sensitive topics must endeavor to seek the technical advice of experts including religious leaders.

3.7   Media accentuating "positive" stories on Muslims (or Mindanao) cannot be left to chance given existing traditional (western) news values. Media companies, especially those that are Mindanao-based, should adopt the policy of allotting "positive" stories, *eg* community initiatives to pursue peace and development, outstanding Muslims in various professions or vocations, and scientific and technological innovations, among others.

3.8   Similarly, coverage of culture should focus not only on the so-called externalities and the exotic but also on the essential elements of culture such as values, beliefs, and mindsets. The "we" versus "they" stories that highlight differences must give way to (or at least be balanced by) media content that shows commonalities between Muslims and Christians.

3.9   Muslim resource persons should be invited in the media discussion of global, national and local issues and events. The issues and events need not be limited to those related to Muslim concerns but may cover broader political, economic and socio-cultural concerns. This will not only correct negative stereotyping of Muslims but also ensure a multi-cultural and national discussion of national issues. Toward this end, a directory of Muslim resource persons on diverse topics may be useful to editors and producers. Should the media organization pursue a regular beat or program, a consultant for media affairs may be advisable.

3.10   Media education programs for pupils/ students, parents, teachers, etc. should include modules on religious and cultural sensitivity by media. Media education programs are intended to make media consumers more critical or discriminating of media content.

3.11   Role of the state and the media in promoting the concept of rights and duties: It is said that a map for future dialogue among cultures would depend on the extent to which the state allows sufficient political space that would ensure that the voices of civil society are heard. The Constitution recognizes the role of information in nation-building and mandates the establishment of a policy environment that would allow free flow and exchange of information. However, the achievement of this goal is constrained by the current state of commercialism in the media system. It is apparent that cultural communities – the Muslims and indigenous communities - do not have adequate access to the media.

4.   Peace Journalism

4.1   Peace reporting as a critical component in training should be promoted and encouraged especially among journalists covering conflict zones. According to its main advocate, Norwegian peace studies professor Johan Galtung, peace journalism highlights peace and conflict resolution as much as violence. The challenge for peace journalism is compelling and urgent. Journalists should be measured not only by how well they cover war but also by how well they make people understand why war is being waged and help prevent another war from coming.

4.2   According to Galtung, peace correspondents must be able to ask the following questions: What is the conflict about? What are the deeper roots of the conflict, in structure and culture, including the history of both? What kind of ideas exists about outcomes other than one party's imposing itself on the other? If violence occurs, what about such invisible effects as trauma, hatred and desire for revenge or more glory?

4.3   Mindanao journalists, however, at the FGD in October 2006 stress more on good or responsible journalism rather than peace journalism. They emphasize the need to constantly pursue the tenets of truth and responsibility among journalists. They add, "When you are in media, you have the responsibility to promote harmony by giving more information which the public needs to know."

4.4   MindaNews, a news service organized by Mindanao-based journalists, is a good model. Its work in producing more balanced, sensitive and informed reports on Muslims and Mindanao should inspire other journalists and media organizations to do the same, or better. They can start by writing about what journalist Red Batario calls "the dividends of peace as opposed to focusing on conflict alone."

4.5   A manual for journalists writing about Muslim/Moro affairs could also be developed. This will serve as a handy reference material on background and basic information about the history, culture and contemporary affairs of the Bangsamoro people. It could also contain do's and don'ts when writing about Muslims.

5.   Editorial Guidelines and Codes of Ethics

5.1   Media companies with explicit editorial policies (including codes of ethics and standards) should review these policies in terms of adequacy and timeliness. There should be more concrete or specific policies related to religious and cultural sensitivity particularly on stereotyping and labeling. Aside from this, Mindanao journalists specifically suggest coming up with a Code of Ethics on "Reporting on Conflict."

5.2   Industry associations (*eg* KBP and PPI), media NGOs, and the academe, among others, should encourage media companies without written editorial policies or codes to craft such policies and to make these policies transparent so that they can be held accountable.

5.3   There is a need to "contextualize" the crafting of editorial polic*ie*s on culture and religion within the broader framework of peace, pluralism, tolerance and harmony. Also, such policies should not be limited to the "do's and don'ts" but include incentives that promote desired behavior and practices, *eg* in-depth and investigative reporting.

5.4   Media NGOs (*eg* Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility) and communication (journalism) schools should continuously monitor media coverage of Muslim issues and call the attention of media companies for observed lapses or inadequacies. Communication schools can be mobilized to assist in monitoring compliance with industry or company editorial policies and guidelines. Such activity can be part of their on-the-job training or research (thesis).

