AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

REPRESENTATION OF LEBANESE SHIITES IN LEBANESE MEDIA

by
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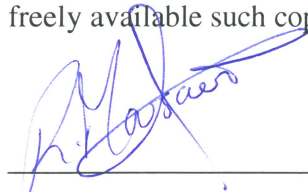
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Ranine AL-Mousawi   for   <u>Master of Arts</u>
<u>Major</u>: Media Studies

Title: <u>Representation of Lebanese Shiites in Lebanese Media</u>

The purpose of this study is to analyze the representation of the Lebanese Shiites in the Lebanese media. The main question that the study attempts to answer is if Lebanese newspapers frame Lebanese Shiites and the predominantly Shiite areas in Lebanon in negative, stereotypical, or homogenous ways. The method used to analyze newspapers is qualitative content analysis since it is suggested that this method is the most appropriate one to be used when analyzing representations. Four articles from each newspaper were analyzed. While all four newspapers treated the Lebanese Shiites as one homogenous group, Al Mustaqbal and al Nahar's articles propagated the stereotype of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiites, and Dahye as dangerous, using descriptions such as "terrorists," "militias," or a group that wants to dominate. Their general representation of this group could be described as negative. Al Akhbar and al Safir, on the other hand, propagated the stereotype of a targeted yet resistant population. Surprisingly, in its coverage of the kidnappings carried out by the Mokdad clan, al Akhbar treated the tribes of Bekaa and the Lebanese Shiites as a homogenous group, portrayed them in a negative light, and portrayed Dahye and Bekaa as dangerous areas.

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Representation of Lebanese Shiites in Lebanese Media

Introduction

Sectarianism and hostility among sects has been present in the Lebanese political

and social arena dating back to when the country was under Ottoman rule (Kebbi, 2013).

Not only have these hostilities endured, but more recently they have also increased,

particularly after the occurrence of certain events, including the skirmishes that took place

on the 7th of May, 2008, and when the "Hezbollah-led opposition" camped in downtown

Beirut with the aim of overthrowing the government (Cochrane, 2007). According to the

United States Institute of Peace (2013) the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, the

Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006, and the involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict,

have also led to an increase in resentment and sectarianism among the Lebanese public.

The media, instead of trying to alleviate the tensions that exist among the Lebanese public,

are reinforcing sectarian tensions through the various means by which they represent the

different sectarian groups and the different ways in which they cover the skirmishes that

took place between them (Dabbous, 2010).

This study will focus on the representation of Lebanese Shiites in the Lebanese

media, specifically newspapers, and will analyze the different ways in which this group has

been framed in the news. Thus, the aim of the study is to discover how different

newspapers belonging to different political factions frame the Lebanese Shiites. This

includes learning whether newspapers represent the Lebanese Shiites in negative,

stereotypical, homogenous, or neutral ways. The main purpose is thus to reveal whether the

representation of Lebanese Shiites is non-partisan, or whether the Shiites are framed in a

biased manner in four Lebanese newspapers, regardless of the sectarian leaning of the owners.

Lebanese Shiites are not one homogeneous group, but rather a very heterogeneous and diverse one. While the Shiites in the past were considered an underprivileged group, through social and economic development they have become politically mobilized and key players in the Lebanese political system (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2003). While today many belong to the working class and work in the agricultural sector, others are part of the middle and upper class (Trabulsi, 2012). These include businessmen, intellectuals, and owners of companies in different sectors of the economy (Trabulsi, 2012). Therefore, like all sectarian groups in Lebanon, the Lebanese Shiites are a diverse group with varying educational, social status, and economical levels.

In fact, even when the Lebanese Shiites were still politically and socially marginalized, the Shiites of southern Lebanon and the Bekaa were dissimilar in terms of character and lifestyle, and they were disconnected from each other (Ajami, 1986). For example, and based on a common myth, the Shiites of Bekaa are said to be headstrong and stubborn while those of southern Lebanon more lenient. The Shiites of these two areas even differed in terms of political stance. Based on previous election results, Hezbollah was the "number one Shiite party" in the Bekaa, which was considered as Hezbollah's "main stronghold," while the Amal Movement was more popular in the districts of South Lebanon (Hamzeh, 2004, p. 130).

Even the Shiites within the same area are different from each other. According to Trabulsi (2012), "while Hezbollah attracted the most deprived and youngest segments of the Shiite population," Amal was more popular among the middle and upper class (p. 236).

Such differences do not only pertain to political opinions, but also to the degree of religiosity, education levels, and social class. Yet, in Lebanese media, as this paper demonstrates, the predominantly Shiites areas in Lebanon are almost always portrayed as underprivileged and dangerous Hezbollah strongholds, occupied by religious, poor, and uneducated people. The women in these areas often appear in black abayas or wearing the more religious types of hijab, rather than the more modern clothing worn by many Muslim women today, even in the Shiite neighborhoods. The argument being made here is not that these traits are necessarily negative, but that the Lebanese Shiites are often homogeneously portrayed as such, while in reality they are a diverse group just like all sectarian groups in Lebanon.

I am a Lebanese Shiite living in Dahye, and originally from the villages Nabi Sheet, Baalbeck, and Khiam, Southern Lebanon. When one of my friends one day asked me where I live and I responded "in Dahye," she thought that I lived in the "ghetto." Another friend's father assumed that I'm "pure Hezbollah" when he learned my full name. This might be due to the fact that I have the same surname as Imam Khomeini and several Hezbollah officials including its ex-Secretary General, Abbas Al Mousawi. Another acquaintance of mine constantly jokes about me being from Baalbek, an area known for hashish cultivation and car theft.

Initially, this study was intended to explore how Lebanese media increase sectarianism through its coverage of critical events in Lebanon. Later, and after being subjected to such stereotypical jokes and comments, I asked myself: how can Lebanon be free from sectarian conflicts when a Lebanese sectarian group is portrayed as such? Therefore, I decided to focus specifically on the representation of Lebanese Shiites.

Analyzing the representation of Lebanese Shiites in Lebanese newspapers is considered valuable since this analysis tackles one of the main issues that reinforce hostility among sects in Lebanon. When a certain sect is continuously represented in a negative or homogenous way in the media, similar to when a certain religious or ethnic group is represented in such a manner, this can lead people to acquire a negative perception of that particular sect (Shaheen, 2003; Bensalah, 2006). For example, if the Shiites and the predominantly Shiite areas are constantly associated with negative attributes, such as militias, illiteracy, poverty, or drug-dealing, the result will be a harmful influence on Lebanese society. This is due to several reasons. First, and especially since many Lebanese haven't experienced being in the predominantly Shiite areas in Lebanon, such as Baalbeck, the southern suburbs of Beirut, or southern Lebanon, they might not be able to resist the influence of the media and end up incorporating certain stereotypes (Bensalah, 2006). Second, many might, as a result, end up hating the Shiites or conceive of this sect as being the main threat to Lebanese security (Bensalah, 2006). Third, when a certain sect is looked at with contempt or when they're feared, then the possibility of having constructive dialogue with members of this sect and others becomes slight (Shaheen, 2003).

This study will analyze how four Lebanese newspapers represent Lebanese Shiites by employing a qualitative content analysis. These newspapers include al Mustaqbal, al Nahar, al Safir, and al Akhbar. These four were chosen because they belong to opposing political factions: the 8th and 14th of March. These two alliances were forged after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri on the 14th of February, 2005. The first coalition, the 8th of March, was formed when a demonstration "organized in 2005 by Hezbollah and the Amal Movement to thank Syria for its support" took place on that day

(Wierda, Nassar, & Maalouf, 2007, p. 1066). The other coalition was formed when almost one million Lebanese demonstrated on the 14th of March, 2005, and called for "the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and an international investigation into the death of" Hariri (Wierda, Nassar, & Maalouf, 2007, p. 1066). Thus analyzing these four sources helps us discover how the Lebanese Shiites are being framed by the newspapers that belong to these two opposing political factions in Lebanon.

