



LUND UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences

SIMV24 Master's Thesis (Two Years) in
Development Studies (30 credits)
Department of Media and Communication
Spring Term 2012
Advisor: Annette Hill

In Pursuit of a Healthy Public Sphere

A News Frame Analysis of the Farmer Suicide Phenomenon in Daily
English-language Indian Newspapers

Author: Julie Jacobson

ABSTRACT

Author: Julie Jacobson

Title: In Pursuit of a Healthy Public Sphere: A News Frame Analysis of the Farmer Suicide Phenomenon in Daily English-language Indian Newspapers

Supervisor: Annette Hill

Examiner: Yiannis Mylonas

The motivation behind this thesis is to better understand the role of the media in the construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon in India. Through theories of communication and participation, particularly Dahlgren's civic cultures framework, I shed light on the ways in which English-language daily newspapers in India seem to be promoting civic engagement and disengagement in its framing of the farmer suicide phenomenon. I also discuss the potential impacts of this enabled or disabled sense of the political self in terms of development and democracy. The following research questions will be addressed: 1) How do English-language Indian dailies frame the farmer suicide phenomenon during the month of October 2009? 2) Who has voice in defining the social problem and suggesting suitable courses of action to resolve the problem during this time? 3) How can Dahlgren's discussion of civic cultures enhance our understanding of the farmer suicide coverage in English-language Indian dailies in terms of its impact on development and democracy? I rely on data that I gathered during a qualitative news frame analysis of three English-language Indian newspapers from varying political orientations, analyzing 157 articles in total.

Keywords: citizen engagement, public sphere, deliberative democracy, participatory development, farmer suicides, media, English-language dailies, India

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the conclusion of this project, I would like to thank my supervisor Annette Hill at the Department of Communication and Media for both her patience and her incredible energy during our brainstorming sessions. Her guidance has been very helpful during the arduous trek towards thesis completion. I would also like to thank the Development Studies program, especially Anne Jerneck and the class of 2012, for two years of inspiring research, interesting discussions, and, of course, the many wonderful fikas.

And finally, I want to thank Jens Rantil for his constant love and support throughout my studies. You were always there to steer me away from my favorite form of procrastination, baking cakes and pies, and you likely saved us both from a mouthful of cavities in the process.

Lund, July 2012

Julie Jacobson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
1.1. My Interest in the Farmer Suicide Phenomenon	4
1.2. Objective of the Research.....	5
1.3. Research Questions	5
2. Literature Review	6
2.1. Farmer Suicides in India: A Recognized Social Problem	6
2.2. A Perceived Gap in Farmer Suicide Research	7
3. Theoretical Framework	8
3.1. Media and the Framing of Social Problems	9
3.2. What is This Thing Called Participation?	10
3.3. Bottom-up Development and the Participatory Approach	12
3.4. Modern Science vs. Traditional Knowledge: A Post-Modern Theory of Knowledge	14
3.5. Participation and Deliberative Democracy.....	16
3.6. Role of the Media in Deliberative Theory: The Public Sphere.....	17
3.7. Civic Cultures, An Analytical Tool.....	19
4. Methodology	22
4.1. Epistemological Basis: Critical Constructivism.....	22
4.2. Research Design: Intrinsic Case Study	23
4.3. Data Collection Method: News Frame Analysis.....	24
4.4. Sampling.....	27
4.4.1. <i>The Times of India (TOI)</i>	29
4.4.2. <i>The Hindu</i>	30
4.4.3. <i>The New Indian Express (TNIE)</i>	30
4.4.4. Farmer Suicide Coverage: An Overview	31
4.5. Reflexivity	32
4.6. Limitations.....	33
5. Results	35
5.1. <i>The Times of India (TOI)</i>	35
5.2. <i>The Hindu</i>	40
5.3. <i>The New Indian Express (TNIE)</i>	44
6. Discussion	48
6.1. Knowledge	49
6.2. Values	50
6.3. Trust.....	51
6.4. Spaces	52
6.5. Practices.....	52
6.6. Identities	53
7. Summary	54
Bibliography	56
Appendix	61

1. Introduction

1.1. My Interest in the Farmer Suicide Phenomenon

My interest in the farmer suicide phenomenon initially came about while working in a rural area in the state of Punjab, India. From July 2011 to January 2012, I lived and worked with Punjabi farmers with the intention of spreading awareness about the potential benefits of organic farming. It was during this time that I first began hearing about the farmer suicide phenomenon in India from the members in my local community, the NGO community, and the English-language Indian media.

A few things struck me as particularly interesting about the phenomenon: 1- the amount of time that farmer suicides have been recognized as a problem in India, 2- the issue's growing presence in popular culture, and 3- the ways in which the media seemed to report on the phenomenon. Farmer suicide has been a recognized issue in India for over a decade and has become a more common theme in popular culture, showing up in everything from documentaries to television soap operas, Bollywood films, and independent dark comedies. It is also a frequent topic in Indian news media. My initial impression of the news media's coverage of the farmer suicide phenomenon was not a positive one. It was my impression, based on my limited access to English-language news articles and broken translations of local Punjabi news pieces, that the suicide phenomenon was not necessarily being covered in a socially responsible way. I felt that the issue of farmer suicides was being reported in an overly dramatic fashion, often by placing emphasis on how an individual farmer had committed suicide (for example, by 'guzzling pesticide') rather than discussing the potential underlying causes. In other words, reports seemed to be geared more towards dramatic effect than towards working towards a solution. This led to my theoretical interest in discussing the role of the media in terms of citizen engagement, development and democracy.

Naturally, these were subjective impressions based on limited and indirect exposure to the social phenomenon, but they are worth noting because I consider these to be the seeds of my research interest.

1.2. Objective of the Research

This research aims to bring about a better understanding of the role of the media in the construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon in India. Through theories of communication and participation, particularly Dahlgren's (2009) civic cultures framework, I aim to shed light on the ways in which English-language daily newspapers in India promote civic engagement or disengagement in their framing of the farmer suicide phenomenon. I will then discuss the potential impacts of this enabled or disabled sense of the political self in terms of development and democracy.

1.3. Research Questions

This thesis is guided by the following research questions:

- ✚ **Research question 1 (RQ1):** How do English-language Indian dailies frame the farmer suicide phenomenon during the month of October 2009¹?

- ✚ **Research question 2 (RQ2):** Who has voice in defining the social problem and suggesting suitable courses of action to resolve the problem during this time?

- ✚ **Research question 3 (RQ3):** How can Dahlgren's discussion of civic cultures enhance our understanding of the farmer suicide coverage in English-language Indian dailies in terms of its impact on development and democracy?

Before addressing these research questions, I will begin with a literature review in order to deliver a bit of background information. This will both provide the reader with an introduction to the farmer suicide phenomenon as a recognized social problem in India as well as present a summary of previous research.

¹ For information regarding the reasoning behind my focus on October 2009, please refer to the Methodology pages, specifically section 4.4.4.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Farmer Suicides in India: A Recognized Social Problem*

‘Farmer suicides’ is an increasingly discussed topic in India and has gathered considerable international attention as well. A quick glance through the media reports and research on farmer suicides in India reveals the highly contested nature of the situation, with debates ranging from its estimated date of origin² to its prevalence in Indian society³. Looking beyond this struggle to define the specifics of the situation, the underlying consensus is that the phenomenon of farmer suicides in India *is* a recognized social problem:

“In a country of 70 million farmers, it is 10 in every 100,000 farmers committing suicide” – *Behere and Behere (2008)*

“It is estimated that more than a quarter of a million Indian farmers have committed suicide in the last 16 years – the largest wave of recorded suicides in human history” - *CHRGJ (2011)*

“On average, one Indian farmer committed suicide every 32 minutes between 1997 and 2005. Since 2002, that has become one suicide every 30 minutes” - *Sainath (2007)*

Sociologically speaking, we can define a social problem as “a phenomenon regarded as bad or undesirable by a significant number of people or by a number of significant people who mobilize to remedy it” (Heiner, 2006). In the case of farmer suicides, I argue that this phenomenon fits the definition of a social problem based on the extent to which it is discussed in both India and the international community. In addition to the increased news coverage and the growth of nongovernmental organizations that

² Some reports trace the origins of the phenomenon back as far as the late 1980s (Prasad, 1999) while the majority of researchers tend to place it around the mid-1990s (Mishra, 2008; CHRGJ, 2011).

³ Estimates for the years 1995 to 2007 range from 40,000 farmer suicides to 150,000+ (Assadi, 2008), while actual estimates may be much higher due to the restricted definition of who qualifies as a farmer in India. communities, etc.

focus on the plight of the Indian farmer, the farmer suicide phenomenon has also become a common theme in popular culture. In the last few years alone, a number of films have been released that have touched on the issue of farmer suicides, including *Mere Desh Ki Dharti*, *Pakal*, *Summer 2007*, *Kisaan*, *Jhing Chik Jhing*, and *Peepli Live*⁴. Thus, as a justification for this thesis, farmer suicides are to be viewed as a social problem because they have arguably been defined as such in the Indian social structure, not because of the inherent badness of the phenomenon. This definition of social problems allows me to continue with my exploration of the farmer suicide phenomenon, without basing my research on my own ethnocentric moral beliefs and value judgments. I feel that this is important to clarify due to the research topic I have chosen.

2.2. A Perceived Gap in Farmer Suicide Research

Considering the amount of national and international media attention that has been devoted to the farmer suicide phenomenon in India, it comes as no surprise that there is a sea of research on the subject from a variety of different angles. There is research from the perspective of human rights and global justice, which focuses on farmer suicides as a violation of the farmer's right to life and highlights the injustice of the farmers' situations (CHRGJ, 2011); from psychological perspectives, aiming to understand the psychological causes and impacts of the farmer suicide phenomenon (Nagthan et al, 2011); through the lens of political science, bringing attention to the agrarian crisis and the role of the government (Assadi, 2008; Keshava and Manjunatha, 2012; Nagaraj, 2008); and from media and communications stances, with an emphasis on promoting 'ethical' journalism (CMS, 2006), just to name a few. This wide range of theoretical frameworks and in-depth analyses has provided a rich source of information on various aspects of the farmer suicide phenomenon.

Coming from an educational background in International Development with an emphasis in Media and Communications, I am interested in filling what I perceive to be a gap in the literature regarding the role of the media in *framing* the farmer suicide

⁴ The release dates for these films are as follows: *Mere Desh Ki Dharti* (2006), *Pakal* (2006), *Summer 2007* (2008), *Kisaan* (2009), *Jhing Chik Jhing* (2010), and *Peepli Live* (2010)

phenomenon and tie this in with a discussion of the media's role in development and democracy. This thesis is particularly inspired by a report produced by the Centre for Media Studies, which offers qualitative and quantitative analyses of the media coverage of farmer suicides from January to March 2005 (CMS, 2006). The mission of the CMS report is to encourage more ethically sound journalism: a media that focuses on saving lives through the power of the pen. While the report offers insightful analyses and discussions, it lacks a solid theoretical foundation and would benefit from a wider analytic scope⁵. I have selected a date between the years 2005 to 2011 because of the increase in farmer suicide coverage both in popular culture and traditional news media during this time. The aim of my thesis is to provide an up-to-date look at how English-language daily newspapers in India frame the farmer suicide phenomenon during the month of October 2009. I will also widen the theoretical scope and approach the phenomenon from a stance rooted in theories of communication, participation, citizen engagement, deliberative democracy and development.

This literature review has introduced the farmer suicide phenomenon as a recognized social problem and addressed existing research surrounding this topic. In doing so, a perceived gap has been addressed regarding the role of the media in the *framing* of the farmer suicide phenomenon and how this relates to citizen engagement, development and democracy. I argue that this thesis will fill an important gap in the literature surrounding this phenomenon. We can now continue to the theoretical framework where I will be laying the foundation for understanding how the media can and should strive to achieve a healthy public sphere, based on theories of communication, participation, development and democracy.

3. Theoretical Framework

In order to strengthen my argument that media framing research will fill an important gap in the literature surrounding the farmer suicide phenomenon, I will begin the theoretical framework with a thorough introduction to media framing research. Once

⁵ The authors of the CMS reported similar sentiments regarding the need for a more thorough analysis. Refer to CMS (2006): Journalism for Life.

the usefulness of this type of research has been established, I will move into the heart of the theoretical framework. Much of the intellectual scaffolding for this thesis deals with communication strategies that fall under the oft-used label of ‘participatory communication’. My theoretical framework will thus continue with a brief explanation of different variations of participation as systematized by Arnstein (1969). After clarifying the variant of participation with which this thesis identifies, I will move into a discussion of participation in the field of development. This will lead into a discussion of participation in deliberative democracy. The role of the media will be highlighted throughout the framework’s development and will lead up to a discussion of Dahlgren’s (2009) civic culture framework, a framework which will play a key role in interpreting the results of the news frame analysis.

3.1. Media and the Framing of Social Problems

The premise of this thesis is that news framing analysis can work as a useful tool for understanding the construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon in India and its potential impacts at the societal level. To defend this premise, I will now present a brief review of the literature regarding the media and the framing of social problems.

Over the last few decades there has been a growing amount of research on the relationship between the representation of issues in the media and the ways that the public perceives them. Early studies focused on whether there was a correlation between the amount of attention placed on a topic by the media and the public’s perception of the topic’s level of importance (Miller, 1997). Frame analysis allows researchers to take this idea one step further. Often being traced back to influential social scientist Erving Goffman (1974), framework analysis focuses on the way in which experience is organized through the use of “frames” which can be understood as guidelines of interpretation. They guide individuals in order to locate, perceive, identify, and label different events in order to organize experiences in a manageable fashion. The framing process essentially involving two parts: selection and salience. Entman describes the basics of this process in his study on news framing:

To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in the communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular

problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (1991: 55).

Since Goffman's contribution to social science, there have been a number of studies that have applied framework analysis to news media, focusing on how the media frames certain issues and discussing the potential impacts of these frameworks⁶. The degree to which news frames influence how readers navigate through and interpret news events is a matter of debate, but studies have shown that news frames significantly affect the cognitive responses of readers and are powerful in defining the ways in which news events are seen and discussed (Huang, 1995; Price et al, 1997). There is also a rich assortment of literature on the construction of social problems that shows that social problems are, as the name implies, *socially* constructed by claim makers who have a stake in defining the issue as a problem, framing it in a certain way, and identifying specific solutions (Armstrong, 2003; Saguy, 2004; Snow et al, 1986). Thus, how the national news media frame the farmer suicide phenomenon has far reaching implications and must be carefully analyzed.

Now that the usefulness of news framing has been established, I will switch gears and move the discussion to the heart of the theoretical framework: How *should* news media frame social problems? This part of the framework will gradually establish the media's role in the context of development and democracy, but will begin with an explanation of one of the key concepts of the theoretical discussion: participation.

