

# Framing the Pains of Others

A Peace Journalistic Perspective on How the News Media  
Constructs Compassion and Understanding for the Suffering  
of the Other

# Abstract

This paper investigates how compassion with and understanding for the suffering of the other is constructed by the news media and why certain choices are made with respect to coverage and framing. Articles published in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in relation to three different cases that all take place in Haiti have been surveyed by using quantitative content analysis and qualitative textual analysis. Peace journalism and compassion fatigue are the main components of the theoretical framework that has been applied to the empirical material. The study finds that there is an ambition to give a holistic coverage but that it falls back on simplifications and stereotypes when the issues become too complicated, resulting in limited understanding and compassion fatigue. To avoid this, the media needs a greater awareness of its usage of sources and on what basis it values an item's newsworthiness.

*Keywords:* peace journalism, compassion fatigue, news media, Dagens Nyheter, content analysis, textual analysis, framing, understanding, the other, Haiti

*Number of Characters:* 69 614

# Abbreviations

DN	Dagens Nyheter
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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# 1 Introduction

To see other people's suffering through the media is a modern phenomena (Sontag 2003:16). When it comes to suffering of people in remote places we need to rely on some sort of channel to see their suffering. This channel tends to be the media (Moeller 1999:3). Although recognising that an audience does not consist of a homogeneous group and that it therefore is hard to generalise about its reactions (Sontag 2003:4-6), this paper aims to investigate the role that the media plays in constructing – or in not constructing – compassion with the unrelated other. Peace journalism is a theory which ideas I share and will apply to the study. Because it assumes that the framing of an event influence how the audience will feel about it, I will investigate how and why the media support some victims but not all. This theme is interesting and relevant because suffering is often ignored because of lacking political will. Even though other factors influence, public opinion is a major contributor to political will in democratic countries.

The medium that will be investigated is the news media, because it is the most common channel for knowledge about what happens around the world (Moeller 1999:3). Even though there is a large information flow today and new media such as the internet increase in importance, mass media still has the largest influence on the national level (Tehrani 2002:76). Here, the focus will lie on newspapers and more specifically on the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (henceforth *DN*). Even though television reaches a larger audience, newspapers are a more suitable focus for the analysis because they are more influential in forming policy and have more space to cover less reported news (Rotberg and Weiss 1996 (1):182-183). Sontag also argues that narratives are more influential than images (Sontag 2003:110) and Moeller maintains that still photographs have a stronger emotional impact than moving pictures because they force the viewer to consider the details and tease her imagination (Moeller 1999:38-45).

Swedish media has been chosen because Sweden is a Western European country that donates large sums in foreign aid. According to the United Nations Development Program (henceforth UNDP) it is one of the few countries that live up to its obligations regarding foreign aid under the millennium development goals (UNDP s.a). *DN* will be analysed because it is the Swedish newspaper with the largest circulation and it is recognized for its quality. Quality newspapers have been selected because they influence policy more and tend to explore issues in greater depth than tabloids, although tabloids have a strong emotional appeal. Even though Fico et al argue that it often is more useful to survey the entire population when doing quantitative content analysis (Fico et al 1998:51), I choose to limit this paper to survey only one newspaper because *DN* is representative of Swedish quality newspapers in its foreign news coverage. It also allows me to

make a deep analysis of one single medium and broaden my analysis by using several different cases.

To investigate the role that the media plays in evoking compassion and in creating understanding, I will make a comparative case study. For a comparison to be possible, the cases have to have something in common and therefore this paper will focus on events that all took place in Haiti. They include the political violence in February and March 2004, hurricane Jeanne that struck Haiti on September 18<sup>th</sup> 2004 and the earthquake that shook Haiti on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2010. The methods that I plan to use are a combination of quantitative content analysis of newspaper articles as well as qualitative textual analysis. As Fico et al points out, content analysis is useful first when it is put in the context of existing theory and research (Fico et al 1998:52-52), and therefore I will apply theories of compassion fatigue and peace journalism.

## 1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The overarching purpose of this paper is to discuss how the news media participate in creating compassion and understanding for the strife of the unrelated other. To understand this, I will also discuss the influence of the choices that the media do with respect to coverage and framing. I will do this by applying theories of peace journalism and compassion fatigue on articles, published by the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter (DN)*, relating to three specific events concerning Haiti. More specifically, the questions that I will answer are:

- What is the role of the news media, and of *DN* in particular, in setting the agenda with respect to the CNN-effect and why do some disasters get a larger amount of coverage than others?
- How can the coverage be interpreted with respect to prioritisations made regarding events contra processes and the other?
- In what way do the framing of the events influence the understanding and the compassion that the audience may feel?
- In what way do choices on what to cover affect compassion and understanding, and how would this be understood from a peace journalism perspective?

## 1.2 Disposition

In the following chapter I will make an outline of the theoretical framework, which I will apply to the empirical material, before making a more detailed discussion on methodology. To place the empirical material in its context, I will then make a brief overview of Haitian history. I will also give a picture of the



general news context at the time to give the reader an idea of what other major events competed for the attention of the media.

Thereafter I will analyse each of the cases separately using both quantitative and qualitative methods and end with a comparison of all of the events. Some more attention will be paid to the coverage of the earthquake in 2010 because of the extent of the coverage. Finally, the findings will be summed up in the conclusion.

## 1.3 Theoretical Framework

In the beginning of media studies the audience was seen as consumers that would passively absorb the message of the media. This has been proven to not be the case. Rather, the audience is an active agent in choosing what media it consumes and will interpret the messages differently depending on its values and social relationships (Fico et al 1998:4-5). For this reason it is very difficult to make any reliable statements about the reaction of the audience and about how much compassion it may or may not feel. However, as Tehranian points out, when the audience consumes information of events that it has little or no previous knowledge about, it tends to accept the picture presented by the media (Tehranian 2002:75).

Even though the media does not tell people what to think, it tells them what to think about and therefore plays an important role in setting the agenda (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:xix). However, the power of the media to influence policy and the so called CNN-effect is much debated. The CNN-effect is the idea that instantaneous news coverage generates demands from the public that something needs to be done and that these demands influence policy (Spencer 2005:24). This pressure is not always beneficial and can lead to distorted priorities and short-sighted policy (Carruthers 2000:207). It can also complicate the issues so that they appear too complex for an intervention to be feasible (Rotberg and Weiss 1996 (2):3-4).

There is little agreement as to whether the CNN-effect exists or to what extent it matters. Spencer argues that there is no clear cause and effect relationship between extensive media coverage and policy change, because the coverage of an event may intensify first *after* there has been a shift in policy (Spencer 2005:26-31). It is only when there is no pre-existing policy that media coverage has an impact (Gowing, as cited in Carruthers 2000:208). Cate argues that the attention of the media is necessary to place an issue on the agenda, but not sufficient to consistently govern policy (Cate 1996:17-18).

Since it is impossible for the news media to report on precisely all news, there is always a selection (Livingstone 1996:68). Gatekeepers exist on both an individual and institutional level and work both consciously and subconsciously in determining which stories are newsworthy and which are not (Carruthers 2000:15-19, 230-231). Such simple considerations as if there is a journalist on the site to provide a report as well as pictures has fundamental importance for

whether a case is reported or not (Carruthers 2000:230). When there is a lack of correspondents, there is a greater tendency to rely on wire service reports which make the reporting mainsteamed (Moeller 1999:25-26, 30-31).

Mass media assumes that we are automatically more interested in people who are close to us and discriminate in its news selection in favour of such news. Proximity is not only a matter of geographical conditions but if the other is considered as someone who is like us and someone that we can identify with (Carruthers 2000:232). In other words there is no equality in the news selection and Moeller argues that some places are treated as more newsworthy than others because of factors such as race, own interests and proximity (Moeller 1999:20-22). For a conflict or crisis that affect the other to be reported, there is a demand on a higher number of casualties (Carruthers 2000:232-233) and it needs to be exceptional as well as relevant to external viewers (Sontag 2003:32-33). If the persons suffering are considered close they will be displayed as individuals as opposed to a nameless suffering mass (Moeller 1999:22). Other characteristics for the representation of the other include the reproduction of stereotypes such as tribalism and roles such as victim and rescuer. The victims are displayed outside of their context without any control or part of the position in which they find themselves (Carruthers 2000:235-236).

Images are influential because they are assumed to be an honest display of the reality (Höijer 2004:515), but even when images have not been consciously tampered with they still represent the photographer's point of view, just as a narrative represents the point of view of the journalist (Sontag 2003:23). Moreover, pictures alone cannot capture concepts, ideas and processes and therefore the audience needs to know in what context the picture was taken, how and why (Moeller 1999:45-46).

When used wisely, images make it easier for the audience to understand the story, but they are always a simplification (Moeller 1999:43-44). In the portrayal of the other, stereotypes are reproduced and the victims are seldom mentioned by name (Sontag 2003:70). A faceless crowd is anonymous and the reproduction of such imagery creates the illusion that all disasters are the same. The audience is thus lead to believe that there is nothing it can do about it and ignores such pictures by routine (Moeller 1999:36-37).

In order to be able to make any statements on the reactions to viewing suffering, I will use the idea of peace journalism as my starting point. The peace journalism perspective argues that the framing of the events matter for how they are understood by the audience. It makes a distinction between war journalism, that is said to make war seem like a more acceptable solution, and peace journalism, that take an active stand for peaceful conflict resolution. Moreover, I will apply the theory of compassion fatigue, which is a theory about how the audience react to and process information on other people's suffering, as well as other academic literature. In the following, I will conduct a more detailed discussion on these theories.

