

TRYING TO GO IT ALONE AND FAILING IN AN AUTHORITARIAN
DEVELOPING STATE: A CASE STUDY OF THE INDEPENDENT IN TRINIDAD

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Study	1
Research Questions.....	1
Research Approach.....	1
Interviews with Editors.....	2
Content Analysis of Editorial Themes in a 9 Month Sample.....	2
Examination of Government Edicts, Pronouncements.....	3
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Various Types of State Press Relationships	5
History of Press and Government Relations in Trinidad.....	7
Trinidad History	7
The Press and Government in Trinidad and Tobago.....	8
Recent Attempts by Government to Limit Press Freedom.....	9
The Green Paper and Press Freedom.....	13
Development News or Press Control?.....	15
Other Factors that Affect the Survival of Independent Media	19
Managerial Expertise.....	19
Advertising	20
Circulation	21
Demographics.....	22
Editorial Policies	22
Ownership.....	23
Government Relations	24
3 CASE STUDY: THE <u>INDEPENDENT</u>	26
History of the <u>Independent</u>	26

High Start-Up Costs	27
Small Advertising Base	28
Weak Circulation.....	28
Weak Demographics	29
Hostile Editorial Policy	29
Ownership Changes.....	30
Poor Government Relations	30
Content Analysis of <u>Independent</u> Editorials	31
4 CONCLUSION.....	34
APPENDIX	
A <u>INDEPENDENT</u> EDITORIAL CODED ‘RESTRICT MEDIA’	40
B <u>INDEPENDENT</u> EDITORIAL CODED ‘SOCIAL/POSITIVE’	41
C <u>INDEPENDENT</u> EDITORIAL CODED ‘PANDAY/NEGATIVE’	42
D <u>INDEPENDENT</u> EDITORIAL CODED ‘UNC/POSITIVE’	43
E <u>INDEPENDENT</u> EDITORIAL CODED ‘SOCIAL ILLS’	44
F <u>INDEPENDENT</u> EDITORIAL CODED ‘UNC/NEGATIVE’	45
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	46
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	51

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
3-1 Conceptual analysis of <u>Independent</u> editorials.....	32
3-2 Positive vs. negative political coverage in <u>Independent</u> editorial sample.....	32
3-3 Full titles of <u>Independent</u> editorials and coding schemes	32

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Why do some fledgling newspapers flourish while others only last a few years?

What is the impact of press-government relations compared to economics, demographics, circulation, management, advertising, editorial policies, and ownership on their survival?

This researcher chose to study the history of Trinidad's Independent newspaper because of the unique circumstances that led to its formation. The Independent represented an integral facet of democracy in Trinidad. It was a rare forum for dissenting or non-mainstream voices, and held the possibility of a real expression of free speech without fear of government sanctions.

From 1996 to 1999, as they tried to keep the paper afloat, the founding members of the Independent faced many crucial challenges. Some of the obstacles in their path were a result of direct pressure from the political administration (unwarranted tax audits, hesitant advertisers, and an arson attempt). But other problems besides government intervention compromised the paper's survival.

This research examines the fate of the Independent in order to better understand the factors that contributed to its brief existence and early expiration, and hopefully point to what its successors need to do if they are to endure.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

This study has a two-fold purpose: one, to examine recent attempts made by the government of Trinidad and Tobago to regulate the media, and two, to examine the effects other variables such as economics, advertising, circulation, demographics and editorial policies had on the survival of an independent news medium.

Research Questions

This thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. What has been the historical relationship between press and government in Trinidadian society?
2. What are some of the factors that have contributed to that relationship?
3. How did the independent press, in particular the Independent, challenge or perpetuate that relationship?
4. What are some of the difficulties it faced and why?
5. What are the prospects for Trinidad having a truly independent press in the future?

Research Approach

This research adopted a tripartite approach consisting of

1. interviews with editors
2. content analysis of editorial themes in a 9 month sample
3. examination of government edicts, pronouncements

Interviews with Editors

To research this paper, four former Independent journalists were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed into plain text and analyzed for central themes. The journalists interviewed included Sunity Maharaj, Executive Director of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association (CJA), Maxie Cuffie, advisor to the Prime Minister's Policy and Media Research Unit in the Office of the Attorney General, Trinidad Express columnist B.C. Pires, and former Trinidad Guardian Managing Director Alwin Chow. Their experiences had as much to do with the Independent's content as it did with the paper's economic and managerial *modus operandi*.

The researcher asked the journalists not only what the government's reaction was to their fledgling paper, but also what the public, advertisers and other journalists thought of their attempt at an independent press. They gave valuable insight into how the environment, and their solutions to problems involving advertising, circulation and publishing houses, impacted the life of the paper.

Content Analysis of Editorial Themes in a 9 Month Sample

The Independent ran as a daily from November 26, 1996, to August 21, 1998. The Friday paper was the Independent's flagship edition, wrapping up the week and retailing for TT\$2.50.

On June 2, 1998, roughly the paper's final two months of publication, the Independent went from publishing five days a week to publishing six days a week. There was no Sunday edition. The researcher constructed a representative composite month from the pool of editorials spanning this time period. For example, among 90 of the possible Mondays, a sample of five Mondays was drawn at random. Five Tuesdays were

drawn at random from the available Tuesdays, and so on until 30 days including Saturdays had been randomly selected.

The month was then examined using qualitative content analysis. According to Smith and Sparkes, this form of analysis focuses on “central themes, typologies, or instances of paradigmatic categories within the telling” (Smith and Sparkes 2005, 228). In other words, using this method of analysis, the researcher assumes the role of a typical Independent reader and attempts to interpret the sample of editorials the same way the reader would. When coding the editorials, the researcher created categories based on what this average reader would construe as positive or negative coverage of the government and/or the Prime Minister. She then analyzed the frequency of negative coverage versus positive or neutral coverage, and drew conclusions about the attitude of the Independent towards the government and whether the Panday administration was justified in its hostility towards the newspaper and the independent press.

Examination of Government Edicts, Pronouncements

The researcher examined attempts by the state to regulate the media in Trinidad and Tobago, by considering various newspaper articles and government documents. Among these was the Green Paper released by the Ministry of the Attorney General entitled Reform of Media Law: Towards a Free and Responsible Media (1997). Also analyzed were the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago (1976), the Freedom of Information Act (1999) and the draft Broadcast Code recently released by the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (2005). Census data on relevant demographics, including income and education statistics for Trinidad and Tobago’s population derived from the 2004 CIA World Factbook provided the researcher with a more precise background understanding of the Independent’s advertising and circulation problems.