3.2. What is This Thing Called Participation?

With words like 'empowerment' and 'equality', the human-oriented language of participation has become quite fashionable in politics, particularly in the field of international development. While the concept seems simple enough to grasp, upon further examination the label of 'participation' can be used to describe a wide variety of communication strategies (Hewavitharana, 1995). In fact, participatory rhetoric is sometimes the common thread between otherwise entirely contradictory strategies. It is therefore useful to briefly describe some of these different usages of the

⁶ A few examples for your reading pleasure: Davis, 1995; Entman, 1991; Fine, 1992

participatory label and then clarify which variant I will be referring to throughout the forthcoming analysis.

One of the more enlightening analyses of participation comes from a writer by the name of Sherry Arnstein. With a closer look at the popular participatory label, Arnstein (1969) shows in her Ladder of Citizen Participation (see figure 1, below) that it is possible to distinguish between different types of participation:

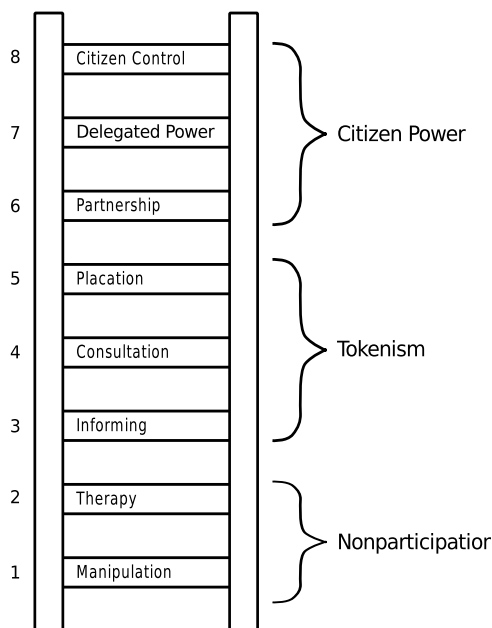


Figure 1: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969)

The first two rungs of the ladder, those of the nonparticipation variety, are fairly self-evident. In these groups the language of participation is used to mask the fact that the top-down power structures remain the same. Those without power are 'educated' or 'cured' of their problems; there is no opportunity for deliberation.

Moving up to steps 3 through 5, participation reaches a level of tokenism. Some aspects of decision-making may begin to involve those without power, but participation is limited and/or manipulated. The elite remain in control of the decision-making process.

Citizen power, the top of the ladder, is on the more radical side of the spectrum and it is to this concept of participation that this thesis adheres. Partnership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control indicate some level of popular control over central decisions and use the word "empowerment" in its literal sense. This type of participation calls for participants to collectively make decisions and have power in all aspects of the decision-making process, from defining aims and objectives to executing the decisions (Arnstein, 1969).

With this established understanding of participation, we can now move into a more elaborate discussion of citizen participation in the context of development.

3.3. Bottom-up Development and the Participatory Approach

The aim of the participatory approach to development, or rather my interpretation of the approach, is to create a space whereby people are able to move up Arnstein's ladder of citizen engagement and become more involved in their own development. Created out of frustrations with the elitist dominant models of development of its time, the participatory paradigm sees ideal participation as that which allows individuals the opportunity to be active agents in decision-making that will directly affect their lives (Desai, 2008). From this perspective, it is imperative that people who are living in poverty, for example, have the opportunity to participate in the pursuit for poverty reduction. This is not about forced participation; it is the democratic prerogative of the individuals to choose whether or not they would like to be involved. The focus here is on ensuring that individuals have the capability and substantive freedom to make that choice (Sen, 1999).

In addition to enhancing the active agency of individuals, the participatory approach towards development views participation as a way to increase the sense of ownership that communities and individuals feel towards development projects and, thereby, as a way to increase the effectiveness of these projects (Sevaly, 2001). This argument focuses on participation as a tool to achieving better development outcomes in terms of efficiency and sustainability. Involving stakeholders in the development process is seen as a way to increase the relevance and effectiveness of policies and projects while minimizing political opposition.

Recent years have witnessed a huge surge in the commitment to this type of bottom-up approach and its rhetoric of "empowerment" has become the latest fashion in development circles. Pant (2009) refers to community participation as "the top agenda of every developed and developing nation." Participatory development is promoted as a facilitator of social change to the advantage of marginalized groups. Robert Chambers (1997), an influential advocate of the participatory approach, explains further that meaningful participation allows hidden issues of the poor to rise to the surface of development discourses. In theory, power is spread more equally, reaching even the poorest members of the smallest communities. In the context of the farmer suicide phenomenon, community participation is a way to empower marginalized

communities and approach the social problem in a more democratic manner. Discussions of the social problem must include voices and perspectives from within the communities wherein the social problem exists. The media plays a key role in creating this space; this will be discussed in greater detail in the segment on the public sphere (see Section 3.6, page 17)

While the insight that stakeholders must be involved in the development process has been widely acknowledged and highly influential in current development theories and practices, there are also a number of criticisms to the participatory paradigm that must be addressed. First, there is a divide between those who view participation as a technique that is only appropriate for certain situations and those who see it as an overall path to social change. Again, referring back to the discussion of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, this thesis aligns itself with the latter group of participation advocates. This is due to the acknowledgement that it is difficult, if not impossible, to encourage actual empowerment within a traditional project framework that leaves unchallenged the social power relations that are demanded by many development agencies, for example (Cleaver, 1999; Sparks, 2007). Without institutionalized accountability and key structural changes, the voices of the poor may be heard in community participation but not properly addressed. The danger lies in focusing too much on the local and losing sight of the grander inequalities and power relations that underlie development issues and problems (Mohan and Stokke, 2000). These power structures must be addressed in order to create a space for human agency and genuine popular empowerment. Thus, in approaching the farmer suicide phenomenon, I will argue that civic engagement and community participation are important elements in the path to social change, but not that they are the only pieces to the puzzle.

This leads us into the problem of potential political conflict due to the radical shifts in power that are demanded by the participatory paradigm (Sparks, 2007: 26). Empowering those who lack power entails a negative shift in power from those who are likely quite satisfied with their current power arrangements. While potential conflict is admittedly a risk, the participatory paradigm is not necessarily suggesting an overnight revolution. It is not expected that power imbalances will be corrected in such a short span of time. The process is likely to be gradual and introduced in a way

that is not overtly threatening to those in power, unless the situation demands otherwise.

Next, it is necessary to look at *who* participates. In its emphasis on the voices of the poor, participatory approaches may mistakenly label and depict the poor as a homogenous group (Eversole, 2010). Upon closer investigation, the so-called Voice of the marginalized community is not likely to be representative of each of its members. It is therefore necessary to critically analyze participatory approaches with regard to *whose* voices are prevailing, which ones are missing, and reflect on why this may be occurring. These issues of voice encouraged Research Question #2 and will be discussed in detail in the Results section.

In focusing on the marginalized voices of the community, the participatory approach to development has also been criticized for differentiating between modern science and traditional knowledge and romanticizing the latter. This is a powerful argument against the participatory approach and one that I will address with a brief discussion of post-modern theories of knowledge.

3.4. Modern Science vs. Traditional Knowledge: A Post-Modern Theory of Knowledge

Logically speaking, if one claims, as the participatory approach does, that modern science is not a superior method of gaining knowledge about the world, then it can be said that traditional knowledge and scientific findings may be contradictory yet are equally valid ways of understanding the world (Sparks, 2007: 61). Though many proponents of the participatory approach are not willing to make this conclusion, this thesis follows this post-modern understanding of knowledge. There are many ways of interpreting the world and, as argued by Jacobson (1996), neither the interpretive paradigm of western science nor any other paradigm deserves “special epistemological privileges” (Sparks, 2007). Applying this argument to the farmer suicide phenomenon in India, it is not my intention to romanticize the knowledge of the marginalized farmer, or put more generally, to promote one form of knowledge over another. Rather, I am arguing that the media should strive to create a space for public deliberation and the coexistence of multiple perspectives.

This post-modern understanding of knowledge, one that views the knowledge of the western scientist and the traditional Indian farmer, for example, as equally valid, may lead to dilemmas in development whereby different knowledge systems provide contradictory advice about the same issue. The participatory paradigm does not adequately address this situation. Critics also argue that the participatory paradigm offers no guidance in dealing with the similar and inevitable situation in which multiple voices from within the same ‘community’ have different solutions (Sparks, 2007: 217). Again, in these situations the participatory approach does not provide clear solutions. In response to these criticisms, I refer back to the post-modern theory of knowledge; the value and utility of different ways of understanding must be judged on a case by case basis, taking all relevant factors into account, and allowing space for the consideration of different interpretations of the particular issue (Sparks, 2007). This solution ties in nicely with the theory of deliberative democracy and its ideas regarding public reasoning. According to the deliberative democracy framework, differences in opinion and conflicting interests are inevitable *but* can co-exist in an atmosphere of mutual respect, public spiritedness and moral understanding. A discussion of this theory is found in the following section of the theoretical framework.

Participatory approaches tend to be portrayed as inherently good; they are seen as the moral, people-oriented pathways to development and democracy. Romantic representations of participation over the last couple of decades have largely spared these approaches from critical inspection, leaving room for the misuse of participatory rhetoric in development agencies and politics. While I promote the idea that participatory approaches are essential in development and, more generally, in democracy, it is imperative that they are subjected to more thorough scrutiny. *Who* is really benefitting from the participatory processes and *who* benefits from the participatory outcomes are questions that must be constantly reflected upon.

Now that a concept of participation has been established and connected with the field of development, I will now move into a wider discussion of participation in democracy.

3.5. Participation and Deliberative Democracy

“We can define deliberative democracy as a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future” – Amy Gutmann & Dennis Thompson (2004)

This thesis argues that the media plays a key role in strengthening democracy and it is thus imperative that I clarify my views on this widely debated concept. There are many different theoretical standpoints from which one may understand democracy, but in this thesis I am inspired primarily by the theory of deliberative democracy. As seen in Gutman and Thompson’s (2004) extensive definition above, deliberative theories place an emphasis on public discussion. The foundation for a healthy democracy, as determined by a deliberative framework, is one in which its members have the space to come together and manage affairs through public deliberation and reasoning (Cohen, 1997; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004).

Creating a space for public deliberation addresses a piece of the deliberative democracy model, but it is the belief in public reasoning that may be considered the core idea behind this framework. Deliberative theories are fundamentally concerned with free and equal citizens and their representatives justifying their political decisions in a way that promotes mutual respect, public spiritedness and moral understanding (Gutmann and Thompson, 2010). Thus, deliberation is considered valuable insofar as it promotes those political values. Ideally speaking, members of a democracy will approach public deliberation with an aim to defend or criticize institutions, programs, and practices, while simultaneously striving to understand the reasoning behind differing arguments. Rather than settling issues on the basis of which individual or group holds the most power, issues are to be settled based on the sway of the stronger argument. That is not to say that deliberative democracy has the potential to resolve all conflicts; quite the contrary, it is the idea that conflicts and differences in opinion are inevitable but can co-exist given the right public atmosphere. This idea of the public spirit, a shared spirit of commitment to the values

and interests of the public, combined with a space for public deliberation is offered as a solution to moral conflict in politics.

This theory assumes that individuals have the capacity to be reasonable, cooperative, respectful and rational in the midst of morally and politically charged debates. Many theorists are quick to challenge this assumption, arguing that it goes against human nature or that it is not possible due to pre-existing social inequalities (Eagan, 2006; Sanders, 1997). While I agree that public deliberation often lacks many of these aforementioned qualities, I maintain that the issue lies in the weaknesses of our institutions, particularly the institutions of government and education, rather than being an inherent flaw in deliberative democracy theories. It is difficult to achieve a healthy environment for public deliberation when the underlying institutions promote self-interest and competition.

Deliberative democracy theory has been criticized on the grounds that it is generally too idealistic; it sounds nice in theory, but is too far removed from political reality to be considered useful (Sanders, 1997; Parkinson, 2003). In response to these arguments, I must re-emphasize that the value of deliberative democracy theory is in its vision. The current social and political institutions certainly do not operate under ideal conditions, but the appeal of deliberative visions of democracy is the desire to see them institutionalized (Cohen, 1997). Whether or not deliberative democracy is currently a political reality, citizens and leaders can create better conditions for its realization by taking advantage of available resources. One such resource is the media, which is where I now turn the discussion.

3.6. Role of the Media in Deliberative Democracy: The Public Sphere

The role of the media in deliberative democracy is often understood and discussed in the context of the public sphere. Initially proposed by Jürgen Habermas, the notion of a public sphere is defined in terms of a space where information exchange and public debate can thrive (Burton, 2010). Political communication can be located in a system of public spheres, with “stronger” spheres being closely linked to recognized decision-making bodies and more informal spheres providing space for the circulation of ideas and the formation of public opinion. According to deliberative theory, the

facilitation of communication within this network of communicative spaces by the media is seen as imperative to democracy. In a healthy democracy, formal and informal public spheres are interwoven with the help of the media and deliberation is dispersed throughout the public sphere.

Deliberative theory views the media as a tool for enhancing the relationship between citizens and their representatives, as an interactive tool that enhances democracy rather than a top-down distributor of information. Thus it is the media's responsibility to provide citizens with a pluralistic sampling of ideas and discussions about current affairs in a way that "facilitate(s) informed opinion and participation in democratic politics (Dahlgren, 2009: 34). An ideal media in this sense serves as a critical watchdog, as a mediator between civil society and decision-making bodies, and as a guardian of the freedom of speech. Bringing the attitudes and practices of deliberation into the intermediary institution of the media is seen as an important step towards strengthening democracy and political engagement.

The notion of the public sphere is certainly not without its share of critics and it is towards these arguments that I will now turn. One of the key themes in the debate has revolved around the conceptualization of the public sphere as a unified space versus a pluralistic or fragmented one (Dahlgren, 2008). Proponents of the former see a united communicative space as a necessity for governability and express concern that the pluralistic vision of democracy is the path to ineffective chaos. This is the old "too many cooks in the kitchen" line of reasoning; just as too many chefs may spoil the broth, too many public spheres may result in an ineffective, chaotic democracy. Advocates for the pluralistic vision, however, view the notion of a pluralistic public sphere as a source of rich diversity (Dahlgren, 2008; Roberts, 2010). Rather than a focus on consensus building and governability, the pluralistic vision sees the necessity of a communicative space where ongoing debate and discussion can take place. While the pluralistic perspective certainly paints a messier picture of democracy, this thesis aligns itself with this particular notion of the public sphere because it seems, in the words of Dahlgren (2008), more sociologically in touch with the real world.