Literature Review

Since little, if any, has been written about the representation of groups in Arab media, the literature reviewed concerns American and Israeli media representations. Yet the arguments made about representation of groups in American and Israeli media and how influence through representation is achieved, can also apply to the portrayal of other groups. This section, thus, examines the representation of Arabs and Muslims in American and Israeli media, and how a negative or stereotypical portrayal of Arabs affects the American audience and Arabs themselves.

Hollywood movies have been perpetuating negative stereotypes about Arabs for over a century. According to Shaheen (2003), the repetition of stereotypes leads the audience to regard these stereotypes as the truth. Moreover, Shaheen (2000) argues that these negative stereotypes also influence Arab Americans by lowering their self-esteem and causing them to feel humiliated about their own culture. Similarly, Abouchedid and Nasser (2006) look at how negative stereotypes about Arabs specifically influence American college students' attitudes towards Arabs. Finally, Tsfati (2007) explores how, when Arabs in Israel feel that they're represented in a biased manner in the Israeli media, their feelings of alienation increase.

In his analysis of more than 900 Hollywood movies, Shaheen (2003) sheds light on and offers a clear description of the stereotypical manner in which Arabs are represented in Hollywood movies. His main argument is that through the repetition of a set of messages or images about Arabs in the media, the audience eventually absorbs most or some of this media content, including the derogatory stereotypes. According to Shaheen (2003), in Hollywood movies, Arabs are repetitively represented in insulting and defamatory ways. Arabs are often portrayed as one homogenous group: as terrorists, as violent, religious fanatics, and as a group determined to terrify or harm westerners (Shaheen, 2003). Rarely are Arabs depicted as regular people. Shaheen (2003) argues that the repetition of stereotypes about Arabs has led to a xenophobic American audience that perceives Arabs as the threatening "other." This hate ultimately affects Arabs as the degrading stereotypes have resulted in hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims (Shaheen, 2003). Even though Shaheen's article is concerned with the representation of Arabs in specific, his arguments have implications on the negative representation of groups in general. Thus it would be possible to generalize that long-term repetitive negative stereotypes about Lebanese Shiites can lead to a Lebanese audience who hates this group, perceives it as the "other," and has a fear of associating with it.

In an earlier article, Shaheen (2000) analyzed a selection of Western media content that contained various stereotypes about Arabs that are perpetuated in the media, and how these stereotypes affect Arab and Muslim identities. According to Shaheen (2000), "stereotypes can lower self-esteem, injure innocents, impact policies, and encourage divisiveness by accentuating our differences" (p. 23). Considering the effect that these stereotypes have on an American audience, Shaheen (2000) states that Arabs and Muslims

are regarded as a violent group that is negatively impacting society. Perceiving Arabs in

such a manner has led many Americans to hate everything Arab or Muslim (Shaheen,

2000). The result has been an Arab American population that's treated in a racist manner

and one that often suffers from prejudice (Shaheen, 2000). Many Arab Americans now feel

that their Arabism is humiliating (Shaheen, 2000). Thus the negative representation of a

certain group, through the impact that it has on the audience's perceptions, also harms the

stereotyped group's self-perception and security. This argument not only applies to people

with different backgrounds, but also to people who have the same nationalities and live in

close proximity. For instance, the propagation of negative stereotypes about Lebanese

Shiites over a long period of time might result in a group of Lebanese who are ashamed of

their Shiite identity and whose security is threatened by other groups.

　　　　While Shaheen discusses the influence of media stereotypes of Arabs on

Americans, Abouchedid and Nasser (2006) examine the specific influence that these

stereotypes have on American college students. According to Abouchedid and Nasser

(2006), the media portray Arabs in negative ways, and this in turn leads to the deterioration

of the relationship between Arabs and Americans and increases the bias against Arabs. To

examine American college students' attitudes, 607 students from the University of Florida,

Gainesville completed questionnaires that measured their attitudes towards Arabs. Arab

American students viewed Arabs positively, while whites, Hispanics, and African

Americans rated the opposite (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2006). Also, those with more

knowledge about Arabs rated them more positively than those who had little or no

knowledge. Abouchedid and Nasser (2006) argue that although the media are not the

strongest forms of socialization, they play an important role in people's political

socialization and also shape people's perceptions about others. One of the weaknesses of Abouchedid and Nasser's study is that the sample might not be representative of American college students in different states where there is a large Arab population and students are exposed to Arab culture on a daily basis. However, the main contribution of this article is the argument that biased or stereotypical representations can result in an audience that perceives the group in a negative way, especially when they have little knowledge about that group.

Negative representations can also impact how a group begins to feel about itself and its sense of integration in society. For example, Tsfati (2007) looked at how negative representations of Arabs in the Israeli media influence Arabs in Israel. The main argument that Tsfati makes is that if Arabs in Israel believe that the media represent them in a negative manner and that this "coverage is influential" and will affect Israeli society's perceptions negatively, they will eventually "feel alienated and estranged from" Israeli society (Tsfati, 2007, p. 632). Based on data collected through conducting phone surveys with 251 Arabs, Tsfati's (2007) assumptions were proven true. "The more the respondents felt that their media coverage was negative," the more they thought that Israelis perceive them negatively, and "the more alienated they felt" (p. 644). For the purpose of this paper, if one applies the arguments made by Tsfati to the Lebanese Shiites, then one can conclude that this group will be driven to feelings of alienation and to believing that they don't belong to Lebanese society. This may occur if the Lebanese Shiites have a conviction that the main Lebanese media outlets represent them in a negative and stereotypical manner, and that the Lebanese audience is uncritically absorbing these stereotypes.

Thus, the four articles discussed above explore the negative representation of Arabs in the media; the first three point to different labels or stereotypes about Arabs that are found in the media, while the last article concentrates on how Arabs perceive their own representation. Even though none of the articles focus on a specific Arab Muslim sect, they all contribute to the topic of this paper by shedding light on how representing a group of people in a negative or stereotypical manner affects the identity of that same group, and the attitudes of the rest of the audience towards that group. Yet not one study focuses on the representation of a group of Arabs by other Arabs. If Arabs in Israel feel alienated as a result of the Israeli media bias, then it is important to ask how would a negative or stereotypical portrayal of one group by its own media affect this group, much as the present case: Lebanese Shiites by Lebanese media.

Lebanese Media and Clientelism

Beyond an examination of the representation of Arabs in American and Israeli media, this section also focuses on the bias and clientelism of Lebanese media including Lebanese television and newspapers. During times of war and conflict, and due to the media's perceived bias, the Lebanese resort to several news sources to get an accurate representation of news (Cochrane, 2008). According to Dabbous (2010), the media increase tensions in society and the ownership of the media reflects the sectarian nature of Lebanon. Similarly, Dajani (2013) argues that even though the Lebanese media are free from government influence, they are being controlled by political officials and business elites. Dajani (2006) also contends that the Lebanese media do not serve the public but primarily give prominence to political leaders. Finally, Ajemian (2008) discusses how Hezbollah uses the media to portray itself as the "vanguard of resistance" (p.1). All the articles, which I

explore further below, give a brief summary about the characteristics of the media with which this study is concerned.

Cochrane's (2008) main argument is that the Lebanese media, instead of taking a neutral stance to alleviate tensions, portray events that take place during critical times in ways that increase the already existing sectarianism in Lebanese society. He uses as his example an analysis of the media's portrayal of events that took place in Beirut on May 7, 2008 and the days succeeding it. According to Cochrane (2008), the Lebanese public was not able to get a precise account of what happened by watching one TV channel. Instead, they had to watch several channels to get an accurate description of events because each channel's newscast represented events in biased ways. Cochrane (2008) concludes by arguing that Lebanese TV is in fact a weapon used by Lebanese and foreign officials to further individual interests and to defame political opponents. While Cochrane offers a special account of the coverage of May 7th, he generalizes his points to all Lebanese TV stations, and he does not tackle each one individually, leaving the reader uncertain about which argument could be attributed to which TV channel. The main contribution of Cochrane's article, however, is the argument that Lebanese media attack their financer or owners' opponents. Consequently, and as pertaining to the present research, when looking at the representation of the Shiites in Lebanese media, one should always consider who the opponent is.