### 1.3.1 Peace Journalism

Peace journalism is an alternative view on journalism that was first coined by Johan Galtung and further developed by Lynch, McGoldrick and Shinar (Lynch 2008:294). According to peace journalism, traditional journalism, or war journalism as it is called, reproduces dominant discourses by uncritically using official sources (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:16-18). It tends to portray conflicts as a tug-of-war where only one side can prevail. Therefore third party interests and peace initiatives are underrepresented (Hanitzsch 2004:484; Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:7-8). War journalism has a preference for events rather than processes, which brings attention to the symptoms of a problem rather than the root causes (Cate 1996:20-21). There is also a tendency in war journalism to use simplistic and dramatic wordings when describing distant disasters (Rotberg and Weiss 1996(1):182-183). The agents are thus stereotyped into desperate victims, ruthless villains and selfless heroes (Moeller 1999:148-149). According to peace journalism, this type of journalism leads to a simplistic reporting that ignores underlying causes, processes and alternative views. It also leads to an obfuscation of social injustices and gives the audience a lacking understanding of what the issues are (Lynch 2008:297).

A basic premise for peace journalism is that the framing of the events matter for how the audience reacts to them and what solutions are seen as conceivable (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:20). It argues that war journalism makes the audience feel detached from the conflict by not providing it with an understanding of the issues, which makes it feel that nothing can be done about the problem and that it has no responsibility to engage in it (Lynch 2008:296-297; Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:20).

Peace journalism presents itself as an alternative tool for journalists that contain new premises on how to value news and sources (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:5). It comes from a constructivist perspective that argues that journalists are part in shaping the reality and therefore cannot act as external, value free observers (Hanitzsch 2004:488). For this reason, journalists need to be more responsible and aware of how their coverage influence how a conflict or a crisis is treated (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:xv-xvi).

Instead of focusing on conflicts and events peace journalism aims to place violence in its context, display non-violent options and show otherwise ignored parties and their interests (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:xvii-xviii). When a plurality of agents is visible, the conflict cease to appear as a tug-of-war which creates room for a mediated solution (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:13-14). It also argues for the need of using a plurality of sources and not treat reports coming from local peace initiatives as less reliable than official information from government sources (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:18-19).

Critics to peace journalism have a positivist view on journalism and argue that the task of the journalist must be to objectively report the reality without having a pronounced agenda (Lynch 2008:295). This does not mean that the journalist has to be completely detached, but should be able to differentiate between her professional and private roles (Hanitzsch 2004:488). Taking an active stance for

peace would compromise the integrity of the journalist (Hanitzsch 2004:485-486). Peace journalists though, would argue that it is not possible to make such a distinction because all journalists carry their own values and preferences with them, which influence their interpretation of reality (Lynch 2008:300).

### 1.3.2 Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a theory about how the audience handles daily information on other people's suffering supplied by the news media. It argues that the audience gets overwhelmed by the media from being fed constant images of other people's suffering. The constant news flow leads to a blurring of issues, short attention span of the public and boredom with international news (Moeller 1999:1-2). Because the news media is dependent on having an audience that buys its product, there is a great sensitivity to the compassion fatigue of the audience. Therefore the media will avoid reporting on issues that do not interest people. With an uninterested public there is no incentive for the media to report, nor any understanding of the events. Consequently, a vicious circle of indifference is created (Moeller 1999:10-12).

There are two major causes of compassion fatigue. One is the sheer volume of information that the audience needs to process. The other is that the framing of other people's suffering tends to follow the same pattern, which causes all disasters to seem alike (Moeller 1999:11-13). Such coverage includes using the type of stereotypes that peace journalism defines as characteristics of war journalism (Moeller 1999:13-14). In order to win the attention of the audience when covering other people's pains there is a trend in Western media to dramatise to make the story newsworthy, which is not helpful in explaining the issues at hand (Moeller 1999:17-18, 24-25). The focus on drama has led to a preference of events that are sudden and span over a brief period of time rather than longer processes (Carruthers 2000:231). Because of the assumed lacking attention span of the audience, less intense crisis are only covered briefly if at all (Livingstone 1996:83-84).

The consequence of compassion fatigue is that it creates a perception of a constant crises even though it is a matter of events that each are unique. Moeller argues that if a crisis is seen as a continuum the audience does not see how anything can be done about the problem (Moeller 1999:11-12). Seeing images of suffering causes feelings of guilt and impotence about not being able to do anything about it (Moeller 1999:9). As it is a part of daily life to filter large amounts of information, we tend to chose to ignore information that make us feel bad (Sontag 2003:104). Thus, compassion fatigue is a learned behaviour.

Höijer defines compassion as a painful emotion caused by the knowledge of someone else's undeserved misfortune. Thus, there are two qualifying conditions for a person to feel compassion: the suffering must be serious and the victim must be seen as blameless. The discourse of global compassion maintains a hierarchy of victims where the ideal victims are women, children and the elderly because they are seen as helpless whereas men are not seen as equally deserving (Höijer

2004:514-517). In her study Höijer confirms that this idea is prevalent among the Swedish public and that it does feel more compassionate with women, children and the elderly because they are seen as more deserving (Höijer 2004:521).

Compassion is complex and Höijer goes on to identify four different types of compassion. They include feelings of tenderness about the victim, anger towards the perpetrators, shame about not doing enough to help and powerlessness (Höijer 2004:522-524). Compassion is also a painful emotion that withers into cynicism and apathy when it cannot be transformed into action (Sontag 2003:90-91). For this reason there are different ways to avoid feeling compassion out of which Höijer defines four strategies. The first one, which is the least common one, is to deny the truthfulness of the report. The second one is a more general way of distancing oneself from the suffering by shifting the focus to criticising the media for being too sensationalist. Third, there is a strategy of dehumanising the victims and explain their suffering as a part of their culture or way of life. This also turns them into undeserving victims. Last, there is the strategy of just becoming numb, which is an example of how powerlessness together with an overload of images of suffering, lacking understanding of the events and the failure of the media to provide an adequate background work together in creating compassion fatigue (Höijer 2004:524-525).

Thus, compassion fatigue is a strategy to avoid feelings of guilt and impotence that originates in the public's lacking understanding of the situation combined with being overstimulated by seeing too much suffering. However, compassion fatigue is not inevitable and for this reason the media has a responsibility to inform the public and explain why it is worthwhile to care (Moeller 1999:315; Sontag 2003:93-97).

There is a debate on whether compassion fatigue exists at all and whether it is felt by the audience or if it is something that the media assumes that the audience feels (Carruthers 2000:237). Höijer shows that only a minority of the audience claim that they do not react to images of suffering (Höijer 2004:519). She argues that it is not a clear-cut phenomenon that affects the entire audience, but has the side of global compassion on the one hand and compassion fatigue and indifference on the other. There are also different kinds of compassion as well as indifference (Höijer 2004:528).

## 1.4 Empirical Material and Methods

In 2004, president Aristide was forced to leave power in the end of February as a result of protests and political violence. Throughout 2004 there was widespread violence and human rights abuses in Haiti (Amnesty International USA 2007). Furthermore, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September in 2004 hurricane Jeanne hit Haiti killing about 2500 people and severely affecting another 300 000 (UNICEF 2005). The problems remained largely unresolved during 2005 and *Médecines Sans Frontières* rates the conflict among the ten least reported crisis in the world during that same year (*Médecines Sans Frontières*: 2006:8-9). On the 12<sup>th</sup> of January

2010 Haiti was struck by an earthquake that measured 7.0 on the Richter scale. It killed over 220 000 people, injured another 300 000 and displaced about 1.3 million people (United States Geological Survey 2010).

Using the same location is an advantage because it is interesting to see why the suffering of the same population is addressed with more urgency in 2010 than in 2004. The cases are different because one deals with a civil war and the other two are natural disasters. Therefore, it is possible that the way in which people may feel compassion may be influenced by this, but at the same time it is interesting to compare and discuss why we feel more compassionate about victims of earthquakes than victims of civil violence. The fact that hurricane Jeanne was a natural disaster that went largely ignored provides a possibility to compare difference in coverage of natural disasters, although hurricane Jeanne claimed fewer casualties.

As Livingstone points out in his comparison of the coverage of the famines in Somalia and the Sudan, location, accessibility and prior international involvement played a major role in the choices made on what to cover (Livingstone 1996:72, 75-77). Since both events that are surveyed by this paper occurred in the same geographically limited area this factor is reduced, even though other factors such as infrastructure still matter. Moreover, the factor of how the other is portrayed is interesting to compare from case to case since it is the same population in the same country that is concerned.

The empirical material for the study will consist of all articles published on the domestic and foreign news pages as well as commentaries in *DN* that concern the events in Haiti. Consequently, articles published in other sections, such as the sections for culture, sports and economics will be excluded because of the limited size of this paper. These articles have been retrieved by going through copies of the main edition of the newspaper manually and by searching in a database that contain newspaper articles called *Presstext*. The keyword I used was “Haiti” and from the search results I made exclusions based on what was stated above.

It is hard to define a clear cut time frame for the coverage of the violence and events in Haiti during 2004 and 2005 because they are stretched out over a long time. Therefore, I will focus on the events of 2004 leading up to the situation in 2005. According to Amnesty International the conflict that would lead to the resignation of president Aristide started on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2004 and on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2004 an interim prime minister was appointed (Amnesty International USA 2007). Because newspaper reporting is not instantaneous I will provide space for a time-lag in the reporting. Thus I will use the dates starting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February and ending on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March as my time frame, a total of 35 days.

In order to make a comparison between the different events possible, I will survey the coverage of the natural disasters during the same number of days. For the coverage of hurricane Jeanne, I will include all articles published on the pages of foreign news, domestic news and commentaries during 35 days from when the hurricane first hit Haiti. That is, articles between the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2004 and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2004. This time frame is also suitable because it concerns a clear chain of events and is long enough to include follow up articles. The same rationale will be applied on the coverage of the earthquake in 2010. In other

words, articles from the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 to the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 will be included.