5.5   Cultural and gender sensitivity in information and communication policies: The current imbalance in reporting on critical issues and concerns among Moros, such as Bangsamoro, sovereignty, cultural values, etc., is due to the lack of participation of the Moros and other cultural groups in the ownership of media. Ownership of media will empower the cultural groups and help ensure a more accurate and comprehensive reporting of controversial issues.

        Much of media reporting on cultural communit*ie*s appear to have primarily focused on: (a) the presentation of superficial aspects of their culture – such as the exotic or unique cultural practices; or (b) a campaign to convert them - winning their hearts and minds to the cause of integrating them into the mainstream culture. But this has failed to focus on what may be important in establishing unity and harmony – the commonalities among Christians and Muslims and tolerance for the cultural diversity.
        .

5.6   State policy in support of alternative media systems: There is need for policies which would establish state support for alternative media enterprises – public broadcasting, community newspapers, multimedia centers for training and production of alternative programming. This would be alternatives to the commercial orientation of the media which has resulted in what we now have – imbalance in news and public affairs and cultural and educational programs.

6.   Communication Media Research

6.1   The formulation of a comprehensive framework for research to analyze prejudice from a multidisciplinary perspective: This would go beyond an earlier focus on historical research and content analysis of perceptions and attitudes.

The latter has provided needed understanding of the roots of prejudice and how media had indeed reinforced stereotypes. Future research must, however, move beyond manifest content into the domain of attitudes. The latter, shown in latent content, is characterized by omissions, distortions and trivialization. These latent prejudices may also explain lack of openness to new knowledge.

6.2   Future research can focus on social-psychological dynamics such as the domination of one social group over the other, resulting in one set of ideas subverting the other. Media representation of the dominant culture is known to have deepened bias against the Muslims.

6.3   Research studies can examine dynamics in the media environment, including the nature of media ownership, codes of ethics and editorial policies, commercialism, and entertainment orientation. The findings could guide the formulation of programs aimed at upgrading standards of ethics and search for alternative channels for expression.

6.4   Media historians and scholars are encouraged to conduct Muslim media research. The research agenda may include the following: History of Mass Media in Mindanao; Biography of Pioneering (Outstanding) Muslim Journalists; and Media Coverage of the Mindanao Peace Process.

6.5   A follow-up study on newspaper coverage of Mindanao is recommended to determine whether the findings of the 1988 PACE Study, which showed that reporting was more objective than sensational, has been sustained.

7.   Alternative Mass Media Enterprises

7.1   There is renewed interest in setting up alternative media enterprises such as a Public Broadcasting System (PBS), which is advocated by UNESCO. PBS is defined as broadcasting made for the public, funded by the public and controlled by the public. Essentially, it emphasizes public participation in ownership, control, funding and programming of broadcasting.

A PBS can partly address the need for quality broadcast programs that highlight cultural diversity or pluralism. Recently, various sectors supported the UNESCO (Philippines) and AIJC initiative to transform the government-owned National Broadcasting Network (Channel 4) into an authentic PBS.

7.2   Community media (either newspapers or broadcast stations) are viable forms of alternative media. These are usually low-cost, cover specific geographic areas and are owned/ controlled by the community. As such, they are accessible to the community and readily reflect their needs and interests. Among the examples of community media are the 15 community radio stations in Mindanao affiliated with the Gender and Peace Project of the Women in Enterprise Development, UNICEF-supported community radio stations, and a few

remaining stations under the UNESCO-DANIDA supported *Tambuli* Project. Adequate incentives and other support mechanisms should be provided to ensure sustainability of these community media. Support mechanisms include training opportunit*ie*s, equipment and facilities.

7.3   Continue the search for other alternative mass media enterprises which provide access to diverse cultural groups, and formulate/implement policies which encourage affirmative action, facilitate ownership of media enterprises by Muslims, open up space on Muslim affairs in commercial media, and encourage entry of young Muslim journalists in mainstream media.

8.   New Media

8.1   The Internet and various web applications such as web sites/web pages, blogging and podcasting provide a viable alternative venue for presenting the Muslim "perspective" on global and local issues. The mainstream media, especially global media companies, still present dominant western perspectives on issues and events. New media channels provide "marginalized" groups with a "voice" and facilitate presentation of and access to diverse viewpoints. Muslim thinkers and scholars should be encouraged to develop their own new media channels to balance the points of view purveyed by mainstream media. New media provides a platform to bypass the dominant media.

