"Brides are not for burning" : a content analysis of newspaper coverage of dowry in India, 1999-2004

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“Brides are not for burning”: a content analysis of newspaper coverage of dowry in India, 1999-2004

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

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has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

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ABSTRACT

In India, the number of dowry-related deaths has been increasing exponentially. Though there have been recent advancements in the status of Indian women in various fields, this commercialization of marriage and the violence against women it breeds continues to be a major concern. To understand the extent to which dowry has been the subject of national discourse, this study explores national and regional newspaper coverage of dowry over a period of five years and the factors that led to this coverage. Using the hoopla hypothesis, the study employs a content analysis of 3,358 newspaper articles and interviews with a convenience sample of editors from the same newspapers.

Across all four newspapers studied, there were discernable pre-hoopla, hoopla, and post-hoopla stages. The hoopla period, characterized by the most number of stories about dowry, was ushered in by identifiable triggering events. A comparison of the national and regional newspapers’ coverage showed that the regional paper the Tribune published the highest number of dowry-related articles. The coverage was more intense in the national newspapers that produced longer articles about the topic. The national coverage was more investigative and in-depth while the regional papers consisted more of short and event-related reports. Both national and regional papers had a similar attitude toward dowry and women—they are anti-dowry and demonstrated a pro-women slant. This attitude of the papers is reflected in the interviews with the editors who perceived that their newspaper tends to portray dowry as a social evil.

The results also show that regardless of the scope of coverage (national vs. regional), coverage intensity is related to the prevalence of dowry within a sub-national region and the “newsworthiness” of dowry cases.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

"Air hostess in deadly dowry drama" (www.timesofindia.com, April 25, 2004);

"Dowry case: Hooda held, released" (www.timesofindia.com, April 26, 2004);

"A dowry to bail out her marriage" (www.hindustantimes.com, April 29, 2004). These are just three headlines in a span of five days, from two of India’s premier newspapers. India might be making news as the number one recipient of outsourced computer-related jobs from the US or for hosting the Commonwealth games in 2010, but headlines like these seem to nullify the real sense of development in the country.

Indian women have actually come a long way, from being completely suppressed in a patriarchal society to working at par with men in almost every field. Indeed, from NASA scientists to medical pioneers, Indian women have shown their excellence in every field. The feeling of elation falls flat, however, when almost every other day, the media carry headlines of dowry cases and bride burning.

Since India’s independence from British colonial rule in 1947, the country has seen gradual changes with respect to how it perceives the role of women in society. Many widespread social practices like ‘sati’ (where a woman self-immolates or is made to burn herself on her husband’s funeral pyre as a gesture of fidelity and loyalty), the ‘purdah’ system (where women are made to cover themselves completely to indicate modesty), have been almost completely eradicated. But the deplorable practice of dowry (paid in cash or kind by the bride’s family to the groom’s) is still prevalent in a number of states, particularly in the northern belt. Dowry is still given and taken by not only the illiterate section of the population but even by the educated elites in India’s metropolitan areas. Modern industrial
capitalism has eradicated the practice of dowry in Europe and in many parts of Southeast Asia, but unfortunately it is still prevalent in India.

Almost two millennia ago, “The Laws of Manu” (200 AD) described dowry as ‘streedhan,’ the gifts that a bride gets from her home. It was a form of inheritance for women. Dowry was supposed to be the security that a woman carries with her in case of any misfortune that might befall her husband’s house. Over a period of time this voluntary practice became life threatening to those it is meant to benefit the most. As Veena Talwar Oldenburg (2003) points out, “making dowry demands is a cultural oxymoron that bears no resemblance to the historical meaning of this institution” (www.timesofindia.com, January 3, 2003).

The East India Company first linked dowry to female infanticide, one of the justifications used to legitimize British rule in India. Ostensibly, one of the civilizing missions of the British is to free Indians from a “barbaric” culture. But Oldenburg (2002) demonstrates that dowry demands increased extensively during the colonial period (1870-1947) when the British introduced severe taxation. After 1947, dowry rates fell, but the economic crisis of the 1970s again saw a rise in the practice. Historically, dowry has been linked to the economic conditions of the people, and in its present form, it has been completely commercialized. As India modernized, dowry became an instrument to make money for the upwardly mobile class.

Today, dowry not only means gold, clothes and utensils, but also consumer items like cars, refrigerators, furniture, washing machines, television sets and sometimes even money for the groom to study abroad. The marriage depends on the money and gifts the bride’s family is able to pay. In most cases, the profession of the groom determines the amount of
dowry. An Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer would normally get the highest rate, followed by doctors, engineers and other professionals. Dowry has thus become a status symbol. During the marriage ceremony, articles comprising the dowry are proudly displayed in the wedding hall.

The problem, however, does not stop at the demand for dowry. After the marriage, there are numerous ceremonies and rituals when dowry is demanded again in the form of gifts or money. In fact, it is a life-long struggle for the woman to keep her in-laws and husband happy by bringing money from her parents. When the dowry amount is not considered sufficient, the bride is often harassed and abused. This abuse could worsen to the point when the husband or his family kills the bride, often burning her, which are reported as accidents in the kitchen or as suicides.

The number of dowry-related deaths is increasing day by day. In 1988, 2,209 women were reportedly killed in dowry-related incidents. In 1994, the figure rose to 5,199, and in 2001, as many as 6,851 dowry-related deaths were reported (National Crimes Bureau, Home Ministry, India, 2004). It is important to note that these official statistics are overly conservative because dowry-related deaths are immensely under reported. Despite the existence of the 1961 Dowry Prohibition Act, and the rigorous laws to prevent dowry deaths under the 1986 constitutional amendments, convictions are rare. The judiciary system itself does not take cases seriously and even the parents or relatives of the victims do not pursue it enough. There are some rare instances where the law has punished the in-laws and the husband although such cases have taken more than 16 years to litigate. Most of the time, the parents of the murdered bride give in to despair and prefer to live with their sorrow.
Getting rid of this practice, which deems women and completely cheapens and commercializes the sacredness of marriage, is a big challenge for today's youth. It is a mammoth task for a young girl to go against society, family and tradition by refusing to succumb to dowry demands. It would, of course, be easier for men to refuse to accept dowry, but then only few would say no to a list of gifts that come as a bonus along with the wife.

Under these circumstances, the story of Nisha Sharma made headlines in May 2003, when she handed over her would-be husband to the police on the day of their wedding for pressuring her parents for more dowry. For her actions, Nisha Sharma attained celebrity status overnight. Nisha finally got married the year after, sans dowry, despite the fact that she had called off her first marriage, an act that could easily bring shame to the whole family and repulse future suitors. Nisha's example gave courage to other young girls and families to say no to the practice.

This study explores the newspaper coverage of the dowry practice in India over a period of five years, from 1999 to 2004. It aims to answer the following key questions: How did the newspaper coverage of dowry change over the five-year period? What themes related to dowry have been prominent in the newspaper coverage? What has been the aftermath of the coverage of Nisha's case and the intense media attention given to it? After Nisha's story made headlines, there was a deluge of dowry-related harassment stories reported in the media. What role can the media play in the empowerment and "coming out" of silenced female voices in a developing country like India?

There have been a number of studies that examined dowry in India. Since the time of Indian independence, the first voices of protest against dowry were raised. Mahatma Gandhi saw it as a social evil and criticized the custom in his papers like the "Harijan." In the 1970s
and 1980s, there were widespread anti-dowry campaigns, and many women’s groups formed
to battle against the injustice and to offer support to victims. There has been intense media
coverage of the issue as well because dowry is directly related to female infanticide and
feticide, as a result of which the sex ratio is now precariously unbalanced. Especially in
middle class families, having a girl child is dreaded because of the dowry that parents will
have to pay later.

Nisha Sharma inspired many other similar cases of defiance. For example, a young
woman called Farzana from Delhi walked out of her new marriage, and Vidya
Balasubramaniam of Chennai fought against her dowry-demanding in-laws on her wedding
day. Media coverage of these cases received immense support from readers in the form of
letters to the editors and e-mails. Research in this area can thus bring about greater awareness
of the debilitating impact of this practice, especially among young girls who are not even
aware that they have a choice of saying no to dowry.

Dowry is wrapped in the guise of tradition whose devastating effects need to be
brought out in the open. This study covers a number of dowry-related cases over five years,
Nisha’s being the most recent. Nisha Sharma’s case especially highlights the fact that women
today have a choice. They do not need to suffer from dowry-related problems throughout
their married life, get killed or commit suicide. Their parents, on the other hand, need to
realize that dowry is not a problem that can be solved by giving in to the groom’s demands,
another lesson that can be learned by examining how the Indian media covered the Nisha
Sharma incident and its aftermath. Awareness of issues like dowry is a step forward because
awareness can cause change. Studies like this can encourage women to come forward to
report the crimes against them. The media can play an important role in exposing the ills inherent in the dowry tradition. Studies like this can bring about that awareness.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dowry in India: A Backgrounder

The historical origins of the modern dowry system in India can be traced back to the 1800s, when dowry meant a collection of clothes, household items, furniture and cattle voluntarily given to the bride by her father at the time of marriage. These items were collected over time and contributions were made to it by family and neighbors. Dowry was, therefore, originally not a burden on the father. As Oldenburg (2002) points out, “There is no evidence in this period that the groom’s family either bargained for a dowry or made dowry demands; it is emphatically seen as a matter of honor for the groom’s side to accept what is given as dowry to the bride” (p. 98).

