

Thesis:
Comparing Journalisms: Newspaper Coverage of River
Issues and Climate Change in Australia and Bangladesh

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that I am the author of this thesis, and this work is original. It has not been previously submitted for any other degree or award anywhere else, and all the sources of assistance including literature and individuals, who have helped in the research or in the preparation of the thesis, are appropriately acknowledged.

Jahnabi Das
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Abstract

This thesis, which takes the form of a comparative study of journalistic practices in Australia and Bangladesh, examines the news coverage of river systems and climate change in four leading daily newspapers (i.e., *The Australian/The Sydney Morning Herald* [Australia] and the *Prothom Alo /The Daily Star* [Bangladesh]) during 2008 and 2009. It identifies and explicates similarities and differences in the selection of news topics and news sources, attribution of responsibility for environmental wrongdoing, and scrutiny of source statements by journalists in the two countries. Environmental debate, which is of great significance to journalism, is particularly important for Australia and Bangladesh as these countries, although located in different geographical and socio-political spaces, are currently encountering serious challenges to their ecologies, albeit the problems for each are widely varied. While a shortage of surface water and rising temperatures make Australia an environmentally vulnerable continent, the potential threat of sea level rise due to global warming, along with recurring massive floods put Bangladesh at the forefront of environmental challenge (Saul et al., 2012; Wahlquist, 2008; Douglas et al., 2001; Nicholls et al., 1999).

The study's findings reveal that in the newspaper articles in Australia, the local issue of river systems and global issue of climate change were strongly linked at both the policy and scientific levels, whereas in the content in Bangladesh these two issues were seldom related. Experts in Australia and bureaucrats in Bangladesh, as authoritative agents, were the most consistently nominated groups asked to discuss and explain issues relating to the two countries' river systems (the Murray-Darling and the Ganges-Brahmaputra). However, in the case of the climate change news, politicians were the most frequently cited sources in both countries' content. The study further reveals that newspapers in the two countries selected particular topics and framed sources so as to conform to the respective papers' positions on fundamental environmental questions. The newspapers under scrutiny used similar sources to validate totally different policy positions vis-à-vis river issues and climate change. As well, this study has made advancement in methodological terms by opening up the issue of journalistic practice to more intensive scrutiny—especially in comparative journalism—because it shows that journalistic professional practices in Western context may be as partial and tendentious as those in non-Western context.