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## **Foreign Media Coverage of African Liberation Struggles: A Content Analytical Case Study of the Angolan Crisis**

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### **Abstract**

The central thesis of this paper is that media reports contribute significantly to the starting, continuation, and termination of wars. It critically assesses the involvement of the American and British press in the Angolan crisis. In particular, it analyses the coverage of that crisis by six papers, namely, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Christian Science Monitor* of the United States and the *London Times*, the *Guardian*, and the *Daily Express* of Britain. The author observes that the weaknesses found in these papers' coverage of the Angolan crisis may be attributable to the nature of journalism as a profession.

### **Résumé**

La thèse centrale de cet article est que les couvertures médiatiques contribuent de manière significative au commencement, à la poursuite et à la fin guerres. L'article procède à une évaluation critique de l'implication de la presse Américaine et Britannique dans la crise Angolaise. Plus spécifiquement, il analyse la couverture de cette crise par six journaux, à savoir, le *New York Times*, le *Washington Post*, le *Christian Science Monitor* des Etats-Unis et le *London Times*, le *Guardian* et le *Daily Express* de Grande-Bretagne. L'auteur fait remarquer que les faiblesses dans la couverture de la crise Angolaise par ces journaux peuvent être dues à la nature du journalisme en tant que profession.

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## **Introduction and Problem Statement**

The declaration of 1986 by the United Nations Organisations as the International Year of Peace (IYP) and other similar efforts aimed at promoting world peace would be ineffective as long as the so-called limited wars, such as the Falkland, Grenada and African liberation wars, keep occurring. The dangers these wars pose to peace and mankind are enormous.

According to a 1985 United Nations report, between 33,000 and 41,000 soldiers and civilians die every month as a result of these limited wars. This is in addition to the hunger, disease, refugee and other problems which these wars bring about. The report went on to point out that most of these war casualties occur in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, and that "some old conflicts have dragged on even for decades while others have flared up repeatedly."<sup>1</sup> The liberation and civil crisis in Angola is one of such recurring conflicts that has remained a threat to peace and equilibrium in Southern Africa and the rest of the continent.

The continued dangers which these limited wars pose for humanity dictate that all institutions or organisations that have anything to do with them, should handle with absolute care. The mass media constitute one of such institutions. It has been amply established in the research literature that the mass media play a major role in the starting, continuation and termination of any war.<sup>2</sup> This is why we have to continually assess the performance of the mass media in reporting wars and other crises. Such assessments become even more important when the media are handling a war taking place in a foreign country and in which their home governments are directly or indirectly involved or interested.

In such situations, as Manny Paraschos and Bill Rutherford rightly pointed out, the mass media are often accused of "presenting a biased and inaccurate picture of a war, costly to civilians and combatants alike."<sup>3</sup> As Roger Morris also observed, the mass media are further accused of "omission, distortion, or worse . . . truth often became a casualty,"<sup>4</sup> just as reported in Philip Kightly's *The First Casualty*.<sup>5</sup> And as a Garth-Furst International study further suggests, the mass media may "unwittingly or unconsciously" be contributing "to some distortion and lack of objective perspective in their coverage"<sup>6</sup> of limited wars in foreign lands.



This study systematically assesses the Angolan crisis in which America was directly involved through military, financial and diplomatic support, and Britain was involved indirectly as America's close ally in most African and other foreign policy matters. It is an attempt to offer an indepth description and analysis of how selected American and British newspapers performed in reporting a crucial segment of the Angolan crisis, between 1974 to 1976.

The six selected newspapers to be analysed are the *New York times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Christian Science Monitor* of the United States and the *London Times*, *Guardian* and *Daily Express* of Britain.

The Angolan crisis started in 1961 in form of liberation struggles against colonial Portugal and has continued till this day, even though Portugal has since been pushed out since November 11, 1975 when Angola had her independence following the signing of the Alvor Accord in January 15, 1975. It is now a war between the liberation groups that fought for independence, who are now supported by the foreign allies from the West and the East. On one side is the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) which is Communist-oriented, Cuban and African supported; and on the other side is the supposedly rebelling alliance of the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) which is openly supported by the American-led Western bloc.

### ***Literature Review***

Even though the Angolan crisis has lasted very long and has attracted much media coverage and involvement by many actors in the international system, there are only a few quantitative studies of media coverage of this war. The available literature shows, however, that the major theme that dominated media coverage of this war at the international level was *ideology*. Two major ideological poles, Soviet/Cuban Communism and Western Democratic capitalism, were in conflict in this crisis.

The literature also suggests that the African, European and American media may have considerable coverage to the war in terms of volume, but did not appear to have done a good job at

interpretation. The media in African countries seem to be the most guilty on this charge of inadequate interpretation, tended to depend mainly on the stories they got from the wire services and failed to supply necessary backgrounds to these stories by sending their own correspondents to Angola.

For instance, Onuora Nwuneli and Olatunji Dare studied the coverage of the Angolan crisis by five influential Nigerian newspapers and found most of the above charges to be true. They found support for their hypotheses, that these newspapers would be overly dependent on international news services for news on the crisis, that they would devote less space for the interpretation of news about the war, and that most of the war would receive little attention in the front pages of the newspapers.<sup>7</sup> The fact that Nigeria has been playing a leadership role in Africa's media development and that *Daily Times*, one of the newspapers they studied, has been described as having no equivalent in Africa, seem to be indicative of the generally poor performance of the African media in covering the war.

The research literature also suggests specifically that the Western press did an inadequate job at interpretation in their coverage of the Angolan crisis. Comparatively and understandably, however, they appear to have performed better than most African press in this and other respects. But their emphasis on the ideological differences of the two warring factions in Angola was reported to be higher than was the case in the African press.