Like Cochrane, Dabbous (2010) argues that Lebanese TV channels mirror the divisions and different political factions prevalent in Lebanese society and that the media's coverage of certain events, especially those of conflict, provokes sectarianism and increases tensions among the Lebanese. Even the ownership of the media is a reflection of the

Lebanese political system since each TV channel or newspaper is mainly controlled by a certain sect, party, or political elite (Dabbous, 2010). The media are used by the political elites to connect with and deliver messages to the public. Dabbous notes that foreign officials also influence the operation of media institutions in Lebanon. In considering Dabbous's conclusions for this research, one has to keep in mind that when looking at the ways in which the Shiites are represented, the political agenda of media owners, the agenda of the political party they belong to, and/or on the agenda of the foreign officials influencing these institutions have to be taken into account as well. The main limitation in Dabbous's article is the absence of specific examples of how the Lebanese media provoke sectarianism, or which political elites influence which media institutions and in what ways. She only describes the overall current state of Lebanese media.

Dajani (2013) also discusses how the Lebanese media are not free from political control. He argues that the concept of a free Lebanese media is a myth. According to Dajani (2010), the Lebanese media are assumed to be free because they are free from government control; in reality, however, the Lebanese media answer to their sectarian bosses and business elites. The outcome, he says, is having journalists and, in turn, media content, that caters to a specific sect or political group instead of to the general Lebanese public. Thus the result is a flow of information that hinders national development and increases sectarianism (Dajani, 2013). Dajani's article contributes to the issue under study by reinforcing the notion that the media do in fact increase sectarianism. This is due to a biased representation of news, which in many cases serves to please media institution owners or financers (Dajani, 2010). Similar to Dabbous's article, the main limitation here is the absence of a particular method of analysis that offers useful conclusions or specific

examples about the media's dependence on political elites and the outcomes of this dependence.

In an earlier article, Dajani (2006) argued that the Lebanese media are not a public service; that is, they do not serve the interests of the public, but instead increase the anxiety and tension amongst the Lebanese. He demonstrated this by looking at the first 15 minutes in the nightly newscasts of several Lebanese TV channels on a random day. His main finding was that the news aired on Lebanese TV is organized in ways that give prominence to Lebanese political leaders rather than to the Lebanese public (Dajani, 2006). The leading stories are almost always about politicians and the tone of these stories depends on whether the politician is considered an ally by that specific channel. He also argued that although the media should try to bring Lebanese people together, they are instead increasing divisions in society by preaching different and conflicting values. The result is a public that is unable to participate in productive dialogue (Dajani, 2006). Therefore, we should always link the tone of the news article when discussing Shiites to the values preached by the specific newspaper being analyzed and to the opponents/allies of the channel or newspaper.

While most of the articles reviewed discuss the Lebanese media in general, Ajemian's (2008) article focuses on Hezbollah-owned media and al Manar in particular. Ajemian (2008) argues that the main goal of Hezbollah's media is to make the party appear as the "vanguard of resistance" (p. 1). He supports his argument by analyzing the content of a small sample of commemorative videos aired on al Manar and made in response to the death one of Hezbollah's military leaders. According to Ajemian (2008), al Manar transforms key events, such as the assassination of Imad Mughnieh and the 2006 war on Lebanon, into "political capital" (p. 1). Through the propagation of a "narrative of

resistance" Hezbollah is able to gain the support of not only the Lebanese Shiites, but also of Arabs in general since this narrative is popular across the Arab world. Through al Manar and other Hezbollah owned media, the party has also been able to link itself with the Palestinian resistance. Ajemian's article demonstrates how certain issues can be framed in the media in ways that serve the political agenda of a political party or group. Even though Ajemian focuses on al Manar in particular, his argument can be applied to other Lebanese media outlets that shape key events in ways that serve their agendas and help them gain political support.

Most of the articles discussed in this section share similar concerns, including the increasingly sectarian nature of the Lebanese media, how each newspaper or TV channel has its own agenda and delivers news accordingly, and how the media are guided by the interests of financers and politicians, rather than the interests of the Lebanese public. Yet no article addresses the issue of how different sects are represented in different Lebanese media sectors, and how such representations influence people's perceptions of certain sects. They provide no specific examples of the biased representations found in Lebanese media, and in addition, most of the articles focus primarily on Lebanese TV with very little attention to the biased representation of news in Lebanese newspapers. The aim of this paper is to address these gaps by exploring how a group of Lebanese, specifically the Lebanese Shiites, are framed in Lebanese newspapers.

Theoretical Framework

Analyzing the representation and framing of Lebanese Shiites in this study is guided by framing theory and the concept of intertextuality. The history of intertextuality is a "long and complex" one, and has been studied by many scholars, in different academic fields,

throughout the last century (van den Berg & Baraz, 2013, p. 1). It is commonly accepted

that Julia Kristeva coined the term in the late 1960s, and that intertextuality is associated

with the move to postmodernism or, in other words, the move from "objectivity" and

"scientific rigor" to "uncertainty" and "subjectivity" (Martin, 2011, p. 148). As defined by

Landreville and LaMarre (2013), intertextuality refers to how media texts combine to

produce certain effects. The concept of intertextuality emphasizes the relationship between

different media texts since "interpretation and sense making is derived, in part, from the

interdependence of multiple media texts" (Landreville & LaMarre, 2013, p. 349).

This means that people make meaning of a certain media text by addressing other

media texts to which they have already been exposed. For example, if one reads news

articles about Hezbollah in one newspaper, which associates the party with resistance rather

than terrorism, then these articles might influence how he/she interprets other Hezbollah

news articles that will be read in the future. This also means that if one news article

mentions Dahye, for instance, without saying that it's a predominantly Shiite area, readers

will still interpret it as such since they have already been exposed to that piece of

information in other media texts. However, using intertextuality in this research is not

without weaknesses. The main limitation of the use of intertextuality is that the researcher

can never be sure but can only make assumptions about which media text the readers refer

to when reading a certain news article. Also, when the researcher assumes that the reader is

familiar with an event or issue from alternative media texts, he/she might actually have no

prior knowledge about that event/issue.

In addition to intertextuality, this study is also guided by framing theory, which,

again, has been employed across many disciplines, such as media communication,

sociology, and political communication (Entman, 2006). Framing theory is concerned with studying how the media and other forms of communication, through the transmission of messages, have an effect on human consciousness (Entman, 2006). Looking at the ways in which certain events and people have been framed is critical for framing theorists. Entman (2006) defines framing as choosing "some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition" (p. 391). What is important in Entman's definition of framing is how certain issues are highlighted while others are overlooked.

Therefore, he argues, looking for what is omitted in media is as significant as examining what is present. This is especially true since the media give us an image of parts of the world which we haven't seen or experienced directly. For this study, Entman's argument is particularly relevant since many Lebanese haven't directly or extensively experienced the predominantly Shiite areas in Lebanon. This is exactly what "annihilating framing" stresses: the importance of looking for aspects omitted from a media frame rather than only those included because the media overlook attributes of certain issues in order to eliminate them from the public's consciousness and thus annihilate or alter issues or objects being represented (Gavriely-Nuri & Balas, 2006).

The importance of the omitted aspects in a media frame is something acknowledged by most framing theorists, but under the umbrella of framing theory many "conceptual inconsistencies" exist (Scheufele, 1999, p. 103). In general, most framing theorists agree that frames affect people and when the portrayal of a certain group or event is altered, the public's attitudes towards that group or event changes accordingly (Chong & Druckman,

2007). But not all theorists agree on how to study frames or even what constitutes framing theory (Scheufele, 1999).