The census data also shed light on the probability that the island's age and education structure might have affected the popular reaction to the Independent's editorial policies.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Various Types of State Press Relationships

Throughout the years, scholars have attempted to define various types of press and government relationships, but the associations outlined by Frederick S. Siebert et al. in his 1963 study Four Theories of the Press are probably the most well known.

According to Siebert, there are four identifiable relationships between the media and government. The authoritarian system mandates direct government control of the mass media, and is practiced tacitly in many developing countries (Siebert and others 1963, 36). On the surface, the press can regularly criticize the establishment without fear of repudiation. But in reality, the government can strike back by threatening their advertising dollars, withholding information from journalists or even restricting their personal freedom (Siebert and others 1963, 36).

The Soviet system in accordance with its communist roots is marked by publicly owned media organizations. All media employees are government employees, are tasked with promoting unity within the state and the party (Siebert and others 1963, 145). Top media executives are leaders in the Communist party, and media access is provided to active and loyal party members. Criticism of the party and government of a substantial nature is forbidden, and the repercussions are serious.

The libertarian theory, also called the free press theory, specifies no relationship between government and media at all. The model assumes that the individual is free to publish whatever he or she likes. Attacks on the government's policies are fully accepted

and even encouraged (Siebert and others 1963, 70). One former Independent columnist explained why this theory is the most desirable within a democratic society:

Newspapers, if they are doing their job properly, give much more assistance than any politician can [hope for], because they provide a forum for free expression of ideas, and the best ideas will bubble to the top. (Pires, 1999)

The theory of social responsibility is an outgrowth of the libertarian theory. In the late 1940's, a commission chaired by University of Chicago Chancellor Robert Maynard Hutchins expanded on this theory when it noted, "It is no longer enough to report the *fact* truthfully. It is now necessary to report *the truth about the fact*" (Hutchins 1947, 88).

According to media scholar John Vivian, the Commission's report criticized the press for "sensationalism, news selected for its entertainment value, 'lying' by newspapers, cover-ups of the press's own scandals, the hunger for scoops, reliance on unidentified sources, reinforcement of group stereotypes, advertisements disguised as news, and, especially, concentrated ownership" (Vivian 1995, 199). To combat those alleged shortcomings the Commission called for a socially responsible press. Its recommendations included:

1. Presenting the news truthfully, with context and meaning.
2. Offering a place to exchange comment and criticism
3. Providing a means to project opinions and attitudes of society's groups.
4. Presenting and clarifying society's goals.
5. Reaching every member of society.

Editorials, columns, news analysis and letters to the editor offer a means to achieve some of the goals of social responsibility. In the 20th century, the United States has been at the forefront of news analysis and interpretation, in accordance with this theory.

Reporters are encouraged to present the news "with context and meaning," therefore

encouraging the public in an informed decision. Publishing stories that include minority viewpoints or that reveal life outside the mainstream is another way journalists can “reach every member of society.”

In a social responsibility system, if the media fail to meet their responsibility to society, the government steps in to ensure compliance. The government of Trinidad and Tobago is a self-titled democracy with a constitution that guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of speech. In the following paragraphs we will examine the historical relationship between the press and government in Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to Siebert’s aforementioned theories.

History of Press and Government Relations in Trinidad

Trinidad History

Trinidad is the most southerly Caribbean island, just seven miles off the coast of Venezuela. To the northeast lies its smaller sibling, Tobago, named for a kind of tobacco smoked by Carib natives (Lycos 2005). The Caribs were one of many tribes of Indians generally accepted to be Trinidad and Tobago’s first inhabitants. The other tribes include the Arawaks, Chaimas, Tamanaques, Salives, Chaguanes and Quaquas. When European colonizers came, beginning with Columbus in 1498, European diseases and the rigors of slavery took their toll on the Indian population; by 1824 there were only 893 Indians left on Trinidad and today there are none (Island Connoisseur 2000).

The Spanish ruled Trinidad until 1797, and during that period encouraged an influx of Roman Catholic settlers, including French-speaking immigrants and slave owners from the French Caribbean islands. The French introduced the sugar cane industry to Trinidad and began to import African slaves to work on the sugar plantations.

In 1797 England's Sir Ralph Abercromby captured the island, and the British colonialists usurped the sugar and slave trade (Island Connoisseur 2000). In 1807 when slavery was abolished, workers became scarce, and the British turned to indentured laborers from India and China to sustain the sugar cane plantations. In five years more than 140,000 Indians were imported to work in the sugar cane plantations, and although many returned to India when their contract ended, the majority stayed and made Trinidad their home (Island Connoisseur 2000). When the Chinese government insisted on return passage being paid for the Chinese workers, immigration from China came to an end. However, Trinidad's history of motley immigrants means "Trinis" are a diverse lot of African, European and Asian heritage.

The Press and Government in Trinidad and Tobago

State control of newspaper publications is a trend started centuries ago when Trinidad was still colonized by British settlers. Michael Anthony, author of the book First in Trinidad, recounts that Trinidad's first English-language newspaper, the Trinidad Courant (1799-1822) was "very much a government gazette . . . Government notices, proclamations, and ordinances were very much in evidence" (Anthony 1985, 50). Its successor the Trinidad Gazette (1822-1825), also gained the reputation of being the mouthpiece of the British colonial regime. Trinidad's first four newspapers, in fact, including the Port of Spain Gazette (1825-1897), and the Trinidad Standard (1838-1847), all backed the Government and the land-owning class (Anthony 1985, 53).

John Lent, author of the book Mass Communications in the Caribbean explained that the balance of power did not equalize after independence (Lent 1990, 90). Trinidad Express columnist Raoul Pantin confirms:

Every single government since Independence in 1962 has locked horns with the Press, the worst offender being our first Prime Minister, that national icon and hero, Dr. Eric Williams, who never was shy about his total contempt for the Press. (Pantin 2005)

Dr. Eric Williams tolerated no criticism on the part of the island's newspapers. On April 22, 1960, he publicly burned a copy of the Trinidad Guardian in the nation's capital (Siewah and Rampersad-Narinesingh 1995, 128). He routinely lampooned reporters at press conferences, or made snide responses to their questions, claiming they "didn't have a clue what running a modern state was all about" (Pantin 2005).

In 1970, his administration drafted the Public Order Act. "The press would have been one of the first victims of that repressive piece of legislation," recounts Pantin (Pantin 2005). However both the media and the public inundated the government with condemnation of the proposal and forced its withdrawal before it could become law (Pantin 2005). Five years later, in 1975, half a dozen reporters, senior editors and producers were fired "for standing up to a government attempt to censor the news . . . a shameful blot on the history of the free Press in this country" (Pantin 2005).