An interesting suggestion of the Angolan war coverage literature is that the African press probably reported the war in line with their home government's foreign policy positions in the war more than Western newspapers did. For example, the Nigerian press coverage of the war was found to be in line with the pro-government-reporting-tendency hypothesis.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, another researcher, *Osagis Ayanru*, examined the coverage of the Angolan war by two influential American news Magazines (*Newsweek* and *Times*), and found "there was no evidence available from our data to show any form of bias for or against either faction. The opinion, inference and judgement sentences were backed by a considerable amount of factual sentence".<sup>9</sup> This means that contrary to the pro-government-reporting-tendency hypothesis, these American news magazines did not report the war in favour of the FNLA-UNITA faction which their home government openly supported.

But another research report by Mohamed El-Khawas suggests that Ayanru's findings may or may not hold true for other Western mass media. He reported that "Angola's entanglement in the



*ideological conflict between the East and the West led to emotional subjective media coverage of the war and that heavily one-sided reporting obscured the actual sequence of events in the crisis*".<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Ernest Harsch and Tony Thomas in their book-length study of the Angolan war reported that there was an unholy marriage between the American press and their government's Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) - 11 a situation that can bring about pro-government reporting.

Even the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has been shown to be using American journalists for its operations. Its director once admitted publicly but said that only "six members of the news media have acted as confidential informants for the Bureau,"<sup>12</sup> A *New York Times* editorial has also confirmed this complicity between the U.S. press and their government's secret services and warned about its implications.<sup>13</sup> John Stockwell maintains, however, that such warnings were not heeded in the U.S. media coverage of the Angolan crisis.<sup>14</sup>

One key research question in this study then is, will the six newspapers examined in this study exhibit this pro-government-reporting-tendency or not? The other key question is, how did the six newspapers perform in terms of volume of coverage, story types, story placement, subject categories, source dependence or usages, dateline emphasis, and directionality? These factors constitute the key variables in this study.

### **Research Design**

Based on the above review and other reasons that include the fact that America's foreign policy position in the war has been pro-FNLA/UNITA faction and that the British foreign policy positions on most issues and events tend to follow closely the American foreign policy positions, the following descriptive assumptions were made:

1. That because of America's greater involvement in the Angolan war, the U.S. newspapers will give greater volume and frequency of reportage to the war than the British newspapers.
2. That for the same reason, the American newspapers will also give greater interpretation to the war than the British newspapers.
3. That the American and British newspapers will, however, register markedly overall low interpretation scores in reporting the war.

4. That the Front-page (strategies) story placement scores of both the American and British newspapers examined will be low.
5. That both the British and American newspapers will give greater coverage to actual battles, ideological and economic aspects of the war than to humanitarian settlement and socio-cultural issues involved in the war.
6. That the American and British newspapers will depend more on their special correspondents than on local bylines or wire services.
7. That the American and British newspapers will report more stories from the FNLA/UNITA datelines than from the MPLA dateline.
8. That the British and American newspapers will publish more favourable stories about the FNLA/UNITA faction and more unfavourable stories about the MPLA faction.

No cause-effect proof was intended in making any of these descriptive assumptions. The major goal of the study was the critical evaluation, quantitative, descriptive and comparative analysis of the reportage given to the Angolan crisis by the six British and American newspapers studied, and to report observable regulations that may emerge. According to Daniel Lerner, "The perception of regularities may in this sense, be the main gift of social research to social policy.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Methodology***

*The primary research technique used was content analysis.* But in addition to this quantification method, the documentary or library research approach was also used for background information and for media interpretation and analysis.

News and opinion items about the Angolan crisis within the study period (1974 - 1976) in the six newspapers under study were read, measured, categorised and coded for purposes of description, comparison and analysis in a manner similar to the ones used by Budd<sup>16</sup> and Hart.<sup>17</sup> The favourability and unfavourability score of each item was determined using well-defined directionality criteria or matrix. The total available space in each newspaper was also measured.

The conventional column inch or word count system or measurement not used because of the differences in column inches and newspaper sizes and because of the growing international trend toward metrication or use of the metric system



of measurement. The system of measurement used was the square column centimetre unit of measurement.

A total of 164 news and opinion items on the crisis were analyzed, initially using standardized story coding sheets. Next, the scores on the coded sheets were computer-analyzed using the Social Science package (SPSS). Finally, the computer data collected were described, interpreted and comparatively analyzed across countries and across papers.

The nine major variables identified and operationally defined for coding purposes were:

1. The name of the newspaper being examined.
2. The frequency: Defined as number of items.
3. Space use, measurement: Defined as volume of relevant news and opinion items.
4. Story Types: Defined as (A) Straight news, (B) Interpretative/feature items (C) Editorial and columns and (D) Others.
5. Journalistic Source categories: Defined as (A) Local Bylines (B) Special Correspondents, (C) Wire Services (D) Other.
6. Dateline or Geographic Sources: Defined as (A) Faction 'A' (MPLA) and its agencies, (B) Faction 'B' (FNLA/UNITA) and its agencies, (C) American Government and its agencies (D) British Government and its agencies, (E) Other foreign countries, (F) International Organizations, and (G) Others.
7. Story Placement or Positioning: Defined as (A) Front Page Main lead story, (B) Front-page sub-story (C) Back-page story and (D) Inside-page Story.
8. Subject Categories: Defined as (A) Actual Battles, (B) Arms Supply (C) Ideological/Political consideration, (D) Economic Aspects, (E) International involvement, (F) Humanitarian Considerations, (G) Peace Talks, (H) International Organizations, (I) Socio-Cultural Issues, (J) Pictorial matters, (K) Miscellaneous.
9. Directionality: Defined as (A) Favourable, (B) Unfavourable (C) Neutral.

A relatively high inter-coder agreement of 82% between two independent coders (this researcher and a colleague) was achieved after a number of adjustments in the coding scheme had been made following two coding exercises using two sets of 50 items from the crisis. The inter-coder agreement was calculated using a combination of the sample percentage procedure and the following formula:<sup>18</sup>



$$A = \frac{Po - Pe}{100 - Pe}$$

Where  $P_o$  is the observed percentage of agreement and  $P_e$  is the expected agreement by chance, and  $A$  is the inter-coder agreement.