According to Scheufele (1999), we can categorize the different studies under framing theory into two groups depending on whether they "focus on media or individual frames" and on whether they study "frames as independent or dependent variables" (p. 107). Gamson and Modigliani (1987) state that a media frame is an "organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (p. 143). Thus media frames give meaning to events that are otherwise considered insignificant by the audience. Individual frames on the other hand, as defined by Entman (2006), are "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information" (p. 392). But theorists also disagree on how to define a media or individual frame (Scheufele, 1999). Even within this categorization, Scheufele (1999) argues that studies can fall into more than one group where the focus is on both media and individual frames. Framing theory and the contradictions existing within it are considered part of, and can be traced back to, the development of media effects research (Scheufele, 1999). Such developments include moving from a concern or "fear" of the effects that media have on individuals, to recognition that the impact is not always a significant one due to the various ways in which people interpret messages (Scheufele, 1999; Hall, 1974).

In addition, framing theory has its limitations. According to Matthes and Kohring (2008), "a frame is a quite abstract variable that is hard to identify" (p. 258). Thus it's difficult to know exactly how the researcher located the frames, or whether the researcher's analysis was subjective and included extracting frames that he/she was actually looking for or not (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). As Matthes and Kohring (2008) argue, coming up with

reliable results is a difficult task since these results may vary when different researchers conduct the analysis. Finally, as Entman (2003) argues, sometimes during a specific period of time, the media might frame a certain event, issue, or group of people through one dominant frame. In this case, when analyzing media content, the researcher might extract only the dominant frames and ignore other frames which are marginal in that specific time frame. Thus when looking at the representation of Lebanese Shiites in the four chosen time frames, the results might differ if other times frames had been analyzed and if they were analyzed by a different researcher.

Despite its weaknesses, however, framing theory helps in discovering how a certain event, issue, or group of people is represented and defined by the media, and if different newspapers frame it differently, at least within a specific time period. Intertextuality, on the other hand, helps in identifying the frames especially since a news article does not stand on its own. Thus to analyze a news article accurately, one should often link it to other pieces of information.

This study follows Entman's definition of framing and focuses on media frames rather than individual frames since it aims to look at the collection of words, phrases, and images used when representing Lebanese Shiites, rather than at how members of the audience perceive the information being relayed (Chong & Druckman, 2007). It will identify and describe aspects of Lebanese Shiites that are made salient as well as those obscured, and it will also identify what's omitted from media frames. Through the concept of intertextuality, this study will also identify the different ways in which people might make meaning of a certain message about Lebanese Shiites by linking it to previous media messages. Thus, the research question being posed here is:

RQ: Do Lebanese print media frame the Lebanese Shiites and the

predominantly Shiite areas in Lebanon in stereotypical or homogenous ways?

Methodology

Because this research is guided by framing theory, the method used to study the content of Lebanese newspapers is qualitative content analysis. As Entman (2006) argues, to be able to understand what a communication text means and to spot the different frames used, a content analysis of that text is beneficial because it helps us determine which words or messages are salient and the degree to which they are salient. Qualitative content analysis is preferable over a quantitative study because this research aims to identify and describe the characteristics with which Lebanese Shiites are framed in Lebanese media, what are the specific and repeatedly employed attributes used to describe Shiites, which are given the most salience, and which attributes are ignored.

The content analysis was carried out on four Lebanese newspapers: al Mustaqbal, al Nahar, al Safir, and al Akhbar. They were chosen because they belong to opposing political factions (8th and 14th of March) and thus help to reveal how the different political blocs in Lebanon are framing the Lebanese Shiites. Al Nahar was founded by, and is currently edited and published by the Tueini family, and is considered to be one of the "mouthpieces of the mu'arada" or the 14th of March alliance (Haugbolle, 2006). On the other hand, al Safir's political stance is close to the 8th of March alliance. Moreover, al Nahar and al Safir are among the most widely circulated newspapers in Lebanon (Mandour, 2013). Al Mustaqbal and al Akhbar, in addition to being read by a significant percentage of the Lebanese population, lead to a sample of articles more representative of Lebanese newspapers rather than simply including articles from only two newspapers. This is

especially true since al Mustaqbal is owned by the Hariri family and is thus representative of the Future Movement (14th of March), while al Akhbar is regarded by some as "Iran's mouthpiece newspaper in Lebanon," and therefore aligned with the 8th of March coalition (Khashan, 2013, p. 85).

The content of these newspapers was analyzed within four time frames: 7-9 May, 2008, August 14-18, 2012, June 5-8, 2013, and August 15-17, 2013. One front-page article from each newspaper was analyzed per time frame. For all four newspapers, the front-page articles on May 8th, August 17th, June 6th, and August 17th were chosen since this is when the particular event was covered for the first time. The front-page articles rather than other articles were chosen due to their prominence in the newspaper and Lebanese print media in general, and due to the fact that they cover the main story of each particular time-frame.

The first time frame was chosen because on May 7, the forces of the 8th and 14th of March fought in the streets of Beirut when Hezbollah and the Amal movement demonstrated in objection to decisions taken by the government. Until today, this date is still remembered by the Lebanese and is referred to often by Lebanese politicians and the Lebanese media. The second, August 14-18, is a period when several Shiite tribes started to kidnap Syrians in Lebanon, as a result of the kidnapping of a man from the Shiite Mokdad family, in addition to other Lebanese, in Syria (Mortada, 2012). During the third, June 5-8, the Syrian army gained control over the Syrian city al-Qusayr with the help of Hezbollah fighters (Mortada, 2013). This was considered the first major "victory" by Hezbollah and the Syrian regime. The fourth was chosen because on the 15th of August, the southern suburbs of Beirut witnessed a terrorist bombing that killed 24 civilians and wounded nearly 300 others ("Nasrallah slams Beirut," 2013). Even though several bombings happened

afterwards in Dahye, this one was chosen because it remains the most catastrophic

bombing. These news articles were accessed through each newspaper's online archives and

through the microfilms at the American University of Beirut library.

In order to analyze the newspaper articles published on the specific dates

mentioned, and in order to answer the research question a certain protocol was used. The

protocol consisted of five main questions. First, what were the negative and the positive

stereotypes used when describing Lebanese Shiites? Second what were the labels used

when describing the Lebanese Shiites? This included looking at the terms and adjectives

used when describing Lebanese Shiites or their actions. Third, what elements or attributes

were omitted from the story? This question was answered through the author's own

personal experience and knowledge of the specific events[1]. Fourth, how were the

predominantly Shiite areas described (Dahye, Baalbeck, and southern Lebanon)? Fifth,

what were the Lebanese Shiites associated with? For example, if Hezbollah was criticized,

was it labeled as a Shiite organization? How were the references made to Lebanese Shiites

and the Shiite areas in a particular article linked to other communication texts? Was the

interpretation of one text dependent on texts that the readers had been previously exposed

to? However, before answering any of the questions in the protocol, the political stance of

the newspaper was taken into consideration.

In order to address these questions a careful reading of each news article was

undertaken. Through the process of reading, the different frames used when describing

Lebanese Shiites were identified. Any reference made to older events by recent articles was

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[1] In addition to being a Lebanese Shiite living in Dahye, the author of this paper also holds a BA in Political
Studies. Both her background and academic major allow her to address this question.

taken into consideration as well. When articles made references to Lebanese Shiites, which attributes were given salience, which attributes were overlooked, and which attributes were scarcely mentioned were noted.

The main limitation of this study is that different researchers may judge the tone, attitude, and wording of the articles in different ways[2]. They might disagree on whether a term used has a negative connotation, or on whether the article's author was being neutral or attacking/defending Lebanese Shiites and their actions. To overcome this limitation each time a judgment was made by the researcher it was defended and supported. Another limitation is the fact that since content analysis is considered a subjective method of data analysis, the findings cannot be generalized. What also prevents the ability to generalize the findings to the majority of articles found in other newspapers is the fact that each newspaper in Lebanon has different values and belongs to a certain political faction. So even if two newspapers support the same political party or coalition, that doesn't necessarily mean that they represent the Lebanese Shiites in the same manner. Also, not enough articles were analyzed. The results here provide a possible trend that future research may develop further.