Recent Attempts by Government to Limit Press Freedom

The press fared no better with Trinidad and Tobago's subsequent prime ministers. Criticism of the government was still met with ire. "Dr. Williams' successors may have been less autocratic and less disdainful of the press but every single Prime Minister thereafter—George Chambers, ANR (Arthur Napoleon Raymond) Robinson, Patrick Manning, Basdeo Panday and back to Manning again—have had their grouses with the press" recalls Trinidad Express columnist Raoul Pantin (Pantin 2005).

George Chambers, who succeeded Dr. Williams as leader of the People's National Movement (PNM) and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago had his share of conflict

with the media. Although claiming that he would never tamper with the constitutionally enshrined principle of press freedom, Trinidad Guardian reporter Gail Alexander recounts that he often criticized the press for inaccuracies in reporting (Alexander 1997, 3). In 1981 he complained that coverage of his tour of the Caroni sugar factory made it seem as if he had a hostile reception. On another occasion an erroneous radio report led to the ominous observation that the station “had not obtained its license yet” (Alexander 1997, 3).

Speaking to a gathering in the beach-front town of Mayaro, Chambers remarked that if residents accepted what they read in the newspaper without verifying it first the way he did, “they would have a serious problem” (Alexander 1997, 3). During the 1986 election campaign, he refused to speak at a PNM meeting in rural Arima, unless the local television crew left the scene (Alexander 1997, 3). Under his administration, PNM supporters pelted Trinidad Express journalist Ria Taitt with seeds, ice cubes and fruit, and accused her of being “a NAR agent” (working for the Opposition). PNM Ministers also accused the media of siding with the Opposition (Alexander 1997, 3).

Arthur (ANR) Robinson was sworn in as the country’s third Prime Minister in 1986, and slowly but surely began to lose popularity with the public and the press (The Economist 1992, 35). His government “inherited a bloated state bureaucracy and an economy in decline since the end of the oil boom in the early 1980s” writes author Douglas Payne (Payne 1995, 30). Despite his austere guidelines for managing the national budget, devaluation, public-sector pay cuts, new taxes and rising unemployment only resulted in five years of negative press coverage for Robinson (The Economist 1992, 35).

Racial tensions between blacks and East Indians also escalated on his watch. In 1989, his Indo-Trinidadian deputy, Basdeo Panday, led a faction out of the government and formed a new party (The Economist 1992, 35). In 1990, the Muslim extremist group Jamaat-al-Muslimeen kidnapped the prime minister and took control of Trinidad's parliamentary building in an attempt to overthrow the government. The island's growing list of problems was seen as the product of poor strategic planning on Robinson's part, and sealed his fate as media scapegoat. In 1991 he lost the election to PNM's Patrick Manning (The Economist 1992, 35).

The most notable conflicts between the press and government, however, began in 1996, with the Trinidad Guardian at the center of a highly publicized controversy. The country's first East Indian Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, had taken office in 1995. In a matter of months he made it clear that any criticism of his government on the part of the media was seen as racially motivated and worthy of extreme censorship. On February 2, 1996, he barred Guardian reporters from access to government information in an effort to force the paper's owners to fire editor in chief Jones P. Madeira. The ban lasted almost a week.

In April 1996, several senior staff members, including Madeira and managing editor Alwin Chow, said that the Guardian's owners, the Trinidad Publishing Co., had forced them to choose between censoring their editorials and resigning. Chow told the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) that Trinidad Publishing, either willingly or under government pressure, sought to appease officials by ousting the journalists. The chairman of the publishing company denied Chow's charges. In May 1996, Chow, Madeira and several former Guardian journalists started a new weekly newspaper, the Independent.

The country's fourth Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, lost two elections to British-trained lawyer and veteran labor leader Basdeo Panday before being sworn in as Prime Minister a second time in 2001. As Leader of the Opposition, Manning had been very vocal in his condemnation of the Panday government's draconian media policies. "The country could now see where the irresponsibility of the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General is leading us now," he declared upon Chow's April 1996 resignation. "The question (is) who next will bite the dust" (Newsday 1996a, 4).

But his administration has proven to be no better. As Trinidad Guardian columnist Anand Ramlogan remarked, "Politicians all sing the same tune from the same hymn book when it comes to the media" (Ramlogan 2004). On May 6, 2004, during the opening of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association (CJA) conference in St. Augustine, Trinidad, Manning complained that the islands' media were deliberately deceptive and regularly misrepresented valid news. The Trinidad Express quoted him as saying, "All is not well with journalism in Trinidad and Tobago. I have witnessed the lives of many people almost destroyed by careless and irresponsible journalists" (Ramcharitar 2004).

On April 18, 2005, the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago released a draft Broadcast Code. It drew almost immediate fire from media workers and journalists throughout the Caribbean (Richards 2005). The Guyana Press Association (GPA) remarked, "We view this as a very unfortunate development and an unbridled attempt to impose a draconian form of censorship on the media in the twin-island Republic in much the same way that authorities in Guyana have sought to impose similar regulations for media in the country" (Internet Express 2005b). The Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association (TTPBA) expressed the view that "the broadcast

draft code . . . is designed to severely curtail freedom of speech and prevent the population at large from being properly informed or publicly expressing their views on various subjects” (King 2005).

The Green Paper and Press Freedom

In 1997, during Panday’s administration, Trinidad and Tobago’s Office of the Attorney General introduced the controversial Green Paper entitled Reform of Media Law: Towards a Free and Responsible Media. The paper asserted that because the free speech principle is grounded in the public interest, it must give way to occasion when the public interest points the other way. Among the reasons listed in the Green Paper as justification for the repression of the free speech principle were “to secure a fair trial, to protect citizens against damaging falsehood or unwarranted invasion of their privacy, to prevent incitement to racial violence or breaches of national security” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 2).

The Green Paper quotes Mahatma Ghandi as saying, “The sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power but just as an unchained torrent submerges the whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 23).

The Green Paper cites policies in Britain that pertain to the broadcast media. “Radio and television have been placed under a statutory duty to ensure (a) that any news given (in whatever form) in programmes is presented with due accuracy and impartiality, and (b) that due impartiality is preserved as respects matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 21).

The Green Paper then suggested not only the creation of a self-regulatory “Press Council” but a press ombudsman “empowered by statute to receive complaints of bias,

incompetence, unethical behavior or unfairness” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 23). This press ombudsman would have more authority than those in the United States, because he would be a High Court Judge and the “wrongs over which (his) new jurisdiction would consist would be made civil wrongs. A Judge would have power to punish persons who disobey (his) orders” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 25).