Oldenburg (2002) traced the roots of the dowry system to the days of British rule. Part of the “civilizing missions” of the British included agricultural taxes to be paid by farmers, effectively increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. There was a slow transformation of the peasant economy to a market and capitalist one. Dowry was one of the casualties of this change (Oldenburg, 2002). Parents were eager to marry their daughters off to richer families, and the bridegrooms’ families took advantage of this. The voluntary element in dowry was replaced by an obligation on the part of the bride’s father to please the bridegroom’s family. The bride’s family thus became vulnerable to the demands of the bridegroom (Chirmade, 1992).

However, there are other scholars (i.e., Mandelbaum, 1999) who speculate that the shift in the dowry system might have arrived even before British rule, when Hindu parents were eager to protect their daughters from Muslim invaders.
The shift in the dowry system from a voluntary and customary ritual to a modern socio-cultural evil has been the subject of many studies. Ranjana Sheel (1999), in her extensive study on the roots of the practice, concludes that, "Dowry, in its historical context, may thus be more appropriately viewed as arising from both compensation to a girl in lieu of the full right of inheritance and from hypergamy to maintain or provide a desired social status" (p. 27).

There are two current major positions of women activists on the issue of dowry (Sheel, 1999). Madhu Kishwar, editor of the women’s magazine Manushi, argues that dowry is the result of inheritance rights. "In contemporary debates, dowry has been explained in the context of the asymmetrical relation between bride-givers and bride-takers as well as women’s resourcelessness and lack of inheritance rights" (Sheel, 1999, p. 137). On the other hand, activists like Omvedt, Parliwala and Kelkar explain dowry in the context of "the changing caste structure within a capitalist economy and of material production" (Sheel, 1999, p. 137).

One of the most common justifications for dowry is that a daughter does not get any share of her father’s property, so in her marriage, she gets gifts in cash and kind, as a compensatory tactic. When the Hindu Succession Act came into effect in 1956, the Hindu daughter earned the right to inherit from her father (Beri, 1988). In practice, however, this is rarely seen. Though dowry is thought to be a form of female inheritance, a bride does not have any real control over the use of this property. As Stone and James (1995) mention in their study, Miller (1981) and Sharma (1984) have "convincingly shown that whereas this may be true in many parts of the world, in India dowry is property which passes from the bride’s family to that of the groom,"
and that even if perceived to be ‘women’s property’ (streedhan) by some Indians themselves, in fact a bride does not have (and historically never had) genuine control over the use and distribution of this property” (p. 126).

Women in the dowry system can be seen as the “vehicles of property transmission” and not as inheritors. In this context women have no control over property or marriage arrangements but suffer harassment, physical abuse and even death in their roles as bringers of dowry (Stone and James, 1995).

The social and cultural effects of dowry are many and devastating. Even after the initial dowry by the bride’s father, in most cases, the bride is tortured mentally and physically for more dowry after marriage. In many cases this torture leads to the murder or suicide of the bride (Chirmade, 1992). The dowry system reduces the woman to a commodity. Children born in such unhealthy conditions can be adversely affected. Apart from other cultural issues, it is also because of the dowry system that a girl child is considered a parental liability, thus resulting in the rise of female infanticide (Krishnamurthy, 1981).

Dowry-Related Crimes

Since India’s independence in 1947, there have been continuous voices of protest against dowry. The state has played the role of a social reformer. Dowry has become the subject of many novels, films, street dramas and political campaign speeches. Amidst this scenario, Goody and Tambiah (1973) published the book Dowry and Bridewealth as a testament against the anti-dowry tide. On the other hand, the government-sponsored pamphlet Towards Equality (1974) took a strong anti-dowry stance. Ranjana Kumari’s (1989) study, Brides are not for Burning, seeks to establish that dowry is not to be regarded as a pre-mortem inheritance on the part of the daughters.
Dowry murders attracted the attention of women's organizations in the late 1970s, an epiphany of sorts that sparked nationwide protests. By 1979, one of the first cases of dowry-related deaths became the subject of serious press coverage. This was the case of Tarvinder Kaur, a 24-year-old new bride from New Delhi. She protested against the constant demands for dowry to expand her husband's business, which resulted in her death on May 17, 1979. In her dying declaration, Tarvinder clearly stated that her mother-in-law and sister-in-law set her on fire. However, the police registered her death as a case of suicide. Women's groups, angered by this blatant police ineptitude, organised a joint platform called Stree Sangharsh (women's struggle) and staged a massive demonstration. This act of protest is said to have launched the women's campaign against dowry in India (Gandhi and Shah, 1992).

In the legal battle over dowry, the murder of 19-year old Sudha Goel was a significant marker as it was the first case in which the accused -- Sudha's husband, mother-in-law and brother-in-law -- were sentenced to death by the trial court in 1985. Her husband was so sure he would be acquitted of the charges that he had married for the second time again with dowry (Bordewich, 1986). Though the Indian Supreme Court later sentenced the accused with life imprisonment, this case triggered important constitutional amendments to the existing dowry laws. This case also demonstrates that responsible neighbors and active women's organizations can help in bringing about justice (Jethmalani, 1995).

Another significant dowry-related murder case is that of Tripti Sharma, an employee in the Ministry of Defense, who was burned to death by her husband and his family in 1986. Despite strong evidence, the accused were acquitted, having convinced the jury that Tripti had committed suicide due to mental illness and depression (Jethmalani, 1995).
Tripti Sharma’s case is not alone; there are many more cases in which the accused get away without any punishment. In most cases, burning the victim is the method of choice because of its “forensic advantages, rather than for Hindu mythological or mystical reasons” (Oldenburg, 2002, p. xi).

Dowry in India persists not only because of the difficulty in enforcing the law or the pressures from the groom’s family, but also because the bride’s family continues to sustain it. In spite of the widespread awareness of the consequences of dowry, it is believed to be a way of buying happiness for the bride (Stone and James, 1995). In a study done by Rao and Rao in 1980, students’ expectations of dowry for persons of different educational background was examined. Though the majority of the students considered the dowry system as “evil” and “unimportant for a marriage,” most of the respondents’ brothers received dowry or gave dowry for their sister’s marriages. An inconsistent attitude toward dowry, therefore, was observed in most respondents. In spite of the student’s disapproval of dowry as a social norm, they held different standards regarding their own marriage (Rao and Rao, 1980).

The continuing prevalence of dowry has often been related to the sheer commercialisation of marriages. There is a positive correlation between a man’s education and status to the dowry his family demands. As a groom’s educational experience increases, the dowry demanded for the marriage also increases (Rao and Rao, 1980).

In order to have a more focused view of what women themselves think about dowry, Saroja Krishnaswamy (1995) conducted a study to learn about the attitude of educated and employed Hindu married and unmarried women. The unmarried educated women were found to be more favorable toward dowry, which might be an indication of the growing materialism
among the younger generation—"one should buy the best things available and affordable to enjoy life even if that thing happens to be one’s bridegroom" (Krishnaswamy, 1995, p. 39).

**Dowry in the Media**

Dowry-inspired murder cases received immense media coverage from the late 1970s to the early 1980s mainly because of the active role played by women’s organizations that brought to light many dowry-related murder cases in strong anti-dowry campaigns. Joseph and Sharma (1994) point out that “These incidents marked the beginning of a change in media coverage of this issue which till then had consisted of small items routinely reporting these deaths on the city page” (p. 34). A study done on the coverage of the dowry issue during this period (1979 to 1984) reveals the impact of the women’s movement on the media. Joseph and Sharma (1994) did a content analysis of the media coverage of dowry in three national and two regional newspapers. They concluded that there was a noticeable improvement in the coverage of dowry in the national papers, although the coverage of regional papers remained unchanged.

Empirical studies on the custom of dowry are few because it is a sensitive topic. Studies in this area cannot be free of important methodological limitations (Prasad, 1994). In view of these problems, some researchers (i.e., Gelles, 1987 and Naik, 1984) suggest the use of “unobtrusive measures” such as content analysis to support findings (Prasad, 1994). Indeed, Prasad (1994) used content analysis to examine the characteristics of dowry-related newspaper stories. She used this data to determine the frequency and uniformity of certain characteristics in reports of dowry-related death or abuse. Three English dailies and six regional language papers were studied for a period of seven years (1981 to 1988). Three major characteristics that emerged from the study were: the victim is a young woman in her
twenties, not well educated, and completely dependent on her husband or his relatives. In more than 80% of these cases, the end was death (Prasad, 1994).