Another critique that ties in with the previous debate is that the notion of a pluralistic public sphere, with its assumptions of a free press and equal, competent, and engaged

citizens, is naïve and does not adequately address deeply ingrained power relations (Gimmler, 2001). In response to this critique, I must emphasize the value of this normative vision in its promotion of journalism for the public interest. I do not argue that the ideal public sphere is attainable, but rather that there is inherent value in the constant striving towards *critical* pluralism.

While the media does play an important role in engaging individuals in the political, it is clearly not the sole bearer of responsibility for the political involvement of citizens. Good journalism in itself is not enough. Deliberative theory also recognizes the role of the citizen, emphasizing that it is the citizen's democratic responsibility to engage and participate in politics (Dahlgren, 2009: 81). This leads us to the question of *how* citizen engagement and participation in politics can be promoted or hindered. To deal with this question, I now turn the discussion to Dahlgren's civic culture framework.

3.7. Civic Cultures: An Analytical Tool

The theoretical framework for this thesis revolves around the idea that citizen participation is a must for democracy and development, but so far I have not adequately addressed the conditions that are necessary for this type of agency to occur. As Dahlgren states, civic agency does not emerge or function in a vacuum; "it must be an integrated and dynamic part of a larger cultural environment that has relevance for politics" (2009: 102-103). In order to analyze the conditions necessary for promoting or hindering civic engagement, Dahlgren introduced what he terms a civic cultures framework. Essentially, civic cultures can be seen as a public sense of loyalty to the vision of democracy. Dahlgren's framework and its focus on the complexities of the citizen, civic participation, and the media are all very appealing for the purposes of my research and will thus play a key role in interpreting the results of the upcoming analysis.

Dahlgren's framework of civic cultures consists of six dimensions: knowledge, values, trust, spaces, identities and practices/skills (Ibid: 108-125). The concept of '*knowledge*' refers to the idea that citizens must be able to access and process information about current affairs in order for democracy to function. While access to reports, statistics, debates, and so forth are crucial, this concept also emphasizes the

development of communicative competencies through formal and informal means of education. After all, just having access to information means nothing if citizens do not have the skills and abilities to process that information.

The concept of '*Values*' refers to a loyalty to the inherent values of democracy. Dahlgren distinguishes between the substantive values, such as equality, liberty, justice, solidarity and tolerance, and procedural values, like openness, deliberation, reciprocity, and accountability (2009: 111). He emphasizes that both categories should be treated as universal. The importance of having these shared democratic values in everyday life, this common thread woven through society, is absolutely essential to a well-functioning democracy.

'*Trust*' as a dimension of civic cultures deals with trust between groups of citizens. Our interest here is primarily in the trust between groups who do not know each other on a personal level, but can interact based on mutual expectations of reciprocity (Dahlgren, 2009). In our increasingly interdependent lives, some degree of trust is essential for us to function. This is not a call for blind faith in other groups or politics, but rather "trust with a built-in antenna for skepticism" (Ibid: 114). A moderate level of trust is needed in democracy.

'*Spaces*' is the idea that citizens need space to meet and discuss with each other. From physical spaces to electronic sites, there are many different places in our lives where people may interact as citizens. These spaces must connect citizens to representatives and vice versa in order for democracy to function in its ideal sense. The emphasis here is both that these spaces or public spheres are available and also that citizens *feel* that they are available for their use.

The idea of '*Practices*' refers to the concrete and recurring practices that bring personal and social meaning to the ideals of democracy. The practices of handling a debate according to the principles of democracy or participating in elections, for example, develop one's communicative competency and, when they have an element of the routine, become a part of the democratic tradition. As emphasized by Dahlgren, "New practices and traditions can and must evolve to ensure that democracy does not

stagnate” (2009: 118). These practices contribute to creating and re-creating democratic values.

Last but not least is the concept of ‘*Identities*’, which refers to the citizen’s membership in a political community or communities and their sense of being an empowered political agent. This deals with people being able to see themselves as potential participants in politics and, more generally, as a part of the bigger political community. Community in this sense, as emphasized by Dahlgren, is “a minimal sense of commonality among citizens in heterogeneous late modern societies” (2009: 121).

These dimensions should be seen as interconnected dimensions that have only been separated for ease of understanding and application. It is also important to note that it is not only the civic cultures that can shape the citizens, but also the citizens who can influence the character of civic cultures (Dahlgren, 2009). There a number of factors that can shape civic cultures, from schools and family to economics and the legal system, but this thesis will follow in the footsteps of Dahlgren and focus on the role of the media. While I recognize the importance of the media in its many different and increasingly interactive forms, I will be paying special attention to the traditional media, particularly the English-language press in India. I will elaborate on this decision in the Methodology section.

The theoretical framework has highlighted the value of media framing research and, through a thorough discussion of civic participation and engagement, has developed a way of understanding the role of the media in regards to development and democracy. Using this theoretical framework, we can now proceed to the analysis of the English-language Indian dailies and the construction of the farmer suicide problem. Through news frame analysis and the now established theoretical framework, I aim to shed light on the media’s construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon and its potential impacts in terms of development and democracy.

4. Methodology

4.1. Epistemological Basis: Critical Constructivism

Before I dive into my research design, I must first address its philosophical underpinnings. In exploring the construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon in Indian media through a qualitative case study design, my epistemological basis for the methodology has been guided by the ‘constructivist’ paradigm, with influences from the ‘transformative’ paradigm as well.

The constructivist paradigm represents a change in research from a focus on explaining phenomena, which is typical in the natural sciences, to an emphasis on understanding phenomena (Constantino, 2008). This paradigm is considered more appropriate for investigating phenomena in the social sciences. Ontologically, the constructivist paradigm views reality as “relative, multiple, socially constructed, and ungoverned by natural laws” (Ibid.). Truth is seen as dependent on one’s perspective and experiences, which influence all of our interpretations of ‘reality’ (Hallahan, 1999; Heiner, 2006; Yin, 2003). The assumption is that people act based on their unique perceptions rather than a so-called ‘objective’ reality. Thus, rather than assessing the objectivity of a study, the constructivist paradigm acknowledges that the researcher’s values always influence the knowledge that is constructed through interactions with the research phenomenon in question. The aim of this type of research is for the credibility of knowledge rather than validity (Constantino, 2008).

Constructivists go on to say that an ‘objective’ circumstance, such as an illness, becomes relevant to a great extent through the subjective meanings that are connected with it. Applying this idea to research, Flick (2007) states, “If we want to understand these processes of meaning-making, we should start from reconstructing how people, institutions, and communications construct their worlds or social reality in our research”. This is precisely what I hope to accomplish in the news frame analysis.

One of the main critiques against the constructivist paradigm is that its ontological assumptions, that there are multiple realities and that one’s own reality depends on one’s point of view, can be interpreted as extreme relativism. Critics feel that

constructivist research simply generates unsupportable opinions. In dealing with this criticism, I turned to elements of the transformative paradigm. I am inspired by the transformative paradigm's attention to asymmetric power relationships and its acknowledgement of the political nature of research. Rather than accepting that all perspectives are equally legitimate, transformativists pay attention to the factors that give one version of reality privilege over another. Influenced by these elements of the transformative paradigm, my analysis seeks to generate a better understanding of a phenomenon, while at the same time furthering a social justice agenda.

Putting all of this together, I will describe the epistemological basis as 'Critical Constructivism'. This position acknowledges the relativism of radical constructivism and introduces a social justice agenda to the research. As explained by Taylor (1996), "the social epistemology of critical constructivism addresses the socio-cultural contexts of knowledge construction and serves as a powerful referent for cultural reform". In the context of social problem construction, which is a focus of my analysis, critical constructivism is primarily concerned with how the meanings of social problems are constructed (Heiner, 2006: 9). Three processes of social problem construction are focused on: 1- "the identification of a phenomenon as problematic," 2 – "the providing of explanations for the causes of that phenomenon," and 3- "the persuasion of the public that the phenomenon is problematic and needs to be handled" (Ibid.). The basic assumption behind my analysis is that people, institutions and interactions are all involved in reality construction in order to attribute meaning to objects and events. This thesis aims to better understand how the institution of the media, specifically the English-language Indian dailies, *constructs* an interpretation of social reality, specifically the farmer suicide phenomenon, while at the same time bringing awareness to underlying power relations and furthering a social justice agenda.

These understandings of 'reality' and 'knowledge' pave the way for my analysis. At this time, I can now turn to the research design.

4.2. Research Design: Intrinsic Case Study

The media's construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon is of primary interest in my research exploration, so I have opted for an intrinsic case study research design with instrumental aspects. Cases, as classified by Robert Stake, can be grouped into three categories: 1- intrinsic, 2- instrumental, and 3-collective (Grandy, 2009). The intrinsic case sees the case as primary, the instrumental case views the case as secondary to building theory, and the collective case study looks at a series of instrumental case studies. I am particularly interested in the intrinsic and instrumental case study designs because the key in both of these types of studies is on the opportunity to learn.

Intrinsic case studies are exploratory. These studies strive to capture the complexity and richness of the case, rather than focusing on producing generalizable findings. I was drawn to this case because of my interest in the farmer suicide phenomenon in India and my desire to better understand the role of the media in the construction of this phenomenon. My interest in this case, as I have mentioned previously, spurned from a six-month internship in India in which I lived and worked with farmers in the rural areas of the state of Punjab.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, I have labeled my research as primarily intrinsic but with instrumental aspects. Case studies can be both instrumental and intrinsic if there are multiple research interests involved (Grandy, 2009). The theoretical elements of my research, with emphasis on the need for a healthy public sphere, put an instrumental twist in my research. The instrumental aspects can be viewed as an outcome of the intrinsic case study.

4.3. Data Collection Method: News Frame Analysis

I will be conducting a qualitative news frame analysis. While there are a number of different models of framing, the central idea that seems to link them together is contextualization (Hallahan, 1999: 224). News media puts issues or events in a certain context and provides clues through framing for how the audience should interpret their news messages regarding those issues or events. Using illegal drug use

as an example, news stories may cover this topic with the frame that drugs destroy lives (Jenson and Jankowski, 1991: 90). Whether people agree with or contest the news stories, they react to the embedded framework of the news story and respond in the context provided by the news media. Thus, framing is a powerful process in communication as it creates a platform for guiding interpretations, discussions, and actions; news spawns news (Ibid: 91). News framing is a vital process used by the media to present events in relevant and meaningful ways for their audiences.

It is the aim of this news frame analysis to show how meanings are built up in media representations of the farmer suicide phenomenon. While some may dismiss the framing process, particularly when it is applied to news media, as manipulation, my epistemological stance views the defining and shaping of news events as the essence of media communication and, therefore, as neither a positive or negative process in itself.

In examining the ways in which English-language News Media frame the farmer suicide phenomenon, I have been highly influenced by the work of Benford and Snow on the framing of social movements (2000). These researchers focus on three primary framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational. Diagnostic framing involves identifying and defining the problem; prognostic framing identifies the solution and assigns responsibility; and motivational framing inspires action. As my research interest revolves more around media and citizen engagement, rather than social movements in particular, I will be looking for a power/powerlessness framework rather than Benford and Snow's motivational frame.

When looking at diagnostic frameworks, I am distinguishing between episodic and thematic frameworks using tools that I have gathered from the Frameworks Institute (2009). Framing problems in an episodic way does what the name implies; it presents the problem as an episode and focuses on the individual event. Thematic frameworks, on the other hand, bring attention to broader social trends. The Frameworks Institute (2009) provides the following table to distinguish between these two diagnostic frames (seen on the following page):

Episodic Frames	Thematic Frames
Individuals	Issues
Events	Trends
Psychological	Political/Environmental
Private	Public
Appeal to Consumers	Appeal to Citizens
Better Information	Better Policies
Fix the Person	Fix the Condition

Table 1: Diagnostic Frames as Clarified by Frameworks Institute (2009)

When considering prognostic frameworks, I have first looked at whether or not a solution has been proposed in the articles. I then explored the various solutions, looking for patterns in the ways in which they were articulated. Attribution of responsibility, *who* is seen as being responsible for solving the problem, has also been carefully considered in my study.

The final core framing task was motivational framing, which “provides a ‘call to arms’ or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive” (Benford and Snow, 2000). They refer to earlier social movement work and present four generic socially constructed vocabularies that have been identified in social movements: vocabularies of severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety (Ibid.). While I consider the motivational framework interesting for the study, I have opted to focus more on the presence or absence of a powerlessness framework, as identified by Neuman et al (1992). My interpretation of this framework is that while it may have similarities with Benford and Snow’s motivational framework, its focus on constructions of power and powerlessness will be more beneficial in shedding light on citizen engagement in democracy, rather than focusing specifically on social movements. This makes the powerlessness framework more useful for the purposes of my analysis.

While the nature of this research is highly subjective, I have based my frame identifications on a list of framing devices that were proposed by Tankard (2001):

- ✚ Headlines and Subheadings
- ✚ Leads (the opening of the news stories)
- ✚ Selection of quotes
- ✚ Selection of sources and affiliations

- ✚ Statistics and numbers offered
- ✚ Concluding statements
- ✚ Images

I have also paid special attention to the ways in which citizen engagement has been promoted or hindered by the articles, with a particular focus on the ways in which the marginalized farmers and or communities are portrayed. The comprehensiveness of stories and the potential impacts on the public sphere, as understood from the theoretical framework of this thesis, have been carefully considered.

Naturally, there will be differences in the ways in which the farmer suicide phenomenon is framed or represented by different sources, which may lead to a type of framing contest amongst those news sources who are seeking to promote their favored version of a story (Gamson, 1984). Hallahan (1997: 228) describes this phenomenon from a business perspective: “Market models of journalism suggest that journalists will purposefully strive to frame stories in ways that resonate with what journalists perceive to be the largest segment of their audience”. It is with this in mind that the news frame analysis will include three English-language Indian newspapers from varying political orientations: Left Wing, Right Wing, and Centrist.

4.4. Sampling

My research focuses on the English-language Indian media’s construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon. Newspapers in India are generally classified into two categories: vernacular papers, which include newspapers that are published in over 100 different languages, and English-language publications (Roy, 2011). My focus on the English-language Indian press is primarily due to the fact that it is written in my native language, though I will acknowledge that I am an *American* English speaker in my limitations section. In addition to the accessibility of the English language papers, I am interested in this category of Indian press because the English media in India, while no longer the dominant force in India’s national media market,

continue to experience growth in circulation and consumption and are arguably still a powerful force in the public sphere⁷⁸.

As mentioned in the previous section, I have selected three Indian newspapers for the analysis, listed below with their ideological orientation⁹:

The Times of India (Centrist)

The Hindu (Left Wing)

The New Indian Express (Right Wing)

After experimenting with the different advanced searching tools available in these newspapers and a variety of search inputs, I settled on the search for “farmer AND suicide” in the archives. This search provided the most reliable and relevant results across all three newspapers.