### ***Sample Selection***

The units of analysis and units of observation for this study were the six United States and British newspapers listed earlier. The coding unit was the "story".<sup>19</sup> One hundred and twenty issues of the selected newspapers were studied for the duration of the Angolan crisis covered by the study, September 1, 1974 to March 30, 1976 - a period of about one and a half years or 76 weeks which saw the greatest and most prolonged military clashes among the Angolan warring factions.

The six newspapers selected represent a purposive sample of 20 the entire universe or population of newspapers in Britain and the U.S.A. They were purposively chosen by considering such criteria as high circulation, geographical distribution and prestige based on reputation as superior leading newspapers of the two countries concerned.

The final step in the sample selection process involved the selection of a stratified sample of 20 issues from each of the six newspapers studied and for the above stated duration of the war. These specific issues or editions selection was carried out by strict random sampling procedure using the random number table.

## ***FINDINGS (ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION)***

### ***Frequency and Volume of Coverage***

The data analysis revealed that the six British and American newspapers coverage of the Angolan crisis was generally low or inadequate in terms of frequency and volume. The data presented below in Tables 1 and 2 describe this situation. From Table 2, for example, we can see that the six newspapers together used only a total of 164 items in reporting the crisis in one and a half years.

Table 2 gives more comparative details about the low volume and frequency of coverage given to the crisis. It shows that the three American newspapers each used 28 items or 17.1% of their total number of items for the coverage. It also shows, however, that by

space use, the three U.S. newspapers vary in their volumes of coverage. The *New York Times* took the lead among the American and British newspapers in terms of volume or space use by taking up to 26.5% of the total news space of 314, 545 sq. cm. used by the six newspapers. The *Washington Post* had only 16.8% and the *Christian Science Monitor* had only 11.9% of this total news space.

On the British side, the *Daily Express* took the lead by both frequency or number of items used and by volume or space use. It used a total of 30 news items or 18.3% of the total number of 164 items used by the six newspapers. By space, it claimed 17.8% of the total news space used by the six newspapers. The *Guardian* followed the *Express* on the British side with 26 news items or 15.9% of the total number of items and 16.5% of the total news space used by the six newspapers. The *London Times* surprisingly came a close third, in terms of volume, among the British newspapers but a distant last among the six American and British newspapers. It has only 24 news/opinion items or 14.6% of the total number of items, and 16.5% of the total news space used by the six newspapers (see Table 2).

A comparison of both countries' coverage of the Angolan war by volume and frequency shows that the American newspapers did better than the British newspapers. From Table 1, it can be deduced that the aggregate space used by the three American newspapers is 174, 211 sq. cm. while the total amount of space used by the British newspapers was only 140, 334 sq. cm. This higher volume is also upheld when the comparative analysis is done by frequency or number of items - the American newspapers used a total of 84 items while the British newspapers used 80 items in reporting the crisis. What these findings mean is that our *assumption number one*, which expected the American newspapers to do better than the British in terms of volume and frequency of coverage because of America's greater involvement in the crisis, is a reasonable assumption since the available data give it some support.

A further attempt to illustrate the observed generally low volume of coverage given to the crisis by the six newspapers was to compare the total amount of space by each of the newspapers with the approximate total of news space available to each of the newspapers in the total sample studied. Table 1 presents the figures for each of the newspapers and the contrast observable in each newspaper's figures is very obvious. For example, the *New York Times*, which gave the greatest volume of coverage to the Angolan crisis, spent only a total of 83, 619 sq. cm. for the crisis when it had a total approximate available news space of



12,093,000,000,000 sq. cm. But this low volume of coverage should not be surprising considering the fact that the Angolan war is but one event in one foreign country and because past studies of global newsflow (see literature review) have amply demonstrated that even when more foreign events and more countries are included in the research design, the volume of reportage for foreign news events usually remains low for many obvious reasons.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 1.** Comparative Quantity of Angola Crisis News and Opinion in Six American and British Newspapers According to Approximate Total Available News Space and Total Space Actually Devoted to the Crisis

Newspaper	Approximate Total Available News Space (square centimeters)	Total Space Devoted to the Crisis (square centimetres)
New York Times	12,093,000,000,000	83,619
Washington Post	5,374,800,000,000	52,960
Christian Science	2,086,600,000,000	37,632
London Times	4,380,500,000,000	32,251
Guardian	3,732,500,000,000	51,970
Daily Express	3,680,800,000,000	56,113
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,348,200,000,000</b>	<b>314,545</b>

*Includes all matters or content except advertisements.*

**Table 2.** *Comparative Quantity of News and Opinion Matter on the Angolan Crisis in Six American and British Newspapers by Number of Items and Approximate Proportion of News Hole in Square Centimetres*

	Newspapers						TOTALS
	New York Times	Washington Post	Christian Science	London Times	Guardian	Daily Express	
Number of news and opinion items (absolute frequency)	28	28	28	24	26	30	164
Percent of total number of news and opinion items (relative frequency) (n - 164)	17.1%	17.1%	17.1%	14.6%	15.9%	18.3%	100.0%
Approximate volumes of news and opinion items in square centimetres (absolute frequency)	83,619	52,960	37,632	32,251	51,970	56,113	314,545
Percent of total volume of news and opinion items (relative frequency) (N - 314,545)	26.5%	16.8%	11.9%	10.3%	16.5%	17.8%	100.0%

Approximate volume of news used by each of the six newspapers in the coverage of the Angolan crisis.



## ***Types of Stories Reported***

It is important to remind ourselves at this point that volume and frequency of coverage only constitute one aspect of the reporting process. A high volume of reportage that is of poor quality could be considered worse than a low volume coverage that is generally of high quality. So, we also sought to find out whether the generally low coverage given to the Angolan crisis was generally of high quality or low quality. We did this via the popularly accepted method of analysing the types of news and opinions about the crisis which the newspaper emphasized. The assumption behind this method is that interpreted stories are of higher quality than uninterpreted ones and that regular public feedback through letters to the editor is a mark of quality. (See the four categories defined earlier for this purpose.)