Trinidadian journalists were alarmed by the suggestion that perceived “incompetence” could become a civil infraction punishable by law. It is no secret that journalists in most Caribbean islands are underpaid and receive on-the-job “training” (Slinger 1993, 31). Peter Slinger reports, “trained personnel, an essential production requirement, are in short supply on Trinidad and most journalists receive inadequate and infrequent training” (Slinger 1993, 31). Examples of English-wrong verbs, bad spelling, and lack of clarity abound.

“The industry is one in which a new product not only has to be created every day but has to be created within a set of fixed deadlines which means that mistakes, misjudgements even, are regrettably part of the territory” remarked one Express editorial (Internet Express 2005a). Five years ago in Trinidad and Tobago it was nearly impossible to find a journalist with an English or Journalism degree, or any degree at all. Today, their numbers are increasing, but slowly.

Other suggested civil infractions included publishing information that “imperils national security or undermines the democratic fabric” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 26). In discussing their “alarm over laws that are worded in such loose-ended abstractions” an Express editorial raised the question,

Would such a law, had it been in place, have been used to prevent the publication of the contents of that celebrated meeting between Attorney General Ramesh

Maharaj and the imam of the Jamaat-Al-Muslimeen, Abu Bakr? Might it not have been argued by somebody, with his own interests in the matter, that publication of the taped conversation would have “imperiled national security” and undermined the “democratic fabric”? (Trinidad Express 1997, 8)

The Green Paper also outlined a code of ethics that immediately drew the attention of international media executives (Editor & Publisher 1997, 15). It states in part:

“Journalists and newspapers shall endeavour [*sic*] to highlight and promote activities of the State and the public which aim at national unity and solidarity, integrity of Trinidad and Tobago, and economic and social progress” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 26).

The Green Paper also states, “Journalists and newspapers shall avoid publication of reports and comments which tend to promote tensions likely to lead to civil disorder, meeting or rebellion” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 26). The seventh paragraph proposes, “Newspapers and journalists shall refrain from publishing matters (including advertisements) which is [*sic*] obscene or is likely to encourage vice, crime or unlawful activities” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 27).

Editor & Publisher magazine cites Owen Baptiste, editor in chief of the Trinidad Guardian, who commented that the goal of the government initiative was “not really to make the press free nor journalists professional, but to have them both responsible only to the government” (Editor & Publisher 1997, 15). Instead of promoting a healthy relationship between the government and the press, the Attorney General’s Green Paper was seen as advancing what is commonly referred to as “developmental journalism.”

Development News or Press Control?

“What happens in Trinidad, politicians become independent and then expect what is called ‘developmental journalism’” explained columnist B.C. Pires (Pires, 1999).

Developmental journalism has come to represent government-controlled news to

academics and journalists in the Western Hemisphere. An Editor & Publisher editorial stated, “Popular independent newspapers are a special target of some sub-Saharan governments, who use the genteel code words of “developmental journalism” to justify their repression” (Editor & Publisher 2003, 11).

The debate rages on, but developmental journalism, as interpreted by Pires and others, is a brand of journalism which asserts that journalists in “developing” societies, like Zimbabwe and Trinidad, should not reveal wrong-doings or highlight misdeeds. Leaders of developing countries do not expect negative coverage. They see it as evidence of gross disrespect.

Politicians will also happily ensure that newspaper publishers pay the price for their independence. During a 1998 appeal to supporters to boycott the Trinidad Guardian, Panday declared, “If a newspaper is working against your interest to achieve a better life, it is your enemy. No newspaper can survive without us. They all depend on us for survival” (Siewah and Rampersad-Narinesingh 1995, 136).

In short, developmental journalists are expected to provide “uplifting” reports of a country’s development plans and strategies. “Positive journalism,” Pires explained. “Nation-building journalism” (Pires, 1999).

In keeping with this theme, in 1998 the ruling party, the United National Congress (UNC) introduced the new state-owned National Broadcasting Network (NBN) with the words, “The key objective of the (Panday) administration’s communications should be to persuade the population that the government cares, and is delivering benefits to the people” (Gibbings 2). Dana Bullen, who served as Executive Director of the World Press Freedom Committee for ten years, commented on developmental journalism this way: “In

my view, it is tragic self-deception to think this will aid the people of a country or its development. It's been tried, and it doesn't work. Especially today, there are many examples of this fact" (Bullen 1990, 15).

Bullen quotes a noted Indian journalist, Pran Chopra, as saying: "...if there is any suppression of the truth under any kind of false notion of the obligations of the media, then very soon you will end up with a situation where you neither have truth nor nation-building" (Bullen 1990, 14).

Journalists in Trinidad and Tobago did acknowledge the Green Paper's many proposals geared towards improving freedom of the press and quality of life. The Green Paper suggested modernizing laws still in effect that did not address current societal trends. For instance, the government introduced a proposal to update the "Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act of 1955, which is directed only against horror comics, and does nothing to protect children from the more recent evil of violent and sexually explicit videos" (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 5). The government also suggested amendments to the "Cinematograph Act of 1936 (which) sets up a censorship system for films, but not for modern forms of electronic communications" (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 5).

The Green Paper called attention to the need for "revising, updating and amending media law . . . to bring it in line with the recent and remarkable advances in media technology" (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 6). "Our laws which relate to freedom of expression are old, vague and frequently anachronistic," states the Green Paper (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 4). In some cases, the unaltered laws have not affected the media

substantially. A statute making it a crime of treason or a felony to “agitate for a Republic” has not been amended, but is obviously invalid (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 4).

However, the Green Paper points out that laws pertaining to obscene libel and the law of contempt of court are still applicable in Trinidad and Tobago in their “ancient, vague and unsatisfactory state, without reforms subsequently made in England by, for example, the 1959 Obscene Publication Act and the 1981 Contempt of Court Act” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 4). Laws such as these, the Attorney General stated, were in urgent need of updating.

The Green Paper suggested that any new laws should include “protection for journalists against punishment for contempt for refusing to disclose their sources of information” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 8). The Green Paper also proposed that the government implement laws that would prevent politicians from “using their ministerial or governmental power to discriminate against a disliked publication or by giving commercial advantages to benefit rivals” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 9).

The Green Paper suggested harsh punishment for racial defamation. “Human Rights treaties generally make an exception to free speech when it is intended to stir up racial hatreds and violence . . . There is a strong case for making incitement to racial violence a specific criminal offence” (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 13). Indeed, other countries, such as Germany, France and Spain, have already made it illegal to spread race hatred, and to defend “negationist” theories that deny the Holocaust happened (Ford 1998). Trinidad Express columnist George John concurred: “No serious media person at any level in this country [would] have any objection to media guidelines that come down heavily on the promotion of racism in whatever form” (John 2005).