I initially searched the archives of these three papers from 2005-2011, as shown in the charts in the following sub-sections 4.4.1-4.4.3. My interest in this time period spawns from the increasing prevalence of “farmer suicides” in popular culture during this time, as mentioned in the literature review (see page 7). In addition, the newspaper archives for years prior to 2005 were either not accessible or deemed unreliable for a number of newspapers that were initially considered.

Both hard news and soft news pieces are to be analyzed. This includes feature stories, news reports, editorials, analysis, and opinion pieces. Each of these news piece categories have been reviewed, selected, and published by their respective newspapers and are thus considered useful for the analysis.

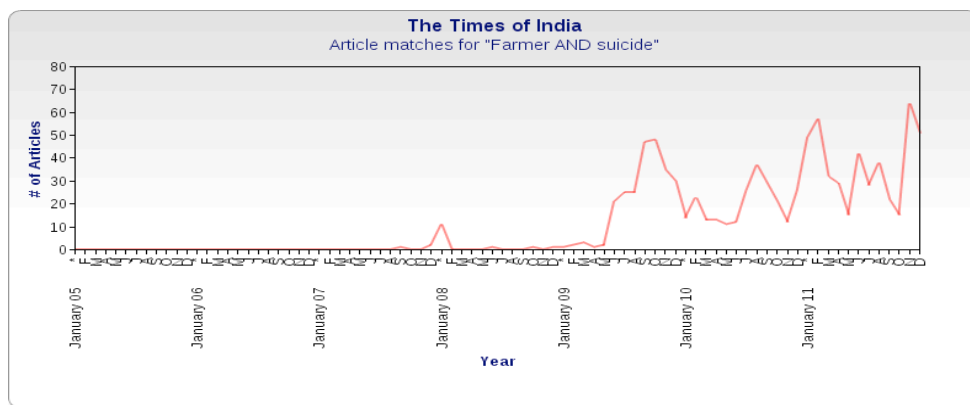
⁷ Research that shows that English media dominated India’s national media market from independence until the late 1990s: Jeffrey (2000) and Ninan (2007).

⁸ Research that shows that English media circulation continues to experience growth, based on reports from the Office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India: Neyazi, 2011

⁹ Political orientations are classified by CRI (2011)

4.4.1. *The Times of India (TOI)*

The Times of India is ranked as the top English daily newspaper in India, based on the 2010 Indian Readership Survey. A well-known industrial family in India, the Sahu Jain family, owns the paper. They are also owners of the Times Group¹⁰, which is the largest mass media conglomerate in India. This centrist newspaper has a political orientation that tends to lean slightly towards the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and is said to define the narrative of the middle class (CRI, 2011). A search for “farmer AND suicide” in the archive from January 2005 to December 2011 generated 927¹¹ news stories and can best be described by the following graph:



Graph 1: Results for "farmer AND suicide" in *The Times of India* Archive

The first reports were seen around January 2008, but the farmer suicide theme really becomes prevalent in 2009 with peaks in September-October 2009, July-September 2010, and February, June, September and December of 2011.

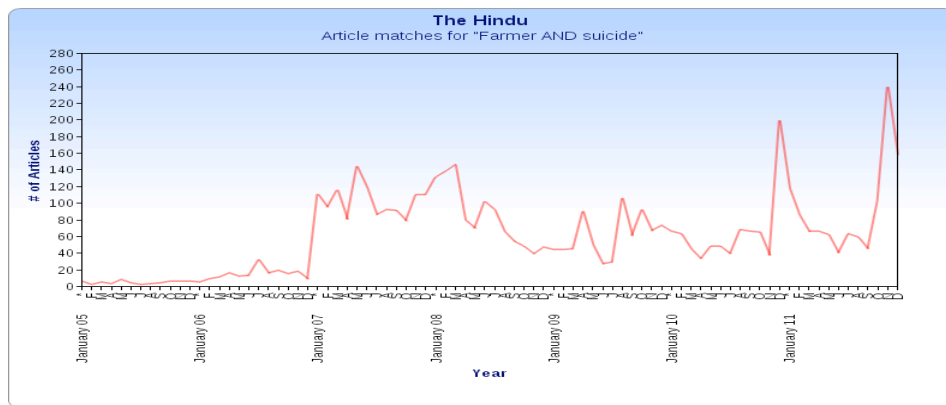
The Hindu and *The New Indian Express* included visuals in their archives, but unfortunately this was not the case for *The Times of India*. As I was unable to find a centrist Indian newspaper archive that was both reliable and included pictures, I decided to continue working with *The Times of India* based on their well-organized, relevant, and accessible material. Visuals are an important element in a news frame analysis, so the lack of images may be seen as a potential limitation to the study.

¹⁰ The Times Group is also referred to as Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd, based on my search via Google Finance.

¹¹ It should be noted that the graph provides a map of the search results, prior to the removal of any irrelevant news stories.

4.4.2. *The Hindu*

The Hindu is the third most popular English daily newspaper in India, based again on the 2010 Indian Readership Survey. It is a left-leaning paper that has drifted from centre-leftism to extreme leftism depending on the branch of the family in charge of affairs. Narasimhan Ram was the managing director and Editor in Chief from 2003 to January 2012 and was known as a left-wing editor with almost communist ideology. Politically, *The Hindu* is said to lean towards the Communist Party of India (CPM) (CRI, 2011). The paper's archive generated 4000 hits for "farmer AND suicide" from 2005 to 2011. The results are shown below in Graph 2:



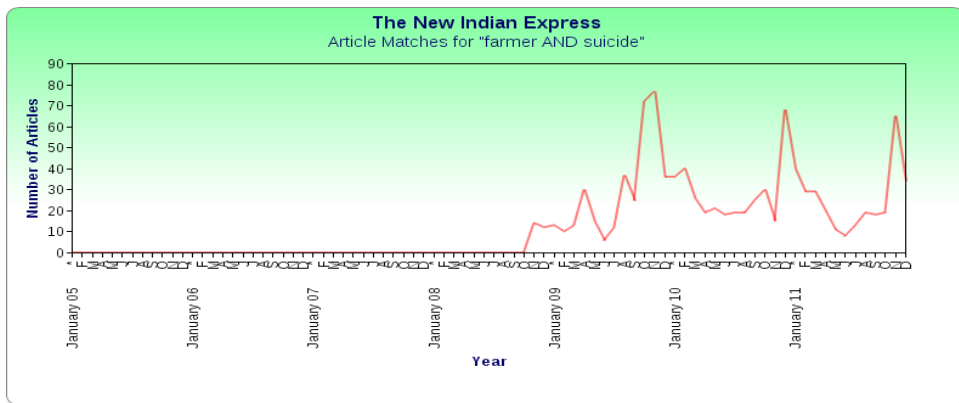
Graph 2: Results for "farmer AND suicide" in *The Hindu* Archive

Articles that matched the search criteria were available from January 2005 but first peaked in January of 2007, much earlier than in *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express*. This will be more obvious when I combine all three charts in section 4.4.4.

4.4.3. *The New Indian Express (TNIE)*

The final selection for the news analysis is *The New Indian Express*, ranked as the tenth most popular English Daily newspaper in India by the Indian Readership Survey (2010). This right-wing paper has a political orientation that leans towards the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The current editor, Prabhu Chawla, was once a big player in the powerful right-wing opposition party known as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and his paper is known for its anti-establishment tone. A search of the

archive for “farmer AND suicide” generated 1009 hits between January 2005 and December 2011. The results can be seen on the following page in Graph 3:

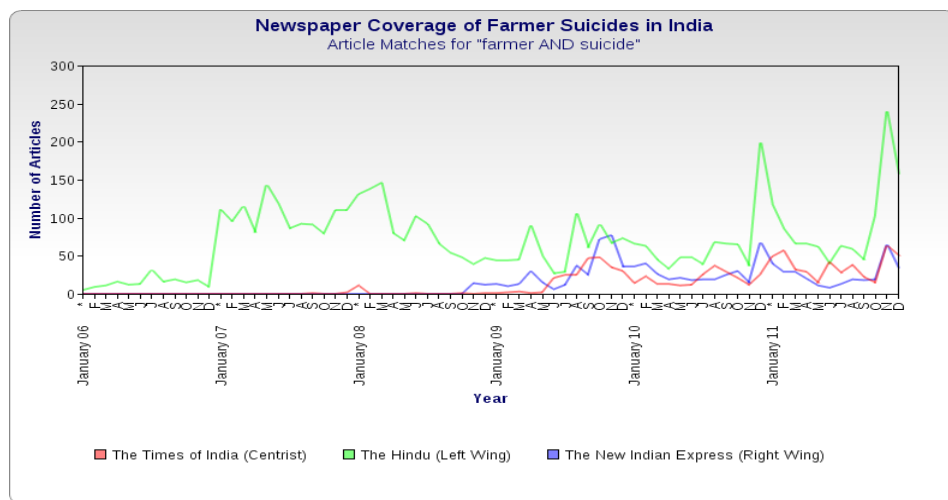


Graph 3: Results for "farmer AND suicide" in The New Indian Express Archive

Articles that matched the search criteria began surfacing in late 2008, with significant peaks in Oct-Nov 2009, Dec 2010, and Nov-Dec 2011.

4.4.4. Farmer Suicide Coverage: An Overview

Once the newspapers were selected, I needed to decide which dates to investigate. There were distinct patterns in the charts, which is more evident when we place the data on a single graph. Based on results displayed in the previous graphs, the year 2005 is considered unimportant for the study and will be excluded from this graphical overview:



Graph 4: Results for "farmer AND suicide" in TOI, The Hindu, and TNIE Newspaper Archives

Coverage of the issue seems to have faded in and out from the scene over the last few years, which may be understood by Anthony Downs' work on "issue-attention cycles" (1972: 38-50). Downs (1972) looks at the up and down coverage of ecological news and demonstrates that issues begin to bore an audience after some time and are then replaced by something else, even if the issue has not been resolved. As my thesis is exploratory in nature, I wanted to focus on a period that would both provide a rich collection of data and be manageable by the efforts of a single researcher.

After reflecting on the patterns of news coverage, I have decided to focus on one of the first peak periods of coverage that is shared with all of the newspapers involved: October 2009. In addition to being a peak period of coverage, October 2009 is considered interesting because it lies in the middle of a number of popular films focusing on the issue of farmer suicides that were released both before and after this period (see page 7). Each newspaper archive generated a large number of articles during this time and, together, they will provide a rich collection of information for my analysis.

4.5. Reflexivity

In doing qualitative research, it is important that I reflect on my own position as a researcher and how this position may affect the research. As established in the epistemological discussion in section 4.1, I, as a researcher, cannot separate myself from the research, but I can become more aware of the multiple influences that I have on the research process through constant reflexivity (Gilgun, 2010). While I have already given the reader a bit of insight into my interest in the farmer suicide phenomenon¹², I will take another moment to brief the reader on my perspective in the hope that it may enhance the report.

In preparing to write this paper, I felt quite emotional as I struggled to understand how the farmer suicide phenomenon continued to be a recognized social problem over a decade after it first gained widespread media attention. After working with farmers in the rural areas of Punjab from July 2011 to January 2012, I was constantly blown

¹² See page 4, Section 1.1: My Interest in the Farmer Suicide Phenomenon

away by their ability to work in the fields from dawn until dusk in temperatures that had me staggering towards the nearest shade tree on a number of occasions. In addition to extreme heat, it was also incredible to witness farming in places that, to my untrained eye, seemed impossible for farming, like the Rajasthan desert. I quickly formed the impression of farmers as generally hardworking, intelligent, social, and incredibly resourceful. Thus when reading newspaper articles that presented farmers as ignorant, helpless or that ignored the farmers entirely, I could feel myself becoming increasingly irritated with the messages of these texts. I expect that my interpretations and reactions to the articles will be similar in many ways to those of the readers of this thesis, but I also acknowledge that my emotional attachment to this topic may color the interpretation in a unique way. With this in mind, I have constantly referred back to the original texts throughout the analysis and provided the reader with quick and easy access to the articles in the Appendix.

4.6. Limitations

As with all research, there are a number of limitations that must be addressed. One limitation concerns the sample. The time span could have been expanded to include some of the other interesting peaks in farmer suicide coverage. This was my initial intention and would have provided an even richer source of information, but I was forced to limit my study due to time and space constraints. In limiting my study, I hope to thoroughly analyze the newspapers during the month of October 2009, rather than haphazardly analyze a number of different time periods. In addition, I have included both hard and soft news pieces in my study. While I understand that soft news may be laden with blatant opinions and not necessarily in line with the hard news articles, I am interested in all of the articles that have made it through to publication as these are all relevant for my discussion of the public sphere.

Language is another limitation of the study. As a native English speaker from the United States, I have a solid command of American English but may miss some of the subtleties of Indian English. In addition, I came across a large number of unfamiliar acronyms, but was able to decipher the majority of them through many painful hours of Internet research.

Another limitation of this study involves its methodology. I have used a combination of inductive and deductive methods during the news frame analysis. My interest is in exploring the farmer suicide phenomenon, to increase understanding around how it is framed in English-language Indian dailies, and to generate knowledge, all of which points to an inductive news frame analysis. In formulating categories in this way, I have decided, through subjective interpretation, to categorize the data into meaningful themes. As mentioned in the reflexivity section, my interpretation is colored by my experience. I have addressed this by frequently quoting or referring back to the original texts so that the readers can interpret the original texts for themselves, if they so desire. This will hopefully serve to increase the trustworthiness and reliability of my analysis. I have also looked to both general and specific frameworks established by previous researchers and will thus be using deductive methods as well during the analysis. This could potentially limit my ability to see other types of emerging frameworks.

There are also the limitations of time and space. The qualitative methods that I have selected have been time intensive and have generated a large amount of data. A common issue with qualitative data, whether it is reported in an article for a professional journal or a thesis for a masters program, is that the richness of the original data may disappear due to the space and word limitations of the project. I have attempted to include the ‘lagom’ or ‘just right’ amount of data in order to provide a rich insight into the data without complicating or oversimplifying my results.

Arguably the greatest limitation of the thesis is that, primarily given the limitations of time, I have not included a triangulation of methods. Qualitative research is greatly strengthened by the use of multiple methods. It was my intention to explore the framing of the farmer suicide phenomenon from a variety of settings, but I had to change my research design due to the unforeseen time and space requirements of my news frame analysis. While admitting these limitations, I still very much consider the knowledge and discussions that are generated by this thesis to be valuable to a variety of fields and, hopefully, inspiring to future researchers.

5. Results

In this section, I will be addressing the first two research questions:

- ✚ **Research question 1 (RQ1):** How do English-language Indian dailies frame the farmer suicide phenomenon during the month of October 2009?
- ✚ **Research question 2 (RQ2):** Who has voice in defining the social problem and suggesting suitable courses of action to resolve the problem during this time?