To analyse the articles and the pictures that accompany them I plan to use both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative part will consist of a quantitative content analysis, which will be used to quantify different types of articles and pictures as well as the number of times certain themes recur in the pictures. According to Fico et al quantitative content analysis is a suitable method to handle a large material that stretches over a long period of time (Fico et al 1998:16). Furthermore, it is a method that allows for systematising the material without influencing it (Wilhelm 2005). When investigating the form, I will investigate how many of various types of articles were published in order to give an overview of how much and what type of attention the event received in the media. I will also display how many articles of the various kinds that were published per day in order to give an overview of how the reporting developed. The categories, some of which have been borrowed from Wilhelm 2005, include the number of:

- front pages
- commentaries
- wire service reports (from agencies such as AFP, TT and Reuters)
- correspondent reports (from own journalists in Haiti)
- reportage
- interviews
- boxes of facts

These categories have been chosen because they are suitable to show how much and what type of interest that the various cases have received. For example, if there is a high frequency in the occurrence of front pages it is likely to assume that it is an event to which great importance has been attached. They also give an indication of what type of themes that are emphasised in relation to the cases. The frequency of interviews, reportage and correspondent reports give an indication of the extent to which *DN* engaged its own journalists in the issue. Since both the theories of compassion fatigue and peace journalism stress how important the framing is for how an event is perceived, these categories are helpful in giving an overview of the extent and the level of involvement of the coverage.

In the analysis of the pictures I will measure how many they are altogether and how many of them appear on the front page, because this will give an overview of the intensity of the coverage and of how important the events were seen to be. Instead of dividing the pictures with regards to form, as with the articles, I will survey the pictures on the basis of the themes that they portray. These themes include:

- aggression/violence (including armed soldiers, militia, rioters, demonstrators)
- suffering/victimhood
- portraits of political leaders
- other portraits (such as journalists and experts)
- explanatory graphics (including maps, charts, etc.)
- landscapes

- external agents/interests (for example foreign soldiers, humanitarian agencies and Haitians in Sweden)
- others

When choosing these categories, I have used the theoretical framework as a starting point. The purpose of using the categories of aggression/violence and suffering/victimhood is to see if there is a pattern of the stereotypical portrayal of suffering and aggression, that the theories argue is characteristic for the coverage of disasters that affect the other. Moreover, the categories of different types of portraits and graphics can show to what extent a more fact-based interest was taken. Measuring the number of pictures showing external agents and interests aims at seeing to what extent external agents had a stake in the conflict since Sontag argues that it is one prerequisite for a conflict to be granted attention.

These quantitative methods are limited in the sense that they are useful when answering questions as to how much or to what extent something is covered, but when it comes to understanding in what way different concepts are used in relation to each other and what is omitted from the reporting, other methods are necessary. Rather than quantifying the contents of the articles, I will use textual analysis as a complement. Textual analysis is a qualitative method of reading texts and assessing the significance of meanings and ideas. It derives from the hermeneutic perspective and contrasts with content analysis (Scott 2006:297). In hermeneutics, the reading of a text is intuitive in character but is challenged by demands of being scientific and generalisable (Ricoeur 1993:41-42). Ricoeur argues that it is important to be able to read a text without being influenced by own prejudice and that it is possible to be a critical reader at the same time as one is empathic to the text (Ricoeur 1993:148-149).

To avoid subjectivity, I will use a critical awareness of my own reading as well as complementing it with the quantitative methods described above. I will also apply the theories described in the previous chapter and particularly look for how suffering and violence is portrayed, to what degree the coverage lends itself to a deeper understanding and to what extent the audience gets involved. In the cases with less extensive coverage I will discuss reasons for this as well as how it affects compassion.

## 1.5 Limitations

First of all, I want to point out that I nowhere in this study try to make a hierarchy of suffering. For a person who is suffering, her suffering is equally hurtful regardless if there is anyone who is doing better or worse. Moreover, this is not a study about Haiti. Some facts needed to understand the context will be supplied, but there will be no detailed analysis of the history, the events nor the prospective future of the country.

This is not a study about the media. Albeit interesting, issues such as the interests of owners and advertisers as well as financial resources will not be discussed. Nor will I investigate how the limitations of space in newspapers



influence the news selection. I will focus on Swedish news media, thus excluding other types of media as well as media from other countries. Out of the Swedish news media, I have chosen to focus on the quality newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (DN).

## 2 Getting into Context

In order to better understand the analysis I will provide a background in this chapter. The first part will review the political history of Haiti. Even though these events are both complex and contested this overview will be very brief. Therefore, further reading is necessary for a deeper understanding.

The second part aims to give a general idea of the news flow contemporary to the sampled events. For the cases in 2004 the information is derived from a yearbook on 2004 as well as my own observations from going through the empirical material. Because there is no yearbook for 2010 yet, this part is based solely on my observations.

### 2.1 A Brief Background to Haiti

The independence of Haiti from its French colonisers in 1804 was unique because it is the only slave rebellion in history that has led to independence. Haiti's modern history has, however, been characterised by unrest and political violence. In 1990 Jean-Bertrand Aristide became the first democratically elected president but was overthrown by the military in 1991. Because of the civil violence, the UN approved of an intervention in 1994 and new elections were held in 1995. In 2000, Aristide was re-elected president, but the elections were criticised for being fraudulent (Utrikespolitiska Institutet: 2010).

Political violence continued and in 2003 voices were raised demanding Aristide's resignation. The celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Haitian independence in January 2004 marked the deepening of the conflict that led to increased violence. Gradually, the rebels took control over all of Haiti except for the capital, Port-au-Prince. Both France and the USA declared Aristide to be a hindrance to a peaceful solution and put pressure on him to resign. After his resignation, Aristide claimed that he had been forced to leave Haiti by American forces, which the USA denied (Utrikespolitiska Institutet: 2010).

Despite the presence of international forces, violence continued and intensified after hurricane Jeanne struck northern Haiti in September 2004 (Utrikespolitiska Institutet: 2010). Amnesty International defines the responsible groups as remains of the disbanded army and paramilitary groups as well as purely criminal gangs. Several human rights abuses including illegal arrests and executions as well as torture were reported (Amnesty International USA 2007).

When the earthquake hit Haiti in 2010, the UNDP had already ranked it as number 149 out of 182 countries in human development index, marking it as the poorest country in the western hemisphere (UNDP 2009:145-146). It was also

suffering from violence, overpopulation, poverty, unemployment and rising food prices (Utrikespolitiska Institutet 2010; Chatterjee 2008:615). Subsequent to the earthquake, aid to the victims was delayed because important institutions and infrastructure had been destroyed (Utrikespolitiska Institutet 2010).

## 2.2 The General News Context

The news reporting during 2004 was characterized by the focus on terrorism and the war on terror (Östman 2004:7). At the end of 2003 Saddam Hussein was arrested (Östman 2004:29) and in May 2004 pictures of tortured prisoners in the Abu Gharib prison were published (Östman 2004:78), causing the war in Iraq to be increasingly questioned. In the end of January, the primary elections started in the USA (Östman 2004:47) and the coverage was followed by *DN* parallel to the political violence in Haiti. Hurricane Jeanne is mentioned among the major news of 2004, but only in as much as it struck Florida (Östman 2004:135).

Major domestic news during 2004 included the homicides in Knutby, related to a Christian sect, that was closely followed by the media (Östberg 2004:43). The Swedish king visited Brunei in the beginning of February 2004 and was heavily criticised for calling Brunei, one of the strictest dictatorships in the world, for a very open country (Östman 2004:52).

During some time after the earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010, it was the major news story at the time. Towards the end of the coverage however, other stories gained attention, such as the unusually cold winter and the problems it caused for public transport in Sweden. On February 8<sup>th</sup> 2010 there were reports on Swedish soldiers that were killed in Afghanistan, which became a new major story in *DN*.

# 3 Analysis: Covering Disasters, Violence and Suffering

In this chapter, each of the chosen cases will be surveyed in chronological order. The results of the quantitative contents analysis will be presented in diagrams embedded in the text and will be discussed together with the textual analysis. At the end of the chapter the three cases will be compared.

## 3.1 Coverage of the Political Violence of 2004

Figure 1.1 Articles and Pictures Covering the Political Violence 2004

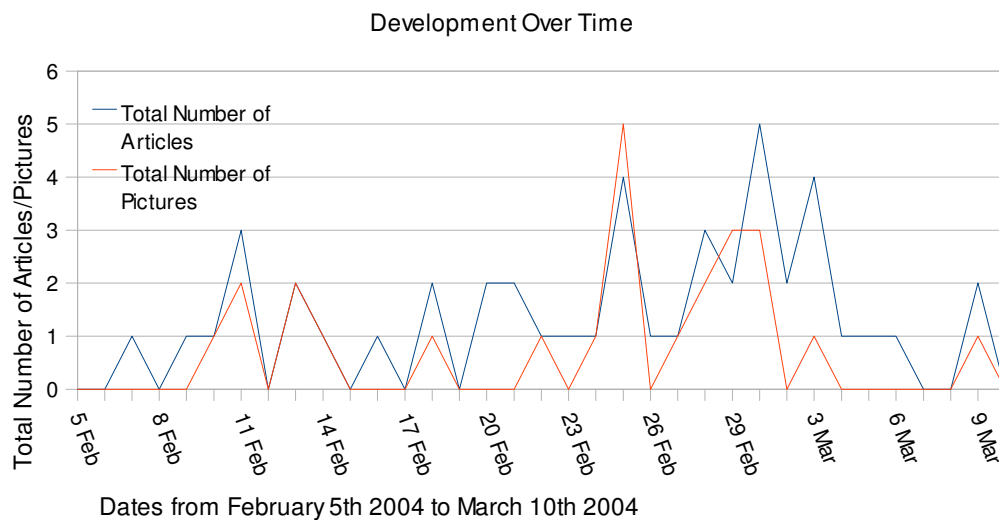


Figure 1.1 shows how the coverage developed over time. It is noticeable that the coverage is fairly sparse but consistent with a peak that coincides with the days just prior to and just after president Aristide left power. The peak is also characterised by a larger diversity in what types of articles that are used to cover the case (see figure 1.2). During this period there was an increased presence of foreign mediators (TT-AFP 2004-02-20<sup>1</sup>:A12), which indicates that *DN* took greater interest in the conflict once foreign interests got involved.