In the last two decades, dowry-related murder cases came to be more frequently reported (Garg, 1990). Even though there is an increase in the number of reported dowry related cases, it is safe to assume that not all cases are reported. A national survey conducted by the All India Democratic Women’s Association in 2002 reveals that the dowry system is widespread and has permeated every section of society (Rajalakshmi, 2004). In the 1980s, the media coverage of dowry was triggered by the anti-dowry campaigns of women’s organizations, while in 2003 it was the case of Nisha Sharma, who sent her husband to jail for demanding more dowry on the day of her marriage. Nisha represents the glimmer of a trend that has already begun (Sharma, www.indiatogether.org/06/01/2003). Nisha’s fight set a trend because others have followed in her footsteps. Her case received extensive media coverage in India and the international media where she was featured in the CBS News, the Oprah Winfrey Show, and the BBC World News Reports.

The present study takes a look at national and regional newspaper coverage of dowry from 1999 to 2004. The few studies on the Indian media’s coverage of dowry carried out in the 1980s demonstrate a dearth of empirical research on the topic. The study is significant also because Nisha’s case has given a whole new dimension to the issue of dowry in India. It is indeed the best time to study the newspaper coverage of the issue and the role of the media in “bringing out” the silenced voices of many women. This study therefore asks: How has the Indian media covered this topic? What other events triggered media coverage about dowry as a social issue?
Theoretical Framework: Agenda Setting Leading to the Hoopla Effect

A theory relevant to this investigation begins with agenda setting. The idea that the agenda initiated by the news media influence the public’s own agenda has its roots in the 1922 book, Public Opinion by Walter Lippmann, where he wrote about “the world outside and the pictures in our heads.” He pointed out that the mass media are the connection between events that occur in the world and the images in our minds (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Lasswell in 1948 posed a question that became a model for mass communication investigation: “Who says what to whom via which channels and with what effect?” (quoted in Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 11). Lasswell argued that the two most important functions of the mass media are “surveillance” and “correlation.” In these two concepts lie the ideas of editorial gate keeping and the media’s role in directing our attention to specific issues. He pointed out the correlation of attention on particular issues at the same time by the media, the public, and the policymakers. McCombs and Shaw (1972) used this very concept to define the agenda setting function of the mass media (Dearing & Rogers, 1996).

In 1963, the conceptualization of agenda setting was advanced by Bernard Cohen, who wrote that “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (quoted in Salwen and Stacks, 1996, p. 96). But agenda setting was still just a concept without a name. In 1972, McCombs and Shaw carried out the first empirical studies on agenda setting. Challenging the limited effects model, McCombs and Shaw tested the proposition that by the day-to-day selection of news, the mass media influence public perception (Salwen and Stacks, 1996). This study found a significantly high rank-order correlation between the importance of five issues on the media agenda and their corresponding importance on the
public agenda, which provided empirical evidence to support the hypothesis (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The methodological approach was replicated in many studies (i.e., Funkhouser, 1973, Palmgreen and Clarke, 1977, Salwen, 1988, to name a few).

However, the development of the agenda setting theory over the years indicates that the influence of the media agenda is not universal (McCombs & Becker, 1979). Different variables, such as an individual's political knowledge or interpersonal communication frequency and intensity, could bring about different levels of media agenda effects. McCombs' continuing research, along with those of other scholars, have teased out different dimensions of the theory.

McCombs (1993) talks about four phases of expansion of the agenda setting theory beyond its original conception. By the time a study he did with Shaw was published in 1972, work had begun on the second phase. Besides replicating the findings of the original study, they also investigated the "contingent conditions" that boost or limit the media agenda setting effect. The theory entered its third phase during the 1976 US elections, when Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) extended the agenda into two new areas: (1) the agenda of candidates reported in the media and learned by the voters, and (2) the larger public agenda on all aspects of politics. In the 1980s, agenda setting entered its fourth phase with a focus on the sources of the media agenda. These phases are "points of emphasis in the larger communication process, not stages in which one succeeds or replaces its predecessor" (McCombs, 1993).

Among the various concepts explored over the years, one that stands out is the limited capacity of the public agenda. In earlier agenda setting research, Shaw & McCombs (1977) and Miller (1956) suggested a "zero-sum process" in which issues compete for media
and public attention. They found that the public agenda includes no more than five to seven
issues at any one time (Zhu, 1992). However, studies like Zhu's (1992) have concentrated on
single issues, noting that the rise of an issue in the public agenda is related to other
competing issues on both the media and public agendas. The results show both mutual
competition and one-way attraction among issues (Zhu, 1992).

McCombs and Zhu (1995) used three competing hypotheses about the trends in the
American public's agenda. They observed that the public agenda has increased (1) its
carrying capacity, (2) in diversity and (3) that the average duration of issues have become
shorter over time. Although a significant increase in the carrying capacity was not found, the
results provided strong evidence for an increase in agenda diversity and issue volatility. Issue
competition, in the absence of an expanded carrying capacity of issues, leads to a quicker rate
of issue turnover on the public agenda (McCombs & Zhu, 1995).

The basic hypothesis of agenda setting is that the media agenda affects the public
agenda (Salwen and Stacks, 1996). Various studies over the years, however, have looked at
many different aspects of agenda setting. McCombs' empirical research in Texas and Spain
defines the media's influence on both "what" we think about and "how" we think about it
(Ghanem, 1997). The theory proposes that the way the news media covers certain attributes
of a topic could directly affect how the public would think about that topic. McCombs,
Escober and Llamas (1998) compared the two levels of agenda setting, the agenda of
"issues" and the agenda of "attributes," and found that there is a slightly greater degree of
support for the agenda of "attributes."

In this study by McCombs et al. (1998), two sets of hypotheses were explored—
increase in media use for political information corresponds to (1) an increase in community
consensus about social priorities (first level agenda setting) and (2) an increase in community consensus about politicians' attributes (second level agenda setting). Though this study was about political information on the media agenda and its influence, the results can be significant for other studies like the present one on dowry. If, for example, the news media's coverage of dowry strongly indicates its dangerous effects on women, the public could begin to think of dowry as a threat to women's lives.

Researchers have examined another characteristic of agenda setting—second-level inter-media agenda setting (McCombs, Lopez-Escober, & Llamas, 2000). This aspect of agenda setting suggests that coverage by larger newspapers could influence the coverage by regional newspapers (Golan & Wanta, 2001). The development of second-level agenda-setting of the theory and its different dimensions testifies to its scope and links agenda setting to several other theories (Ghanem, 1997).

Over the past 35 years, the evolution of agenda setting has provided a common umbrella for a large number of research traditions and ideas in mass communication (McCombs, 1993). The first phases of agenda setting research concentrated on the question "who sets the public agenda—and under what conditions?" while the recent phase of research has moved its attention to "who sets the media agenda?" (McCombs, 1993, p. 60). This question has linked agenda setting research to a number of social science disciplines. The sociology of news literature and its vast range of concepts that influences the shaping of the daily agenda of news is relevant to this characteristic of agenda setting research. Studies done by Shoemaker and Reese (1991) explored perspectives like "media routines" and "organizational sociology." Breed's (1955) study on "news diffusion" is also relevant to this inter-media aspect of agenda setting (McCombs, 1993).
The hoopla effect

Related to this question of “who sets the media agenda?” (McCombs, 1993, p. 60), some researchers have explored the aspect of agenda setting theory that sees events as the cause of an issue arising in the media agenda. This aspect of agenda setting theory is relevant to the present study on dowry. In Rogers, Dearing & Chang’s (1991) study of the coverage of AIDS, different events associated with the disease kept AIDS in the media agenda. Traditional approaches to agenda setting has provided only partial explanations of issue development in the public sphere. Agenda setting, in this case, can be more broadly defined as the “study of how public issues gain or lose importance relative to other issues over time” (Rogers, et al., 1991). They found the existence of “peak periods” in the newspaper coverage of AIDS. Events such as the press release based on an editorial in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), the death of actor Rock Hudson from AIDS, and the news of 13-year old Ryan White accidentally contracting AIDS, brought about these “peak periods” in the media coverage of the AIDS epidemic. Events such as these cause a “triggering effect,” leading to an increase in coverage. Rogers et al. (1991) found that new public issues arise and replace existing issues. Similar to the “triggering effect” of Rogers et al., Perry (1996) gives the example of the cocaine-related death of basketball star Len Bias, an event that contributed to the rise of the drug issue among athletes in the media agenda.

Rogers et al’s (1991) study also compared the media coverage of AIDS and the actual reported cases of AIDS. The results showed that an increase in actual AIDS cases was not an indicator of the rise in newspaper coverage of the issue. In fact, in 1988, when the number of actual AIDS cases had gone up, newspaper coverage was low.
In most of the agenda setting studies, a content analysis of the media is carried out to understand the media agenda, and a public survey was conducted to obtain the public agenda. The present study is limited to a content analysis of the media coverage of dowry, which therefore precludes an analysis of the public agenda. In the media coverage of dowry in India, such events as the women’s anti-dowry movement, the first case of dowry-related death, or most recently, the case of Nisha Sharma, have kept the dowry issue in the media agenda for a long time, with coverage rising to a crescendo whenever such events occur.