8.2   The emergence of the Internet as an important news source was shown in the 2003 Iraq war. A study conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project that surveyed 1,600 American adults during the first six days of the war revealed that while television beat the Internet when it came to war coverage, the Internet nonetheless emerged as an integral information pipeline. Among Americans who had online access, 77 percent sought information on the Internet about the war while 87 percent turned to TV. Overall, among those who turned to the Internet for information about the war, 66 percent said they did so to get news from a variety of sources, 63 percent said they wanted to get up-to-the minute news, and 52 percent said they wanted to get points of view that were different from those found in traditional news sources (Gutierrez 2003).

The interactive or two-way quality of new media facilitates dialogue between and among religious and cultural sectors. Programs and projects that promote inter-faith dialogue through new media such as the Peace Tech project should be supported, encouraged and expanded.

8.3   A web site could be developed as an online resource for journalists reporting on Muslim affairs. Content may include the history of Islam in the Philippines, the culture of the various Moro groups (*eg* Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Badjao), background on contemporary developments (Moro National Liberation Front, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Tripoli Agreement, Abu Sayyaf, etc.), the Shari'a courts, Muslim/Moro Filipino leaders (past and present), and a directory

of Muslim/Moro individuals and institutions and their areas of specialization, among others.

9.   Continuing Search for Answers to Questions

There is considerable anxiety about the ongoing "clash among civilizations." We can contribute to the dialogue by examining more deeply the social, economic and political forces that either facilitate or hinder authentic dialogue. They include:

9.1   Foreign policies, both explicit and implicit, that will be able to guide present and future actions

9.2   The willingness to place the Agenda on Cultural Diversity on the list of an urgent National Survival Agenda

9.3   Political will from government, business, and civil society to address the issues raised as well as the recommendations

9.4   Utilize the new information technologies – the Internet and mobile communications - in sharing these concerns with the global community

9.5   Focus on the youth who are still relatively free from the influence of old stereotypes and patterns of thinking. And focus on younger journalists to equip them to handle the complex issues and problems in a culturally diverse society.

Prejudice and pride paper-editedAugust2008/ann/20August2008

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Appendix A

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER'S MANUAL OF EDITORIAL POLICIES

1. *Section II. Basic Statement of Editorial Policy*

   For God

   The Philippine Daily Inquirer believes in God, the Supreme Being of the Universe. But while the Inquirer believes in God, it also tolerates all religious beliefs. It does not advocate a particular religion or discriminate against those who have none.

   For Pacifism and Non-Violence

   The Inquirer is for pacifism and non-violence. It is for the peaceful settlement of international and intra-national disputes. It is for stricter gun control. It calls on all mass media, including the movies and television, to tone down violence in their publications and productions.

2. *Section IV. Fairness and Objectivity*

   The use of labels

   Use of label when it has a bearing on or relevance to the issue being discussed

   Do not use a label when it has no bearing on or relevance to the story.

3. *Section VIII. Editorial Cartoons*

   Do not make fun of ethnic or racial characteristics in the drawing or the dialogue (the "balloons").

   Respect tribal and ethnic Filipinos. Do not make fun of their physical features. Depict them in their proper attire. Do not interchange costumes.

4. *Section VIII. Columnists*

   Delicate topics, particularly those dealing with religion, race and minority groups, should be handled with great prudence and care. The columnists

should always be aware of the dangers of bigotry. In no case should they criticize or ridicule another person on the basis of his or her religious bel*ie*fs, race, sexual preferences, etc.

5.   ***Section XII. Canons of Taste for Journalists***

Slurs on people

Avoid language that perpetuates racial stereotypes or is offensive to certain races.

Avoid language that denigrates certain religious. For example, there is no reason to call a bandit "a Muslim bandit" unless the fact of his being a Muslim is an essential factor in the story.