<sup>1</sup> All dates follow the format of year-month-day.

Figure 1.2 Articles Covering the Political Violence 2004

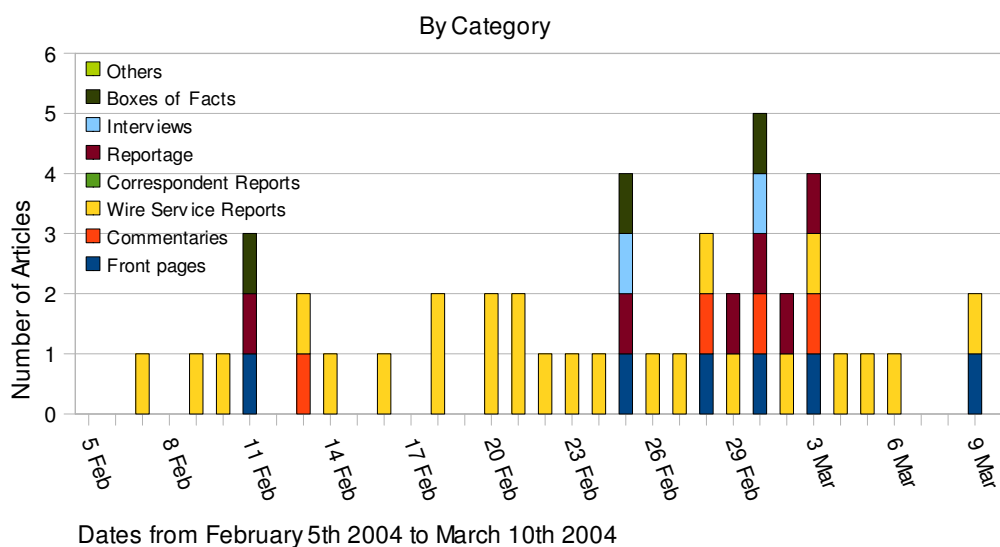


Figure 1.2 shows that the most common type of article is the wire service reports. What is characteristic for that type of articles is that they are brief entries giving a detached review of what has happened with a focus on what particular events have taken place and what impact they have had. They are examples of articles that by answering the questions of what, who, when and where but ignoring the questions of how and why, fail to give a proper understanding of the underlying processes (Moeller 1999:25). They also tend to take a neutral or external tone that peace journalism criticises for leading to a reproduction of dominant discourses.

In this case, they emphasise the number of deaths and the continuation of the violence, but do neither explain what the conflict is about nor who the parties are (TT-Reuters 2004-02-07:A10(A2); TT-AFP 2004-02-09:A17; TT-AFP 2004-02-10:A9). Once foreign mediators get involved in the conflict the coverage emphasises the political elites as well as the statements and positions of the various parties (see for example TT-AFP 2004-02-20:A12; TT 2004-02-21:A11; TT-AFP 2004-02-22:A11; TT-Reuters 2004-02-27:A15). Because of this focus, the perspective from below is unrepresented, omitting how the conflict influence the lives of people on a micro level.

The commentaries that discuss the situation in Haiti use it as a basis for a discussion on the Iraq war, which was a major issue in the news at the time (Ahlin 2004-02-13:A2; DN 2004-02-28(2):A02(A6/A2); Ahlin 2004-03-01). This is an example of how other people's wars are in themselves not seen as significant enough to interest the general public, but become interesting first when related to issues that we are involved in.

The violence is treated in quantitative terms such as number of deaths or what areas of Haiti are controlled by whom (see for example TT-AFP 2004-02-23:A10). Articles with titles like "Haiti: The conflict is moving towards a bloody ending"<sup>2</sup> (my translation, DN 2004-02-29:A08) and "We should not

<sup>2</sup> Original quote: "Haiti: Konflikt går mot blodig upplösning" (DN 2004-02-29:A08).

believe in bright perspectives”<sup>3</sup> (my translation, Shachar 2004-03-01:A18) as well as describing the situation as “[...] a vicious circle of violence and meaningless destruction”<sup>4</sup> (my translation DN 2004-02-11:A01) illustrate how most of the coverage follow a deterministic and sensationalistic model that does not problematise the violence. If the violence is meaningless, there is no possibility to do anything about it nor any reason to care. It is seen as the only viable solution leaving little room for other perspectives or initiatives.

During the 35-day period that the reporting was surveyed the political violence was mentioned on the front page six times. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2004 there was one picture published on the front page relating to the events. The picture is uncomfortable showing a man who gets arrested by armed rebels for supporting Aristide. It is interesting that the man is mentioned by name since, according to the theory, victims in distant conflicts usually are not (DN 2004-02-25:A01; Photograph by Walter Astrada/AP). However, as both parties thus far in the news reporting are depicted as violent criminals it is hard for the audience to value the victim's innocence and whether or not he deserves compassion.

One explanation to why the coverage followed this simplistic pattern is, as Shachar points out in his article, that it was hard to get a clear picture of the chain of events because the only sources were propaganda from the government and the opposition (Shachar 2004-02-11:A13). Although most of the reportage published consist of second hand sources (see for example Shachar 2004-02-25:A10; Hellberg 2004-02-29:A12; Hellberg 2004-01-03), *DN* makes an attempt to give a background to the conflict and to place it in its context by providing historical facts about Haiti, when it has access to information (Shachar 2004-02-11:A13; DN 2004-02-11:A13; DN 2004-02-25:A10). *DN* also explores how Aristide could lose so much popularity from the mid 90's when he used to be described as the saviour of Haiti (Shachar 2004-02-25:A10).

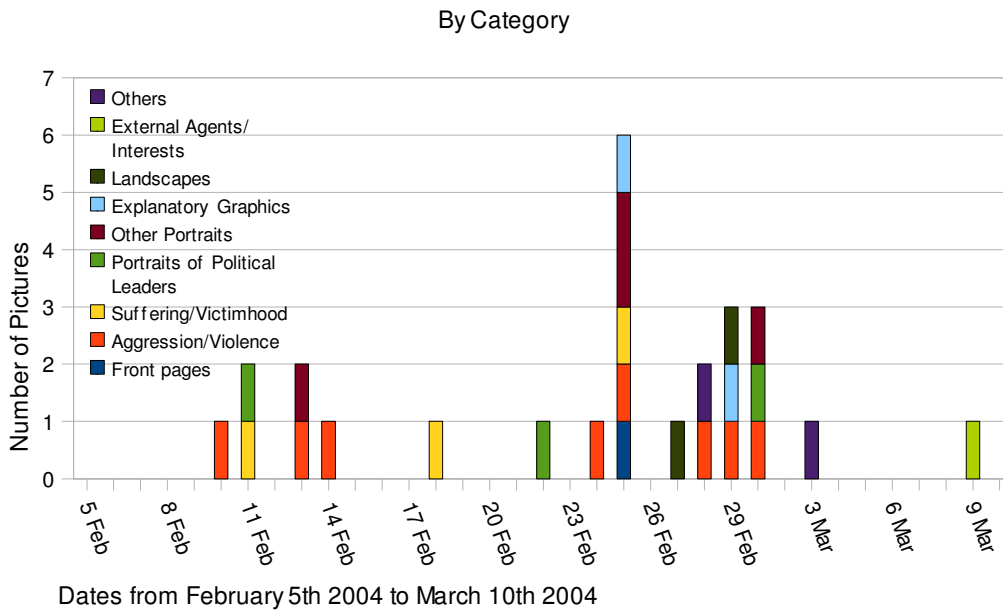
In one of the two interviews that are published during the surveyed time-span, a Swedish aid worker in Haiti is interviewed. He describes how people in the capital are afraid about what will happen and how the roadblocks and violence prevent farmers from working, which could lead to starvation (Sjöblom 2004-02-25:A10). There are also some briefer articles published that mention how civilians are harassed by plunderers and by militia that support Aristide (Hellberg 2004-02-29:A12) as well as how attacks against hospitals prevent the victims from getting aid (TT-Reuters 2004-02-16).

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<sup>3</sup> Original quote: ”Vi ska inte tro på ljusa perspektiv” (Shachar 2004-03-01:A18).

<sup>4</sup> Original quote: ”[...] en ond spiral av våld och meningslös förstörelse” (DN 2004-02-11:A01).

Figure 1.3 Pictures Covering the Political Violence 2004



The largest category of pictures that was published reproduces the concept of violence. Recurrent themes are armed males and angry demonstrators. These are images that do not show people that the reader will want to identify with and feel any compassion for. The number of images of political leaders is equal to the number of pictures showing suffering and victimhood, which illustrates how this conflict is reported from a top perspective focusing on political elites. In one way it is natural to focus on political processes since it is predominantly a political conflict. From a peace journalism perspective, though, this needs to be questioned because it argues that the framing of a conflict is decisive for how the audience reacts to it.