The main problem faced was in trying to locate the articles. None of the chosen newspapers have online archives except for al Mustaqbal. Al Nahar does have online archives but only for the past six months. The other option to get access to these articles was through the American University of Beirut's (AUB) microfilms. Printing the articles wasn't an option and so pictures of the articles were taken on a phone. The result was

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[2] Since a researcher's background and beliefs cannot be completely separated from his/her analysis and interpretation, a non-Shiite researcher might arrive at different conclusions than those this I did.

having many unclear images which made the analysis more time consuming than

necessary. Another difficulty faced was translating the articles from Arabic to English,

especially since in many cases meaning is lost during translation. In addition to the author's

fluency in both languages, Google Translate was used to translate the articles, to ensure the

translation was as accurate as possible.

<div align="center">**Results**</div>

This section provides the results generated from the analysis of 16 newspaper

articles. Four articles from each newspaper were analyzed, one from each of the four time

frames specified in the methodology**.** It is divided into four main parts, and each part

addresses the four newspapers' coverage of a single time frame, beginning with the earliest.

It is important to mention here that the four newspapers are not directly comparable as there

are different ownership patterns among them. As noted earlier, while al Mustaqbal is

owned by the Hariri family of the Future Movement and al Nahar by the Tueini family that

has members who are part of the Lebanese government (and both support the March 14th

movement), al Akhbar and al Safir are not owned by a particular political party yet both

support the 8th of March coalition.

May 2008

The first four articles analyzed are those discussing the clashes that took place

between the forces of the 8th and 14th of March in Beirut, beginning on May 7, 2008. Al

Akhbar's portrayal of the event was less sensational than al Mustaqbal's. Rather than

accusing a single political party, it was critical towards the forces of both the 8th and 14th of

March in general. The only time that Hezbollah or a Shiite political party was directly held

responsible for an act of hostility was when the author said "the opposition, and especially

Hezbollah and Amal movement, blocked some roads." Al Mustaqbal's coverage, on the other hand, was more critical of Hezbollah. Some of the phrases used, as translated from Arabic, include: With the use of its weapons, Hezbollah "seized the airport and burned Beirut;" "Hezbollah is trying to expand its state;" and, "Hezbollah attacked innocent civilians and safe neighborhoods." It was also made clear that attacks against civilians and the government were accomplished by militias that came out of *Dahye* and the camp sites in downtown Beirut. *Dahye* was also referred to as a "Hezbollah's state." The image accompanying the article shows tires burning on the blocked airport road, a group of young men and children standing next to these tires, and a bridge bearing the phrase "a gift from the municipality of Tehran to the honorable and resistant Lebanese population." This image could be interpreted as trying to show that the Lebanese Shiite "militias" don't live up to the labels of "honorable" and "resistant," and also emphasizing Hezbollah's links to Iran.

To sum up, in al Akhbar, Hezbollah was represented as an actor amongst others, part of the opposition group, rather than the instigator of the conflict. In al Mustaqbal on the other hand, not once is Hezbollah linked explicitly to the Lebanese Shiites, but by linking this news article to other media texts that audiences have been exposed to, and since Hezbollah is known to be a Shiite political party, the readers will most likely associate the party and its actions with Lebanese Shiites. And since *Dahye* is known to be a predominantly Shiite area, the actions of the "militias" associated with that area would also be linked to the Lebanese Shiites, or at least the Shiites living in *Dahye*.

Furthermore, and through intertextuality, the majority of Lebanese citizens who watched the news on that day know that those who burned tires and blocked roads on the 7th of May were not only Hezbollah members, but also included ordinary Shiite civilians

living in Dahye and elsewhere. As shown in the image, young men and children, not only

Hezbollah members, took to the streets. Also since the article does not once mention parties

other than those representing Lebanese Shiites (Hezbollah and one mention of Amal

Movement), we can conclude that the event is framed to accuse the Lebanese Shiite

political groups as the instigators and only actors in the event. Finally, we can also deduce

that al Mustaqbal's article represents the Lebanese Shiites (via Hezbollah) mainly in a

negative way.

          Moving to the articles in al Nahar and al Safir, according to al Nahar "Beirut returns

to the seasons of sectarian and militant horror," and the streets of west Beirut witnessed the

explosion of political and sectarian tensions. At first it appears as if there wasn't a single

group being blamed for the events, until one reads that the "militant scene" "extended from

the airport road to the neighborhoods of west Beirut." The article does not have to mention

that the airport road is part of Dahye or that the majority of its residents are Shiites, because

most readers already know this. Moreover, the fact that the "militant scene" started from

there, might lead readers to conclude that it was instigated by the Shiites of Dahye and that

this group is responsible for west Beirut's day of "horror and anxiety." On the other hand, al

Safir's article was critical towards the government and also attempted to justify Hezbollah

and Amal's actions. Its title, "the authority's decision to criminalize the resistance ignites

the risk of civil war," described the 7th of May as a "political confrontation with the

resistance through stripping it of its national characteristic and considering it as an outlaw

militia." Thus Hezbollah is labeled as a resistance and nationalistic party that only acted in

response to the authority's decisions. Even when describing the events that took place, the

article doesn't mention the involvement of a specific Shiite group and instead referred to them as "members of the opposition."

In al Nahar's article, the Shiite political parties and Shiites of Dahye are not only held responsible for instigating the skirmishes that took place on May 7th, but were also portrayed as the sole violent groups involved in the clashes. Even though the word "Shiites" is not used in the article, since the "militant scene" started from Dahye, it would have been instigated by the people who live there: Lebanese Shiites. This is the conclusion reached by many readers because, through intertextuality, they know that Dahye is predominantly Shiite. Furthermore, the article mentions that members of Amal broke into centers that belong to the Future Movement, and that Hezbollah imposed a tight blockade on the airport road, but that members of the Future movement cut off roads in Bekaa asking for the opening of the airport road. Thus members of the Future Movement acted in response to Hezbollah's actions, and when they did, it only involved blocking roads. On the other hand, the article in al Safir mentioned that what took place was a "confrontation between the two sides," and even the images on the front page included one from the airport road and one from Nueiri, a non-Shiite neighborhood in Beirut. Also, it explained why the "opposition" acted as it did, while the voice of the 8th of March coalition was barely heard in al Nahar. Instead, al Nahar's article included many accusatory statements against Hezbollah, spoken by members of the 14th of March coalition. Two of these statements, "Hezbollah organized an insurrection to seize power" and Hezbollah intends to "extend its military distribution," demonstrate that the party was portrayed as a dangerous militia with a fake "resistance" identity and that it had an intention to seize power in Lebanon. Shiite political parties in general are portrayed as a threat to Lebanon's security. Statements by Mufti Qabbani and

former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's reinforce these positions: "Hezbollah went from being a resistance to Israeli occupation to an armed force occupying Beirut and violating its sanctity… Lebanon is being exposed to an attempt of dominance by a political party with external support and a resistance guise," and "even Israel didn't dare do" what others did yesterday in Beirut.

August 2012

The second set of articles analyzed includes those covering Lebanese tribes' kidnapping of Syrians in Lebanon, beginning on August 14, 2012. The title of the article in al Mustaqbal is "Lebanon in the grips of kidnapping and armed chaos." The image accompanying the article depicts a group of masked men holding weapons and the caption reads that these men are from the Mokdad clan in *Dahye.* Most of the article has a hard news angle except in two instances. The first is when the article states that "the armed chaos was about to spread outside of *Dahye.*" The second is when it is mentioned that Hezbollah and the Amal movement "stated that they are against the kidnapping." The article then quotes Prime Minister Fouad Seniora who refers to the 7th of May and to Hezbollah's weapons as "harmful to the state's status." First, identifying the Mokdad clan with *Dahye* in al Mustaqbal generates a negative image about that area and its Lebanese Shiite residents since the article states that the chaos was about to spread outside of *Dahye*, as if chaos were normally associated with only that area. Second, the references made to the 7th of May, remind the readers, through intertextuality, of the "offenses" committed by the "Dahye militias," in other words, the Shiites, on that date.