Table 3 presents the data on how the six newspapers interpreted the Angolan crisis. From that table it can be seen that both by total number of items used and by total space used, the six American and British newspapers reported more Type A stories (straight news) than any other type of study. Type B stories which refer to interpretative and feature items come next in terms of attention. This is distantly followed by Type C stories or editorials and columns. The six newspapers were silent on Type D stories (letters to the editor).

A comparison of the individual newspapers' performances from Table 3 shows that the *Guardian* did the poorest job in terms of balanced and interpreted reporting. It used as much as 92.3% of its total number of items or 69.9% of its total news space for reporting straight uninterpreted news items. The *New York Times* seems to have done the best job in comparison to the other five American and British newspapers in news interpretation. Up to 44.3% of its stories were Types B and C stories which are interpreted items. 55.7% of its news items (as opposed to *Guardian's* 92.3%) are straight news or Type A stories. But if this comparative analysis is done by space use instead of number of items, it will be found, as shown also in Table 3, that the *Christian Science Monitor*, not the *New York Times*, did the best job in interpretation. This paper has only 50% of its stories as Type A (straight news) items 37.9% as Type B stories and 11.9% as Type C stories (interpreted items).

From the above analysis it can be seen that the American newspapers did a better job than the British newspapers in terms of interpreting and analysing the stories they published on the crisis or placing them in greater perspective (see Table 3). *These data also lend some support to our assumption Number 2 which*

held that the American newspapers would give greater interpretation to the crisis than the British newspapers for reasons given earlier. The findings reported on Table 3 also support our assumption Number 3 which stated that both the American and British newspapers will tend to generally give inadequate interpretation to the Angolan crisis stories when these papers are viewed collectively. This is in spite of the fact that, as reported above, the American newspapers comparatively interpreted the crisis better than the British newspapers.

The complete silence of the six newspapers on Type D stories (Letters to the Editor) suggests that throughout the duration of the Angolan crisis, there was little or no feedback between the newspapers and their readers. Such a feedback process is not only useful to the news process, but is also vital to the formation of the right opinions and policies on the event concerned in the two countries covered by this study - British and the U.S.A.

### **Story Placement or Attention Score**

Because the position in which a newspaper places a story is an indication of the kind of emphasis it gives to it, the kind of importance it attaches to it, a determinant of its chances of being read or not being read, and a good measure of the attention score of the story, the newspapers' story placement patterns were analysed.

Table 4 (below) presents the frequency distribution of the six newspapers' manipulation of this reportorial element of story placement, both in terms of space use and in terms of number of items used. A quick look at the table shows that all the six British and American newspapers placed a disproportionately high amount of their stories, both by space and number of items, in their inside pages (category D). None of the newspapers published any story on the Angolan crisis on its back page. The table also shows that only a small amount of their coverage by space and number of items were placed in the front-page lead story position (A) and the front-page sub-story position (B).

A comparison of all the six newspapers shows that, both by space use and number of items, the *Daily Express* of Britain made the worst use of this element of reporting. It placed up to 96.7% of its total number of items on the inside pages (D) or used a total of 95.5% of its entire news space on the Angolan crisis for stories that were buried on its inside pages. The *Express* has no story on either the back-page or the front-page sub-story position and has only 3.3% (by number of items) or 4.5% (by space use) under category A or front-page main lead story position. The *New York*



**Table 3.** *proportion of Angola Crisis News and Opinion in Six American and British Newspapers According to Story Types*

Story Types	New York Times		Washington Post		Christian Science		London Times		Guardian		Daily Express	
	News/ Opinion (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 83619)	News/ Opinion (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 52950)	News/ Opinion (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 37632)	News/ Opinion (n - 24)	% of News Hole (n - 32251)	News/ Opinion (n - 26)	% of news Hole (n - 51970)	News/ Opinion (n - 30)	% of News Hole (n - 56113)
A	71.4%	55.7%	71.4%	81.0%	57.1%	50.1%	87.5%	89.9%	92.3%	69.9%	76.7%	85.7%
B	25.0%	42.0%	28.6%	20.1%	32.1%	37.9%	8.3%	17.7%	7.7%	30.5%	20.0%	14.2%
C	3.6%	2.3%	—	—	10.7%	11.9%	4.2%	4.5%	—	—	3.3%	0.1%
D	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In square centimetres

Story Types:

A - Straight news

B - Interpretative/feature items

C - Editorial and columns

D - Letters

\*Totals may not all add up to exactly 100 due to rounding error

*Times* probably did the best job here. Table 4 for instance, shows that by space use this newspaper has only 23.3% of its stories under category D or inside page stories, 71.4% as front-page sub-stories and 3.3% as front-page main lead stories. But the brilliant performance in story placement is somewhat weakened by the fact that when the analysis is done by number of items used the *New York Times* has up to 75% of its 28 stories as inside page stories, or 17.9% as front-page sub-stories and only 7.1% as front-page main lead stories.

A cross-country comparative analysis of the newspapers studied shows that there are really no sharp differences noticeable in their manipulations or use of the placement variable. The figures in most of the cells or columns in Table 4 are very much alike. As the table shows, the *Daily Express*' poor performance is cancelled out by the almost equally poor placement scores of the *Washington Post* on the American side. The *New York Times*' somewhat good use of the placement categories is also counter-balanced on the British side by the *Guardian*'s also somewhat good use of this variable, as Table 4 shows.

Nevertheless, the dominant item placement pattern of the six newspapers indicates that the Angolan crisis was not given the importance and attention that would have been expected of a crisis that has caused much death, posed a continual threat of an East-West confrontation in Africa and continued to stand on the way of total liberation of Africa from colonialism and neo-colonialism. It also leads support to our fourth assumption in this study that the front-page (strategic position) placement scores of all the six American and British newspapers studied would be generally low.