Victims, villains and foreign soldiers are described in the stereotypes that the peace journalism perspective argues is characteristic of war journalism. Victims are mostly portrayed as an unnamed mass in both pictures and narratives. One example of such is the picture and the brief article showing Haitians that, in the wording of *DN*, are “[...] stumbling and falling over each other [...]”<sup>5</sup> (my translation, *DN* 2004-02-18:A11) in order to gain access to food distributed by relief agencies. This type of behaviour does not agree with the notion of the deserving victim that exists in the discourse of global compassion. The plunderers and militia are described as ruthless villains (for example *TT-AFP* 2004-02-28) and the foreign soldiers, once they arrived in Haiti, were portrayed as heroes that had come to restore order (*Cederskog* 2004-03-09:A11).

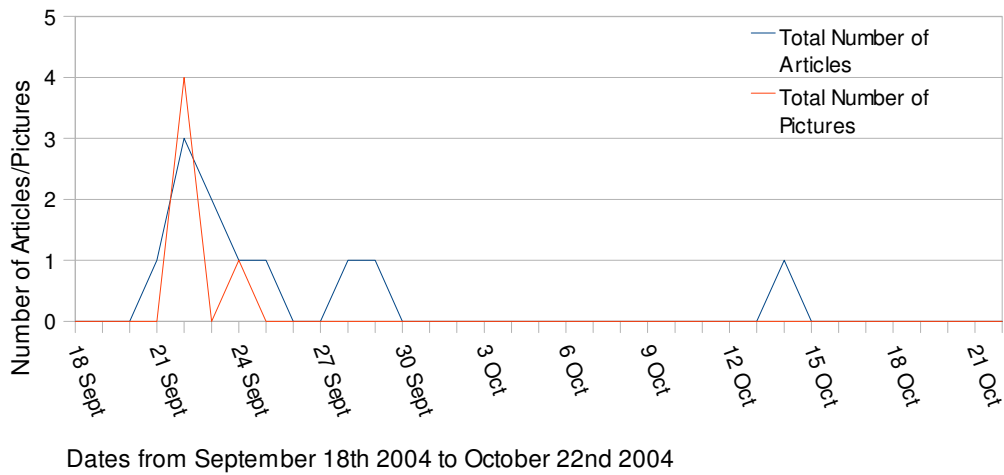
During the final phase of the coverage the emphasis lies on how life is getting back to normal and the process of electing a new government after Aristide left power (*Ohlsson* 2004-03-02:A8; *TT-Reuters* 2004-03-05:A10; *TT-AFP* 2004-03-06:A11). At this point there are only two visible sides to the conflict of which one has lost the tug of war. Even though there are some articles that give

<sup>5</sup> Original quote: “[...] snubblar och faller över varandra [...]” (*DN* 2004-02-18:A11).

Aristide room to explain how he, according to him, was forced to leave Haiti by American interests (TT-Reuters 2004-03-02:A8; Cederskog 2004-03-03:A5; Cederskog 2004-03-09), these arguments are not pursued. Instead, there is a tendency to make Aristide responsible for the previous problems of Haiti and the harassment of civilians (Shachar 2004-03-01:A18), making his departure from power seem like the only just and conceivable solution.

### 3.2 Coverage of Hurricane Jeanne in 2004

Figure 2.1 Articles and Pictures Covering Hurricane Jeanne 2004  
Development Over Time

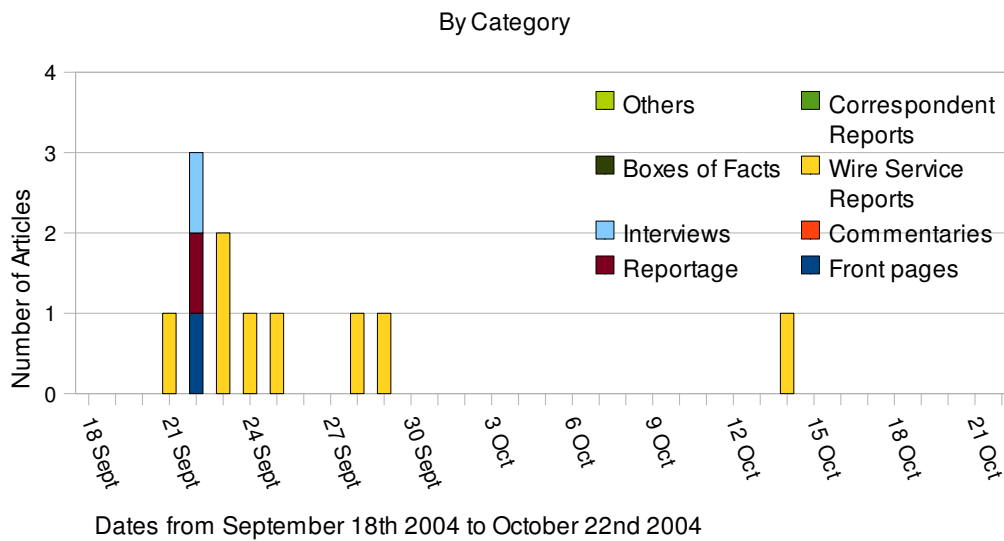


One of the most striking features when looking at the quantity of the reporting over time, is how little reporting there was. There is a peak starting five days after hurricane Jeanne hit Haiti on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2004 that lasts for five days, but altogether there are only eleven articles published during the 35-day time-frame that has been surveyed.

When looking at the types of articles it is noteworthy that all except for three articles are wire service reports. Just like the wire service reports covering the political violence, they tend to take a distanced approach and report the disaster in terms of numbers of bodies (TT-AFP 2004-09-21:A11). They also report dead bodies floating in the water as a health hazard without making the horror of dead people floating around real (TT-AFP 2004-09-23:A16(A2); TT-AFP 2009-09-23:A16(A2)).



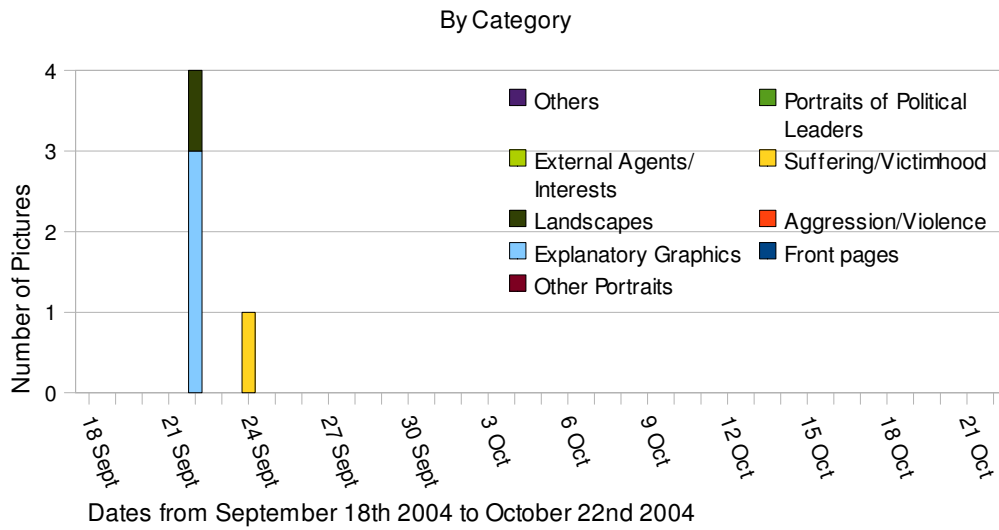
Figure 2.2 Articles Covering Hurricane Jeanne 2004



Altogether, there is one reportage and one interview published. The reportage explains the struggle of ordinary people, how relief is impeded by poor infrastructure and explain the historical context of Haiti. It also shows possibilities for a positive development (Shachar 2004-09-22:A14). Thus, there seems to be a will to give a human dimension to the events, just like in the covering of the political violence, but because *DN* has no own correspondent on site it cannot retrieve these stories and get first hand information. This indicates that compassion fatigue may not be as an important factor in the absence of coverage as the lack of reporters. It is also significant to note that a death toll of a similar scale occurring somewhere that is socially closer to us would probably generate more attention by the media (Carruthers 2000:232-233).

The tendency to connect other people's suffering to other themes can be seen in this case as well. The interview consists of a set of questions on hurricanes as a phenomenon and natural disasters generally, directed towards an expert (Gunther Axelsson 2004-09-22:A14). There are also two wire service reports on how the hurricane continues towards the USA and cause death and destruction in Florida (TT-Reuters 2004-09-25:A12(A6/A5); TT-AFP 2004-09-28:A13(A2)).

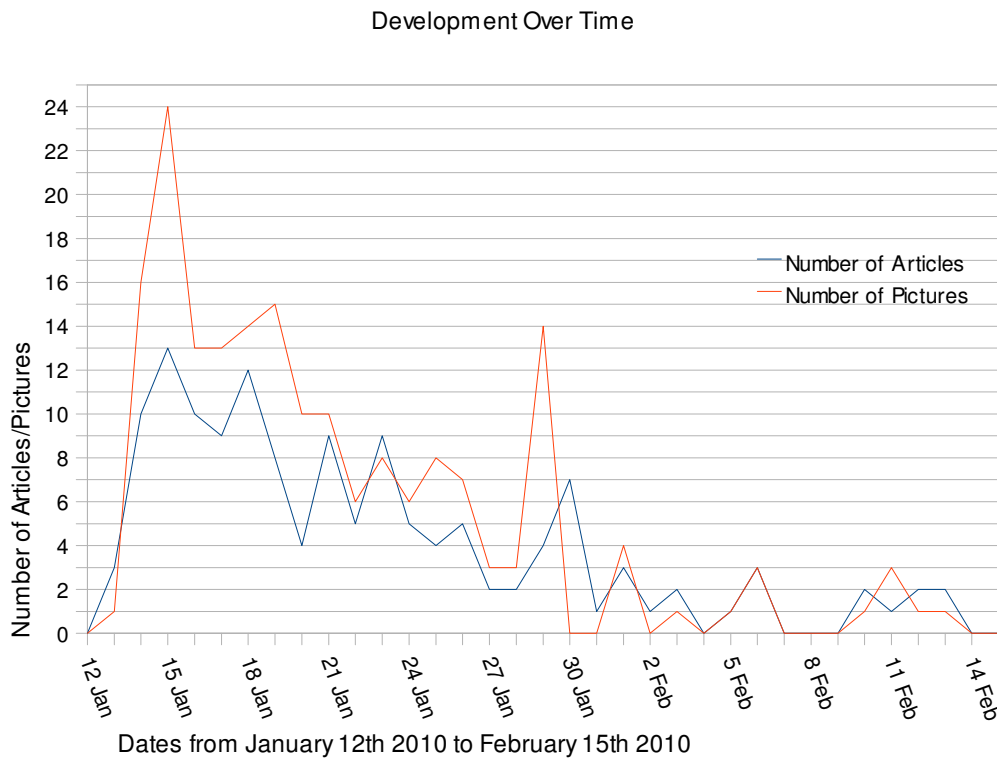
Figure 2.3 Pictures Covering Hurricane Jeanne 2004