Because the language contained in the Green Paper had an undercurrent of media control, it incited heated public reaction. The government was eventually forced to withdraw the document. Panday also promised to curb his strident condemnations of the press, but in 1998, journalists and supporters took to the streets to protest continued attacks on them and threats to democracy (Freedom House 1999).

Other Factors that Affect the Survival of Independent Media

Editors and broadcasters of failed independent ventures worldwide can narrate stories of arbitrary arrests, detentions without trial, tax audits, and arson and assassination attempts. Inarguably, draconian laws and authoritarian systems make it difficult for these media to stay afloat. But according to Webster there are other factors that are equally important in determining a newspaper's fate in a developing and often authoritarian context such as the Caribbean (Webster 1992): These are management, circulation, advertising, demographics, editorial policies, ownership, and government relations. We shall outline the importance of each of these briefly in the next section.

Managerial Expertise

Effective managers are born of training and experience, much of it involving trial and error (Webster 1992). However, a developing country is an economic environment unforgiving of slip-ups. One mistake could be the difference between life and death for a small newspaper.

In Zambia, The Post is the only newspaper that withstood the pressure of a free market economy without government or religious financial interjection (Africa News 2004). "The Post has shown its management ability to plan ahead, to read its economic environment, and to budget and plan accordingly" reported the Africa News (Africa News 2004). Botswana's leading independent newspaper Mmegi made the strategic

decision to increase production from one to four times a week, and doubled its circulation figures in seven short months (Index on Censorship 1992, 64).

In contrast, in South Africa, the Nigerian-owned daily ThisDay did not fare as well. They changed publishers twice in one year due to an inability to “fulfill the conditions of their [*sic*] contract,” paid their reporters infrequently and finally suspended printing in October 2004 until “all outstanding dues to staff and others could be cleared” (Agence France Presse 2004). And in France, the leading daily Le Monde launched a weekend magazine aimed at women and younger readers that not only did not lure new readers, but repelled existing customers with its trivial content, and compounded the newspaper’s financial difficulties (The Business 2004).

Advertising

In general, paid circulation accounts for roughly 20 percent of a newspaper’s revenue (Ahrens 2005, F01). The sale of advertising space makes up the rest. The managing editor of Botswana’s Mmegi credits 80 to 85 percent of his paper’s income to advertising (Index on Censorship 1992, 64). In the Caribbean, the figures are between 80 and 95 percent (Neptune and Richards 2001). However, advertisers are not plentiful, and conditions within the advertising market are steadily worsening (Index on Censorship 1992, 64). As many newspaper publishers can attest, “advertisers prefer glossy magazines, radio and television” (The Business 2004).

Advertising expenditure is also susceptible to changes in the economy. “When jobs grow, employers tend to buy help-wanted ads to attract applicants. When housing is booming, so do real-estate ads, and when retailers or auto companies are competing with each other for the attention of free-spending consumers, they also take out ads” says Associated Press writer Seth Sutel (Sutel 2004). However, when the economic climate

takes a turn for the worse, businesses may limit their advertising expenditure, especially if they are fearful that their other expenses, such as energy, fuel, insurance, interest rates, commodities and health care, are also on the rise (Sutel 2004). A newspaper with minimal circulation figures, or one seen as anti-establishment, would be even more hard-pressed than most to win the attention of a cautious businessperson.

Circulation

Newsstands are the main form of circulation for newspapers throughout the Caribbean. Some organizations, such as airlines, schools and hotels, subscribe to one or more of the major newspapers on behalf of their patrons, but smaller publications are distributed almost entirely by individual sales. Apart from newsstands and subscriptions, some publications are distributed via the post office. Obviously, this is an inefficient form of distribution that can result in slow deliveries (Webster 1992).

Apart from the means by which newspapers are circulated, there are almost more publications than the consumer market can sustain. Some newspapers resort to sensationalism to draw customers away from their competition (Webster 1992). The researcher found several examples of such sensationalism in Trinidad's newspapers. In a one month period, the front pages literally screamed for attention with words like fire, slash, crash, burned, stabbed, shot, and killed.

But even these strategies fail to attract the new generation that is bypassing newspapers altogether for the Internet, radio and television. "Circulation has been in decline for more than a dozen years," reported industry expert John Morton (Hundley 2004, Business 1D). "And it probably will continue to decline unless some of these attempts to attract young readers prove more successful than likely."

Demographics

The physical characteristics of a population such as age, sex, marital status, family size and education have a lot to do with their acceptance of a new media. An older, more settled population will respond differently to independent media and the possibility of change than a younger, more defiant population. A financially secure, more settled household is more likely to read the newspaper than their struggling neighbors (Malthouse and Calder 2003, 2). A low literacy rate more negatively affects print publications than it would a television or radio station.

Then there are the variables common to newspapers throughout the world: young people are accustomed to getting their information for free, through the Internet, radio and television. The Newspaper Association of America reports that in 2004, an average of 38.8% of those aged 25 to 34 read a daily newspaper, while the readership percentage for those 55 and over is 67.4 (Saba 2005). Newspapers in the United States have experimented with many strategies to woo younger readers, from publishing free community papers and special sections to utilizing colorful fonts and celebrity front page pictures (Gloede 2005).

Editorial Policies

“Being a newspaper that is not tied to any political party or commercial interest has stood us in good stead,” recounts Gwen Lister, editor of one of Africa’s successful independent newspapers. “The Namibian consistently adheres to a clear set of ideals, and this has helped us steer our course, often through very stormy waters” (Lister 2004, 46). A paper’s editorial policy can affect its readership. The Philadelphia Inquirer urged its readers to vote for Republican candidates, and their lack of objectivity cost them readers (Gloede 2005). The editorial policy not only affects circulation, but also impacts how the

state and government relate to that paper. The government can easily kill a publication through limiting the supply of newsprint or presses, persecuting its staff or confiscating its assets if it doesn't agree with the paper's content (Webster 1992).

Ownership

Most newspapers in authoritarian societies are owned either by the state or by private families (Djankov and others 2001, 1). Both groups can have a negative impact on press freedom and survival. "Government ownership of the media is generally associated with less press freedom [and] fewer political and economic rights" wrote one group of researchers (Djankov and others 2001, 1). Editor-in-Chief of Guyana's Stabroek News David de Caires added,

The State should not own any of the media of information except through the device of an autonomous State corporation like the BBC in which directors, programmers, journalists and so on are insulated from interference by the State. Direct state ownership of the media is incompatible with a multi-party democracy and with the free flow of information. It puts enormous pressures on the staff to conform and to become the propaganda agents of the party in power. It makes for bad journalism. Certainly, especially in poor countries, the resources of the state must play a major role in developing the media, but this must be done in such a way that the politicians have no control of news content. (de Caires 2003, 73)

Many governments use their financial leverage on the media as a way to control them. "State subsidies and state advertising revenues enable governments to influence media content" (Djankov and others 2001, 15) "In Cameroon, for example, the state refused to advertise in privately owned press after critical coverage of government."