5.1. *The Times of India (TOI)*

This section will refer back to articles that can be found in the Appendix, Section A. For the reader's convenience, I will only be writing the number of the articles, rather than the long-winded "Appendix, Section A, Article 3" references that I originally included. This will allow the reader quick and easy access to the original texts from which I based my analysis. To improve the readability of the results sections, I have used footnotes to guide the reader back to lists of original articles; I have tried to keep the number of footnotes to a minimum.

A search of *The Times of India* for "farmer AND suicide" from 2009-10-01¹³ to 2009-10-31 generated 48 results, of which 39 were deemed relevant for the study¹⁴¹⁵. Of these articles, there is only one that indicates that farmer suicides are no longer an issue, specifically referring to the state of Kerala. Based on statements from the State Agriculture minister, "the pro-farmers policy of the LDF government had put an end to farmers suicide in the state" (1). This information is not backed up by statistics or official reports and seems to contradict the public suicide data available at India's

¹³ Dates used in this thesis follow the international format, YYYY-MM-DD, where YYYY is the year, MM is the month, and DD is the day.

¹⁴ Irrelevant articles included repeated articles (identical text) and those that ended up in the search results because they contained the words "farmer" and "suicide" in the text, but were not related to the farmer suicide phenomenon. For example, an article about a man who murdered a farmer's daughter and then attempted suicide was included in the search result and was deemed irrelevant (28).

¹⁵ Irrelevant article examples include articles 9, 12, 15, 21, 28, 34, 35, 39, and 47

National Crime Records Bureau¹⁶, but is not questioned in the article. While this was the only message claiming that the problem had been solved, the article's emphasis on the state government as the solution to farmer suicides was a dominant theme throughout the analyzed articles.

Beginning with diagnostic elements, there are examples of both thematic and episodic frames in the search result. In articles with episodic frames, the reader is encouraged to think about the individuals, who are typically listed by name and age, and individual suicide events rather than focusing on thematic trends. Of the nine articles that used an episodic framework, eight of them define the cause of suicide in these individual cases as a combination of crop failure and debt/loan burden¹⁷, with the remaining article portraying financial burden and illness as the cause of the individual's suicide (19). With one exception, each of the articles provides a description of the method of suicide, from consuming pesticide to jumping in front of a train. One of these articles even portrays a "massive cardiac arrest" as a farmer's successful suicide (16).

Articles with episodic frames often emphasize the psychological traits of the individual and tend to describe the farmers as, for example, "unable to cope" (16), "under stress" (18) or "crippled mentally" (19). While many of these articles frame the farmer in a way that indicates helplessness, like the farmer being "driven to suicide" (22) by adverse weather, a number of these frames can also be interpreted as proactive portrayals of the farmer. For example, articles that describe suicide in terms of "taking the extreme step" (16), "taking a step" (24), "deciding to end his life" (27), and "deciding to take a decision" (19) can be interpreted as farmers actively taking matters in to their own hands. One of the most troubling findings was that these "extreme steps" are occasionally framed in a way that presents suicide as a moneymaking opportunity for one's family. Article 16 is a good example: After the farmer commits suicide, the District Commissioner "gave a Rs 1-lakh¹⁸ cheque as compensation to the members of his family the same day." This type of framework

¹⁶ Public information regarding suicides is available at the National Crime Report Bureau's website: <http://ncrb.nic.in/>

¹⁷ For examples, please refer back to articles 16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29 and 43.

¹⁸ One lakh is equal to 100,000 rupees

seems to provide incentives, same-day rewards in fact, to commit suicide, which is problematic if the aim is to put an end to farmer suicides. Episodic articles tend to be shorter than thematic stories and usually end with a statement that police have filed a report, indicating that the cases are now closed¹⁹.

Thematic diagnostic frameworks of the farmer suicide phenomenon are slightly more common in *The Times of India* during the specified date range. Many of these articles simply mention farmer suicides in passing, usually as part of a list of social crises in the context of political campaigns²⁰. The focus of articles that mention farmer suicides in this way typically revolve around how the farmer suicide crisis, as a social issue, could harm or benefit different political parties or nominees during elections. While not explicitly stated, I consider this type of framework to be thematic in nature as it acknowledges farmer suicides as a social problem and suggests that the solutions will come in the form of better policies from the state government.

Other news stories make their diagnostic claims more explicitly and tend towards a variety of different thematic trends, including adverse weather patterns and subsequent crop loss²¹, crop loss and loan burdens (26), a combination of agrarian struggles and poor governmental policies²², general debt and wedding debts²³, the “killer cotton crop” (41), and the “breakdown of community structures, growing aspirations and the lack of institutional support mechanisms” characteristic of the middle class (40). Local farmers, farm activists, and farming organization tend to promote the idea that farmer suicides are a result of harsh farming conditions and poor governmental policies. Articles that frame flooding as a primary cause of suicide are particularly interesting because they tend to come from government officials and are the only articles that include pleas (from a Chief Minister and a District Commissioner) to farmers, encouraging them “not to resort to extreme steps like suicide as the government has been making all efforts to provide them quick

¹⁹ The following articles contained a closing message about police filing a report: 16, 18, 19, 24, 25, 27, and 29

²⁰ Farmer Suicides only mentioned in passing as a campaigning/election issue: Articles 4, 8, 11, 13, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 42, 45, 46, and 48

²¹ Thematic framing that focuses on adverse weather conditions: 7, 20, 23

²² See articles 3, 5, 6, 14, 17 and 33 for examples

²³ Article 1 focuses on general debt, while articles 10 and 44 focus on wedding debts.

relief” (23) and emphasizing that “(suicide) was not a solution to the problem” (20). Another notable article is one that describes workers belonging to an opposition party (the BJP) attacking an agricultural official who had written a “misleading report” to the state government; his report claimed that family disputes were the cause of most farmer suicides, rather than crop losses and loan burdens (26). Other than this article, however, I did not get a sense of conflict regarding the struggle to define farmer suicides.

Moving on to prognostic frameworks, the dominant prognostic trend seems to be that the actions of the state government, irrespective of political orientation, and its agricultural policies, are the primary solution to the farmer suicide problem²⁴. One notable article, which is voiced by a small farmer, frames state government policies as the solution, but calls upon farmers to protest in order to bring attention to their cause (3). Most frameworks, however, leave the responsibility and power in the hands of the state government, portraying the farmers as generally helpless and separate from governmental decisions. Article 14, for example, illustrates this point in its opening paragraph: “They [cotton growers] can only pray that a government is quickly formed” (14). This type of news story, where the locus of control is in the hands of ‘powerful others’ is what Neuman et al. (1992) would call a powerlessness frame. Other prognostic frameworks included farmers participating in mass marriages to reduce the costs of weddings (10), army recruitment (7), switching to short-term food crops instead of cotton (41), and, from a study by psychologists and sociologists, a call to everyone in society to become more sensitive towards others and strengthen community ties (40). These frameworks tend to portray the farmer as more of an active agent. Article 10 is particularly interesting in that regard; it focuses on an organization of farmers (Bharatiya Kisan Sangh) who are addressing one presumed cause of suicide, wedding debt, by hosting mass marriages in order to reduce costs for farmers. This is one of the few news stories that describe farmers as taking initiative, rather than being acted upon.

²⁴ State government and its policies as a solution: Articles 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 33, 41, and 44 along with the articles referring to ‘farmer suicides’ as a political issue (in footnote 19).

Focusing in on **Research Question 2**, there are a number of different voices that emerge during the period of interest (2009-10-01 to 2009-10-31). From political officials (State Agriculture Minister, Chief Minister, and District Officials), the messages range from ‘There’s no problem’ (1) to ‘We are here to help, do not commit suicide’ (20, 23). Articles that mention the farmer suicides in passing include messages from a variety of political parties and tend to use the farmer suicide issue as a justification for electing a certain party or rejecting another. There are also several articles that present perspectives from farm leaders and associations, including an organization whose motto is “of the farmers, for the farmers, by the farmers” (Bharatiya Kisan Singh, 10), a Cotton Growers Co-operatives Federation (14), Kishor Tiwari (a well-known farm activist and leader of a farmers advocacy group)²⁵ and members of district farmers associations (33). With the exception of article 10, however, the messages of these articles tend to be directed towards the state government, urging them to rescue distressed farmers.

Small farmers also have space to speak in a couple of articles and tend to give personal stories that support the overall message of the particular article. For example, one small farmer states that the Government’s price for paddy will cost him a huge loss (3), while another expresses the relief he felt when his daughter’s wedding cost a fraction of the price at the mass marriage function (10). Researchers (farm researchers, psychologists and sociologists, and agriculture economists) are also present in the discussion of farmer suicides, often offering suggestions to the state government or society at large²⁶. The director of Army Recruitment uses farmer suicides as an opportunity to advertise for the army, saying that it is a way to “greener pastures” and “a better life”. An article written by the director of *The Times of India* was also found in the search, which is critical towards the results of a recent election and especially towards the BJP political party (6). Police and the family of the deceased are typically only incorporated into episodic frameworks, with family members saying how and why the farmer committed suicide and police filing the report.

²⁵ Kishor Tiwari’s voice is present in articles 5, 17 and 41.

²⁶ To see examples, continue on to article 17 (farm researcher), 40 (psychologists and sociologists), and 3 (agriculture economist).

These results will be discussed further in section 6 of the thesis. We can now continue to the next newspaper: *The Hindu*.

5.2. *The Hindu*

The articles referred to in this section of the text can be found in Section B of the Appendix.

A search of *The Hindu* for “farmer AND suicide” from 2009-10-01 to 2009-10-31 generated 92 results. The first four results were not considered as they were published in the month of November, so I initially began with 88 articles. I discovered that the data set included a number of irrelevant and repeated articles²⁷. These were removed from the study and my analysis was narrowed down to 58 articles.

As seen in *The Times of India*, there is also one article in *The Hindu* that indicates that farmer suicides are no longer an issue, specifically in the state of Kerala (4). Rather than coming from the State Agriculture minister, the article found in *The Hindu* comes from an LDF (Left Democratic Front) leader. The message, however, is the same: LDF governmental policies have put an end to the farmer’s suicides in Kerala (44). This type of framework presents the farmers as passive; the solution to farmer suicides will come, or in this case ‘has already come’, from the few in power.

Focusing in on diagnostic elements, there are examples of thematic and episodic frameworks in this search result as well. The majority of episodic news stories are quite short, usually consisting of the name of the farmer, his reasons for committing suicide (typically ‘crop loss and loan burdens’ as claimed by the family of the deceased and/or the police) and a description of how the farmer committed suicide (consumption of pesticide, hanging, jumping into a well, etc)²⁸. The closing statement of these types of articles is, again, that police are investigating (64) or that they have filed a report: case closed. There is, however, another type of episodic

²⁷ Irrelevant Articles (2, 10, 30, 33, 39, 42, 54, 57, 58, 61, 62, 67, 72) and Repeated Articles (12, 17, 20, 35, 47, 52, 53, 56, 68, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 85)

²⁸ For specific examples, see articles 6, 7, 21, 26, 34, 43, 46

article that emerges several times throughout the analysis. These articles open with a statement that a farmer has committed suicide. From there, a political battle ensues, usually with the BJP (opposition party) claiming that they are “all set to make this suicide a major issue in the area” (1) and will respond by sending their own team to enquire about the suicide (1) or by starting an agitation (50). The other side is also presented, though not in the same article, in which another political party, the BJD, sends a team to “assuage farmers”, as they are “perturbed over oppositions’ attempts to make it issue”²⁹ (38). The farmer seems to get lost in these presentations as the focus tends to land on the political battle.

Thematic frameworks of the suicide phenomenon are also more prevalent in *The Hindu*. In many articles, ‘farmer suicides’ is mentioned as an issue that may have an impact on elections and is usually only mentioned in passing along with a list of other social crises³⁰. As an example, this article presents the results of an election in the following way: “The Mumbai terror attack, which was not an issue, rising prices, the drought, power cuts and farm suicides apparently did not come in the way for the Congress, which bagged 82 seats...” (22). The focus of these types of articles, again, is on the political competition, rather than the social face of the issue.

Narrowing my focus to diagnostic tendencies, most of the articles fall into one of the following categories: adverse weather conditions and subsequent crop loss³¹, crop loss and loan burdens³², a combination of agrarian struggles and weak governmental policies/reactions³³, and, more generally, as a side of the agrarian crisis³⁴. Messages that focus on farmer suicides as a result of weather tend to come from government officials, especially the Chief Minister³⁵ (8, 31, 37), but one is also seen in a message

²⁹ There were, at times, grammatical errors in the news articles and I have not corrected them in my text, as I did not wish to alter the original data. This is seen in a few of the direct quotes and will hopefully not distract the reader from the message of the text.

³⁰ Farmer Suicides only mentioned in passing, typically as a campaign issue: 14, 18, 22, 23, 24, 27, 40, 48, 55, 59, 60, 66, 69, 11, 71, 73, 74, 79, 84

³¹ Averse weather conditions and subsequent crop loss examples: 8, 13, 31, and 37

³² Crop loss and loan burden examples: 5, 9, 15, 19, 25, 28, 29, 81

³³ Combination of agrarian struggles and weak governmental policies/reactions: Articles 3, 15, 19, 41, 45, 51, 63, 70 and 86.

³⁴ Side of agrarian crisis: Articles 4, 36, 49, and 65.

³⁵ A Chief Minister is the elected head of government of a state of India.

from a Swami, a Hindu religious teacher (13). The message of ‘Crop loss and loan burdens’ in *The Hindu*, which is a common diagnostic theme found across all three newspapers, tend to come from a wide spectrum of voices, including farmer leaders, government officials, the family of the deceased, and a number of political parties. Messages indicating that farmer suicides are a face of the agrarian crisis also come from a wide spectrum of voices, including a columnist, political party leader (PMK), farmer leader and agriculture expert. On the contrary, messages indicating that poor judgment on the side of the government combined with the agrarian crisis is the cause of farmer suicides are most likely to come from the BJP and CPI (M) political parties, splashed with the occasional message from a farmer leader or news columnist.

Turning over to prognostic frameworks now, the dominant prognostic trend here again is that better actions of the state government will be the primary solution to the farmer suicide issue. Some articles call for the government to act, by waiving loans (41), helping farmers begin anew after flooding (13), distributing compensation to farmers in order to prevent suicides³⁶, increasing transparency in implementing farm schemes (4), and enquiring into causes of farmer suicides (45). The voices behind these messages come from a variety of speakers, including politicians, agriculture experts, a religious leader, and a small farmer. Others, written from the perspective of the state government, announce plans of action and encourage farmers not to take their lives³⁷. One of the more common messages in *The Hindu* is that protests must be staged in order for the government to act. Politicians from the Congress, CPI (M) and BJP parties are often behind these messages, organizing protests (8, 51), demanding compensation from the government for family members of the deceased and distressed farmers³⁸ and demanding the resignation of the Chief Minister and Agriculture Minister (29, 32).