There are very few pictures published in relation to the hurricane and most of them take an intellectual interest in the catastrophe that may be enlightening but do not appeal emotionally. These include maps and graphics explaining how hurricanes are formed (DN 2004-09-22:A14). The only picture that show the victims of the catastrophe shows a woman standing next to a destroyed house looking into the camera which would, according to Moeller, make the viewer wonder who she is and what will happen to her (Moeller 1999:38-45). The narrative that accompany the article however uses the same distanced way of relating to the suffering as the wire service reports do (DN 2004-09-24:A19). Because there is no explanation of the issues nor any suggestion that the reader can do anything about it, the picture and narrative in combination may cause compassion fatigue rather than compassion.

### 3.3 Coverage of the Earthquake in 2010

Figure 3.1 Articles and Pictures Covering the Earthquake 2010

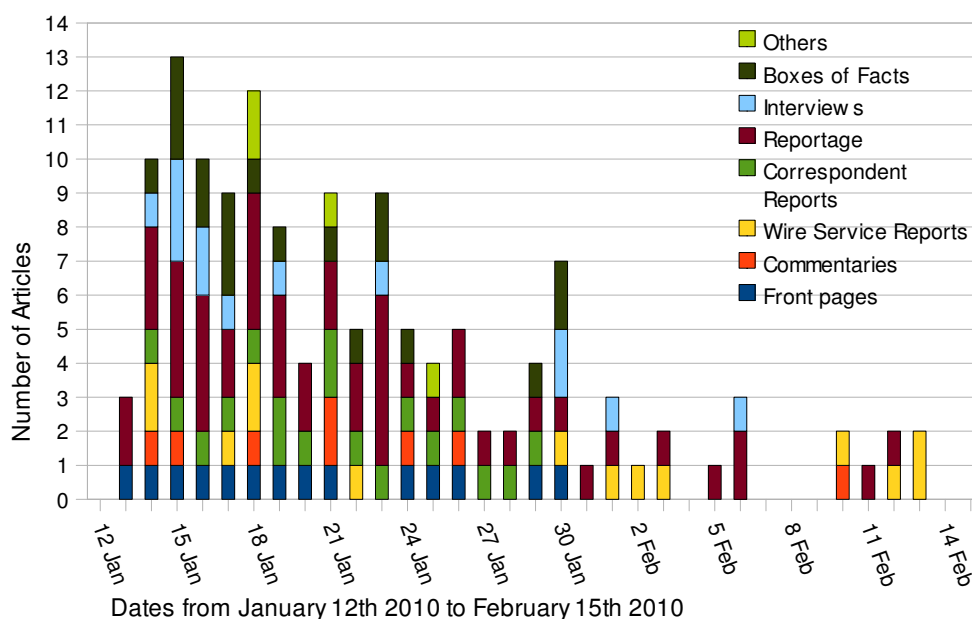


The coverage of the earthquake that struck Haiti on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January in 2010 was massive. Altogether there were 139 articles and 186 pictures published in the 35-day time frame. The very same day that the earthquake occurred there was no mentioning of it in *DN* because it had not happened when the newspaper was printed. There was still little information available the day after and therefore the first articles published on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 just stated that it had happened and that many people had been killed (Kihlström 2010-01-13(1):A16; Kihlström 2010-01-13(2):A14).

It has been argued in the theory that the media report on events rather than processes or events that may happen in the future. The development of the reporting over time confirm this because the coverage peaks shortly after the earthquake occurred and fades out slowly.

Figure 3.2 Articles Covering the Earthquake 2010

By Category

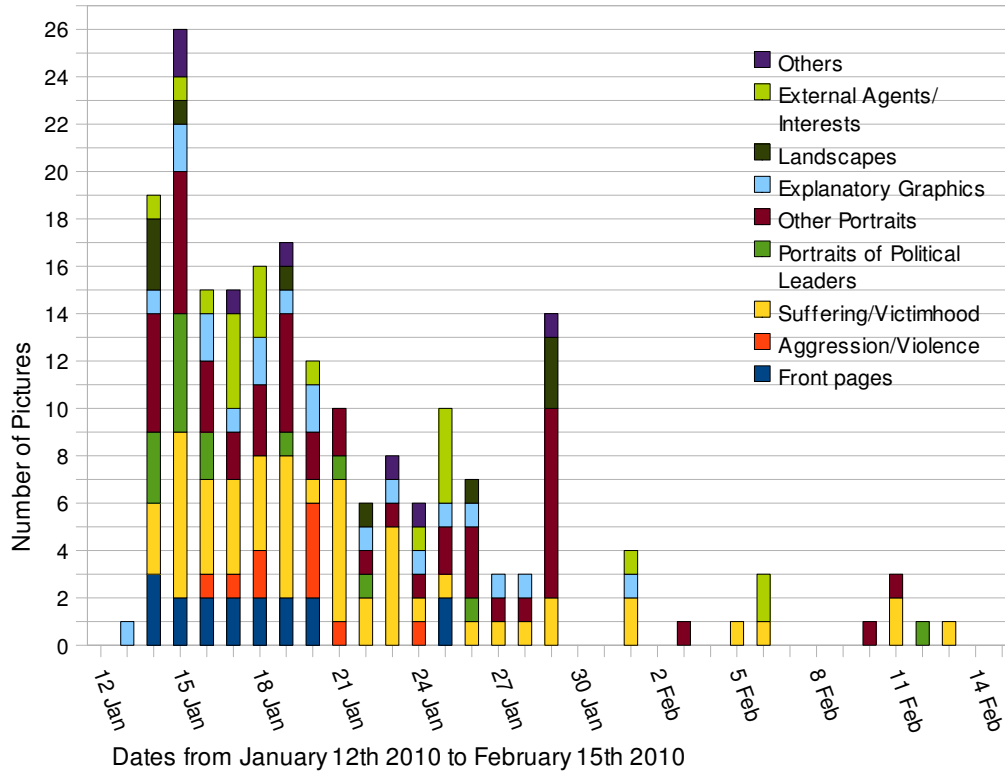


From the 13<sup>th</sup> of January and onwards the disaster was mentioned on the front page every day for nine days and for 14 days out of 35 days in total. *DN* also sent its own correspondents to Haiti and published daily entries from them during 16 days, starting on January 14<sup>th</sup> 2010. The extent and intensity of the coverage starting once the correspondents came to Haiti confirms Livingstone's argument that once a distant crisis is selected for reporting it is seen as an investment. Consequently, once the media decides to send a reporter to the site, it tends to report comprehensively (Livingstone 1996:70).

During the most intense part of the coverage there are usually several different articles published the same day. These different types complement each other in generating knowledge and emotions for the events. Generally, the correspondent interviews people in Haiti and describe their struggle. Human interest stories are, although emotionally appealing, not always helpful because they tend to simplify (Carruthers 2000:236-237). In this context however, the other articles help placing the issue in a context and give the reader a holistic picture by providing background information and describing what other agents, such as the UN, do (for example TT-Reuters 2010-01-17:A07; Bojs 2010-01-14:A11; Olsson 2010-01-15:A11).

Figure 3.3 Pictures Covering the Earthquake 2010

By Category



Just like the articles, the pictures contain a large set of themes. The variety of themes is largest during the first two weeks from the occurrence of the earthquake. Thus, the reader is provided with several different perspectives. The frequency of images appearing on the front page is yet an illustration of the urgency with which this event was treated by *DN*. Starting on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2010, there were pictures published on the front pages daily for one week.

Throughout the period surveyed, pictures showing suffering and victimhood are prevalent, which indicates a major focus in the reporting on the strife of the civil population. Pictures portraying aggression and violence appear as early as on the fifth day of the coverage, but do not reach the extent of the images of suffering quantity wise. Surprisingly, the second largest group of pictures are the group of portraits of journalists and experts that the journalist interview in relation to the event. Although they are vast in number they are small in size.

The number of portraits of journalists and experts indicate two things. First, even though there was a large focus on the suffering of people, there was a strong tendency to connect it to other themes and events that had relevance for the story. Second, it indicates that the primary object of identification of the audience is not the Haitians, but the journalists that report on the events (Carruthers 2000:234).

### 3.3.1 Focus on Aid and Compassion with the Victims

In the initial phase of the reporting there is a tendency to try to measure the extent of the catastrophe in terms of bodies, just like in the coverage of hurricane Jeanne (Kihlström 2010-01-13(1):A16; Pehrson och Winiarski 2010-01-14:A8). As has been discussed elsewhere, this is a distorted way of measuring crisis that is not applied equally to all people's crisis.