But ownership by families or widely-held corporations can also be detrimental to the free flow of information and a publication's continued existence. "Controlling private shareholders get the same benefit from controlling media outlets: the ability to influence public opinion and the political process" (Djankov and others 2001, 17). President of the Caribbean Association of Media Workers (ACM) Wesley Gibbings remarked,

As a media workers representative, I often run afoul of media owners and managers who believe the agenda of media practitioners is necessarily the same as theirs.... They are amongst the principal enemies of free press in an ironic kind of way. The over-emphasis on making money has been a discredit to the Caribbean media industry. (Pires 2005)

In other words, even when an entity is privately owned, they may need to practice a form of self-censorship in order to survive.

Government Relations

The willingness of a country's administration to tolerate the criticism of opinionated journalists is a pivotal factor in the survival of an independent medium. In Tanzania, journalists have been known to lose both their citizenship and their work permits through the machinations of a hostile government. In 2003 the country's only independent newspaper Dira was closed by the Zanzibar government on unspecified "national security" grounds (Committee to Protect Journalists 2005). In 2005, the government banned political columnist Jabir Idrissa from writing, citing a rarely-enforced 1988 law to show that he was working without permission (Committee to Protect Journalists 2005).

African governments have also used criminal libel laws and licensing requirements to conveniently muzzle the press. A 2003 Editor & Publisher editorial related, "Since publishing an article in October suggesting Sierra Leone President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was unfit to hold office, the newspaper Di People has been hit by a variety of "seditious" and "criminal" libel charges. On Nov. 4, the World Association of Newspapers reported, heavily armed police seized all the newspaper's equipment -- right down to Editor Paul Kamara's car" (Editor & Publisher 2003, 11).

In Armenia, freedom of speech is specifically enshrined in the constitution: "Everyone is entitled to assert his or her opinion. No one shall be forced to retract or

change his or her opinion. Everyone is entitled to freedom of speech, including the freedom to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas through any medium of information, regardless of state borders" (European Journalism Centre 2003). In practice, however, newspaper content is controlled by political parties and the power elite. Because the majority of Armenians do not contribute to the circulation or advertising sales of the country's newspapers, independent media are virtually non-existent, and a publication's survival is contingent upon the goodwill of powerful political sponsors (European Journalism Centre 2003).

The Caribbean island of Jamaica, however, is noted for its "vibrant and free press" (Henry 1999). Jamaica is home to three daily national newspapers, several regional papers, seven radio stations, three television stations and dozens of imported cable channels, as well as magazine and book publishers (Henry 1999). The government owns none of these media outlets, and journalists, whom the public holds in high esteem, are free to report on government activities.

The next chapter takes a look at how these antecedents and factors influenced the birth and career of the Independent and ultimately led to its demise.

CHAPTER 3
CASE STUDY: THE INDEPENDENT

History of the Independent

The journalists and editors who started the Independent walked out of their jobs at the Trinidad Guardian in April 1996, after the publishers terminated Alwin Chow, the managing director, and asked the remaining staff to stop writing stories critical of Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and his government (Pires, 1999). Three months prior, Panday had called on his supporters to boycott the Guardian and force the removal of its editor-in-chief Jones P. Madeira on the grounds that he was racist and that the Guardian was biased against the government (Newsday 1996b, 3).

Former Guardian editor Sunity Maharaj recounted that Panday called the Guardian almost weekly to complain about articles that had been written about him or his parliament (Maharaj, 1999). The publishers of the Trinidad Guardian were understandably uncomfortable with the undue attention the prime minister was giving their paper. Pires stated that at one point Michael Mansoor, Managing Director of the Trinidad Publishing Company, would “come into the newsroom and go through letters to filter out letters critical of the government” (Pires, 1999).

To that end, Chow related that the Guardian’s board of directors wanted him to “stop covering events of the Jamaat-Al-Muslimeen, a group of left-wing Muslim dissidents, to drop a column by former UNC parliamentarian Hulsie Bhaggan and to submit editorials for the Board’s approval” (Newsday 1996a, 4). His refusal to conform to a new editorial policy resulted in his almost immediate dismissal. But as he cleaned out

his desk, so did nine other editors and journalists, who saw the sequence of events as an attack on freedom of the Press (Pires, 1999).

Their resignation represented a level of ethics unheard of in Trinidad. “People talk a lot about doing the right thing, and they don’t do a damn thing,” said Pires (Pires, 1999). Although a few journalists supported the actions of the former Guardian staff, the majority did not.

The firing or resigning or constructive dismissal of the managing director of the Trinidad Guardian, Alwin Chow, knocked all other news off the front pages of the Guardian and the Express. As if everything else in the country dwindled to insignificance,” wrote Ian Gooding, a Newsday columnist. “Some people are taking their principled stands very seriously, as if they have no mortgages and car payments to deal with, and are threatening to resign. I wish them all the best and congratulate them on being excellent managers of their economic lives. (Gooding 1996, 8)

An Express editorial announced,

Whatever the construction Mr. Chow has put on the events, we believe that he understands that the right to decide the editorial direction of any newspaper lies with the owners of that paper. If he would not or could not carry out that policy as enunciated by the owners through the board, they had the right to dismiss him, constructively or otherwise. (Trinidad Express 1995, 5)

As we shall see, the Independent had a difficult birth.

High Start-Up Costs

“Starting a newspaper... is not easy and requires a fair amount of organization and, more crucially, capital,” observed Editor-in-Chief of Guyana's Stabroek News David de Caires (de Caires 2003, 74). “Even using a 20-year-old reconditioned press and elementary typesetting and other equipment an expenditure of at least US \$140,000 could be involved.”

In order to start the paper, the editors of the Independent borrowed against the retirement funds and credit union accounts of their founding staff. The initial investment,

including all loans and personal mortgages amounted to US \$165,000 (Cuffie, 1999). The majority of this went toward paying for the lease of the Trinidad Express' printing press, paying the salaries of the junior journalists and securing office space for the fledgling newspaper and its staff.

Small Advertising Base

Advertisers look at two things: a paper's circulation figures, and the image of the publication in the eyes of the public. Cuffie explained that East Indian businessmen, inarguably over 60 percent of the advertising base, refused to advertise with the Independent because of the perception of it being anti-government (Cuffie, 1999).