The article in al Akhbar, on the other hand, was much more critical of these clans. Phrases used include "the state of tribes," and "street mafias." The article was also eager to

separate the kidnappings from Hezbollah by using phrases such as "armed groups with unknown identities." Even though al Akhbar doesn't connect these clans with Dahye in general, it treats an area in Dahye (Hay el Sollom) in a stereotypical way by mentioning that it's the place where one finds these "masked and armed" men. Moreover, al Akhbar's article mentions that these kidnappings "were welcomed by the public." Which public? Since the Mokdad and other involved tribes are known to be Shiites, then stating that their actions were welcomed treats the Lebanese Shiites as a homogenous group that welcomes the kidnapping of Syrians. While al Akhbar tries to differentiate between the actions of these tribes and Hezbollah, it ends up lumping together the tribes of the Bekaa in general. This is achieved particularly when the article states that the actions of the Mokdad clan were emulated by "other tribes from Bekaa." Also what is omitted from al Akhbar's article is the fact that most of those belonging to the Mokdad clan's "military wing" are from Byblos and not from Baalbeck. Thus the article treats the Lebanese Shiites and the tribes of Bekaa in a stereotypical manner: that it's not unusual for these tribes to have their own military wings, kidnap people, and cause armed chaos.

The title of al Nahar's article on the 17th of August is "the 15th of August's kidnapping. Lebanon is without a state." The image accompanying the article portrays a group of masked and armed men, and the description is "armed men from the Mokdad clan as they appeared in a press conference in the locality of Rueis in Dahye." To consider the implications of this title and image, other Lebanese media texts should be taken into consideration. On many occasions, Dahye has been previously referred to as a "state within a state," or an area where the government is absent and Hezbollah is in control. Through intertextuality, and by linking the title and the image, the reader might conclude that Dahye

and its residents in specific are giving Lebanon this "stateless" characteristic. Therefore, when the article states that "the unprecedented wave of kidnappings… has disastrous consequences on the image of the Lebanese state and on its internal stability" the reader might blame this on the Mokdad clan in specific, and the Shiites of Dahye in general.

Moving to al Safir's article, it seems that the main concern here was to exonerate Hezbollah and Amal from the kidnapping. This could be inferred from the article's subtitle and image. The subtitle states, "Hezbollah and Amal reject the chaos… and political mobilization to release the hostages." The image portrays Hezbollah MP Ali Mokdad in the clan's press conference "reluctant about using the phrase 'military operations'" when referring to the kidnappings. Al Safir's article mainly tries to absolve Hezbollah and, to some extent, the Mokdad clan from blame. This can also be concluded from the choice of image, since, unlike al Nahar, al Mustaqbal, and al Akhbar, it portrays MP Mokdad and a number of unarmed men rather than armed and masked ones. Even when discussing the kidnappings, the article states that "the fate of the kidnapped Lebanese is unknown," and thus these armed men "meddled with security" and "appeared form behind a humanitarian cause par excellence." So the article tries justifying the clan's actions by blaming what happened on the Lebanese government's incompetence.

June 2013

The time frame June 5-8, 2013, is when the Syrian army took control of al Qusayr with the help of Hezbollah fighters. In its article, al Akhbar does not mention the fact that Hezbollah was involved in the fighting and attributes the "victory" to the Syrian army. The only time Hezbollah was mentioned was when the article was quoting White House press secretary Jay Carney who accused Hezbollah of killing innocent civilians in Syria. Al

Mustaqbal's article, on the other hand, was very critical of Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict. The article quotes officials who described Hezbollah as "Iranian militias," "the party of killers," "gangs of terrorists and extremists," and a group of "expert killers who committed massacres while chanting the names of Hussein and Zeinab." The article also stated that Hezbollah's weapons are not being used against Israel as the party says, but are being used against innocent civilians. Moreover, the article is accompanied by two images; the first is an archived photo from 2006 and the second from 2013. The 2006 image shows a group of people claimed to be Lebanese Shiites (as the caption states) who are being welcomed in al Qusayr by its residents during the 2006 war on Lebanon. The second is a picture taken in Dahye of civilians giving out sweets and of banners bearing the phrase "al Qusayr fell." The caption says "they welcomed them in their homes and they're celebrating its destruction."

Hezbollah is a political party representative of the Lebanese Shiites in general, and any labels given to it might also be interpreted as referring to the Lebanese Shiites in general. Also, giving salience to some officials' statements and barely mentioning others' means that the article aims to promote a particular problem definition which portrays Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiite's actions in a negative light. Finally, the two images are obviously representing the Lebanese Shiites in general, rather than a political party, in a negative way by describing them as thankless people.

Al Nahar's front-page article focused on Hezbollah's involvement in Syria and on portraying the Syrian army and Hezbollah as threatening entities rather on the event itself. Part of the title is "the Arab League condemns Hezbollah's involvement in Syria" and on the side is a quote from Reuters, which states, "the Free Syrian Army announces that it will

fight Hezbollah in Lebanon." Even though the article does not directly label Hezbollah as a terrorist or threatening party, considerable space within the article is given to people who do. For example George Sabra, president of the Syrian National Council, is quoted saying "the invaders and the agents on the mullah's regime in Iran entered the city of Qusayr… and now terrorists are fighting Syrians in their own country." Unlike al Nahar, al Safir's article makes no mention of Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict and instead attributes the Syrian regime's victory in the battle of Qusayr solely to the Syrian army. For example, quotes include "gunmen in Syria suffered a blow directed by the Syrian forces, who managed to settle the battle" and "the Syrian forces… were able to get hundreds of gunmen out."

Hezbollah is the main Shiite political party in Lebanon, followed by Amal. Most of its political and military members are Shiites, and a large percentage of the Lebanese Shiites (but not all) support the party. Thus when Hezbollah is accused of "committing crime," "killing innocent civilians," and of "celebrating" their victory in Syria after ending a battle that resulted in a high number of casualties and wounded, some readers might extend these accusations to the Lebanese Shiites in general (since the assumption already exists that all Lebanese Shiites support Hezbollah). Moreover, al Nahar's articles on both May 9 and June 6 give salience to some officials' statements and rarely mention others. This means that the articles aim to promote a particular problem definition, one that again portrays Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiite's actions in a negative light. Why quote, more than once, members of the Free Syrian Army threatening Hezbollah but not quote Hezbollah members or Syrian officials? Al Safir's article, in contrast, quoted the Syrian army saying that they will "crush the terrorists" in Syria. Although the article makes no

mention of Hezbollah, the party is still presented in a positive light when it's stated that "hundreds of cars were allowed to leave Qusayr through a safe exit," and that the casualties and wounded only included "gunmen." This is because it's a well-known fact today that Hezbollah is very much present in Syria and is fighting alongside the Syrian army.

August 2013

The last four articles, from August 15-17, 2013, cover the bombing that took place in Dahye on August 15th. Al Mustaqbal took a hard news angle and it called the attack a terrorist act. Al Akhbar, on the other hand, covered the event in a more sensational manner. On the front page of the newspaper Hezbollah's secretary general, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, is quoted saying "we're coming to get you" and also on the front page the running headline says "the events of the targeting of the resistance and its people." Most of the article discusses how Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiite population have been targeted ever since Hezbollah became involved in the Syrian conflict. Yet they're also portrayed as a resistance group that has become accustomed to being targeted, and will fight the groups that target them. This is another example of how Lebanese Shiites, or at least those living in Dahye, are presented as a homogenous resistant group, one that is fully and only associated with Hezbollah.