Protests are not seen as the only way to get the attention of the government, however. There are also a couple of articles, both of which are written by columnists of the newspaper, which introduce the widow of a farmer who is running for office in order

³⁶ Asking for government to distribute compensation to farmers: 16, 44, 65, and 70.

³⁷ Government announces plan of action: Articles 5, 8, 31, and 37.

³⁸ Demanding compensation from the government for families of the deceased and distressed farmers: Articles 8, 19, 25, 28, and 45

to influence the government. Another party official, from the PMK party, organizes a media-farmer meeting in which he brings together the media, farm leaders and agriculture experts in order to “raise their livelihood issues and press for a solution” (36). These insights will then be gathered into a farmer manifesto that will be given to the Chief Minister. The visual included is of a group, consisting of men and women, smiling and collaborating together. The article, with its emphasis on common goals and collaboration, fits in nicely with the theoretical framework of this thesis, specifically regarding citizen participation and civic cultures. This will be elaborated on in the ‘Discussion’ section.

The news frame analysis of *The Hindu* has provided a couple of interesting insights into the matter of voice. First of all, the majority of voices seem to focus on farmer suicides as a political issue rather than a people issue: Political leaders discussing the political impact of suicides on elections, political parties criticizing the actions of other political parties, politicians rushing to the site of the farmer suicides and demanding governmental compensations for the families, and so on. The voices of the small farmers, farmer organizations, and farmer leaders are significantly low in comparison. There is one message from the secretary general of the consortium of farmer’s organizations of India who calls upon farmers “to unite and help each other when in distress” (3). There is also only one ‘small farmer’ found in the news stories, described as a senior citizen, who is quoted saying “Can we be blamed for coming close to suicide”. In general, the farmers seem to be shallowly included in order to add a human interest frame to the story, but are often absent when the conversation moves to defining the crisis and proposing solutions. There are also rare news stories that include voices from agricultural experts (4, 36). I should clarify that I am not making this point in order to promote the voice of experts and farmers as more valid than others; I am merely suggesting that these voices seemed significantly absent during my reading of the texts.

These results will be brought up again in the ‘Discussion’ section, so I would now like to continue on to the third and final newspaper: *The New Indian Express*.

5.3. *The New Indian Express (TNIE)*

The articles listed in this section can be found in Section C of the Appendix.

A search of *The New Indian Express* for “farmer AND suicide”³⁹ from 2009-10-01 to 2009-10-31 generated 72 results, of which 60 were used for the analysis. After carefully analyzing 48 articles, there seemed to be clear themes emerging from the data. Due to the exploratory nature of my analysis, I continued analyzing another 12 articles and, when I felt confident that new frameworks were no longer emerging from the data, I ended the analysis after the 60th article.

Beginning with diagnostic elements, there are both thematic and episodic frames found in this search result. The articles with episodic frames are particularly interesting in this data set. Each time the episodic framework was used, the focus of the news story is on the widow of the deceased farmer. Each of these news stories also includes a black and white photograph of the somber-faced widow sitting behind three or four young children wearing forlorn expressions, all looking down or away from the camera⁴⁰. Stories of poverty, loan burden and crop failure are common in these frameworks, often as descriptions as to why the farmer has committed suicide, but the focus of each story is on the current precarious state of the family. Discussions of available financial assistance, such as Widow pension and the National Family Benefit plan, are found in each of the articles, but presented with several different angles. One news story praises the district’s quick assurance of aid and assistance to the widow of a farmer (1), another checks in on a widow and her family two weeks after the suicide and finds that the money received from politicians and social organizations was insufficient and the woman may need to mortgage her land (29) and a third article checks in on a widow and her family two months after the suicide and announces that she has not received the assistance promised to her by political leaders and social organizations (28). In each of these articles, the farmers who committed suicide and their families are portrayed as helpless and in need of

³⁹ Due to differences in the advanced search tool for *The New Indian Express*, it is only necessary to search for “farmer suicide” in the textbox labeled “With **All** Of The Words”.

⁴⁰ The episodic frameworks can be seen in articles 1, 28, 29, and 48.

financial assistance. Article 1 demonstrates this helplessness quite well in its opening statement: “Poverty and penury followed Kushadhwaja Majhi (38), the landless tribal of village Tarbod in Komna block, like a shadow forcing him to commit suicide”⁴¹. The message seems to be that distressed farmers and their families are waiting on the state government and district officials to save them; the power is in the government’s hands.

Thematic diagnostic frameworks of the farmer suicide phenomenon are more common in *The New Indian Express* during the specified date range. While a number of stories mention farmer suicides in passing⁴², the majority of them present the farmer suicide phenomenon as the predominant focus of the story. These tend towards a number of thematic trends, including a combination of drought/flooding and a lack of government action⁴³, natural calamities such as flooding (39, 45), loan burden and crop failure⁴⁴ and global corporate giants and debts to the banks (14). When individual farmer suicides are discussed in the thematic framework, they are usually introduced in the title or opening statement as “Another farmer” (4), “One more farmer” (13), or “Another debt-ridden farmer”. These pieces are then connected to the plight of farmers in general and tend to be highly critical of the state government.

While ‘loan burden and crop failure’ is the dominant diagnostic theme, there are also a large number of articles that describe a debate between groups over the cause of suicides⁴⁵. Often the two sides of the debate are ‘loan burden and failed crop’ vs. ‘family problems’, with local farmers and opposition parties claiming the former (4, 6, 32) and police and government officials claiming the latter. A couple of articles in particular paint a chaotic scene in which the police say that a farmer died of natural causes; one individual (who police had detained) claims that it is a suicide due to failed crops and loan burden; the family remains “tightlipped about the issue”; and the

⁴¹ To prevent confusion, I would like to clarify that the number quoted is the age of the deceased farmer, not a reference to article 38.

⁴² Farmer Suicides mentioned in passing: Articles 3, 7, 11, 27, 30, 33, and 38.

⁴³ Drought and lack of government action: Articles 5, 9, 20, 21, 40, 43, Flooding and lack of government action: Article 16

⁴⁴ Loan burden and crop failure: Articles 2, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 22, 24, 25, 26, 31, 34, 35, 36, and 37

⁴⁵ Examples in articles 4, 6, 32, 42, 44, 46, and 47

villagers are “too scared to speak” (42, 44). Common cries in these articles are that the government is “in denial mode” (47), “turning a blind eye” (46) and “busy ensuring that [the death of a farmer] is not portrayed as another suicide” (44). These frameworks paint a hopeless, confusing view of the situation and are especially critical of the government’s actions. Political leaders, primarily from the opposition party, are typically the voices behind these types of frameworks.

Moving on to prognostic frameworks, the dominant prognostic trend again is that the immediate action of the state government will be the primary solution to the farmer suicide problem⁴⁶. This is presented from a number of different angles. One interesting pattern that arises from the data is that farmer suicides are often introduced as “embarrassments to the state government”. This can be seen, for example, in the opening statement of article 13: “One more farmer committed suicide in Nuapada much to the embarrassment of the State Government”. Congress and the BJP, the primary opposition party, often demand the resignation of certain officials, like the Chief Minister (35, 37) and the Agricultural Minister (42, 44). Many articles demand that the government acknowledge the farmer suicide situation and act, by waiving crop loans or outstanding loans⁴⁷, declaring an area a drought area⁴⁸, protecting the farmer from corruption and bribes (36), and generally by providing financial aid to distressed farming communities⁴⁹. When written from the perspective of elected officials, articles tend to acknowledge the situation and provide promises of relief, often, though not always, introducing aid plans and encouraging farmers to not take their lives⁵⁰.

There are also many articles that, while proposing that the central and state governments must be a part of the solution, claim that the key will be for the farmers to mobilize and rise up in order to be acknowledged⁵¹. Rather than a call for deliberation, these articles describe farmers as “angry” (44), “irate” (46), and “no

⁴⁶ State government and its policies as a solution: Articles 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 47

⁴⁷ Waiving loans: Articles 2, 5, 15, 31, 34, 37

⁴⁸ Declaring a drought area: 20, 21, 35, 40

⁴⁹ A few examples: 9, 13, 23, 24, 25, 37

⁵⁰ Promises from the Government to provide relief: Articles 4, 10, 12, 18, 31, 39, 45

⁵¹ Farmer mobilization as part of the solution: 19, 22, 35, 36, 40, 41, 43, and 44.

longer prepared to suffer in silence” (19). Protests and blockades are mentioned in several of these articles. While I consider the portrayals of farmers as active agents to be a positive step away from the more typical powerlessness framework, the fact that farmers are resorting to protests and blockades in order to be heard does not speak highly for the health of the public sphere. I will discuss this further in the following section of the thesis.

I have already touched upon the topic of voice in this section of the analysis quite a bit because, after all, it is rather difficult and uninteresting to separate diagnostics and prognostics from voice. However, I see the benefit in specifically focusing on the issue of voice here again as it plays such a key role in my thesis. After reflecting on the data collected, it becomes clear that political leaders and district officials are the dominating voice in defining the issue and proposing solutions⁵². This in itself is not negative considering the fact that these are primarily elected representatives who are, ideally, elected to represent the voice of the people. What I do consider negative is that there seems to be a tendency to play the circular blame game, with districts blaming the state governments, the state governments blaming the central government, the central government blaming the states/districts, and opposing political parties blaming one or more of these groups. In general, the messages created by political leaders and district officials tend to leave power in the hands of government officials, describing a situation in which farmers are helpless and will be “totally ruined” unless the government steps in soon (24). The visuals provide a powerful insight into this construction of powerlessness; Politicians are seen in color, dressed professionally and often seen in action, like walking to or from somewhere. Meanwhile, images of the farmers are shown in black and white, sitting on a dry, cracked field, looking away from the camera (6, 7, 32). Remember as well that the widows and children of the deceased are also pictured in black and white, sitting, and looking forlornly away from the camera.

An exception to government messages portraying farmers as powerless is a message from CPM, the communist party of India, which encourages farmers to mobilize. Other messages that contribute to the construction of farmers as active agents come

⁵² Messages from Political leaders and district officials: 4, 8, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 25, 32, 34, 35, 37, 42, and 46

from local farmers⁵³, a *TNIE* news editorial (19), a civil liberties group (5), and a farming organization known as POKSSS (41). These articles paint a picture of widespread agitations and farmers on a “warpath” (35), using whatever means necessary to have their voices heard. The message of the civil liberties group is particularly interesting in that it reaches out to farmers and encourages them to not resort to “extreme steps” and to work towards re-constructing the image of the farmer into one of confidence (5). It is a message of hope that stands out from the majority of articles that are included in the analysis.

While the ‘Results’ section of my thesis has arguably been a combination of results and discussions, in the next section I will be viewing the insights gathered in the news frame analysis through the paper’s established theoretical framework, specifically through the lens of Dahlgren’s civic cultures framework. The aim is to generate an interesting and relevant discussion, while furthering a social justice agenda.

6. Discussion

In this section, I will naturally be discussing the research findings, while simultaneously addressing the last remaining research question:

- ✚ **Research question 3 (RQ3):** How can Dahlgren’s discussion of civic cultures enhance our understanding of the farmer suicide coverage in English-language Indian dailies in terms of its impact on development and democracy?

Through the lens of Dahlgren’s (2009) civic cultures framework, I hope to generate a thought-provoking discussion and bring about a better understanding of the role of the media in democracy and development. I will be diving head first into the discussion, but the reader can refer back to page 19 to revisit the basics of the civic cultures framework.

⁵³ Voice of the local farmer, found in: 6, 36, 40, 43, and 44

6.1. Knowledge

The dimension of knowledge is easy to understand; citizens need access to information as well as the skills to acquire and interpret new information in order to participate politically. Referring back to section 3.4 of the theoretical framework (“Modern Science vs. Traditional Knowledge”), I am stressing a post-modern theory of knowledge and am thus looking for the existence of multiple varieties of knowledge in the English-language Indian dailies.

Based on the results of the news frame analysis, there are a variety of perspectives and presentations of the farmer suicide phenomenon in the English-language Indian newspapers. However, there seems to be a tendency for the press to focus on political competitions, rather than the social face of the crisis or the proposed steps forward. This can lead into an endless blame game amongst political parties, with proposed solutions taking a back seat to attributions of responsibility. While debate is an important aspect of the dimension of knowledge, I find there to be a lack of depth to debates of this nature. The overall message becomes one of confusion and distrust, which negatively impacts the other dimensions of civic cultures as well.

On a brighter note, there are also many news stories that include the names and descriptions of specific organizations, social activities, and government schemes and other stories that offered clear debates, proposals and potential solutions to the farmer suicide phenomenon. I was also positively surprised to find that thematic frameworks were more common than episodic frameworks. These types of frameworks encourage the reader to focus on understanding the issue and fixing the condition, rather than viewing the individual suicide as a closed case. This type of information may contribute to a more informed public and, ideally, promote civic agency.

6.2. Values

As emphasized by Dahlgren (2009: 110): “Democracy will not function if such virtues as tolerance and willingness to follow democratic principles and procedures do not have grounding in everyday life”. Based on my interpretation of the results, I find ‘Values’ to be one of the weaker dimensions; this does not bode well for the other dimensions of civic cultures if one considers the undeniable importance of common democratic values.

As mentioned in the previous section, loyalty to the values of democracy during political conflicts seems to take a backseat to the promotion of particular group interests. Rather than committing to the values of democracy and pursuing respectful deliberation, the situation presented is one of corruption and injustice. The government is often portrayed as deliberately ignoring or trying to cover up the farmer suicide crisis, while farmers are usually portrayed as helpless victims in need of rescue. Being able to work through a controversial issue without violence is a crucial task in a democratic society, but, in the case of farmer suicides, violence and protests are continuously promoted as one of the only ways to get the attention of the government.

There are also several news stories that bring attention to the lack of democratic values in everyday life. One such article describes a farmer’s widow who is excommunicated from her caste because villagers alleged that people belonging to a lower caste had touched the body during the autopsy⁵⁴. My impression of the role of the media in these texts, however, was that they were both acknowledging the continued existence of these types of undemocratic practices and also subtly denouncing them. While the promotion of democratic values is present to some degree, I feel that the English-language Indian media must take a more active role in weaving this common thread through society as this is absolutely essential to a well-functioning democracy.

⁵⁴ This article is found in *The New Indian Express*, article 29.

6.3. Trust

Dahlgren emphasizes that a moderate level of trust is an important component for democracy; He refers to this as “trust with a built-in antenna for skepticism” (2009: 114). The focus is primarily on trust between groups who do not know each other on a personal level, but are able to interact based on mutual expectations of reciprocity.