Appendix B

ABS-CBN STANDARDS ETHICS MANUAL

Some of the relevant provisions on newsgathering are quoted below:

Covering Crime

> With coverage of crime, security and medical problems, we should offer ample context to help viewers assess the risk to their own health or safety, remaining mindful of the danger of inflating public fears through sensationalized reporting …

> Police and crime stories should avoid dehumanising victims. Camera shots should be tasteful…

Threats and Claims of Responsibility

> ABS-CBN does not encourage groups that use violence for political or other ends to use ABS-CBN as a publicity vehicle. .. Desk editors and reporters need to exercise judgment in deciding whether to report that statements or calls from such groups were received by ABS-CBN…

Covering Hostage/Barricade Situations

> …(C)onsider whether describing or showing the actions or movements of law enforcement officers could tip off the hostage taker or barricaded person…

> Avoid becoming part of the incident, *ie* putting yourself in a position where you are playing a role…

Covering Terrorism/Riots

> In covering possible terrorist activities, it is important not to become a platform for propaganda…

> The mere presence of the media can excite a crowd, and the presence of light can draw attention that might have been drawn in that direction…

Covering Religion

An attack carried out in the name of a religion should not cast suspicion on all followers of that creed. People who resort to violence are a minority in any religion. But the religious connection is relevant for our reporting if an attacker invokes spiritual beliefs or has links to a group that seeks religious justification for violence.

We should seek precision with religious descriptions. "Islamist" indicates an emphasis on Muslim principles. The adjective "Islamic: refers primarily to the religion while "Muslim" has both religious and cultural connotations.

ABS-CBN reporters must resist the assumption that their cultural values, religious beliefs or social mores are the norm.

Stereotyping

Our language should be neutral and natural. We should avoid gratuitous references to appearance or attire, while recognizing the situations when these details are relevant.

Crime reporting requires particular care with race, sexual orientation and religion.

Covering War

We/Us/Our": you should not use "we", "us", or "our" in referring to the military or the government, or to other side(s) as "they". "them" or "their".

"The Enemy": you should not refer to any side as "the enemy", or any country or side as "enemy territory".

Reporting movements: as a rule you should not report that troops, vehicles, warplanes or missiles are en route to their target(s).

Appendix C

REPORTING RACIAL AND COMMUNAL TENSIONS
Press Foundation of Asia - 1970

General Guidelines

1. Factual accuracy in a single story is no substitute for the total truth. A single story, which is factually accurate, can nonetheless be misleading.

2. Prejudice may sell newspapers but newspapers should resist the temptation to exploit human fears for commercial gain.

   Recommendation: Editors in competition should consider meeting to evolve ground rules for moving race and communal divisions out of the market place.

3. In mixed societies, editors should be aware of the danger of feeding, by selective reporting, common prejudicial stereotypes about groups. Generalizations based on the behavior of an individual or a small number of individual are invariably unjust.

   Recommendation: There should be a deliberate attempt to break false stereotypes by publication of stories that run counter to common prejudice. There should, in particular, be no irrelevant identification of communal groups in text or headlines, especially in court and crime stories.

4. Where there is potential for communal tension there should be a constant effort to investigate and expose the underlying causes.

   Recommendation: Newspapers should check their columns from time to time to see how far they are themselves initiating inquiries and how far they are merely reacting to events and statements of politicians.

5. Statistics can be used to excite passion and should always be checked and interpreted.

6. All stories of communal, racial or religious nature should be scrupulously ascribed to their source. The authority of the source should be properly evaluated.

7. Advertisements of an unfair discrimination nature should not be accepted.

8. Harm can be done by distortion in translation, especially in areas where several languages are spoken. Words and phrases may have different connotations among different groups.

   Recommendation: Newspaper should ensure that their staff includes journalists knowing languages of the area. If this is not possible, care should be taken to get reliable translation. If there is a doubt about meaning, the doubt should be indicated in the news columns.

9. It is recognized that editorial comment, however, benign, does not necessarily compensate for the harm done by a misleading news report.

   Recommendation: The impact of news is more immediate and deeper than that of the statement of editorial opinion.

10. Journalists should always use cool and moderate language, especially in headlines and also in display. No concession should be made rhetoric. Lurid and gory details and emotive reference to past history should be avoided.

11. In mixed societies where extra-territorial loyalties are often alleged and are a cause of tension, great care should be taken about stories imputing interference by a foreign power unless it is clearly established.

12. The traditional newspaper standards of checking for accuracy should be applied with even greater rigour in any stories involving racial, religious, or communal groups. Statements should not be accepted at face value from any source, including official source, and where necessary these should be accompanied in the news columns by corroboration and interpretation.

13. Unverified rumor is not the proper content of news columns. In particular, there is a great danger in speculation about violence.

   Recommendation: Do not print or broadcast rumor. If rumor is prevalent, it must be checked and --- if found false --- contradicting as soon as possible by every media. Where possible, the sources of rumors should be traced. Contradiction should always be specific, i.e., the newspaper and radio should say "The water is safe to drink."