In a Trinidad Express interview he added that the Ansa McAL group which owns the Trinidad Guardian and is one of the country's largest conglomerates also declined to advertise with the Independent. "I think there was a certain amount of sympathy from the Syrian business community toward the Ansa McAL Group which meant that we did not get advertising from them either" (Duke-Westfield 1998, 8).

Without a steady stream of advertising revenue, the Independent was relying on its shaky circulation figures and its investors as their sole sources of income.

Weak Circulation

With a literacy rate of 98.6% (CIA 2005) Trinidad & Tobago's citizens are avid readers; the country's media are in heated competition for their attention. Apart from the Independent, one could find at any newsstand copies of the Trinidad Guardian, the Trinidad Express, the Probe, the Punch, the TNT Mirror, Newsday, the Tobago News, and the Catholic News.

Newspapers such as Newsday and Punch are known for their sensational headlines, and in the case of the Sunday Punch, sexy front page pictures. Individual sales are a

substantial fraction of a publication's circulation figures, so the objective for many papers is to attract the attention of the ordinary newsstand customer.

With a staff of senior journalists adept in the clever use of English language, the Independent soon set itself apart from other publications. "The Independent was cheeky. It had mass appeal," recalled Maharaj (Maharaj, 1999). But circulation figures never reached the break-even level. "The Independent's daily circulation averaged 20,000, on a good day 23,000" (Duke-Westfield 1998, 8), just 11 percent of the daily newspaper market. In contrast, Newsday, the second youngest daily, boasted an average circulation of 52,596 copies Monday to Saturday (Newsday 1998, 1).

Weak Demographics

The population of Trinidad and Tobago is a very racially diverse. According to the 2005 CIA World Factbook, East Indians make up 40 percent of the population, blacks 37.5 percent, mixed 20.5 percent and other races 2 percent. The median age is 30.91 years and literacy is high (98.6 percent). It is not surprising that a newspaper stigmatized by the country's first East Indian prime minister lost almost half of its potential readers from its inception. In fact, the arson attempt at Polygon Printers Ltd, printers of the Independent was deemed by some to be racially motivated (Phillips 1997, 5).

Hostile Editorial Policy

The Independent was the first paper to report on the implications of the Green Paper, "and well we ought to have been: we are the most under threat, if only by virtue of our size relative to the other dailies" (Independent 1997a, 8). It broke the existence of tapes recording conversations between the leader of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen and the Attorney-General, irregularities in the award of the contracts in the airports expansion project, and a minister who waived the taxes on the import of Jeep Cherokees for his

friends (Independent 1997a, 8). The government cited these stories as evidence of bias against the UNC and the government, and justification for their lack of cooperation with the Independent and its staff members.

Ownership Changes

By the time the first issue of the Independent hit the streets on May 9, 1996, the journalists responsible for its birth owned only 40 percent of the paper (Duke-Westfield 1996, 7). In August 1998, CL Financial bought the remaining shares and sold the Independent in its entirety to the Caribbean Communications Network (CCN), owners of the Trinidad Express (Trinidad Guardian 1998, 1).

The CCN group kept the newspaper in publication for almost three more years. In a 1999 interview, then Independent managing editor Maxie Cuffie expressed optimism that with the CCN name behind it, the paper had a “better chance” (Cuffie, 1999). “Hopefully the stigma with the Independent being anti-UNC and all of that will change...and we’d be able to survive,” he said (Cuffie, 1999).

However, the ability of the publication to attract advertisers did not improve, and in April 2001 Craig Reynold, CCN’s Chief Executive Officer, announced that “while the product was essentially a very good one, it failed to attract the volume of advertising necessary to keep the paper afloat” (Internet Express 2001). The Independent published its last issue on April 6, 2001.

Poor Government Relations

Former prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago Basdeo Panday firmly believed that the island’s newspapers depended on him and his supporters for survival (Siewah and Rampersad-Narinesingh 1995, 136). He found evidence of bias in almost every issue of the local newspapers, and encouraged his supporters to boycott several publications. In

1996, he targeted the Independent for special antagonism, claiming that its reporting reflected both political and racist bias. He asserted that the media were polarizing the country and discrediting his leadership with its anti-UNC and Afro-centric agenda. To that end, he did not hesitate to castigate Independent reporters at every opportunity.

Content Analysis of Independent Editorials

The researcher examined randomly selected Independent editorials, from the time of its daily publication, using two forms of analysis. The 30 editorials were coded in view of their subject matter: editorials dealing with government's efforts to restrict the media were coded "Restrict/Media." Coverage of the Panday administration was either coded "UNC/negative" or "UNC/positive."

Editorials dealing with social, non-governmental issues such as road safety, the police force, teachers' unions or national holidays were coded either "Social Ills" or "Social/positive." Editorials specifically dealing with the Prime Minister were coded "Panday/negative" (there were no "Panday/positive" editorials).

References to the "Panday government" were coded under "Panday/negative" instead of "UNC/negative" because of the reference to the Prime Minister. As was mentioned before, editorials dealing with the police or teaching force were coded under "Social Ills" or "Social/positive" because the editorials contained no reference to the government. Examples of each are listed in Appendixes A through F. Six editorials did not fall into any of the above categories and were not coded.

The category with the greatest occurrences was "Social Ills" (8). This is not surprising, since newspaper editors routinely comment on pressing issues that affect the community. But it was noted that this category occurred more frequently than

“Panday/negative” (3) in light of the fact that the Prime Minister accused the Independent of targeting him for special criticism.

The tables below illustrate the breakdown of the Independent editorials randomly selected for analysis. The first table illustrates the coding schematic, while the second table focuses merely on negative political coverage versus positive political coverage. The third table shows the date and title of each editorial that the researcher selected for this analysis.

Table 3-1. Conceptual analysis of Independent editorials

Subject Matter	Occurrences
Restrict Media	5
UNC/Negative	5
UNC/Positive	2
Panday/Negative	3
Social Ills	8
Social/Positive	2
<i>Not Coded</i>	6

Table 3-2. Positive vs. negative political coverage in Independent editorial sample

Political Positive	Political Negative
2	8

Table 3-3. Full titles of Independent editorials and coding schemes

Title of Editorial	Date Published	Assigned Code
A step forward for Public Service Reform	Tue 12/17/1996	UNC/Positive
Waiting to happen	Wed 09/10/1997	Social Ills
Restore Public Confidence	Wed 11/12/1997	Social Ills
Bound by the Constitution	Tue 03/18/1997	<i>Not Coded</i>
Probe those cops	Sat 08/09/1997	Social/Positive
Crossing the line	Wed 07/02/1997	Restrict/Media
The Singapore model of repression	Thu 12/04/1997	<i>Not Coded</i>
One year of Independence	Fri 05/09/1997	Restrict/Media
Full untruth	Fri 09/05/1997	Panday/Negative
Go after them	Tue 10/07/1997	UNC/Positive