Al Nahar's article took a hard news approach to the event while al Safir's coverage was more sensationalized. Al Nahar's article discussed the types of explosives used, the number of dead and injured people, previous bombings that took place in Dahye, and the meeting of the Supreme Council of Defense. Also the image accompanying the article had no human element and instead was a long shot of the bombing scene. On the side of the article, Nasrallah is quoted saying "I will go to Syria with all of Hezbollah if necessary." Al

Safir's article on the other hand, depicted "the crowd during the celebration of victory" in Ayta al Shaab, a village in southern Lebanon, and an area called al "Raheb al Israeli" also appears in the image. The title of the article is "Nasrallah: we will face all the Takfiris and protect Lebanon."

A new message is being sent by al Nahar's articles, both the one covering the events in al Qusayr and the bombing in Dahye. The message concerns Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian conflict, and the fact that this involvement is threatening Lebanese security and leading to terrorist activity in Lebanon. First, anti-Assad officials' statements threatening to fight Hezbollah in Lebanon are given salience. Second, the article also gives emphasis to the part of Nasrallah's speech where he addresses the group responsible for the bombing and tells them that if necessary, more Hezbollah fighters will go to Syria. Also, right after covering Nasrallah's speech, the article quoted Future Movement officials criticizing Nasrallah's speech and stating that it "moved Lebanon to a very dangerous phase." In al Safir's article, on the other hand, the main message is that Hezbollah and its supporters are a strong and resistant group. For example, Dahye is described as "resistant," an area that was able to "defeat" and "break" the Israeli enemy 30 years ago, the suburb of "victory" and "deprivation," and the suburb whose citizens' heads remained high regardless of its government's neglect.

Whether they are represented in a negative or positive light, all four newspapers lump the Lebanese Shiites into one group or category. While in al Mustaqbal and al Nahar's articles, the Lebanese Shiites are often referred to as "militias" or "terrorists" and depicted as a dangerous group that wants to seize power in Lebanon, they are portrayed in many instances as an invincible and resistant one in al Akhbar and al Safir's articles. Therefore,

all four newspapers treat the sect in a stereotypical manner, regardless of whether these stereotypes are positive or negative.

Discussion

The main question that this study addressed is whether Lebanese newspapers frame the Lebanese Shiites in stereotypical or homogenous ways. The findings generated from the study suggest that in many cases Lebanese newspapers do represent this sect in such a manner. It is important to note that there is a distinct difference between how al Mustaqbal and al Nahar versus al Akhbar and al Safir represent the Lebanese Shiites. For the most part, the stereotypes propagated by al Mustaqbal and al Nahar were negative, while those propagated by al Safir and al Akhbar were positive. Nevertheless, all four newspapers treated the Lebanese Shiites as one homogeneous group.

As already mentioned, Hezbollah is Lebanon's most popular Shiite political party, followed by Amal. The majority of Lebanese Shiites support the party, but not all. Furthermore, Lebanon is a country where each sect has its own political party or parties. Many Lebanese do not differentiate between Hezbollah and Shiites, al Mustaqbal and Sunnis, or the Progressive Socialist Party and Druze. Just as someone assumed that the author of this paper is "pure Hezbollah" due to her surname, all Lebanese Shiites are subjected to such stereotypical judgments. Even the newspapers treat Hezbollah and Shiites of Dahye as one entity. For example, one of al Mustaqbal's articles stated that Dahye is "Hezbollah's state," and in al Safir, Dahye was referred to as "the suburb of the resistance… it is the secret behind the resistance's progress… it's the embracer of its victories." The argument being made here is not that Hezbollah and Lebanese Shiites are one, but that they are treated as such by newspapers (and many Lebanese). Therefore, to fully understand

how Lebanese Shiites are being portrayed, the representation of Hezbollah should be taken into consideration since negative or stereotypical comments made about the party could reflect upon Lebanese Shiites.

Al Mustaqbal's articles propagated the stereotype of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiites, and Dahye as dangerous, using descriptions such as "terrorists," "militias," or a group that wants to dominate. Its general representation of this group could be described as negative. Similar to al Mustaqbal, al Nahar's articles portray Hezbollah, and sometimes the Lebanese Shiites, as a menacing group that's threatening Lebanese security and aims to take over Lebanon. More than once, officials were quoted saying that Hezbollah is more harmful to Lebanon than Israel, or that Hezbollah's weapons are not only directed towards Israel. For example, Seniora was quoted saying: "even Israel didn't dare do" what others did yesterday in Beirut. On June 6[th,] al Mustaqbal's article stated that "al Qusayr city fell and along with it fell the saying 'the resistant weapons against the Israeli enemy'." Also, Hezbollah and thus, the Lebanese Shiites, are being held responsible for terrorist activity in Lebanon due to their involvement in the Syrian conflict.

Al Safir, in contrast, not only made sure to portray Hezbollah as a resistance group whose main aim is to protect Lebanon, but also omitted certain pieces of information that might negatively impact the image of the party and its supporters. The main stereotypes being perpetuated by al Safir is that Hezbollah and the Shiites of Dahye are a strong and resistant group which can't be defeated. Therefore, similar to al Mustaqbal and al Nahar, al Safir conflates Lebanese Shiites and Hezbollah. For example, one of al Safir's articles states that Dahye is the "suburb of victory" and that every "sinful hand failed to bend Dahye's will." Even though this stereotype is not what someone might call negative, it still distorts

the truth. For example, many people living in Dahye chose to move to other areas in Lebanon after the bombing that took place in August. Therefore, treating the Shiites, or at least the Shiites of Dahye, as one homogenous resistant group is an oversimplification. Moreover, by relating such portrayals of the Lebanese Shiites to other media texts, such as those in al Nahar and al Mustaqbal, the image of this group as a threatening one might be reinforced. Al Akhbar, on the other hand, propagated the stereotype of a targeted yet resistant population, and surprisingly, in its coverage of the kidnappings, it treated the tribes of Bekaa and the Lebanese Shiites as a homogenous group, portrayed them in a negative light, and portrayed Dahye and Bekaa as dangerous areas.

The results of the analysis support previous research on the Lebanese media. As Cochrane (2007) argues, each TV station or newspaper has its own political agenda, which it tries to promote. Each of the four newspapers has a different political agenda and each one of them covered the different events accordingly. Also similar to what Cochrane (2007) noted, the content of the media mirrors the schisms found in Lebanese society. Al Mustaqbal and al Nahar's critical stance of Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiites mirrors their supporters' and stakeholders' sentiments and, at the same time, mirrors the schisms between the Lebanese Shiites and Sunna. But contrary to Cochrane's argument, al Akhbar and al Safir's coverage of the events don't reflect the schisms since they don't directly attack or blame a certain sect or party, and instead tend to blame the government or the 14th of March coalition as a whole. Both newspapers reflect the pro-Hezbollah stance of the supporters of the 8th of March. Another point confirmed by the analysis is that the main aim of Lebanon's media are not to serve the public, especially since the newspaper articles cover events in ways that potentially increase hostility among the Lebanese public, reinforce existing

stereotypes about Lebanese sectarian groups, in this case Lebanese Shiites, and often treat a sectarian group as one homogenous group (Dajani, 2006).

Although not the object of this study, the results generated from the analysis demonstrated that each newspaper covers the events in ways that reinforce a certain position, and inevitably, reinforce sectarian tensions. For example, in trying to exonerate Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiites from blame, al Safir attacked the government in more than one article. It was due to the "government's incompetence" that the Mokdad clan acted as it did, or because the government decided to "criminalize the resistance" the 8th and 14th of March coalitions clashed on the 7th of May. Similarly, to make it seem like the Future Movement or the 14th of March coalition was not involved in the 7th of May conflict, all blame was attributed to Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shiites by al Mustaqbal. The same could be said about al Nahar and al Mustaqbal's coverage of the events in al Qusayr. Due to both the newspapers' anti-Assad stance, Hezbollah and the Syrian army were portrayed in a negative light. This supports Cochrane's (2008) main argument, mainly that the Lebanese media, instead of taking a neutral stance to alleviate tensions, portray events that take place during critical times in ways that increase the already existing sectarianism in Lebanese society.