Unlike the situation with hurricane Jeanne, there were immediate voices raised on the need to show solidarity with Haiti and send aid to the victims (DN 2010-01-14(2):A02). Even though criticism is raised towards the Haitian authorities for not being better prepared to handle natural disasters (de la Reguera 2010-01-14:A10), there seems to be a general agreement on that these issues have to wait until after the most urgent needs have been taken care of (DN 2010-01-18(2).A02). Therefore, there are initially no parties that need to be displayed since no one in particular can be blamed for the earthquake. Instead, the focus lies on the strife of the Haitians and they are initially portrayed in simplifying terms of helpless victims. This appeals to the idea of the ideal victim and justifies feelings of compassion. As will be displayed later, this type of coverage is only useful in generating compassion as long as the complex issues are left aside. When they resurface, compassion flounders.

The articles that are published on Haiti during the most intense part of the coverage, are all connected to the same daily theme. For example, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 the correspondent, Michael Winiarski, describes the disaster from an eye-witness perspective. He also allows the victims to speak for themselves in interviews (Winiarski 2010-01-15:A8-A9). Furthermore, there is an interview with a Norwegian voluntary worker who gives a personal account of the suffering (Persson 2010-01-15:A11). These articles evoke emotions, but the coverage does not stop there. It also appeals to the cognitive level by explaining in reportage how Swedish aid is contributing (Olsson 2010-01-15:A10; DN 2010-01-15(3):A10). Finally, the audience is encouraged to turn its compassion into action in an article that provides information on how to donate money to the relevant relief agencies (DN 2010-01-15(4):A11).

A recurring theme is the focus on the benevolence of the aid and how much Sweden donates compared to other countries (for example Larsson 2010-01-17:A8; DN 2010-01-17(3):A8; By 2010-01-19:A11; Olsson 2010-01-22). There are also a number of stories about people being found alive and saved (for example Jonjons: 2010-01-17:A7; Winiarski 2010-01-19(2):A10; TT 2010-02-10:A19), as well as human interest stories of how life goes on despite the disaster (Rothenberg 2010-01-23:A20-A21; Rothenberg 2010-01-26:A16). These stories are important in maintaining the idea that caring matters.

That the audience is offered a solution that it can be part of is important for it to continue feeling compassion. As has been discussed in the theoretical framework, compassion is a painful emotion and without an outlet it easily withers into any of the strategies described by Höijer to avoid feeling compassion. The *DN* correspondent, Michael Winiarski, takes a very clear stance in favour of the victims and argue in his reporting for their right to quick and efficient relief

(Winiarski 2010-01-24:A20). Given the circumstances it may be inhumane to demand otherwise, but it is interesting to note that there seem to be no demands on Winiarski to keep the distanced approach of the observer.

### 3.3.2 Surfacing Complexities and the Changing Image of the Victim

The situation in Haiti did not lend itself to an easy solution. Although aid was sent to Haiti there were major obstacles in distributing it because of the lacking capacity of the infrastructure as well as problems with coordination (Sörbring 2010-01-15:A11; Larsson 2010-01-16(2):A20; Winiarski 2010-01-17:A6-A7). Once the most acute phase was over, the difficult issue of how to reconstruct Haiti started to be discussed (for example Brors 2010-01-26:A16-A17; Rothenberg 2010-01-29:A20). Even though there is an emphasis on how important it is for the world to stay committed (Winiarski 2010-01-19(1):A09), these issues are harder for the readers to grasp and it is harder for them to see how they can do anything about these problems. Therefore, compassion runs a greater risk to falter.

Because of the lack of access to aid, frustration rose that led to plundering and violence (Holmberg 2010-01-16:A19). The violence is described in a way characteristic of war journalism when it is portrayed as a continuity that was just briefly disrupted by the earthquake (Winiarski 2010-01-20:A14-A15) and the plunderers are depicted in one-dimensional terms of “[...] machete-waving, drugged gangs [...]”<sup>6</sup> (my translation, Winiarski 2010-01-17:A07). These gangs caused enough insecurity to further delay the distribution of aid (Larsson 2010-01-18(2):A08). However, the consequences of the violence are also described in human terms, for example how a child was shot to death for looting (Winiarski 2010-01-21:A23), and how people in a city closer to the epicentre try to rebuild what they can (Winiarski 2010-01-22:A14-A15).

The looters are not alone in behaving disgracefully. Only five days after the earthquake, Winiarski briefly mentions how the victims fight among themselves when water distributed by relief agencies is insufficient to fill the need (Winiarski 2010-01-17:A07). This theme is further pursued towards the end of the time frame surveyed. Brooks argues in a commentary, which was originally published in the *New York Times*, that the poverty of Haiti cannot be blamed on historical and political circumstances alone, but must be seen as a result of the Haitian culture that does not encourage people to take responsibility. (Brooks 2010-02-10:A04).

This way of describing the other is an example of how war journalism stresses exoticism that creates a difference between the social us and the social other. It also corresponds to the strategy of blaming the victim for its situation to avoid feeling compassion, which Höijer describes. Rothenberg does not go as far as Brooks, but he makes a comparison between the earthquake in Haiti and the tsunami that hit South-East Asia in 2004. He argues that in the case of the tsunami there were no similar problems with people fighting for access to water or food (Rothenberg 2010-02-11:A16).

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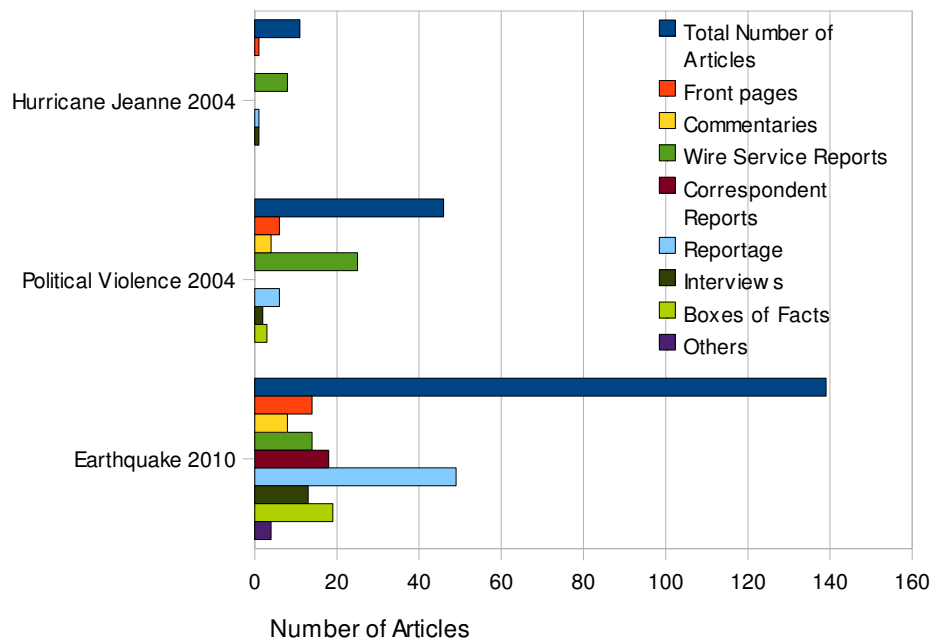
<sup>6</sup> Original quote: “[...] macheteviftande, drogade gäng [...]” (Winiarski 2010-01-17:A07).

If the ideal victim is helpless, innocent and grateful, this greedy and violent behaviour does not make the Haitians qualify as deserving victims anymore. That this way of portraying the Haitians appear towards the end of the time period surveyed can be a sign of that *DN* is no longer able to sustain compassion and interest for Haiti. The most dramatic stories appear within a week from when the quake occurred. After that, correspondent reports are still published but the rest of the coverage tries to find new angles to interest the audience, such as foreign aid and donations by the Swedish public (for example *DN* 2010-01-23(2):A9; Flores 2010-01-23:A21; Kjöllér 2010-01-24). After the correspondents have left Haiti, the coverage decrease significantly and the proportion of articles made up by wire service reports increase.

### 3.4 Comparison

Looking at the diagram below, there are large differences in the quantity of the coverage of these three different cases. Altogether, there were eleven articles published in relation to hurricane Jeanne, 46 articles about the political violence and 139 articles published about the earthquake in 2010. Although the earthquake unarguably was a more large scale disaster the differences are striking.

Figure 4.1 Comparison of Events  
Articles by Category



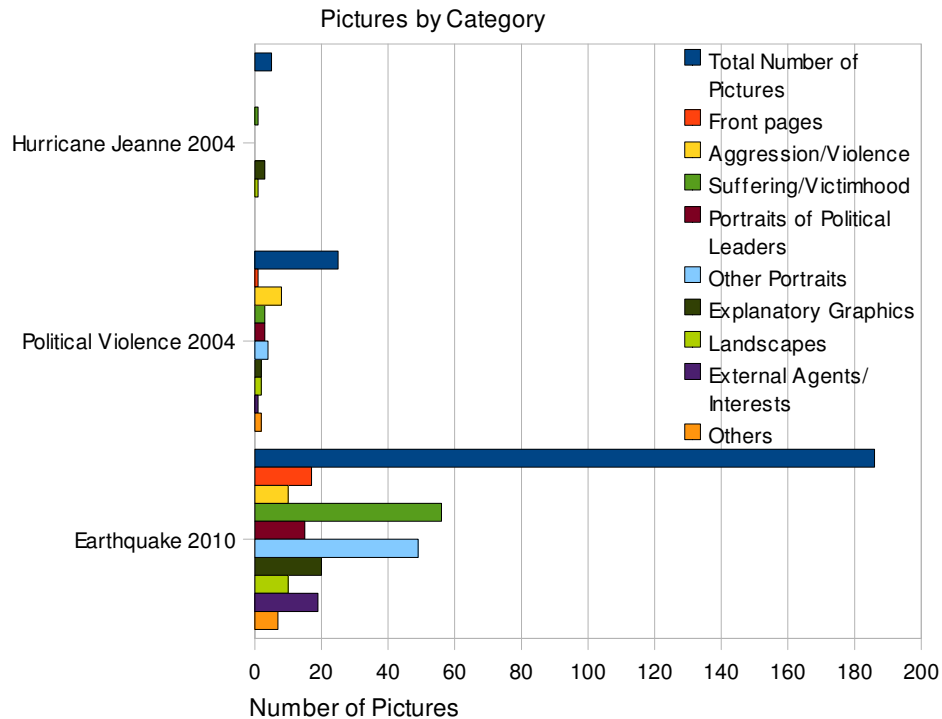


These differences can be explained by who was affected by these different cases. In the example of the political violence the coverage took largely a top down perspective indicating a concern about the political development for the system at large (for example TT-AFP 2004-02-20:A12; TT-AFP 2004-02-22:A11). Consequently, the main object of the concern was not the individual, but the political system. When the earthquake struck Haiti in 2010 there was already a large international presence and many UN employees were killed (Pehrson and Winiarski 2010-01-14:A8). It was also significant that the capital was so severely affected and that important structures such as the UN headquarters and the parliament collapsed (DN 2010-01-14(2):A02), because they became powerful symbols for the extent of the disaster.