This pattern in media coverage has been called the “hoopla effect” (Abbot and Eichmeier, 1998). The “hoopla effect” is another dimension of agenda setting theory similar to Rogers et al.’s., (1991) “peak periods.” According to the “hoopla effect,” media coverage of a certain issue rises to a crescendo because of a certain incident, and then declines (Abbot and Eichmeier, 1998). A similar pattern of media coverage of the dowry issue was evident during the 1980s in India, when women’s organizations first launched anti-dowry campaigns. The general hypothesis of this study is that the media coverage of dowry in India over a period of five years (1999 to 2004) would begin at a lower level, rise to a crescendo due to such events as the Nisha Sharma case, and then decline.

The coverage can be divided into three time periods: (1) pre-hoopla, characterised by a low level of coverage, (2) hoopla, characterized by a sharp rise in coverage and (3) post-hoopla, when the coverage declines in volume (Abbot and Eichmeier, 1998). Abbot and Eichmeir explains that, “the idea that there would be a predictable cycle of coverage of certain types of problems or innovations was put forward by Anthony Downs (1972), who was concerned about the patterns of media coverage of environmental issues” (Abbot and Eichmeier, 1998, p. 5).
Based on this literature review, the present study investigates the following questions related to the newspaper coverage of dowry in India over a period of five years (1999 to 2004):

(1) In general, what does the cycle of newspaper coverage of dowry look like over a five-year period? Is there a discernible hoopla effect from this pattern of coverage?

(2) Is there a difference among the four newspapers in terms of intensity of coverage (number of dowry-related articles and length of stories)?

(3) Does the coverage of national newspapers (Hindu and Times of India,) differ from that of regional newspapers (The Tribune and Telegraph) in terms of intensity and length as well as attitude toward dowry and women?

(4) Who are the sources quoted the most in the newspapers' coverage of dowry?

5) What are the journalistic values and routine demands that led to the newspapers' coverage of this social issue?
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Dowry-giving is an age-old tradition in India. Despite societal advances in many spheres, dowry remains a popular practice, and incidences of dowry-related crimes have escalated. These circumstances prevailed even with the advent of modern mass communication means. How did the Indian press cover this issue over a period of five years? Whose voices were privileged in that coverage? What are the journalistic values that led to that kind of coverage?

The Research Design

This study employed a content analysis of newspaper texts to answer these research questions. Berelson (1952) defines content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (quoted in Perry, 1996, p. 67). Kerlinger (2000) looks at content analysis in very similar ways, describing it as the “method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003, p. 141). Content analysis is systematic because the content to be studied is selected according to “explicit and consistently applied rules” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003, p. 141). Both sample selection and the evaluation process must be systematic. Sample selection follows proper procedures and all content for evaluation is treated in precisely the same manner. The coding system also follows a uniform system (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003).

The objective measurement of variables ensures that the study can be replicated by other researchers. In order to do so, the operational definitions and rules for classification of variables have to be explicitly laid down, so that other researchers could come to the same
conclusions. “Researchers conducting a content analysis follow carefully specified rules to categorize content” (Perry, 1996, p. 67). A clear set of criteria and procedures explains the sampling and categorization methods, so that the study can be called objective and reliable. “A study is reliable when the repeated measurement of the same material results in similar decisions or conclusions” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003, p. 156).

To study trends in newspaper coverage, the study has to be quantitative. Quantification makes it easier for researchers to summarize the results and make a concise report. Quantification also helps in comparing data from one time period to another, and give researchers statistical advantage in interpretation and analysis (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003).

In order to cross-validate the content analysis results, a convenience sample of editors in the newspapers under study was interviewed. This was done to provide a better feel for the editorial decisions that led to the coverage. Thus, this study adopted a triangulated approach by first content analyzing newspaper texts and then conducting the interviews. Triangulation “refers to the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to fully understand the nature of a research problem” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). By doing so, triangulation aims to enhance data accuracy.

**Sampling**

To arrive at the newspaper sample, a multistage sampling technique was applied in this study. This process consists of two stages. In the first stage, a sample of the content sources (the newspapers) was taken. The second step involved selecting the dates to be studied from among the population of newspapers chosen. This study examined national and regional newspaper coverage of dowry over a period of five years (1999-2004). In the first
stage, two national newspapers and the top two regional newspapers in terms of circulation were selected from the sampling universe of all Indian newspapers. The top two national newspapers were The Hindustan Times and The Hindu, however due to inadequate archives of The Hindustan Times available online, the second and the third newspapers, The Hindu and The Times of India were chosen.

The selection of the most widely circulated newspapers means that the information is reaching the maximum number of audience members. The two national newspapers are published in New Delhi, the capital city, also situated in the Northern belt where dowry incidences are reportedly most common in the country. As such, it can be expected that these two newspapers have extensively covered the issue over time. Including two regional newspapers in the sample allows a comparison of coverage and content in newspapers of national and regional circulation.

The two regional newspapers chosen were The Tribune and The Telegraph. Besides being the most circulated regional papers, these papers gave different perspectives on the issue of dowry from two states. The Tribune is published in Chandigarh, the capital of the state of Punjab, where dowry-related cases have made headlines over decades. Punjab is in the heart of Northern India where traditional values are of utmost importance. Dowry is almost a permanent fixture of the Punjabi tradition. The other regional paper examined was The Telegraph, published in the state of Bengal. Amongst the Eastern Indian states, dowry-related cases are frequent in Bengal and Bihar. The Telegraph represents the views and opinions regarding dowry in these states. Table 1 outlines the characteristics of the four newspapers under study and specifies their service areas. Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the newspapers’ service areas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>The Hindu</th>
<th>The Times of India</th>
<th>The Tribune</th>
<th>The Telegraph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kasturi &amp; Sons Ltd.</td>
<td>Bennett, Coleman, &amp; Co.</td>
<td>H.K.Dua</td>
<td>ABP Pvt. Ltd.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>922,407</td>
<td>820,289</td>
<td>220,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service area</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, North Eastern States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. The demographic characteristics of the newspapers' target service areas (Source: Censusindia, 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Punjab</th>
<th>West Bengal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1,027,015,247</td>
<td>24,289,296</td>
<td>80,221,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in total population</td>
<td>495,738,169</td>
<td>11,325,934</td>
<td>38,733,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Hindi (national)</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 other official languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Hindu 80.5%</td>
<td>Hindu 36.9%</td>
<td>Hindu 72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim 13.4%</td>
<td>Muslim 1.6%</td>
<td>Muslim 25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian 2.3%</td>
<td>Christian 1.2%</td>
<td>Christian 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sikh 1.9%</td>
<td>Sikh 59.9%</td>
<td>Sikh 0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddhists 0.8%</td>
<td>Buddhists 0.2%</td>
<td>Buddhists 0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jains 0.4%</td>
<td>Jains 0.2%</td>
<td>Jains 0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others 0.6%</td>
<td>Others 0.0%</td>
<td>Others 1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male 75.3%</td>
<td>Male 75.2%</td>
<td>Male 77.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female 53.7%</td>
<td>Female 63.4%</td>
<td>Female 59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media saturation</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Radio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correctness of sampling depends on the adequacy of the sampling frame, which is the complete list of members in a population (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). This study counted all articles related to dowry published in the selected papers so that the sampling frame is equivalent to the sampling universe.

The unit of analysis for this study is the complete newspaper article from the four papers. They were collected using the Lexis/Nexis database and was supplemented by each
newspaper’s electronic archives. All articles that carry the word “dowry” over the five-year period was compiled to form the sample.

Coverage of national and the regional papers was compared on a number of variables. Two of these are the articles’ attitude toward dowry and their attitude toward women. To answer these questions, a random sample of articles from all four newspapers was drawn, the second stage of the multistage sampling technique that was applied.

Random sampling helped reduce sampling error. Once the four newspapers and the articles were selected, 12 articles were systematically drawn by day of the month from each year. This was done in order to avoid periodicity, i.e., to avoid the selection of the same days of the week, which would bias the selection process. Different days from each of the month were chosen. Thus, in 12 months, 12 articles were chosen, for a total of 72 articles in five years for each paper. Apart from the dates, the articles selected mentioned the word “dowry” at least three times within the articles. This avoids the selection of articles that looked at the issue only superficially. Random sampling without replacement was conducted, which means that the unit once drawn was removed from the population.

As a complement to content analysis, a convenience sample of editors from the four newspapers were interviewed. The questionnaire (Appendix A), sent via e-mail, asked about newspaper policies, journalistic values, and journalist routines that led to the nature of dowry coverage in their respective papers. The editors were informed about the results of the content analysis of the newspaper for which they work.
Operationalization of variables and method of data analysis

Research questions:

(1) In general, what does the cycle of newspaper coverage of dowry look like over a five-year period? Is there a discernible hoopla effect from this pattern of coverage?

(2) Is there a difference among the four newspapers in terms of intensity of coverage (number of dowry-related articles and length of stories)?

(3) Does the coverage of national newspapers (Hindu and Times of India,) differ from that of regional newspapers (The Tribune and Telegraph) in terms of intensity and length as well as attitude toward dowry and women?

(4) Who are the sources that are getting quoted the most in the newspapers’ coverage of dowry?

(5) What are the journalistic values and routine demands that led to the media coverage of this social issue?