### ***Subject Categories Reported***

Table 5 (below) presents the eleven subject categories identified and applied in this study and the data on how the six American and British newspapers performed in their subject-matter reporting of the Angolan crisis. We had assumed or expected (Assumption Number 5) that all the six American and British newspapers would publish more stories about actual battles, ideological and economic aspects of the crisis (categories A, C, D) than about the humanitarian, peace or settlement and socio-cultural aspects of the war (Categories F, G, I). The data generated give support to this assumption or expectation. A look at Table 5 shows that the sum of the percentage scores for categories A, C and D are much higher than the sum of the percentage scores of categories F, G, and I, both by number of items used and by total space used by each of the



**Table 4.** *Proportion of Angola Crisis News and Opinion in Six American and British Newspapers According to Placement Categories*

	New York Times		Washington Post		Christian Science		London Times		Guardian		Daily Express	
A	News/	% of	News/	% of	News/	% of	News/	% of	News/	% of	News/	% of
B	Opinion	News	Opinion	News	Opinion	News	Opinion	News	Opinion	News	Opinion	News
C	Items	Hole	Items	Hole	Items	Hole	Items	Hole	Items	Hole	Items	Hole
D	(n - 28)	(n - 83619)	(n - 28)	(n - 52960)	(n - 28)	(n - 37632)	(n - 24)	(n - 32251)	(n - 26)	(n - 51970)	(n - 30)	(n - 56113)
	7.1%	3.3%			17.9%	27.3%	4.2%	9.0%	23.1%	22.7%	3.3%	4.5%
	17.9%	71.4%	14.3%	19.4%	3.6%	5.1%	8.3%	12.4%	3.8%	1.0%	—	—
	75.0%	25.3%	85.7%	80.6%	78.6%	67.5%	87.5%	90.9%	73.1%	76.2%	96.7%	95.5%
16 Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In square centimetres

Placement Categories

A - Front-page main lead story

B - Front-page story

C - Back-page story

D - Inside-page story

\*Totals may not all add up to exactly 100 due to rounding error

newspapers. This observation is correct in spite of the fact that the three British newspapers recorded zero scores for Category D that houses news and opinion material on the economic aspects of the war.

What the support to the above expectation means is that hard news which had earlier been shown to be largely uninterpreted dominated the coverage given to the crisis by the six newspapers. It also means that they neglected generally soft and constructive news-opinion items on the war dealing with humanitarian aspects of the war, the Socio-cultural issue involved and moves to secure peaceful or negotiated settlement of the Angolan crisis. For suffering humanity and in the interest of African liberation and world peace, it seems logical to say that these newspapers should have focused more of their readers' attention on these constructive, human, and peaceful settlement aspects of the war, than on sensationalised reports of battles and political-ideological concerns of the super power nations or their home government.

Table 5 also indicates that the ideological and pictorial reporting categories (C and J) had the higher scores among the individual newspapers. For example, the *Christian Science* devoted as much as 52.9% of its total news space to ideological category C, while the *Daily Express* used as much as 49.2% of its entire news space for the publication of photographic and other art materials on the war (category J). This means that the crisis reportage was well-illustrated with maps and other pictures, but the stories were too concerned with the ideological conflict between the East (on the side of the MPLA) and the West (on the side of FNLA/UNITA) in the Angolan crisis.

Other interesting, but unfortunate findings on subject category reportage is the fact that as Table 5 shows none of the six newspapers published even one story about the I sub-category that houses socio-cultural issues involved in the crisis; only two newspapers published any story on Category F which houses humanitarian considerations and only two newspapers again published any materials that belong to category G which houses peace talks. (See Table 5.)

### **Journalistic Source Categories**

The term journalistic source category, as used here, refers to the journalistic authority, personnel or organisation that ultimately makes the stories available to newspapers. These should not be confused with the "news sources" which refer to the usually non-journalistic persons or organisations that occasionally provide the



**Table 5. Proportion of Angola Crisis News and Opinion in Six American and British Newspapers According to Subject Categories**

Subject Categories	New York Times		Washington Post		Christian Science		London Times		Guardian		Daily Express	
	News/ Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 83619)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 52960)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 37632)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 24)	% of News Hole (n - 32251)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 26)	% of News Hole (n - 51970)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 30)	% of News Hole (n - 56113)
A	14.3%	2.9	21.4	34.5%	7.1%	3.2%	12.5%	10.7%	23.1%	25.4%	16.7%	6.5%
B	—	—	7.1%	11.8%	—	—	8.3%	13.8%	7.7%	3.7%	23.3%	11.8%
C	17.9%	42.8%	14.3%	7.9%	39.3%	52.9%	12.5%	6.8%	26.9%	32.8%	33.3%	32.4
D	3.6%	0.4%	7.1%	4.4%	7.1%	5.3%	—	—	—	—	—	—
E	10.7%	33.9%	—	—	17.9%	21.5%	20.8%	17.4%	7.7%	3.6%	—	—
F	—	—	3.6%	10.9%	—	—	8.3%	7.1%	—	—	—	—
G	7.1%	10.8%	10.7%	19.4%	—	—	—	—	7.7%	2.4%	—	—
H	3.6%	0.1%	—	—	3.6%	1.3%	12.5%	18.9%	11.5%	25.0%	—	—
I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
J	39.3%	17.9%	28.6%	7.9%	25.0%	15.8%	8.3%	10.7%	11.5%	2.8%	23.3%	49.2%
K	3.6%	2.3%	7.1%	3.2%	—	—	16.7%	26.9%	3.8%	4.4%	3.3%	0.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In square centimetres

Subject Categories:

- A - Actual battles
- B - Arms supply
- C - Ideological/political considerations
- D - Economic aspects

- E - International involvement
- F - Humanitarian considerations
- G - Peace talks
- H - International organizations
- I - Socio-cultural issues

- J - Pictorial matters
  - K - Miscellaneous
- \*Totals may not all add up to exactly 100 due to rounding error

facts to the journalistic authority who puts these facts together in the form of stories.