What all of the four newspapers have in common is that they treat the Lebanese Shiites as one homogenous group and they propagate stereotypes, either positive or negative, about this group. They also tend to conflate Lebanese Shiites and Hezbollah. And, as much previous research has demonstrated, there are impacts to such stereotypical representations; for one, and as studies have shown, in many cases, when people perform anti-social acts towards a certain group it is because that group is perceived as a threat

(Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Dodge, 1980). This implies that portraying the Lebanese Shiites as a dangerous group, one that aims to seize power in Lebanon, might lead other groups to perceive all Lebanese Shiites (regardless of whether they are Hezbollah supporters or not), as supporters of Hezbollah or as a threat. This perception, in turn, might result in anti-social behavior towards the Lebanese Shiites. Such stereotypes also influence Lebanese Shiites' own self-perception. As discussed earlier, some of these effects may include lower self-esteem, humiliation, and alienation.

When discussing the negative consequences of stereotypes, one should take into consideration that all stereotypes, both negative and positive, are harmful. As Berg (2002) argues, whether positive or negative, stereotypes are "rigidly applied, crude, oversimplified representations of a group" that "operate by marginalization" (p. 166). Even though positive stereotypes, for the most part, might be less insulting and considered more acceptable by the targeted group, they are still generalizations that mark this group as distinct from other groups (Berg, 2002). Therefore, labeling the Lebanese Shiites as strong and resistant, rather than threatening, may more acceptable and even considered flattering by some, yet it still indicates a generalization and distinction from other Lebanese groups (Berg, 2002). Moreover, while some of the Lebanese Shiites are satisfied being associated with either resistance or Hezbollah, others are not, especially if one does not support Hezbollah. Even those who do support the party and the idea of resistance might object to being constantly referred to in such a narrow manner.

Conclusion

Most of the existing literature on media representations deals with the construction of groups in western media. However, little, if any, has been written on representation in

the Arab media. This is particularly surprising since the political arena in several Arab

countries is characterized by instability and inter-group conflict. The aim of this study was

to look at how the Lebanese Shiites are portrayed in Lebanese newspapers, and if they're

framed in stereotypical or homogenous ways. This was achieved by conducting a

qualitative content analysis of 16 articles from four Lebanese newspapers, guided by

framing theory and the concept of intertextuality. To reiterate the major findings of this

research: each of the newspapers, regardless of its political stance, propagates stereotypes

about the Lebanese Shiites. The stereotypes are both positive and negative. Those

disseminated by al Mustaqbal and al Nahar's articles were negative, while those in al Safir

and al Akhbar's were mostly positive. However, all the newspapers treated the Lebanese

Shiites as one homogenous group, either dangerous or resistant. Also, the four newspapers

portrayed all the Lebanese Shiites as supportive of Hezbollah.

As the results of the research demonstrate, it is rare that the Lebanese Shiites are

directly mentioned or referred to as "the Shiites" in the 16 articles analyzed. It is mainly

through intertextuality that one interprets the content as referring to Shiites. For example

Hezbollah, Dahye, Mokdad, Hay el Sollom, Iranian militias, groups chanting Hussein and

Zeinab's name, and tribes from Bekaa are all words/phrases interpreted by addressing other

texts that the audience has been exposed to. None of the articles in the sample could have

been analyzed accurately without taking into consideration the interdependence of texts.

Readers always interpret media texts by referring to other media texts. None of the articles

mention that Dahye is a predominantly Shiite area, that the Mokdad clan is Shiite, or that

the tribes of Bekaa mentioned earlier are Shiites. Yet, that doesn't mean that readers did not

interpret them as such.

As for the way the Lebanese Shiites are framed, what Entman (2006) describes as "choosing some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition," was obvious during the analysis. Not only are certain aspects given more salience, but also some facts are omitted completely from the articles. For example, in al Mustaqbal's coverage of May 7th not once does the article mention the involvement of parties other than Hezbollah or Amal. The same is true for al Safir's coverage of the events that took place in al Qusayr. The fact that Hezbollah did take part in the battle of al Qusayr was omitted. Furthermore, describing the people of Dahye's reaction to the bombing that took place as resistant and strong also involves the omission of information: that many people living in Dahye were afraid, worried, and helpless. This implies that each of these newspapers has a certain message and representation of Hezbollah/Lebanese Shiites that it wants to propagate.

The results discussed are not free of limitations. One such limitation is the loss of meaning when translating the articles from Arabic to English. The meanings of many of these words change or lose their cultural significance when translated. Therefore, in order to approximate the intended meaning, some phrases were altered rather than translated word for word. Yet that was not always sufficient to overcome the problem of translation. As already mentioned, one of the main limitations is the fact that if the analysis was carried out by a different researcher, it might yield different results. Another limitation is that the articles selected for analysis only covered critical events, and therefore, the analysis does not reveal how Lebanese Shiite are represented on a daily basis.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several factors that could be combined to improve this study and to contribute to the overall literature on representations of groups in the Arab media. First, since the time frames analyzed in this study are characterized by conflict, danger, or tragedy, for future research randomly selected articles should be included in the sample to be analyzed. For example, what if the stereotypes found in the 16 articles analyzed, are disseminated only during critical times, and if the representation of Lebanese Shiites varies according to the event being covered? Analyzing more articles would yield results that give a clearer picture of the representation of Lebanese Shiites in Lebanese newspapers on a daily basis or during "normal" days as well and not only during times of conflict or unusual circumstances. It would also be useful to analyze a sample of newscasts of the Lebanese TV stations in order to see how the Lebanese Shiites are framed not only through words and photographs, but through videos as well.

In future research, and in order to improve the research design several factors should be considered. More newspapers should be included in the sample in order to see if there are greater differences in how newspapers supporting the same political stance (i.e., 8th and 14th of March) represent the Lebanese Shiites. Analyzing additional newspapers will also help in spotting other frames used when discussing Lebanese Shiites. Also, more than one article per time frame should be analyzed. This is helpful in seeing if the representation of Lebanese Shiites in the coverage of the same event changes or remains the same from day to day.

Analyzing articles other than those on the front page can provide richer information on the representation of Lebanese Shiites during a specific event. Do, for example, articles on the inside pages offer more nuances in their representations? Moreover, analyzing a

newspaper, or even an online news website, that is owned by members of Shiite political parties could have increased the breadth of the study since al Mustaqbal and al Nahar are owned and controlled by families that have members in the government, while al Akhbar and al Safir are not. Doing so would make comparing party-owned newspapers possible, rather than simply comparing pro 8th and 14th of March newspapers that don't have similar ownership patterns.

Furthermore, similar to how the representation of African Americans, Arabs, and Muslims in western media have been traced back to present day, the same could be done for Lebanese Shiites, or other groups, in Lebanese media. This will help in gaining an overall picture of the representation of Lebanese Shiites, rather than one that focuses on the past few years. Articles covering additional critical or key events could be analyzed. For example, two events include the liberation of southern Lebanon in 2000 and the Israeli war on Lebanon is 2006. Also, future research can focus on how this group's portrayal changed from the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011 to the present day, taking into consideration Hezbollah's involvement in the conflict. How did the terrorist bombings that took place in Dahye and Baalbeck, which al Nusra-Front and Daesh (the Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant) took responsibility for, influence how Lebanese newspapers represented Lebanese Shiites?

Finally, and while this study focused on the portrayal of Lebanese Shiites, future research on the representation of other sectarian groups in Lebanon should be conducted. For example, how are the Lebanese Sunnis being represented in Lebanese media, particularly after the rise of Ahmed al Asir and of Salafist groups in Lebanon? This topic is of particular importance since the current political instability is Lebanon is characterized

by, in addition to other factors, a Sunni-Shiite strife. Just how this study found that the
Lebanese Shiites are portrayed in a stereotypical manner in Lebanese newspapers, other
studies might render similar results that demonstrate a stereotypical representation of
different Lebanese groups.

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