In the first research question, intensity of coverage was operationally defined as the total number of articles about dowry published over the five-year period. The cycle of newspaper coverage refers to the trends in coverage over the same time period. The cycle of newspaper coverage was analyzed to determine the presence of three time periods: pre-hoopla, hoopla, and post-hoopla. The number of articles published over time was counted for each year and then graphed. Descriptive statistics was used to answer RQ 1.

The second research question asks if there is a difference among all four newspapers in terms of number of dowry-related articles published and the length of these stories. Descriptive statistics was used to answer RQ 2.
The third research question asks if there is a difference between national and regional coverage in terms of number and length of articles. In order to determine the length of articles, the number of words in the articles was counted. The number of articles published about dowry determines the intensity of coverage.

This research question also asks if there is national and regional difference in terms of attitude of the newspaper toward dowry and women. The attitude of the articles toward dowry was analyzed by categorizing an article as either pro-dowry or anti-dowry. Articles considered pro-dowry described dowry as part of the Indian tradition, which cannot be given up. Articles categorized as anti-dowry saw dowry as a social evil. Articles were considered pro-women when dowry was described as diminishing women’s status and respect in society. The articles were categorized as anti-women when the reasons for dowry-related murder was explained as being due to the woman’s “character” or blaming her for committing suicide. For both of these variables, the tone of the articles was rated on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means “pro” and 5 means “anti” in both cases. Therefore, to answer this question, a t-test on means was conducted.

The fourth research question asks for the most frequently cited sources in the dowry-related articles. These sources may be (1) the victim of a dowry-related crime, (2) relatives of the victim, (3) activists from women’s organizations, (4) witnesses to the dowry-related crime, (5) government officials, (6) the husband and his family members. To answer this research question, descriptive statistics were used.

The last research question aims to determine the factors that led to the kind of coverage of the dowry issue as revealed by the content analysis. A qualitative analysis of the
editors’ responses was used to answer this research question. In the interview, newspaper editors were asked the following questions:

1. Do you think your newspaper had caused awareness of dowry as a social issue?
2. How do you choose the stories on dowry that were published in your newspapers?
3. How would you characterize those dowry-related stories? Are they in-depth and investigative? Do they merely report events?
4. What factors might have led to how your paper covered the issue?
5. Do you consider articles on dowry “market friendly”? 
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Sampling

A total of 3,358 articles on dowry were retrieved from the national newspapers the Hindu and the Times of India and the regional newspapers the Tribune and the Telegraph from 1999 to 2004. The average length of the articles was 299 words, ranging from 12 to 3,449 words. A complete enumeration of articles on dowry was used to answer research questions 1 and 2. Research questions 3 and 4 required a random sample of articles.

To randomly select the articles to be analyzed, every ninth article was chosen to make up a total of 12 articles per year, one article from each month. This was done for all newspapers except in the case of the regional paper, the Telegraph, which published less than 12 articles about the issue in 1999 and 2000. Each article randomly chosen in all four newspapers was more than 200 words and mentioned the word “dowry” at least three times. To respond to RQ3 and RQ4, therefore, a total of 72 articles per paper was examined for a total of 288 articles for all the four papers. Because The Telegraph came out with six articles less in 1999 and 2000, the total articles examined to respond to these two research questions was 282.

To answer research question 5, a convenience sample of 23 editors from the four newspapers was interviewed via email and by telephone.

Inter-coder reliability

Two coders, both undergraduates from Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication, were trained by practicing coding on a sample of article, which were not included in the final analysis. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Holsti’s (1969) formula. Reliability was assessed for the two ordinal variables of interest -- attitude toward
dowry and attitude toward women. The percentage of agreement between the two coders was established at 98.5% for the former and at 97.3% for the latter variable.

Answering the Research Questions

This study set out to determine (1) if there is a discernable hoopla effect in the five-year period of newspaper coverage about dowry; (2) if the four newspapers differed in terms of their intensity of coverage; (3) if national and regional newspapers differed in terms of their intensity of coverage and attitude toward dowry; (4) the most frequently quoted sources in this five-year coverage period; and (5) the journalistic values that led to this coverage.

RQ 1: In general, what does the cycle of newspaper coverage of dowry look like over a five-year period? Is there a discernible hoopla effect from this pattern of coverage?

To examine the cycle of newspaper coverage over a five-year period, the total number of articles in each paper per year was charted against time. As Figure 1 shows, there was a steady rise in the number of articles over five years. The four papers combined produced only 182 articles about the issue in 1999, which grew to 916 articles in 2003, showing a prominent hoopla effect in the pattern of coverage.

In all four newspapers, the presence of the three time periods—pre-hoopla, hoopla and post-hoopla—is clear. The pre-hoopla period came in 2002 when only 694 articles were published in all four newspapers. Coverage intensifies in 2003, the hoopla period, with 916 articles published in all four papers. Coverage intensity dropped in 2004, with only 625 articles about dowry produced across the national and regional newspapers. Figure 2 shows the intensity of coverage for each paper, showing a peak period (2003) for all papers analyzed.
Figure 1. Total number of dowry-related articles in all four papers combined, 1999-2004
RQ 2: Is there a difference among the four newspapers in terms of intensity of coverage (number of dowry-related articles and length of stories)?

Counting the number of stories about dowry published over the study period and computing for the average number of words for all articles in one publication indicated a difference in coverage in terms of intensity across all four newspapers. The two national newspapers, the Times of India and the Hindu, covered the issue with the same intensity. However, there is a huge difference between the two regional newspapers. The Tribune produced a total of 2,355 articles, outperforming the national papers, while The Telegraph came up with only 140 articles about the topic.

In the case of the Hindu, a national paper, the Ilyasi dowry-murder case increased coverage intensity in 2000 (the hoopla period) to 53 articles, up considerably from only 15 articles in 1999 (the paper’s pre-hoopla period). In 2001, it carried only 30 articles on dowry,
making it the paper's post-hoopla period. Similarly, the Nisha Sharma case intensified the Hindu's coverage of dowry in 2003. The Hindu carried only 65 articles on dowry in 2002 (pre-hoopla), 188 articles in 2003 (hoopla) and 75 in 2004 (post-hoopla). Figure 3 graphs the Hindu's dowry coverage over time.

![Figure 3. Total number of dowry-related articles in the Hindu, 1999-2004](image)

Likewise, in the Times of India, a pre-hoopla period was evident in 1999 with 47 articles; a hoopla period can be seen in 2000 with 81 articles brought about by the Ilyasi dowry murder case, and a post-hoopla period was clear in 2001 with only 74 articles published about the topic. A triggering effect brought about by the Nisha Sharma case was visible in 2003 as well, with 122 articles (hoopla), 56 articles in 2002 (pre-hoopla) and 58 articles in 2004 (post-hoopla). The Times of India’s coverage is graphed in Figure 4.
In the regional newspaper the Tribune, there was a steady rise in dowry coverage in terms of number of articles. The Nisha Sharma case brought about a triggering effect in 2003 (hoopla) with 556 articles on dowry. A pre-hoopla period can be discerned in 2002, with 545 articles, and a post-hoopla period was noticeable with 461 articles in 2004. Figure 5 charts the intense coverage of dowry in the Tribune over time.
In the case of the second regional newspaper, the Telegraph, the coverage intensifies each year with a visible hoopla effect in 2003 with 50 articles. The Nisha Sharma case also intensified the coverage of dowry in 2003 in the Telegraph, a paper which otherwise is slow to cover the topic. This paper, published in the eastern parts where dowry cases are not as common as in the rest of the country, carries the minimum number of articles among the four newspapers. The Telegraph carried 28 articles in 2002 (pre-hoopla) and only 31 articles in 2004 (post-hoopla). The dowry coverage of the Telegraph is graphed in Figure 6.
There is also a difference among the newspapers in terms of length of stories. The length of an article was determined by counting the total number of words in a story after which an average length of stories was calculated for all the papers.

The average number of words in the Hindu’s articles for the five-year period was 508.31. The length of stories ranged from 29 to 3,461 words. A comparison of the Hindu’s average length of articles in all five years also shows that the articles were considerably longer during the hoopla years (2000 and 2003) as shown in Figure 7. The Ilyasi dowry case (2000) and the Nisha Sharma case (2003) intensified the coverage in terms of number of articles as well and the length of those articles.
Figure 7. Average length of articles in the Hindu

The Times of India covered dowry with shorter articles (mean = 334.3 words) during this five-year period. This was perhaps due to the fact that the Times of India carried more short reports while the Hindu carried more in-depth articles. The Times of India’s pattern of coverage in terms of length of articles is the same as that of the Hindu. The Ilyasi and Nisha Sharma case again were responsible for longer articles in the hoopla periods, 2000 and 2003. The average length of words for all five years is shown in Figure 8.
The mean length of articles in the Tribune for all five years is 265.3 words, ranging from 12 to 3,145. The Tribune published articles with an average of 305 words in 2003, which is just a little higher compared to the rest of the years (Figure 9). The pattern of coverage of the Tribune is different from the other newspapers in terms of number of articles as well as length of articles. The coverage of the Tribune is very intense throughout the years, with Nisha Sharma’s case bringing it to the maximum in 2003. Similarly, in terms of length of articles, the coverage is the same throughout, with a slight increase in 2003. This may be because the enormous number of dowry cases in the Punjab, where the Tribune is published, keeps the coverage intense over time.
Figure 9. Average length of articles in the Tribune

The average length of articles in the Telegraph is 347.3 words, ranging from 26 to 1,063. When all five years are taken into consideration, 2003, the year with the clear hoopla effect because of the Nisha Sharma case, has the highest average number of words in the Telegraph (Figure 10).
RQ 3: Does the coverage between national newspapers (Hindu and Times of India,) differ from that of regional newspapers (Tribune and Telegraph) in terms of intensity and length as well as attitude toward dowry and women?