Our sixth working assumption or expectation stated contrary to what the literature in this area suggests and because of the nature of the event being reported (crisis), that the six American and British newspapers would tend to depend more on their special correspondents than on local bylines or wire services. The data available to us gave some support to this expectation.

Table 6 (below) shows that generally, all the newspapers have their highest scores under Category B row which houses special correspondents. The only newspaper that appears to be deviant is the *New York Times* which has 25% of its total number of items under Category A (local bylines) and 21.4% under category B (special correspondents), It also used as much as 65.2% of its entire news space for Category A items and only 26.4% for Category B items. Furthermore, up to 39.3% of the *New York Times* total number of items were wire service items belonging to Category C.

But in contrast with the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, used as much as 90.3% of its total news space or 65.4% of its total number of items for stories supplied to it by its foreign or special correspondents (category B stories). Only 0.8% of its total number of items were local byline stories (category A), 7.2% were wire service stories and 1.7% were from unidentified sources. (See Table 6.)

The importance of the above findings lies in the fact that they seem to run counter to the suggestion of some critics that the Western mass media tend to be overly dependent on the wire services in their coverage of Third World or African news events. In fact, some of the critics would blame this alleged dependence on wire services as the major cause of the shallow or uninterpreted treatment which stories from Africa and other parts of the Third World receive in the Western mass media.<sup>22</sup> The present study seem to show that the reason for this uninterpreted or shallow reportage may lie elsewhere, not on the dependence or non-dependence on wire services. The data generated in this study also suggests that even when most of the newspapers depend more on their own correspondents than on the wire services, the stories still remain largely uninterpreted.

### ***Dateline Categories***

An assessment of the dateline emphasis in a newspaper's coverage is useful for two main reasons: It not only identifies the geographical origin of the stories published, but could also aid in the determination or suggestion of the leaning or bias of the



**Table 6. Proportion of Angola Crisis News and Opinion in Six American and British Newspapers According to Source Categories**

Source Categories	New York Times		Washington Post		Christian Science		London Times		Guardian		Daily Express	
	News/ Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 83619)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 52960)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 37632)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 24)	% of News Hole (n - 32251)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 26)	% of News Hole (n - 51970)	News/ Opinion Items (n - 30)	% of News Hole (n - 56113)
A	25.0%	65.2%	28.6%	13.5%	21.4%	20.3%	4.2%	4.7%	3.8%	0.8%	10.0%	3.4%
B	21.4%	26.4%	39.3%	63.3%	53.6%	72.1%	58.3%	73.5%	65.4%	90.3%	50.0%	46.2%
C	39.3%	7.4%	25.0%	22.9%	10.7%	7.3%	25.0%	13.5%	26.9%	7.2%	6.7%	0.7%
D	14.3%	1.0%	7.1%	0.5%	14.3%	0.3%	12.5%	19.5%	3.8%	1.7%	30.0%	46.6%
*Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In square centimetres:

Source Categories:

A - Local bylines

B - Special correspondents

C - Wire services

D - Other

\*Totals may not all add up to exactly 100 due to rounding error

newspaper's stories. This is especially true in a study of a war or crisis situation because there are usually two clearly identifiable sides or factions in any war. It seems reasonable to expect a newspaper to publish more stories originating from the side of the conflict it favours, as well as from its agencies.

This is why our seventh assumption or expectation stated that in the Angolan crisis coverage the six American and British newspapers will report more stories from the UNITA/FNLA or Category B datelines (supported by the West) than from the MPLA or Category A dateline (supported by the East).

The data presented on Table 7 below show clearly that this seventh assumption got no support at all. The table shows that both the American and British newspapers published more stories originating from the MPLA faction (Category A) than those originating from the UNITA/FNLA faction (Category B). Only one American newspaper, the *New York Times*, and one British newspaper, the *London Times*, published any material at all originating from category B or the UNITA/FNLA faction - and the figures they recorded were really low. Table 7 shows that the *New York Times* devoted 1.2% of its total news space or 3.6% of its total number of items to Category B and 25% (by number of items) or 17.9% (by total space) to Category A (the MPLA and its agencies). Also, it is only 12.5% (by number of items) or 15.8% (by total space used) of the *London Times*' stories that originated from Category B (the FNLA/UNITA and its agencies). On the other hand, up to 16.7% of the *London Times*' total number of items on the Angolan war were from Category A or the MPLA and its agencies. The rest of the newspapers studied recorded zero scores for Category B and at least some positive scores or figures for Category A.

The only plausible explanation that could be given for the non-support of this seventh assumption or for the pattern of the data that emerged seems to be that the UNITA/FNLA faction never really controlled any considerable amount of geographical area during the Angolan war - at least not long enough to generate enough original news items. In fact, this researcher found in analyzing the newspapers that most of the stories that originated inside Angola were datelined Luanda (the capital city); and for most, if not all of the entire time covered by this study, this capital city was in the hands of the MPLA faction. The foreign correspondents, who have been shown earlier to have provided most of the Angolan crisis stories, also did not have direct access to the UNITA-FNLA men that were in the remote areas of Angola, several miles away from the capital city. They, therefore, had to depend mostly on materials originating from the MPLA faction which controlled Luanda and



**Table 7. Proportion of Angola Crisis News and Opinion in Six American and British Newspapers According to Dateline Categories**