14. When there is violence, particular care should be taken about publication of the first incidents.

Appendix D

WORKSHOP ON REPORTING FOR PEACE IN MINDANAO
September 8-10, 1988
El Corazon Hotel, Cotabato City

Workshop Recommendations

1. It is suggested that rebels be simply labeled as rebels, etc. However, this would give rise to another need to fill a requirement of editors.

    On the other hand, the word "Muslim" or "Christian" should be used only with reference to religion, religious rites, traditions or practices, thereby avoiding unnecessary and sensational uses of the terms.

2. It is suggested that reference to the rebel movement, for want of something to differentiate it from the communist movement, should be "Moro," and not "Muslim." It is also a fact that not all members of the MNLF are Muslims, because there are also Highlanders and Christians in the Moro rebel movement.

3. Criminal Elements. It is suggested that rebels, kidnappers, and other criminal elements be simply labeled as such, or to add to another word to localize the situation, like using the name of the place, e.g., Cotabato rebels, for purposes of clarity, or maybe the use of ethnic groups, e.g., "Tausug bandit," or "Samal kidnappers," which would again meet objections from some sectors in the community.

4. It is suggested that these perceptions of Mindanao journalists be relayed to Manila editors.

5. It was said that there is no Christian-Muslim conflict outside of religion. This calls for the elimination of the terms that would aggravate the situation in Mindanao, i.e., using Muslim to describe terrorists, secessionists, etc.

6. The Philippine Press Institute (PPI) is enjoined to act as conduit to apprise Manila editors of the true Mindanao situation.

7. Mindanao journalists recommend that Manila editors come to Mindanao as often as possible, and when they do, that their visits are coordinated by local publications and newsmen. This is recommended to enlighten Manila newspapermen on the situation in Mindanao.

8. It is also recommended that there should be a deliberate program to resolve the conflicts in Mindanao, and to "equalize" Christians and Muslims. Here, the commitments of Mindanao writers are solicited.

9. For Mindanao newspapers to have a vigorous relationship, it is recommended that a Mindanao media news exchange through the facilit*ie*s of the PNA be arranged through Mr. Teodoro Benigno and PPI, if possible for free or at a minimal cost to provincial newsmen. This Mindanao news network, eventually, could ensure proper treatment of Mindanao news.

10. It is strongly suggested that developmental stor*ie*s from Mindanao be given importance and prominence in the national dail*ie*s. More space for Mindanao is asked of national dail*ie*s.

11. Finally, the use of the word "Mindanaon" is recommended when referring to people of Mindanao collectively.

Appendix E

**WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF MEDIA REPORTAGE IN THE PEACE PROCESS,
UNIFICATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
October 15-16, 1994
DAP, Tagaytay City

Reporters

1. Reporters must recommend to make "peace" a regular beat.

2. They must initiate regular roundtable discussions on the peace process (media, NGOs, government)

3. Reporters must look for the news angles. They should study and research on the peace process issues. They must likewise explore process reporting. They can link the broader social issues to the peace process.

4. Reporters should observe codes- KBP, PPI, etc. and take refresher courses on ethics, fair and just reporting

5. Reporters must resort to ambush interviews only when necessary.

6. Reporters must cover on-site as much as possible with the help of government organizations or agencies and NGOs. Likewise, Manila reporters on field assignments should works with local reporters.

7. Reporters must develop more linkages with NGOs.

8. Reporters must work with NGOs to push for the FOIA passage.

Editors/ News Desks

1. News editors must be given an orientation on the peace process.

2. They should give reporters time and resources to develop stories on the peace process.

3. Editors should not twist, distort or take stories out of context including the writing of headlines.
4. Editors should see the value of NGOs as news sources; include them as a regular beat.

5. They should also assign and develop specialist reporter/s on the peace process.

6. They must develop desk capability to sort out story angles.

7. They should encourage more reports from the provinces.

8. They must cooperate with the KBP, PPI, etc. in the continuing training and evaluation in the media news process (ethics, libel laws); media-wide, in-house.

9. They must be open and oriented towards news as a process rather than mere event or series of events and news as issues rather than personalities.

Media Managers/ Owners

1. They should seek balance between profit and social responsibility.

2. They must also be given an orientation on the peace process.

3. They must also give an adequate support for peace reportage.

4. They must re-orient corporate and editorial policies towards more process or developmental reporting.

5. They should hold regular meeting with reporters.

6. They should make "peace" a regular beat.

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