There is a considerable difference between national and regional papers in terms of intensity of coverage. The two national newspapers, the Hindu and the Times of India, published 426 and 438 articles on dowry, respectively, while the regional newspaper, the Tribune, had 2,355 articles, a lot more than the Telegraph, with only 140 articles about dowry from 1999-2004. The Tribune’s intense coverage pushed dowry higher in the media agenda of regional papers than that of the national papers (Figure 11). The Tribune’s intense
coverage can be explained by the fact that it services the state of Punjab, where dowry cases are the most common throughout the country.

![Graph showing total number of articles in national vs. regional papers](image)

**Figure 11. Total number of articles in national vs. regional papers**

However, the national newspapers carried longer articles about dowry than the regional ones. This shows that national newspapers carried more in-depth articles while the regional newspapers carried more short reports. The average length of articles in national and regional papers varied across time as shown in Figure 12.
RQ3 also asks if there is national and regional difference in terms of attitude toward dowry and women. To answer this research question, a random sample was drawn from the complete enumeration of all articles regarding dowry in all four newspapers. Every ninth article was chosen to make up a composite sample consisting of 12 articles for each paper per year, one article from each month. In order to find out the attitude of the articles toward dowry and women, the articles were coded according to the extent to which they were pro-dowry or anti-dowry and pro-women or anti-women. Coders were asked to ascertain the tone of the articles on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “pro” and 5 means “anti” in both cases. An independent samples t-test on means (Table 3) shows that there is no difference between national and regional papers in terms of their attitude toward dowry ($t = 1.907, p = .058, df = 280$). Both national and regional papers, showed a more anti-dowry stance.
Table 3. Independent samples t-test testing the difference of national and regional papers in their attitude toward dowry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude toward dowry</th>
<th>national vs. regional papers</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>.083</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>.085</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Independent Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward dowry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.694</td>
<td>1.907</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.907</td>
<td>279.42</td>
<td>.058</td>
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Another t-test done to determine whether the national newspapers have a more pro-women approach than regional newspapers (Table 4) showed that the national and regional newspapers have the same positive attitude toward women ($t = .051$, $p = 0.959$, $df = 280$).
Table 4. Independent samples t-test testing the difference between national and regional papers in their attitude toward women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>national vs. regional papers</th>
<th>N</th>
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<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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Independent Samples Test

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<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>Attitude toward women</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

RQ 4: Who are the sources quoted the most in the newspapers’ coverage of dowry?

A random sample of 12 articles per year for all four newspapers was used to answer this research question. Six different kinds of sources were identified: the victim of dowry-related crime, relatives of the victim, activists from women’s organizations, witnesses to dowry-related crimes, government officials, and the husband and his family members. Government officials were found to be the most quoted source, followed by women’s rights activists and the victims’ relatives (Figure 13). The sources cited partly explain the
newspapers' pro-women attitude and anti-dowry stance. The least quoted sources were witnesses and the husband or his relatives.

![Sources Most Frequently Quoted](image)

**Figure 13. Sources most frequently quoted across all newspapers**

A comparison between the national and regional papers regarding their most commonly quoted sources showed that national papers cited more sources across all source groups than the regional papers (Figure 14). This also shows that the coverage of national newspapers was more in-depth than that of regional papers. It is also interesting to note that the national papers had more quotes from the victims and their relatives.
Figure 14. Sources most frequently quoted, national vs. regional newspapers

RQ 5: What are the journalistic values and routine demands that led to the newspapers' coverage of this social issue?

To answer this research question, a convenience sample of 23 editors from the four newspapers was interviewed via email and by telephone. When asked if they think their newspaper caused awareness of dowry as a social issue, most of the editors from all four newspapers answered in the affirmative. One editor from the Times of India says, “It is indeed possible that some of the editors and journalists might practice dowry but as far as the newspaper is concerned, they would always write against dowry and hence cause awareness.” Asked about how stories related to dowry were chosen, most of them said the stories they publish are news reports of dowry cases chosen purely based on conventional news values such as immediacy and perceived importance. Indeed most editors pointed out that the newsworthiness of the story is a very important factor influencing publication decisions. An editor from the Times of India observes: “Just like any other story for the day, the dowry-related stories are also based on newsworthiness and immediacy.” Most of them
characterized their dowry coverage as consisting of in-depth, investigative as well as straight
news reports. "It is not that one newspaper carries more in-depth stories than the other," says
a Hindu editor, "sometimes a dowry-related incident demands investigative stories, while in
most cases they cannot be more than mere reports." Almost all the editors point out that the
in-depth coverage of Nisha Sharma’s case was because of its "newsworthiness." An editor
from the Times of India aptly remarks, "Nisha Sharma made headlines because of the
immediacy and newsworthiness of the case, in most instances dowry-related cases can be
nothing more than a short report." A Tribune editor notes, "there is nothing new in a dowry
case that can have follow-up stories, and in most cases the groom’s as well as the victim’s
family refuse to cooperate with the media."

The editors agree that one of the factors that might have accounted for the nature of
the papers’ dowry coverage was "political correctness." Dowry, they claim, is a social evil
and even though it is traditionally tied to Indian marriages, they claim their newspaper
always take an anti-dowry stance. A senior editor of the Hindu opines that "the political
correctness of any issue is very important, and dowry is no exception." The editors add that a
papers’ coverage of dowry-related stories is directly related to its service areas. An editor
from the Telegraph explains that the paper’s limited dowry coverage is due to the fact that
the practice is not as common as it is in the northern parts of India. Besides, he continues,
dowry-related stories are not considered "market friendly." This was an opinion echoed by
almost all the editors. They claim people do not like to read about dowry-related stories,
which they consider as reflecting the "ugly truth" about Indian society.
Summary of Results

This study looked at national and regional newspapers’ coverage of dowry in India by employing two approaches: a content analysis of articles from two national and two regional newspapers and a qualitative examination of journalists’ assessments of their newspapers’ coverage using a convenience sample of editors from the four newspapers.

The content analysis showed that the coverage of dowry in all four newspapers intensified in 2003 because of the Nisha Sharma case. The coverage peaked during this time not only in terms of number of newspaper articles published but also in terms of the length of articles. Why this is the case can be explained partly by the responses of the editors interviewed. Almost all of the editors from the four newspapers said their coverage largely depended on the nature of the dowry cases themselves. As one editor points out, “whenever any such incidents take place, our newspaper covers it and the coverage is intensified if it happens in an affluent section of society or if there is something more interesting than the usual stories.” Nisha Sharma’s case in 2003 definitely fits this description because she is from a rich family who sent her would-be husband to jail on their wedding day.

A comparison of the national and regional newspapers’ coverage showed that the regional paper the Tribune published the highest number of dowry-related articles. The coverage was more intense in the national newspapers that produced longer articles about the topic. The number of sources quoted was also higher in the national newspapers than in the regional papers, which shows that the national coverage was more investigative and in-depth while that of the regional papers consisted more of short and event-related reports. Both national and regional papers had a similar attitude toward dowry and women—they are anti-dowry and demonstrated a pro-women slant. This attitude of the papers is reflected in the
interviews with the editors who perceived that their newspaper tends to portray dowry as a social evil.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the pattern of newspaper coverage of dowry in India over a five-year period, from 1999 to 2004. During this period, the hoopla effect was evident in the national and regional papers, triggered by the case of Nisha Sharma who, in May 2003, made headlines when she sent her would-be husband to jail on her wedding day for demanding more dowry. It seems that single-handedly, Nisha Sharma intensified the newspaper coverage of dowry in India like never before.

In the two national papers, the hoopla effect was triggered by two major dowry cases -- the Ilyasi dowry murder case in 2000 and the Nisha Sharma case in 2003. The high profile case of Suhaib Ilyasi, a television producer-director who allegedly murdered his wife for dowry, is responsible for the intensified national coverage of dowry in 2000. Similarly, in 2003, when Nisha Sharma eschewed her would-be husband, coverage in both national papers experienced a spike. The pattern of coverage across newspapers showed three distinct time periods -- pre-hoopla, hoopla and post-hoopla.

The two regional papers showed a steady increase in the number of articles with the hoopla effect visible as a result of the Nisha Sharma case in 2003. The coverage of the Tribune is the most intense of all the four papers. This is perhaps because it services Punjab, a region where there is a significant number of dowry-related cases. In 2001, the reported number of dowry-related deaths in India was recorded at 6,851 of which 1,500 cases were in the state of Punjab alone (National Crimes Bureau, Home Ministry, India, 2004). Two high-profile cases in the state of Punjab also contributed to the intense coverage of the Tribune in the years 2001 and 2002. A famous veteran Hindi film actress, Nirupa Roy, was arrested in a dowry harassment case in 2001. In 2002, Giani Kewal Singh, a religious leader, was arrested
on an alleged dowry-death case involving his daughter-in-law. Dowry-related cases are least reported in the eastern parts. As such, the coverage of the Telegraph, published in Calcutta and services the eastern regions, is the least intense in terms of number of dowry-related articles.