Dateline Categories	New York Times		Washington Post		Christian Science		London Times		Guardian		Daily Express	
	News/Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 83619)	News/Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News Hole (n - 52960)	News/Opinion Items (n - 28)	% of News/Opinion Hole (n - 37632)	News/Opinion Items (n - 24)	% of News Hole (n - 32251)	News/Opinion Items (n - 26)	% of News Hole (n - 51970)	News/Opinion Items (n - 30)	% of News Hole (n - 56113)
A	25.0%	17.9%	28.6%	41.9%	14.3%	9.4%	16.7%	8.6%	38.5%	23.7%	10.0%	4.7%
B	3.6%	1.2%	—	—	—	—	12.5%	15.8%	—	—	—	—
C	28.6%	65.9%	28.6%	13.5%	28.6%	28.5%	4.2%	9.0%	11.5%	13.4%	26.7%	15.5%
D	—	—	—	—	—	—	4.2%	4.7%	3.8%	0.8%	10.0%	3.2%
E	14.3%	12.5%	21.4%	23.4%	25.0%	31.6%	58.3%	63.1%	42.3%	42.6%	13.3%	8.5%
F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
G	28.6%	2.4%	21.4%	11.3%	32.1%	30.5%	4.2%	11.2%	3.8%	19.6%	40.0%	68.1%
*Total	100.0*	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In square centimetres

Dateline Categories:

A - MPLA and its agencies

B - FNLA/UNITA and its agencies

C - American government and its agencies

D - British government and its agencies

E - Other foreign countries

F - International Organizations

G - Other

\*Totals may not all add up to exactly 100 due to rounding error

most of Angola.

There is also the noticeable tendency for the British newspapers to publish materials on the Angolan crisis originating from the U.S. while the U.S. newspapers published no materials originating from Britain. Table 7 shows that all the British newspapers published materials from Category C (the U.S. and its agencies), while the U.S. newspapers were totally blank on materials originating from category D (Britain and its agencies).

### *Direction of Coverage*

Applying the favourability-neutrality-unfavourability matrix is generally accepted as an effective way of determining the leaning or bias of the coverage given to an event by any newspaper. This was adopted and applied in this study.

Our eighth assumption or expectation was that the American and British newspapers would publish more favourable stories about the UNITA/FNLA faction and more unfavourable stories about the MPLA faction, because of reasons given earlier. A look at Table B below which presents the findings on directionality shows that this assumption is generally not supported by the available data.

Only two American newspapers, the *Washington Post* and the *Christian Science* tended weekly to report in line with assumption or expectation and in line with the U.S. foreign policy position - (i.e. anti-MPLA and pro-FNLA/UNITA). The other four American and British newspapers deviated from this assumption by reporting more favourable stories about the MPLA and more unfavourable stories about the FNLA-UNITA.

As Table 8 shows, 21.7% of the *New York Times*' stories were favourable to the MPLA faction and only 19% were favourable to the FNLA-UNITA faction which its home government supported. But the effect of this paper deviation is somewhat reduced by the fact that it also has more unfavourable stories about the MPLA than about FNLA/UNITA - 7.1% of its unfavourable stories were about the MPLA while 4.8% of it were about the FNLA/UNITA. Most of its stories (69.9%) were, however, neutral.

On the British side, the pro-MPLA and anti-FNLA/UNITA pattern of directionality is even more pronounced. The three British Newspapers generally carried more favourable and less unfavourable material about the MPLA, or more unfavourable and less favourable about the FNLA-UNITA faction.

Table 8 shows, for instance, that 43.8% of the *London Times* stories were favourable to the MPLA faction, while only 33.3% were



favourable to the FNLA/UNITA faction. That paper also published 12.5% of its total news stories as unfavourable to the MPLA and as much as 20% unfavourable to the FNLA/UNITA. This trend is repeated in the other two British newspapers.

When we take the above non-pro-government reporting findings along with the earlier reported non-bias finding in our dateline analysis, we can safely say that there is no strong evidence available from our data to show any form of bias against the MPLA as we expected and as some studies reviewed earlier would suggest. This can then be interpreted to mean that professional considerations may have guided the American and British coverages here more than the positions of their home governments in the war. But more studies may have to be carried out using other American media before we can draw a strong conclusion here.

The earlier-reported study by Ayanru<sup>23</sup>, for example, also came up with a no-bias verdict after studying the American *Time* and *Newsweek's* coverage of the Angolan crisis. May be future studies should concentrate on the electronic media coverage of the Angolan war in Britain and the U.S.

### ***Summary and Conclusion***

In this study, we have assessed systematically and quantitatively how six American and British newspapers performed in reporting the Angolan crisis. Nine key variables and eight assumptions were employed in doing this descriptive content analytical assessment.

Five out of the expectations or assumptions were proved plausible while the three on journalistic source, dateline and direction were not. In other words, the data generally seem to confirm our fear that the six American and British newspapers under-reported the Angolan crisis, (volume or quantity of coverage) published mostly uninterpreted or shallow reports about the war that were buried in their inside pages, and concentrated more on actual battles, ideological and economic aspects of the crisis, neglecting the humanitarian, peace or settlement and socio-cultural aspects of the crisis. But the available data also showed that the expected fear of biased reporting arising from subjective utilization of the stories taken mainly from wire services and mainly from UNITA/FNLA datelines, as well as reporting mostly stories that are favourable to the UNITA/FNLA faction in the crisis, was not founded.

Different expectations can be given for the observed poor performance of the six British and American newspapers in the area of interpretation, volume or quantity, placement of story or

categories. In classical New World Information Order style one could say that those newspapers performed the way they did because they were sensational and supposedly unfair Western media all out to distort the African or Angolan reality, negatively influence events in Africa and Angola, cause trouble, paint negative and subjective pictures of Africa and Africans and misinform or even disinform the world about Africa and African events like the Angolan crisis.