Because of the international presence there was access to information and footage of what was happening. On January 14<sup>th</sup> *DN* writes in a commentary that the pictures coming from Haiti were terrifying (DN 2010-01-14(2):A02). Seeing these types of images may have affected editors into choosing to cover this crisis. For the case of hurricane Jeanne the situation was almost the opposite. With little international presence in the area there were few eye-witness reports and few vested interests.

The case with the largest spread of categories is the coverage of the earthquake in 2010, but the coverage of the political violence in 2004 is almost equally versatile. The category that both the coverage of hurricane Jeanne in 2004 and the coverage of the political violence lack is the category of correspondent reports. Instead, the wire service reports account for a much larger part of the coverage of these two cases than for the earthquake. In the case of the earthquake, the largest category of articles is the reportage, which indicates that when the newspaper sends its own correspondents to cover an event it gets more deeply involved on other levels as well. Therefore, it is more likely to produce its own articles rather than relying on articles bought from wire service companies.

Figure 4.2 Comparison of Events



The pictures reflect the same pattern as the articles quantitywise. The hurricane Jeanne was covered with five pictures, the political violence with 25 pictures and finally there were 186 pictures related to the earthquake in the 35-day period during which each of these events were surveyed. Pictures are important both for the emotional appeal of the coverage (Moeller 1999:44) as well as the credibility (Sontag 2003:46-47). The number of pictures concerned with the earthquake indicate that the case received much pictorial attention and that the attention that the coverage received appealed highly to the feelings of the audience. That the single largest category of pictures are pictures that show suffering support this as well.

In comparison, violence is the most common theme portrayed in relation to the political violence. This may be a result of the case being a violent conflict, but it also shows what side *DN* chooses to portray. From a peace journalism point of view there are always more sides to a story and it would have been possible to frame the case from another angle. In relation to hurricane Jeanne, there are very few images and the majority are explanatory graphics.

## 4 Conclusion

The over all objective of this paper has been to discuss how the news media influence compassion and how choices with regards to the coverage is made. Haiti has been used as an example to highlight themes and trends of the reporting. Below, I will return to to the research questions stated in the introduction and answer them.

### 4.1 Setting the Agenda for Compassion

What has been seen in this study is that the news media plays a significant role in both raising issues and in keeping them on the agenda. Hurricane Jeanne, is an example of a natural disaster that went largely ignored in *DN* and thus not brought to the attention of the public. Given that it was not as large a disaster as the earthquake in 2010, it is still obvious that it is not treated as a case that is unique. Hurricanes in the Caribbean are not a novelty and we have seen the images of flood victims before. Therefore, such items are treated as less newsworthy. However, there is an ambiguity in the influence of compassion fatigue in this case, because *DN* does show a tendency to display the disaster from a victim's point of view when it has access to material. On the other hand, pursuing information has not been prioritised.

In the case of the earthquake in 2010, where there was extensive coverage with a strong emotional appeal, *DN* did not create the interest from policy makers from the beginning. Already on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2010, when the intensive phase of the coverage commenced, the UN had required assistance to Haiti and the global community was in favour of this aid (DN 2010-01-14(2):A02). What *DN* did was to generate popular support for the policy and to keep the issue on the agenda for about a month. There was also an awareness within *DN* of its role in sustaining the interest and make the issue stay on the agenda. Winiarski quotes a doctor in one of his correspondent reports that clearly show this problem: “The biggest problem is what happens in two-three weeks, when you journalists are gone and the dramatic images have faded away. Who will then look after all the ill, injured, handicapped and orphaned children?”<sup>7</sup> (my translation, Winiarski 2010-01-19(1):A09). Consequently, this example confirms the theory that the CNN-effect does not create compassion in the first place but that it maintains it once the issue is raised.

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<sup>7</sup> Original quote: ”Det största bekymret är vad som händer om två tre veckor, när ni journalister är borta och alla dramatiska bilder tonat bort. Vem kommer då att ta hand om alla de sjuka, skadade, handikappade och föräldralösa barnen?” (Winiarski 2010-01-19(1):A09).

## 4.2 Becoming Newsworthy

According to peace journalism, war journalism has a preference for events rather than processes. There is support for this argument in the empirical material of this study. In the comparison of the coverage of the political violence of 2004 and the earthquake in 2010 we have seen that the coverage of the earthquake, which was an event that fits the criteria of being disruptive and sudden, was more extensive. Furthermore, the most intensive part of the coverage of the political violence and the earthquake coincides with the climax of the stories. In the latter case, it is the period following immediately after the occurrence of the earthquake and in the former case it coincides with the days before and after president Aristide was made to leave power. This preference for events leads to an underrepresentation of processes, such as political processes, and helps explaining why *DN* relied so heavily on wire service reports for its coverage of the political violence.

The representation of Haitians throughout the cases follow the pattern of how people defined as the other are described by the media. As has been seen in the analysis, factors such as the number of casualties and the degree of external involvement in Haiti have had a major impact on the extent of the coverage that the cases received. Everyone is not equal in the eyes of the editor and for people who are considered as the other, such as the Haitians, there are higher demands on drama for their story to be reported. The presence of journalists has also been an important factor as to whether a story is reported or not, because if there is no one to tell the story no one will know what happened. However once a story is chosen for reporting, it is treated seriously.

## 4.3 Using a Simple Frame

Peace journalism argues that war journalism is characterised by its tendency to simplify processes and describe the other in stereotypes that make her even more distant. Framing a conflict or a crisis in this way does not allow for a deeper understanding of the issues involved and therefore fails to explain to the audience why it worthwhile to care.

The framing of the political violence shows these characteristics where the violence itself is not questioned and the agents on the local level are described in sensationalist terms. In the cases containing natural disasters the focus on the number of casualties fill the same function in simplifying and showing a one-dimensional image (Cate 1996:19-20). Simplifications do not only highlight the negative aspects, but in the case of the earthquake they portrayed the victims as innocent and exposed to great and undeserved misfortune by the forces of nature. As a comparison, the victims of violence in the case of the political violence are virtually invisible, although they may be victims of unfortunate events to the same

extent as victims of natural disasters. In the case of the earthquake, all Haitians suddenly became ideal victims.

Initially, these simplifications helped manufacturing compassion, but once problems with distributing aid and violent behaviour of the victims reached the news digest, these images were shattered. This led to a disillusioned audience that no longer could feel compassion. That a simplifying coverage is unhelpful in explaining complex issues is also displayed in the case of the political violence of 2004. When the conflict is presented as consisting of two sides, the audience may need to choose a side to feel compassionate. If the victims of violence become visible, such a choice may not have to be made.

## 4.4 Choosing Perspectives

The problems that have been displayed in the coverage by *DN* do not originate in a desire to misinform the public. On the other hand, it is likely that the reports are both relevant and accurate given that *DN* is a newspaper that takes care of its reputation as a quality newspaper. The problem is that some issues and some perspectives are given a disproportional priority. In the analysis, the usage of wire service reports illustrate this phenomena since they are a type of article that give a distanced overview. This type of overview can be useful in some cases, but when the coverage exist almost exclusively of such articles it becomes one-tracked.

Peace journalism helps explaining these issues when arguing for the necessity of including alternative perspectives and use unconventional sources. For example, in the coverage of the political violence in 2004 it would have given another dimension to the conflict if voices advocating a peaceful solution had been allowed to speak for themselves. If the media fails to inform the public properly when dealing with complex conflicts, the result is compassion fatigue which makes the media lose the incentive to report. The solution, however, is not to supply the audience with gruesome footage and heart-throbbing stories of people's suffering. Instead, the media must take care in placing the audience in the context and show what can be done and what is done to solve the problem.

When the problems are seen as too vast for anyone to solve the audience is likely to feel frustrated and helpless. The *DN* correspondent Winiarski testifies to that what he felt was the hardest to handle in Haiti was his own powerlessness to do anything about the enormous amount of suffering (Winiarski 2010-01-24:A21). If compassion is this painful and cannot be channelled into concrete action, the audience is likely to avoid these feelings, either consciously or subconsciously. This is done either by dehumanising the victim, as was done in the case of the earthquake in 2010, or by being numbed by compassion fatigue and stop caring about the news.

However, if the media can report in a way that make difficult processes understandable and interesting it is possible to sustain interest (Moeller 1999:22-23). Peace journalism is one option that argues that by showing the uniqueness of each case there will be a greater understanding, interest and

compassion. It offers itself as a tool and a framework for such coverage by arguing that the media must revalue what is worthwhile to report and how to report it. Moreover, it needs to rely more on local sources and let the parties speak for themselves rather than using them as a backdrop.

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