When the total number of articles in all four newspapers is combined, the pattern of the coverage shows a steady rise in the number of articles until 2003, a watershed year in dowry events and, consequently, media coverage. The Nisha Sharma case clearly ushered in—or triggered—the intense coverage during the hoopla year, 2003.

The national papers featured longer dowry stories than the regional papers. The Hindu had the highest average number of words (509) in all five years, indicating that the national papers have more detailed and analytical stories. The Tribune, a regional paper, had the highest number of articles, most of which are short reports of dowry cases so common in the area. However, the Tribune also carried some long investigative stories (the maximum being 3,145 words in length), and is the only newspaper where the spikes are not very pronounced, indicating that the Tribune covered dowry cases intensely on a regular basis unlike the other papers whose coverage intensified only when there was a big dowry event.

One pattern is common in all four papers—the articles are longest in 2003 when the Nisha Sharma case occurred. This shows that Nisha Sharma not only provided the momentum that spurred the coverage in terms of number of articles, it also was responsible for longer stories about dowry. The national papers also carried longer articles in 2000 during the high profile Ilyasi dowry murder case.

There was no significant difference between the regional and national papers in terms of their attitude toward dowry and toward women. All four newspapers, whether published in
the capital city of New Delhi or in smaller cities like Chandigarh, showed both anti-dowry and pro-women slants in their coverage.

Government officials were found to be the most quoted sources, followed by activists from women’s organizations. This might indicate that the newspapers considered these two sources to be the most credible and accessible in dowry-related cases. The victims and their relatives were also quoted in some of the stories, but the least quoted were the witnesses to the crime and the husband or his relatives. Comparing the number of sources quoted in national and regional papers, the national papers showed more quotes from all six sources. This also indicates that the national coverage was more in-depth than the coverage of regional papers.

The pattern of dowry coverage in all four newspapers is reiterated in the editors’ responses to the open-ended questions. They all believe their newspapers bring about social awareness against dowry, which perhaps explains the anti-dowry and pro-women inclination of the papers. The intense coverage of dowry in 2003, in the aftermath of the Nisha Sharma case, was explained by the editors due to the “newsworthiness” of dowry-related stories. The newsworthiness of the Nisha Sharma’s case was unquestionable, as were some of the other dowry cases like the Ilyasi murder case, the dowry case involving Nirupa Roy, and Giani Kewal Singh, all caused spikes in the pattern of dowry coverage. However, almost all editors believed that dowry-related stories are not market friendly. As one editor said, “the market needs ‘feel good’ lies. Dowry deaths are the ugly truth.” This attitude partly explains why most dowry-related stories are just short reports in the crime pages. In-depth and investigative articles are carried only when some dowry-related case proves to be “newsworthy” and as a result is able to influence coverage intensity. This is again established
by the fact that in 2003, the newspapers carried more and longer articles on the subject compared to the other years.

Relating the results of the study with the theoretical framework, the newspaper coverage of dowry in the Hindu, the Times of India, the Tribune and the Telegraph from 1999 to 2004 provides evidence that supports the hoopla effect. In all four papers, the dowry case of Nisha Sharma in May 2003 triggered a peak period. The three hypothesized periods in the coverage of an issue -- the pre-hoopla, hoopla and the post-hoopla -- were found in all four papers. The hoopla effect, another dimension of agenda setting theory, states that media coverage reaches a crescendo due to a certain event, and then declines. This is exactly what is seen in the pattern of the coverage in the five-year period, which was cross-validated by the editors' responses. The results of this triangulated approach to the study, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, have therefore enhanced data accuracy.

**Implications of the Results to Media Practitioners**

The results indicate that, to some extent, the coverage of an issue in the media is ruled by market norms. According to the content analysis results and the responses of editors, the media's coverage of an issue can increase when there is a "newsworthy" story and that intensity of the coverage depends on where the paper is published and its service area. In the case of the Tribune, dowry coverage was heavy compared to those of other newspapers because it is published from Punjab where dowry-related cases are very common. However, this intense coverage was characterized by short reports and breaking stories. In 2003, the Nisha Sharma case elicited some in-depth coverage across all papers. It is also worth noting that in all four newspapers, the stories that caused the spikes in the coverage are dowry cases that occurred in the affluent sections of society. For example, Nisha Sharma is a computer
engineer belongs to a rich family in Delhi, the capital city of India. Ilyasi is a famous and rich television producer. Nirupa Roy was a veteran film actress, and Kewal Singh is a popular religious leader from Punjab. These stories caught the media’s attention due to their “newsworthiness” as well as their marketability. As one of the editors pointed out, “Generally, it appears the media here have not taken the issue seriously, save some stray write-ups or a coverage due to some ‘big’ story. The fact that the evil practice still continues unabated is a telling commentary on the indifference of the media here. If there is no extra news value, such as the involvement of a celebrity, news relating to dowry deaths are buried in some obscure column.”

The power of the media to influence audience perceptions of news issues can be seen in two similar instances that followed Nisha Sharma’s experience. Right after she made headlines, a woman named Farzana walked out of her marriage on her wedding day in Delhi to protest against dowry. Vidya Balasubramaniam of Chennai also fought her in-laws on her wedding day because of their insistent demands for more dowry. Joseph and Sharma (1994) emphasize that the media in India has the “ability to influence the attitudes of both ordinary readers and policy-makers that cannot be underestimated” (p. 15) in their examination of a variety of women’s issues covered by Indian newspapers from 1979 to 1988. They found that the newspapers covered issues such as dowry deaths, but these stories saw print only when “a woman’s issue fits the dominant definitions of newsworthiness.” Only then can it “move up in the hierarchy of news and consequently get greater coverage” (p. 27). This study also found that the newspaper coverage of dowry mostly consists of routine reporting, with some big story intensifying the coverage every once in a while. As the editors emphasized, the media can do much more in covering this important social issue.
Sen (2003), summarizing the factors responsible for the kind of coverage that women's issues receive in the Indian media, point to the influence of commercial pressures. Every media agency is relatively dependent on financial factors in setting the media agenda, so that unless a dowry story has ample "newsworthiness," it is often ignored. The findings of this study's content analysis as well as the interviews with editors lends support to this contention. Sen (2003) also explains that a fair amount of the media's coverage is taken up by image managers and public relations professionals from various organizations. As such journalists get their job done easily without having to worry much about newsgathering. Because social development issues do not often benefit from the strategies of image managers unless journalists and editors take a special interest on them or if some big story breaks, issues such as dowry remain mostly as short news reports. Media coverage is also dictated by audience demand. There is perhaps more demand for "infotainment" and sensational news coverage than for issues like dowry.

The rise of the contemporary Indian women's movement in the late 1970s was mainly responsible for heftier media coverage of women's issues such as dowry. Today, the media continue to cover such issues, as can be seen in their intense coverage of Nisha Sharma's case. However, a more in-depth and investigative coverage where dowry finds relevance regardless of the victim's socio-economic background can help build a more meaningful awareness of this social evil. This means paying as much attention to the process and the underlying causes of dowry as to the dowry events themselves. Only when the media give voice to the weak can laws meant to protect women as stipulated in the country's constitution and judiciary system can be implemented to help dowry victims and their families.
Implications of the Results to the National Policy Regarding Women

There is evidence from Vedic literature (Vedas are considered the most sacred scriptures of Hinduism, composed between 1500 BC to 900 BC) suggesting that women in India have a higher status and should enjoy more rights (Agrawal & Rao, 2004). According to the Vedas, women must have full access to education, and that women have made significant contributions to the Rigveda (one of the four Vedas). The Vedas also guarantee that women can choose their own husbands. However, this situation seems to have deteriorated in the Puranic age (the Puranas were composed to disseminate the teachings of the Vedas to common men) when the status of women became inferior to that of men. Although women can be worshipped as goddesses, the birth of a son is now considered essential to maintain one’s lineage. There is hardly any mention of female students in the gurukulas (the education system in ancient India). Women became confined to their homes. As time passed, social evils like child marriages, sati (the killing of a widow in her husband’s funeral pyre), the neglect of the girl child, and the dowry system took roots in Indian society (Agrawal & Rao, 2004).

The struggle for freedom and independence from the British was surprisingly gender-neutral. This experience, along with people’s exposure to western education and international attention to the status of women, have led to attempts to lift women’s position in society. “In post-independent India, these attempts have taken the form of constitutional rights, legislative action to protect women’s interests, gender focus in development activities, institution building and, more importantly, non-governmental actions spearheaded by women’s organizations at various levels” (Agrawal & Rao, 2004, p. 24). The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution’s preamble, fundamental rights, fundamental
duties and directive principles sections. Article 15(2) provides for affirmative action by empowering the state to make special provisions for women (Agrawal & Rao, 2004).