But it may not be fair or realistic to draw this conclusion or give this typical NWIO explanation partly because of these papers' good performance on the journalistic source, dateline and directional elements of reporting, and partly because most current research literature shows that in reporting African wars and other events, many African mass media have also performed similarly.<sup>24</sup> The Western mass media have also been shown to be reporting according to professional type - i.e. in line with the general journalistic practices in any part of the world.<sup>25</sup>

It seems to be now widely accepted that journalism and the mass media everywhere seem to be usually biased in favour of the immediate location quantitatively and qualitatively, not necessarily out of political or ideological malice (even though this can sometimes be part of it), but mainly due to the nature of journalism as a profession. As Galtung and Ruge put it, the mass media often "pay particular attention to familiar and culturally similar events," while distant events are usually under-reported.<sup>26</sup> Robert Stevenson and Donald Shaw put it even more emphatically when they wrote that "news flow are less problems of Western flow dominance than problems of journalism. The criticisms of the West can be applied to foreign coverage of every national system . . ." <sup>27</sup> John Merrill concurred by saying that much of global coverage contains bias, distortions and stereotypes, not only of their home countries but of other nations as well.<sup>28</sup> William Hachten and Brian Bell must have also had a similar conclusion in mind when they condemned strongly what they called "the charges of Masmoudi and other proponents of a new order . . ." <sup>29</sup>

But the pertinent question we must ask at this point is: Can we not do anything to change the journalism profession as it presently is: are our hands tied? Should this negative contribution of journalism to world politics and world peace not be changed?

Shifting the blame from the nations or regions of the world and exonerating them completely of any negative influences or intentions as some of us seem to be now doing, and blaming it all on journalism, does not seem to be a wonderful new cure for the problems of global news flow and news reporting which the on-



going controversy has pointed out very well. We have to do much more than shifting blames and exonerating nations or regions and help to find solutions to the poor performance of journalism in global and even national politics. Otherwise the profession will remain stagnant and largely dysfunctional.

In these years when international peace seems to be on the lips of all and sundry, we cannot afford to all fold our hands and say "Oh, that's the way it is and that's the way it will continue to be." We can start from the known to the unknown in seeking a solution to this problem. For one thing, even the most vitriolic and vociferous critics of the UNESCO and Third World standard views on the global news flow controversy agree that there is some disparity, some distortion and some bias in global information flow and news reporting. We have to regard these as real problems, especially in sensitive issues like the Angolan crisis, before we can take positive steps to improve global journalism in the interest of world peace and understanding.

#### NOTES

1. See UN Report, "Armed Conflicts Claim 21 million Lives", in *Concord* (Nigeria), February 18, 1985.
2. See UNESCO "Declaration of Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War," November 22, 1978. See also Laurie Wisberg, "Christian Churches and the Nigerian Civil War" *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall 1975, p. 331.
3. Manny Paraschos and Bill Rutherford Network News Coverage of Invasion of Lebanon by Israeli in 1982", *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3, Autumn 1985, p. 457.
4. Roger Morris, "Beirut - and the Press-Under Siege," *Columbia Journalism Review*, November-December, 1982, p. 23.
5. Philip Knightly, *The First Casualty*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957.
6. Garth-Furst International "Television Network Coverage of the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon", (Unpublished), June-September, 1982.
7. Onuora Nwuneli and Olatunji Dare, "The Coverage of Angolan Crisis in the Nigerian Press", *UNILAG Communication Review*, January-March, 1977, pp. 20-23.
8. *Ibid.*

9. Osagie Ayanru, "A Content Analysis of the Coverage of the Angolan Civil War by *Newsweek* and *Time* Magazines," Unpublished M.S. Thesis, West Virginia State University, 1978.
10. Mohamed El-Khawas, "Power Struggle in Angola: Whose Struggle, Whose Power?" *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, Vol. 1 (special issue), October 1976, p. 57.
11. Ernest Harsch and Tony Thomas, *Angola: The Hidden History of Washington's War*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977.
12. As quoted in *Christian Science Monitor*, March 30, 1976.
13. As reported in *Twin Cities Reader*, Vol. 5, No. 21, May 28 - June 4, 1980. See the piece entitled "The FBI and the Press".
14. John Stuckwell, "Media Manipulation in Angola", in Ellan Ray et. al. (ed.), *Dirty Work: The CIA in Africa*, London: Zed Press, 1982, pp. 98-109.
15. Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958, p. 398.
16. Richard W. Budd, "U.S. News in the Press Down Under", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Number 28, Spring 1964, pp. 39-56.
17. Jim Hart, "The Flow of International News into Ohio" *Journalism Quarterly*, No. 38, Autumn 1961, pp. 541-543.
18. This is a slightly modified form of the formula suggested by William Scott, "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 19, Fall 1955, pp. 321-325. See also Wayne Danielson, "Content Analysis in Communication Research", *Mass Communication Research*, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1958, pp. 180-206.
19. Story coding has been found to be the most rapid and one of the most effective coding methods. See A. Geller, D. Kaplan, and Harold Laswell, "An Experimental Comparison of Four Ways of Coding Editorial/Content," *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1942.
20. A purposive sample for the present study is reasonable and necessary because the relatively small amount of foreign news content (and hence news on wars in Africa) of most small-sized American and British newspapers make it difficult to expect that random sampling would be representative of the entire universe.
21. See Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 2, Summer, 1965, pp. 29-30. See also Frank Kaplan, "The Plight of Foreign news in the U.S. Mass Media: An Assessment", *Gazette*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1978; and Al Hester, "Five Press Service: News for and about the Third World", *Studies in Third World Societies*, Number 9, September 1979, pp. 83-101.
22. Osagie Ayanru, op. cit.



23. *Ibid.*
24. See Onuora E. Nwuneli and Effiong Udoh, "International News Coverage in Nigerian Newspapers", *Gazette*, Vol. 29, 1982, pp. 31-40; Bababunmi Pratt, "Foreign News in Nigerian Dailies: A Comparative Analysis", Unpublished Thesis, University of Lagos, 1977; Muraino Oso, "International News Flow: How Nigerian Press Reports the World, Unpublished Thesis, University of Lagos, 1978; and Annabelle Sremberry-Mohammadi, "The World of the News' Study" *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 34, pp. 121-134.
25. Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, *op. cit.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. Robert L. Stevenson and Donald Lewis Shaw (eds.) *Foreign News and the New World Information Order*, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1984, p. 2.
28. John Merrill (ed.), *Global Journalism*, New York: Longman Publishers, 1983, p. 7.
29. William A. Hachten and Brian Beil, "Bad News or No News? Covering Africa", *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3, Autumn 1985 pp. 626-630.