Based on my interpretation of the results, there seems to be a low baseline level of trust between unfamiliar groups. This is primarily based on the prevalence of messages that indicate a betrayal of trust. For example, *The New Indian Express* has a series of news stories that revolve around the plight of the widows and the broken promises made by local politicians and social organizations. These stories describe a type of gold rush after a farmer suicide, with a diverse crowd arriving to the home of the deceased farmer promising liberal financial assistance to the family. Once the dust settles and the reporters check back in with the families, it is discovered that the payments were either inadequate or, more often, not delivered. While it is commendable that the media has the sense to follow through with the story, their findings certainly do not improve the dimension of trust.

Claims that the government is trying to cover up the farmer suicide crisis, typically by claiming that the deaths were caused by family disputes or natural illness, are also common. Many articles make references to the long length of time that farmer suicides and farmer distress had been ignored by the government and described each new suicide as “fuel” for the growing anger. It is naturally difficult to increase the level of trust in institutions if citizens feel that they are being lied to, cheated, and ignored.

This is not to say that all of the experiences were of distrust and betrayal. There were several messages of positive experiences within civic organizations. Referring back to section 3.3 of the theoretical framework, these types of experiences often fall under the category of bottom-up participatory development and are seen as a valuable tool in development and, more generally, in democracy. Building trust and developing the skills necessary to become more civically engaged citizens are just a couple of the perceived benefits of this approach. The danger, however, lies in focusing too much

on the local and ignoring the underlying power relations in society that may be continuously recreating a system of oppression. The media plays an important and difficult role in both encouraging trust and maintaining a constant lookout for underlying, oppressive power relationships.

6.4. Spaces

This dimension refers to the idea that citizens need spaces to meet and discuss with each other and that they must also *feel* that these spaces are available for their use. There are some hopeful messages found in the data set that describe settings of deliberation. For example, one article describes a farmer-media meeting that was set up by a political group. The meeting consisted of farmers, farm leaders, agriculture experts and the media with the purpose of bringing awareness to a number of concerning issues and working together towards solutions. For the most part, however, the prevalence of messages of self-inflicted violence, anger and protests from farmers points to a clear sign: these individuals do not feel that they are being heard. Whether or not they technically have spaces for deliberation, these spaces are either seen as missing or ineffective channels for their messages. This may also be an indication that these individuals lack the necessary skills to participate, which can be enhanced by introducing recurring democratic practices (see next section).

According to Dahlgren (2009), the media has the potential to multiply these spaces. Based on my results regarding the construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon, I believe the English-language Indian newspapers to be falling short in this regard. The image of the farmer is often portrayed as helpless, not as an active agent with a powerful voice. As a first step, the media might contribute to a healthier public sphere in part by diversifying the voices and messages of its makeup.

6.5. Practices

This dimension refers to the concrete and recurring practices that bring personal and social meaning to the ideals of democracy.

Based on the results of the news frame analysis, participating in elections is one of the acknowledged recurring democratic practices, but it certainly does not seem to be a practice that is generating a sense of citizen empowerment. Many news stories painted a sad portrait of democracy, with voters opting for the “lesser evil” party⁵⁵, if they voted at all. The options available to farmers, and citizens in general, are portrayed as fairly slim pickings.

Participation in civic organizations, on the other hand, is presented as a predominantly positive experience. There seems to be a growing current amongst farmers to unite together because of the perceived neglect by the government. These types of organizations may provide a space in which farmers can develop their civic skills through practices. This in turn can foster a sense of empowerment and positively impact the ‘Identities’ dimension of civic cultures. Once these practices are in motion, they contribute to creating and re-creating democratic values. The media may promote these experiences by continuing to incorporate these types of news stories in their publications, while maintaining the necessary amount⁵⁶ of skepticism.

6.6. Identities

Last but not least, the dimension of ‘Identities’ refers to the citizen’s membership in a political community or communities and their sense of being an empowered political agent.

While positive examples of citizen identity did emerge from the data, such as a widow running for office on a platform to help other farm widows⁵⁷, the vast majority of articles paint the farmer and farming communities as passive victims. Even the act of committing suicide is frequently presented in a way that takes control out of the hands of the farmer, with descriptions such as ‘forced into suicide’ and ‘driven to suicide’. Referring back to section 3.1 of the theoretical framework, the majority of representations of the farmer tend to place the farmer on one of the bottom rungs of

⁵⁵ This refers to article 5 in the Times of India (Appendix: Section A)

⁵⁶ The “necessary amount” is a vague concept used to indicate that it is dependent on the specific situation in question.

⁵⁷ This article can be found in article 41 of The Times of India (section A of the appendix)

Arnstein's Ladder of Civic Participation (1969). They do not seem to have the power or perceived privilege of participating in their own development.

The visuals from *The New Indian Express* provide a powerful insight into this construction of powerlessness. Politicians are seen in color, dressed professionally and often photographed in action; in stark contrast, images of the farmers are shown in black and white, sitting on a dry, cracked field, looking away from the camera. Widows and children of the deceased are pictured in much the same way, but sitting in a different setting.

What I find particularly troubling about these findings is that the farmer is not presented as having many options other than self-inflicted violence. When talked about in the passive voice, suicide is something seen as forced upon the farmer. When farmers are referred to in the active voice, it is also often in terms of committing suicide or taking to the streets. Add to this the poorly framed news stories that describe government officials rushing to the scene within 24 hours of a suicide with a large sum of money for the farmer's family, and you have a very troubling message indeed. I am **not** claiming that the media's construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon is pushing farmers towards suicide; many months of research has left me with more questions than answers regarding the causes and nature of suicide. What I **am** arguing is that these types of news frameworks present a troubling image of the farmer that has serious flaws in terms of its potential impact on development and democracy. At the very least, the media might contribute to a healthier public sphere and encourage civic identity by placing confidence and agency back into its construction of the farmer.

7. Summary

A great deal of our civic knowledge is derived from the media and it is thus crucial that we, as researchers and as individuals, continue to critically reflect on the frameworks and messages that these institutions produce. While the media surely has a certain responsibility to present 'good' journalism, which by my established understanding entails the promotion of democratic values and the furtherance of a

social justice agenda, citizens must also acknowledge their democratic responsibility to get engaged and participate in the pursuit for a healthy public sphere.

The motivation behind this thesis has been to understand the role of the media in the construction of the farmer suicide phenomenon. Through theories of communication and participation, particularly Dahlgren's (2009) civic cultures framework, I have attempted to shed light on the ways in which English-language Indian dailies may be promoting civic engagement or disengagement in their framing of the farmer suicide phenomenon. Based on the results of a thorough qualitative news frame analysis, I have also discussed the potential impacts of this disabled sense of the political self in terms of development and democracy, while simultaneously furthering a social justice agenda.

Naturally, this work is only touching on a small chain of the communicative process and a small aspect of the public sphere. It is impossible to say, based on my study, how individuals react to different frameworks of the farmer suicide phenomenon, though this could be an interesting follow-up study for future researchers. Nevertheless, I feel that the insights and discussions presented in this thesis will serve as a rich addition to the vast sea of research on the farmer suicide phenomenon in India.

Bibliography

- ARMSTRONG, E.M. (2003) *Conceiving Risk, Bearing Responsibility: Fetal alcohol syndrome and the diagnosis of mental disorder*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- ARNSTEIN, S.R. (1969) A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), pp. 216-224.
- ASSADI, M. (2008) Farmers' Suicide in India: Agrarian crisis, path of development and politics in Karnataka. Available at: [http://viacampesina.net/downloads/PDF/Farmers_suicide_in_india\(3\).pdf](http://viacampesina.net/downloads/PDF/Farmers_suicide_in_india(3).pdf) (Accessed 2012-05-30)
- BEHERE, P.B. and BEHERE, A.P. (2008) Farmers' Suicide in Vidarbha Region of Maharashtra State: A myth or reality? *Indian J Psychiatry*, 50(2), pp. 124-127.
- BENFORD, R.D. and SNOW, D.A. (2000) Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, pp. 611-639.
- BURTON, G. (ed.) (2010) *Media and Society: Critical perspectives*. 2nd ed. New York: Open University Press.
- CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND GLOBAL JUSTICE (CHRGJ) (2011) *Every Thirty Minutes: Farmer suicides, human rights, and the agrarian crisis in India*. New York: NYU School of Law.
- CENTRE FOR MEDIA STUDIES (CMS) (2006) *Journalism for Life: A Look at Indian Media Representation of Farmer Suicides*. New Delhi: Centre for Media Studies (CMS).
- CENTRE RIGHT INDIA (CRI) (2011) Part 1- A Survey on Ideologies and Political Leanings of English Language Newspapers. [WWW]. Available at: <http://centreriight.in/2011/08/a-survey-on-ideologies-political-leanings-of-english-language-newspapers-part-1/#.UBFikpkjGXXN>. (Accessed 2012-06-01)
- CHAMBERS, R. (1997) *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the first last*. London: ITDG Publishing.
- CLEAVER, F. (1999) Paradoxes of Participation: Questioning participatory approaches to development. *Journal of International Development*, 11(4), pp. 597-612.
- COHEN, J. (1997) Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy. In: BOHMAN, J. and REHG, W. (eds.) *Deliberative Democracy*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 67-92.
- CONSTANTINO, T.E. (2008) Constructivism. In: GIVEN, L. (ed.) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Reference Online, pp. 117-121.

- DAHLGREN, P. (2008) Public Sphere. In: KAID, L.L. and HOLTZ-BACHA, C. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Political Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Reference Online, pp. 683-686.
- DAHLGREN, P. (2009) *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, communication, and democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DAVIS, J. (1995) The Effects of Message Framing on Response to Environmental Issues. *Journalism and Mass Communications Quarterly*, 67(4), pp. 723-731.
- DESAI, V. (2008) Community Participation in Development. In: DESAI, V. and POTTER, R. (eds.) *The Companion to Development Studies*. 2nd ed. London: Hodder Education, pp. 115-119.
- DOWNS, A. (1972) Up and Down with Ecology: The issue-attention cycle. *The Public Interest*, Summer Issue, pp. 38-50.
- EAGAN, J.L. (2006) Deliberative Democracy. In: BEVIR, M. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Governance*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Reference Online, pp. 205-207.
- ENTMAN, R.M. (1991) Framing U.S. Coverage of International News: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents. *Journal of Communication*, 41(4), pp. 6-27.
- EVERSOLE, R. (2010) Empowering Institutions: Indigenous lessons and policy perils. *Development*, 53(1), pp. 77-82.
- FINE, T.S. (1992) The Impact of Issue Framing on Public Opinion Toward Affirmative Action Programs. *The Social Science Journal*, 29(3), pp. 323-334.
- FLICK, U. (2007) *Designing Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- FRAMEWORKS INSTITUTE (2009) *Changing the Public Conversation on Social Problems: A Beginner's Guide to Strategic Frame Analysis*. Washington, DC: Frameworks Institute.
- GAMSON, W.A. (1984) *What's News: A game simulation of TV news*. New York: Free Press.
- GILGUN, J.F. (2010) Reflexivity and Qualitative Research. *Current Issues in Qualitative Research*, 1(2), pp. 6-13.
- GIMMLER, A. (2001) Deliberative Democracy, the Public Sphere and the Internet. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 27(4), pp. 21-39.
- GOFFMAN, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- GRANDY, G. (2009) Intrinsic Case Study. In: MILLS, A.J., DUREPOS, G. and WIEBE, E. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Reference Online, pp. 500-502.
- GUTMANN, A. and THOMPSON, D. (2004) *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- GUTMANN, A. and THOMPSON, D.F. (2010) Deliberative Democracy. In: COUTO, R.A. (ed.) *Political and Civil Leadership*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Reference Online, pp. 325-333.
- HALLAHAN, K. (1999) Seven Models of Framing: Implications for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(3), pp. 205-242.
- HEINER, R. (2006) *Social Problems: An Introduction to Critical Constructionism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- HEWAVITHARANA, S. (1995) Some Thoughts Concerning Participation in Development. *Journal of Development Communication*, 6(1), pp. 38-45.
- HUANG, K. (1995) *A Comparison between Media Frames and Audience Frames: The case of the hill-Thomas controversy*. Thesis (PhD), University of Wisconsin.
- JACOBSON, T. (1996) Conclusion: Prospects for theoretical development, In: SERVAES, J., JACOBSON, T. and WHITE, S. (eds.) *Participatory Communication for Social Change*. New Delhi: SAGE, pp. 266-77.
- JEFFREY, R. (2000) *India's Newspaper Revolution: Capitalism, Politics, and the Indian-Language Press 1977-199*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- JENSON, K.L. and Jankowski, N.W. (eds.) (1991) *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*. New York: Routledge.
- KESHAVA, S.R. and MANJUNATHA, N. (2012) Farmer's Suicides in India: Issues and Concerns. *Indian Streams Research Journal*, 2(1), pp. 1-4.
- MILLER, M.M. (1997) Frame Mapping and Analysis of News Coverage of Contentious Issues. *Social Science Computer Review*, 15 (4), pp. 367-378.
- MISHRA, S. (2008) Risks, Farmers' Suicides and Agrarian Crisis in India: Is there a way out? *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 63(1), pp. 38-54.
- MOHAN, G. and STOKKE, K. (2000) Participatory Development and Empowerment: the dangers of localism. *Third World Quarterly*, 21(2), pp. 247-68.
- NAGARAJ, K. (2008) *Farmers' Suicides in India: Magnitudes, trends and spatial patterns*. Chennai: Bharathi Puthakalayam.

- NAGTHAN, S., PODDAR, R., KUNNAL, L.B., BASVARAJA. H., and BANAKAR, B. (2011) A Probe into Socio-Economic and Psychological Profile of Farmers' Suicide in Karnataka. *Karnataka J. Agricultural Science*, 24(2), pp.157-160.
- NEUMAN, W.R., JUST, M.R., and CRIGLER, A.N. (1992) *Common Knowledge: News and the construction of political meaning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- NEYAZI, T.A. (2011) Politics After Vernacularisation: Hindi Media and Indian Democracy. *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, XLVI(10), pp. 75-82.
- NINAN, S. (2007) *Headlines from the Heartland: Reinventing the Hindi Public Sphere*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- PANT, S. (2009) International Development Theories. In: LITTLEJOHN, S.W. and FOSS, K.A. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Reference Online, pp. 542-47.
- PARKINSON, J. (2003) Legitimacy Problems in Deliberative Democracy. *Political Studies*, 51, pp. 180-196.
- PRASSAD, C.D. (1999) Suicide Deaths and Quality of Indian Cotton: Perspectives from history of technology and Khadi movement. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(5), pp. 12-21.
- PRICE, V., TEWKSBURY, D., and POWERS, E. (1997) Switching Trains of Thought: The impact of news frames on readers' cognitive responses. *Communication Research*, 24(5), pp. 481-506.
- ROBERTS, J.M. (2010) Public Sphere. In: BEVIR, M. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Political Theory*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Reference Online, pp. 1120-1124.
- ROY, T. (2011) Language Press in India: A Study of Contemporary Bengali Journalism. *Global Media Journal-Indian Edition*, June 2011, pp. 1-9.
- SAGUY, A.C. (2004) What is Sexual Harassment? From capitol hill to the Sorbonne. *Thomas Jefferson Law Review*, 27(1), pp. 45-56.
- SAINATH, P. (2007) A Farmer is Committing Suicide Every 32 minutes, *Counter Punch*. Available at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2007/11/17/a-farmer-is-committing-suicide-every-32-minutes/> (Accessed 2012-5-30)
- SANDERS, L.M. (1997) Against Deliberation. *Political Theory*, 25(3), pp. 347-376.
- SEN, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: University Press.
- SEVALY, S. (2001) Involving Stakeholders in Aquaculture Policy-making, Planning and Management. In: SUBASINGHE, R.P., BUENO, P., PHILLIPS, M.J., HOUGH, C., MCGLADDERY, S.E. and ARTHUR, J.R. (eds.) *Aquaculture in the Third Millennium: Technical Proceedings of the Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium, Bangkok, 20-25 September 2000*. NACA: Bangkok, pp. 83-93.