Over the years, there has been legislative action to promote the interests of women in the form of personal laws, laws against social evils, labor laws and laws on political rights. Under laws against social evils, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 made demanding and accepting dowry a crime. Later amendments in the law made punishments more severe. In 1971, the government constituted the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI), which reported that a majority of Indian women were not enjoying these constitutional rights. In addition to many other inadequacies, it also became clear that there was an “escalation of social practices like dowry” (Agrawal & Rao, 2004, p.37). To counter this, the National Commission for Women (NCW) was established in 1992. This commission now works on amendments to laws concerning dowry (Press Information Bureau, Government of India). In 2001, the country adopted the National Policy on the Empowerment of Women, aimed at achieving gender equality and protection of women.

Over the past 50 years, the status of women has improved at least in terms of women being financially independent or being able to take decisions about their lives but a lot more still needs to be done. As this study shows, dowry cases are common, especially in certain areas of the country. The number of dowry-related crimes and stories uncovered in this study exposes the incompetence of the judicial system to curb this social injustice. Statistics show that dowry-death cases are still on the rise. Because the media and their reach have grown extensively over the last decade, they are now able to reach the most rural areas. The media should, therefore, play a more active role in causing awareness of dowry as a social evil.
Study limitations

This study depended on the Lexis/Nexis database and the electronic archives of the newspapers for the articles analyzed. The regional newspapers were not available on Lexis/Nexis, so the electronic archives of the papers was the only source, which in some years were not fully updated, especially in case of the Telegraph. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain whether this study has examined the full range of articles published about dowry in the four newspapers analyzed.

Recommendations for future research

This study was limited to looking at the pattern of coverage over a five-year period. A study using a longer time frame of analysis will be able to give a more complete view of the dowry coverage. This study wanted to compare the number of dowry-related death cases in the media to the actual number of dowry-related death cases. But statistics regarding dowry-related death cases, either from government agencies or women’s organizations, were difficult to come by. A future study should look at this comparison. The gathering and compilation of these data can be the purview of women’s advocacy groups should the government remain reluctant in performing this task. Future studies can also examine the social status of dowry-related victims to provide a better profile of women who are more often victimized. A qualitative look at the frames or interpretive packages the newspapers applied to report and explain the topic to their readers will provide a more nuanced look at the impact of journalists’ practices and routines. Also, a study on the audiences’ interpretations of dowry will be beneficial in ascertaining the impact of fluctuating newspaper coverage and other media effects.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW APPROVAL

ISU NEW HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH FORM

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Principal Investigator (PI): PORISMITA BORAH
Phone: 515 706 2530
Fax:

Degrees: MASTER IN ENGLISH

Department: GREENLEAF SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Center/Institute: IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

PI Level: Faculty

Email Address: PBORAH@IASTATE.EDU

College: LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Project Period (Include Start and End Date): (mm/dd/yyyy) 08/01/2003 to 05/01/2005

Name of Project: "BRIDES ARE NOT FOR BURNING": A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF DOWRY IN INDIA

FOR STUDENT PROJECTS

Type of Project: (check all that apply)

☐ Research  ☑ Thesis  ☐ Dissertation  ☐ Class project

☐ Independent Study (490, 590, Honors project)  ☐ Other. Please specify:

KEY PERSONNEL

List all members and relevant experience of the project personnel. This information is intended to inform the committee of the training and background related to the specific procedures that each person will perform on the project.

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<th>NAME &amp; DEGREE(S)</th>
<th>SPECIFIC DUTIES ON PROJECT</th>
<th>TRAINING &amp; EXPERIENCE RELATED TO PROCEDURES PERFORMED, DATE OF TRAINING</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. LULU RODRIGUEZ, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR</td>
<td>MAJOR PROFESSOR</td>
<td>ISU HUMAN SUBJECT TRAINING 3/11/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. PORISMITA BORAH, GRADUATE STUDENT</td>
<td>MASTERS CANDIDATE</td>
<td>ISU HUMAN SUBJECT TRAINING 11/22/04</td>
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FUNDING INFORMATION

Research Compliance 04/10/03
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: "Brides are not for Burning": A Content Analysis of the newspaper coverage of dowry in India.

Investigators: Poriamita Borah, Graduate Student.

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to find out about the pattern of newspaper coverage of dowry in India and what editorial decisions lead to that coverage. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are an editor in the 4 newspapers that the study covers.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for half an hour. During the study, you may expect the following study procedures to be followed. You will respond to an interview that will be given by e-mail. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

RISKS

While participating in this study you may experience the following risks: There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by knowing how media can cause awareness about an social evil.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

RESEARCH INJURY

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.
To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken. On the questionnaire, you will check off if you decide to allow the researchers to use your name in the research paper, which will be distributed to the public, delivered at communication research conference, and published. A YES check means you will allow us to quote you; a NO check means you do not want to be quoted. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Porismita Borah, (Phone Number: 515-708-2530), Dr Lulu Rodriguez, (Phone Number: 515-294-0484. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact Ginny Austin Eason, IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, austingr@iastate.edu, or Diane Ament, Research Compliance Officer (515) 294-3115, dament@iastate.edu.

SUBJECT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Subject’s Name (printed) ____________________________

(Signature) ____________________________ (Date)

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Porismita Borah ____________________________

(Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent) ____________________________ (Date)
APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE NEWSPAPER EDITORS

1. Do you think your newspaper had caused awareness of dowry as a social issue?

2. How do you choose the stories on dowry that were published in your newspapers?

3. How would you characterize those dowry-related stories? Are they in-depth and investigative? Do they merely report events?

4. What factors might have led to how your paper covered the issue?

5. Do you consider articles on dowry “market friendly”? 
APPENDIX D

CODEBOOK 1: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE NEWSPAPERS

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2.February
3.March
4.April
5.May
6.June
7.July
8.August
9.September
10.October
11.November
12.December |
| 4               | PAPER         | Name of the Newspaper           | 1.Times of India
2.Hindu
3.Tribune
4.Telegraph |
| 5               | WORDS         | Number of words in the article  | String nominal variable                                |
| 6               | DOWRY         | Attitude toward dowry           | 1.pro dowry
2.almost pro
3.neutral
4.almost anti
5.anti dowry
9-none can be found |
| 7               | WOMAN         | Attitude toward woman           | 1.pro woman
2.almost pro
3.neutral
4.almost anti
5.anti woman
9-none can be found |
|   | SOURCES1 | The victim | 1. quoted  
|   |          |            | 2. not quoted 
|   |          |            | 9. missing value 
| 9 | SOURCES2 | Relatives of the victim | 1. quoted 
|   |          |            | 2. not quoted 
|   |          |            | 9. missing value 
| 10| SOURCES3 | Activists from women’s organizations | 1. quoted 
|   |          |            | 2. not quoted 
|   |          |            | 9. missing value 
| 11| SOURCES4 | Witnesses to the crime | 1. quoted 
|   |          |            | 2. not quoted 
|   |          |            | 9. missing value 
| 12| SOURCES5 | Government officials | 1. quoted 
|   |          |            | 2. not quoted 
|   |          |            | 9. missing value 
| 13| SOURCES6 | Husband or any of his family members | 1. quoted 
|   |          |            | 2. not quoted 
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</thead>
</table>
| 1               | EDITOR        | Editor of the Newspaper | 1. Times of India  
2. Hindu  
3. Tribune  
4. Telegraph |
| 2               | AWARE         | Newspaper cause awareness | 1. Yes  
2. No  
9-missing value |
| 3               | CHOOSE        | Categories of choosing stories | Open ended question will be coded later  
99-missing value |
| 4               | CHARACT       | Stories characterized | 1. In-depth and investigative  
2. Merely reporting events  
3. Both  
9-missing value |
| 5               | FACTORS       | Factors responsible for the kind of coverage | Open ended question will be coded later  
99-missing value |
| 6               | MARKET        | Are the articles market friendly | 1. Yes  
2. No  
9-missing value |
APPENDIX F

CODING SHEET 1: CODING SHEET FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE NEWSPAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable number</th>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Variable label</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NUMBER</td>
<td>Article Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>Year of Publication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MONTH</td>
<td>Month of publication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PAPER</td>
<td>Name of the Newspaper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>WORDS</td>
<td>Number of words in the article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>DOWRY</td>
<td>Attitude toward dowry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>WOMAN</td>
<td>Attitude toward woman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>SOURCES1</td>
<td>The victim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SOURCES2</td>
<td>Relatives of the victim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SOURCES3</td>
<td>Activists from women’s organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>SOURCES4</td>
<td>Witnesses to the crime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>SOURCES5</td>
<td>Government officials</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>SOURCES6</td>
<td>Husband or any of his family members</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX G**

**CODING SHEET 2: CODING SHEET FOR QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE NEWSPAPER EDITORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable number</th>
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<th>Variable label</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Editor of the Newspaper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AWARE</td>
<td>Newspaper cause awareness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CHOOSE</td>
<td>Categories of choosing stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CHARACT</td>
<td>Stories Characterized</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FACTORS</td>
<td>Factors responsible for the kind of coverage</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MARKET</td>
<td>Are the articles market friendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


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