- SNOW, D.A., ROCHFORD, E.B., WORDEN, S.K., and BENFORD, R.D. (1986) Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review* 51(4), pp. 464-481.
- SPARKS, C. (2007) *Globalization, Development and the Mass Media*. London: SAGE Publications.
- TANKARD, J. (2001) The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing. In: REESE, S., GANDY, O. and GRANT, A. (eds.) *Framing Public Life*. London: Lawrence Elbaum, pp. 95-106.
- TAYLOR, P.C. (1996) Mythmaking and Mythbreaking in the Mathematics Classroom. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 31(1-2), pp. 151-173.
- YIN, R.K. (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Appendix

October 2009 Articles

A. Times of India

(<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/advancesearch.cms>)

1. 13,000 hectares of land brought under cultivation (2009-10-29)
2. Drama troupe to salute flood victims' spirit (2009-10-26)
3. Angry with SAP, farmers plan agitation (2009-10-25)
4. BSP fails to open account this time too (2009-10-25)
5. Congress gains in Vidarbha despite heavy odds (2009-10-24)
6. After the Maha Victory (2009-10-24)
7. N Karnataka good breeding for jawans (2009-10-23)
8. Roaring tiger turns into cowering kitten (2009-10-23)
9. After fourth-place finish, gloom envelopes Matoshree (2009-10-23)
10. Mass kisan marriage to save farmers from debt trap (2009-10-23)
11. EVMs have become 'electronic victory machines' for Congress: BJP (2009-10-22)
12. Mass marriage to save farmers from debt trap (2009-10-21)
13. Cong-NCP in for a setback in Vidarbha? (2009-10-21)
14. Hung assembly could (2009-10-21)
15. Hung House could cause more distress to cotton growers (2009-10-21)
16. Three farmers end lives (2009-10-20)
17. Five farmers end life in Diwali (2009-10-20)
18. Two farmers commit suicide in Warora (2009-10-20)
19. Two farmers die in western Orissa (2009-10-19)
20. Rs 6,000 crore sought as temporary relief (2009-10-19)
21. 'Harassed' agri officer commits suicide (2009-10-19)
22. Two teachers misbehave with girl students, suspended (2009-10-16)
23. Banks to reschedule farmers loans (2009-10-16)
24. girl drowns self (2009-10-15)
25. farmer commits suicide in Bellary (2009-10-14)
26. officer's face blacked over farmers' suicide (2009-10-12)
27. Chilli crop failure claims one life (2009-10-12)
28. Spurned lover kills girl in restaurant (2009-10-12)
29. Debt-ridden farmer commits suicide (2009-10-12)
30. Rebels make for interesting contests in Gondia (2009-10-12)
31. Hold state, LS polls together to save money (2009-10-12)
32. Raj issues 'diktat' an hour before deadline (2009-10-12)
33. Shocked farmers demand probe into twin suicides (2009-10-11)
34. 'Am I the culprit?' (2009-10-10)
35. Ragged Howrah fresher kills self (2009-10-10)
36. Home min's Centre-state ties remark absurd: BJP (2009-10-10)
37. Forum of women's groups formulates manifesto for candidates (2009-10-08)
38. Rising prices could prove costly for DF (2009-10-08)
39. Forum of women's groups formulates manifesto for candidates (2009-10-07)
40. family suicides a phenomenon of middle-class India (2009-10-07)
41. Babytai to campaign against cotton crop (2009-10-06)
42. Maharashtra may be headed for hung assembly (2009-10-06)

43. Debt-ridden farmer takes poison (2009-10-05)
44. Munde makes a splash on a rainy day (2009-10-05)
45. War of words: Thackeray cousins lash out at each other (2009-10-04)
46. 53% people want a change: BJP survey (2009-10-02)
47. Follow footsteps of Gandhi, Sardar: President (2009-10-02)
48. Gohil demands ban on RSS (2009-10-02)

Irrelevant articles: 21, 28, 34, 35, 47

Repeated articles: 9, 12, 15, 39

B. The Hindu

(www.thehindu.com/search/advanced.do)

1. Farmer's suicide in Naveen's home district? (2009-10-31)
2. Mother kills daughter and herself (2009-10-31)
3. 'Pay pension to farmers' (2009-10-31)
4. Action plan to address FTA concerns soon (2009-10-30)
5. Naveen announces package for farmers (2009-10-29)
6. Farmers commit suicide (2009-10-28)
7. Farmer ends life (2009-10-28)
8. Walk the talk on inclusion (2009-10-27)
9. Naveen convenes meet to finalise rabi action plan (2009-10-27)
10. Untouchability rampant in Villupuram: CPI(M) (2009-10-27)
11. Dose of optimism (2009-10-26)
12. Dose of optimism (2009-10-26)
13. Seer for waiver of farm loans taken by flood-hit (2009-10-26)
14. Challenge and opportunity for Congress-NCP (2009-10-25)
15. Naveen asks official to look into farmers' suicide (2009-10-25)
16. Loss assessment method criticised (2009-10-25)
17. Challenge and opportunity for Congress-NCP (2009-10-25)
18. Assembly verdicts (2009-10-24)
19. Congress, CPI (M) blame State for farmers' suicide (2009-10-24)
20. Assembly verdicts (2009-10-24)
21. Farmer ends life in Bidar (2009-10-24)
22. No rotation of CM post: Congress (2009-10-23)
23. Cong-NCP combine scores a hat-trick in Maharashtra (2009-10-23)
24. Cong sweeps Maharashtra, Arunachal (2009-10-23)
25. Ryot's suicide: Congress, BJP stage protest (2009-10-23)
26. Farmer ends life (2009-10-23)
27. Congress, NCP do better than expected (2009-10-23)
28. Kundagol farmers take out padayatra to Dharwad (2009-10-22)
29. Farmer commits suicide in Nabarangpur district? (2009-10-22)
30. Five held on murder charge (2009-10-22)
31. Minister seeks official's suspension (2009-10-21)
32. BJP demands resignation of Naveen, Rout (2009-10-21)
33. NFBS: 400 families benefit (2009-10-21)
34. Two farmers commit suicide (2009-10-21)
35. Two farmers end lives (2009-10-21)
36. Ramadoss to lead delegation of farmers to meet Karunanidhi (2009-10-21)

37. Rs. 6,000 crore to be sought as temporary relief: Yeddyurappa (2009-10-20)
38. Farmer's suicide issue hots up (2009-10-19)
39. Woman official ends life (2009-10-19)
40. For global leaders (2009-10-19)
41. Probe misappropriation of relief funds: Chiru (2009-10-17)
42. Inter student 'ends life' in hostel (2009-10-17)
43. Six end life in Karimnagar district (2009-10-14)
44. LDF poll campaign launched (2009-10-14)
45. State orders enquiry into suicide by farmers (2009-10-14)
46. Farmer commits suicide (2009-10-14)
47. LDF poll campaign launched (2009-10-14)
48. Maharashtra: there is no alternative? (2009-10-14)
49. A candle in the wind (2009-10-13)
50. BJP protest against ryots' suicides (2009-10-13)
51. 'Mines scam probe a farce' (2009-10-13)
52. A candle in the wind (2009-10-13)
53. Maharashtra: there is no alternative (2009-10-13)
54. Getting real (2009-10-12)
55. K. Balagopal: a memory to be cherished (2009-10-10)
56. K. Balagopal: a memory to be cherished (2009-10-10)
57. Drama queen gets real (2009-10-10)
58. Drama queen gets real (2009-10-10)
59. Voters will elect Sena-BJP Govt in Oct. 13 polls: Uddhav (2009-10-09)
60. 'Maharashtra development taken back-set under Cong-NCP' (2009-10-08)
61. Drama queen gets real (2009-10-08)
62. Drama queen gets real (2009-10-08)
63. On the brink of starvation (2009-10-07)
64. Farmer commits suicide (2009-10-07)
65. Deficit rainfall in Nizamabad (2009-10-07)
66. Beware parties invoking Shavji: Sonia (2009-10-07)
67. Drama queen gets real (2009-10-07)
68. Beware of parties invoking Shavji: Sonia (2009-10-06)
69. The battle for Maharashtra (2009-10-06)
70. Compensation sought for crop loss (2009-10-06)
71. Mayawati's counsel to North Indians in Mumbai (2009-10-06)
72. Drama queen gets real (2009-10-05)
73. UPA's anti-labour policies lead to unemployment: Brinda Karat (2009-10-05)
74. It is water, not elections, that excites people in Beed district (2009-10-05)
75. Mayawati's counsel to north Indian voters in Mumbai (2009-10-05)
76. Mayawati's counsel to north Indian voters in Mumbai (2009-10-05)
77. It is water, not elections, that excites people in Beed district (2009-10-05)
78. Drama queen gets real (2009-10-05)
79. "Women's problems are every one's problems" (2009-10-04)
80. "Women's problems are every one's problems" (2009-10-04)
81. Concern over suicides by tenant farmers (2009-10-03)
82. Trade pact bodies ill for farm sector: CPI (M) (2009-10-03)
83. Large turnout to form 'human chain' (2009-10-03)
84. Rashtrapati Bhavan intervenes in Modi seating controversy (2009-10-02)
85. Rashtrapati Bhavan intervenes in Modi seating controversy (2009-10-02)
86. Life and death issues not on parties' radar in Marathwada (2009-10-01)

Irrelevant Articles: 2, 10, 30, 33, 39, 42, 54, 57, 58, 61, 62, 67, 72
Repeat Articles: 12, 17, 20, 35, 47, 52, 53, 56, 68, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 85

C. The New Indian Express

(newindianexpress.com/search/)

1. Poverty haunted this farmer (2009-10-31)
2. Debt-ridden ryot suffers brain stroke (2009-10-31)
3. Cong fact-finding team meets Guv (2009-10-31)
4. Another farmer ends life (2009-10-31)
5. Admit drought, former HC judge tells government (2009-10-30)
6. Ugly trend continues, another farmer ends life (2009-10-29)
7. Congress to form 2 panels for farmers' meet (2009-10-29)
8. BJP team to visit Nuapada, meet SIET student's (2009-10-29)
9. Decade after, villages yet to return to pre-cycl (2009-10-29)
10. Government plans aid, dusts off old schemes (2009-10-29)
11. Naveen's concern (2009-10-28)
12. Rs 1,095 cr loan for rabi farmers (2009-10-27)
13. Farmer hangs self, another tries to end life (2009-10-27)
14. Of Bullshit and a green activist's battle agains (2009-10-26)
15. Samruddha Odisha demands crop loss surveys (2009-10-26)
16. Flood relief works on a war footing: Shobha (2009-10-26)
17. District Admn responsible forfor suicides: MP (2009-10-25)
18. Now, official team to assess crop loss (2009-10-25)
19. Deathwatch in Orissa (2009-10-24)
20. 194 gm paddy from one decimal land! (2009-10-24)
21. Declare Sambalpur drought-hit: Congress (2009-10-24)
22. CPM threatens agitation (2009-10-24)
23. Deaths low compared to other states: BJD (2009-10-24)
24. Government's neglect exposed: Congress (2009-10-24)
25. 'Crop loss, loan burden behind suicides' (2009-10-24)
26. Pavala Vaddi scheme for Karimnagar small farmers (2009-10-24)
27. Thackeray blames people for poll debacle (2009-10-23) – picture: politician, group of 7 men pressed into the photo, colorful
28. ...Promises not kept (2009-10-23)
29. No money for last rites (2009-10-23)
30. BYJD extended executive to meet today (2009-10-23)
31. Naveen assures action (2009-10-23)
32. Crop failure pushes farmers to debt and death (2009-10-23)
33. Failure was arithmetic not political: BJP (2009-10-23)
34. Government yet to come to bereaved families (2009-10-22)
35. Despair spreads: Farmer ends life in Nabarangpur (2009-10-22)
36. Team spends 'less than 30 minutes to find fact' (2009-10-21)
37. Resign, BJP tells Naveen (2009-10-21)
38. The inflation we forget (2009-10-21)
39. State to ask Centre for Rs 6,000 crore (2009-10-20)

40. Farmers block NH, demand drought-hit status (2009-10-20)
41. Probe by Agri Minister sought (2009-10-20)
42. Another farmer dies (2009-10-20)
43. Shrill cry for irrigation water (2009-10-20)
44. Another farmer's death fuels anger (2009-10-20)
45. Additional irrigation potential (2009-10-19)
46. Farmer suicided over crop loss, admits BJD (2009-10-19)
47. Government, Opposition fight it out (2009-10-19)
48. Another farmer ends life (2009-10-09)

After analyzing the above articles, I felt confident in my grasp of the frameworks. I continued skimming through 12 more articles simply to be sure that no further frameworks would emerge. Please note that these articles have not been as thoroughly examined as the 48 articles above. The names of the articles are as follows:

49. CPM demands loan waiver scheme (2009-10-17)
50. 'People will vote against Centre's policies' (2009-10-15)
51. Crop loss: Matter of life and debt for farmers (2009-10-15) – B&W Picture: People of flooded district going back to their homes in horse and buggies
52. Loss drove farmer to suicide, admits Collector (2009-10-14)
53. Orissa BJP leaders held for manhandling official (2009-10-13)
54. Farmers let it out on official (2009-10-13)
55. BJP hits out at Govt for failure to act (2009-10-13)
56. Congress MP demands separate W Orissa state (2009-10-13)
57. Many contenders as Maharashtra readies for polls (2009-10-12)
58. Villagers lock agriculture officials (2009-10-12)
59. Suicide: Farmer leader decries admn's remark (2009-10-10)
60. Farmers dispute administration's version (2009-10-07)

Of these 60 articles, all were deemed relevant for the study.