Table 3-3. Continued

Title of Editorial	Date Published	Assigned Code
What now Mr Maraj?	Mon 06/02/1997	Social Ills
Speaker out of line	Thu 12/04/1997	Restrict/Media
Of rights and responsibility	Thu 07/10/1997	UNC/Negative
Banking on short memories	Sat 07/05/1997	UNC/Negative
Too many holidays	Tue 04/01/1997	Social Ills
Outright lies	Mon 01/12/1998	UNC/Negative
Think about the children	Fri 01/02/1998	Social Ills
Seeing red	Fri 11/28/1997	Social Ills
Something new	Wed 10/22/1997	<i>Not Coded</i>
No clear alternative	Thu 12/19/1996	<i>Not Coded</i>
On a dangerous path	Mon 01/13/1997	Social Ills
Message of Independence	Sat 08/30/1997	Social Positive
Life after Di	Mon 09/01/1997	<i>Not Coded</i>
Down to the wire	Tue 12/31/1996	UNC/Negative
Public service cuts a word of caution	Mon 12/09/1996	Social Ills
Media obsession	Sat 01/17/1998	Restrict Media
More lies, half-truths and innuendos	Fri 05/23/1997	Panday/Negative
Curb yourself, Mr. Prime Minister	Wed 06/17/1997	Panday/Negative
Clean up this act	Thurs 01/23/1997	Restrict Media
Leadership and credibility	Sat 05/09/1998	UNC/Negative

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION

In a previous chapter, the researcher described in great detail the Four Theories of the Press advanced by media scholar Frederick S. Siebert (Siebert and others, 1963). The relationship between politicians and the press in Trinidad and Tobago seems to mirror the social responsibility theory. But more often than not, the established government reverts to the authoritarian system that it has historically been more comfortable with. While claiming to advance the ideals of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, politicians have simultaneously attempted to implement legislation that would muzzle independent media on the island.

The UNC government's Green Paper Reform of Media Law: Towards a Free and Responsible Media is a suitable example of this fact. The office of the Attorney General pointed out within its pages that there is a need to amend many of the laws pertaining to the media in Trinidad and Tobago (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 4). This is true, but the undercurrent of media control was just barely veiled by the Green Paper's modicum of positive suggestions. The notion of an uncompromising press ombudsman "empowered by statute to receive complaints of bias, incompetence, unethical behavior or unfairness" was one of the proposals that incited loud protests from journalists all over the country (Trinidad & Tobago 1997, 23); and it is not hard to see why.

Former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday's distaste for public criticism is well-known to Trinidadian journalists. He "has been known to condemn all opinions contrary to his own as having a political agenda, and more often than not, a racist agenda" (Ramesar 7).

It was feared that the press ombudsman would have become just another way for him to harass members of the press. For instance, he could go through the paper every day and count how many East Indian writers were published, totaling up the sum every week for review by the ombudsman. Would an adverse number in any given week have been considered bias, worthy of punishment?

Paragraphs that outlined a media code of ethics also drew fire from media professionals throughout the Caribbean. It was seen as the government's promotion of developmental journalism and a strong indication that the Panday administration was uninterested in fostering true freedom of the press.

Lessons Learned from Studying the Case of the Independent

Many factors affect the survival of a fledgling newspaper, including ownership, demographics, circulation, editorial policy, and more importantly the political environment into which it was born. On the surface it appeared that the Independent had a respectable chance at a continued existence. It was 60 percent owned by CL Financial, a stable and willing donor. It was published on an island with a high literacy rate and a young demographic make-up. The editorial staff of the newspaper was comprised of the most well-trained journalists in the country. And the constitution of Trinidad and Tobago guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

However, the reality of the Independent's situation was that corporate ownership led to them being sold to a bigger publishing house, one with a less confrontational approach to reporting. "We can't be wild and outrageous," recounted former managing editor Maxie Cuffie (Cuffie, 1999). "Before, you know, I put a story in the paper, I don't

have to answer any questions...[Now we] have meetings where I disagree totally with what they're telling me (Cuffie, 1999).

The Independent's consumer base shrank as its stories began to mirror those of its larger and more established competitors, and advertising revenue decreased proportionate to circulation. The Panday administration also continued to ignore the editors' right to freedom of speech. "Three of us were audited by the IRS. Maxie, Sunity and I were all asked to file taxes for the last six years," recounts former Independent columnist B.C. Pires (Pires, 1999). In the face of such complex pressures, it is no wonder that the paper eventually folded.

The researcher concluded from her analysis of 30 randomly selected Independent editorials that the country's newest independent publication was not biased against the government. The Independent did publish several editorials that were critical of the UNC and their attempts to restrict the media. However, they did not publish anything that was undocumented, or fabricate news for the sole purpose of criticizing the administration. Even reporters not associated with the Independent felt compelled to denounce "the UNC's unprecedented attempts to control the press, the calypsonians¹, the dissenters of all stripes" (Yawching 2000).

In 1997, for example, one calypsonian sang a calypso titled "Panday needs glasses." The song portrayed the prime minister as enamored with alcohol and blind to the corruption in his administration (Lashley 2004). Panday declared after the 1997 calypso season that he was going to "make sure" that kind of thing never happened again. The UNC government subsequently announced the decision to "withhold State funding

¹ Calypso is a style of music that originated in the West Indies at about the turn of the 20th century. Calypsonians typically use their lyrics as a form of social and political commentary.

of any activity in which calypsonians sing lyrics deemed distasteful” (Joseph 2000) and even proposed a bill, titled the Equal Opportunities Bill that forbade the dissemination of artistic works is reasonably likely, in all circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of persons” (Lashley 2004). Trinidad Express columnist Selwyn Cudjoe relates that the UNC’s propensity for corruption and media suppression resulted in negative press coverage from all Trinidadian newspapers, not just the Independent:

“For many, a UNC government symbolizes more lies, more distortion, more illegality, more corruption, more undemocratic practices and more indecency” (Cudjoe 2000). And in a poll taken just before the November 2000 election, and subsequently published in the Trinidad Express, 66 percent of the respondents acknowledged that the UNC government was blatantly corrupt (Ryan 2000).

It is therefore not surprising that the Independent was seldom able to cast the new administration in a positive light. However, within the 9-month sample there were editorials that reported favorably on government actions or initiatives. In one editorial, the editors wrote favorably about a code of conduct agreed upon by the government and the Public Services Association calling it “one of the few pieces of positive news on that front in a long while” (Independent 1996, 8). In another editorial the Independent praised former president Arthur Robinson and former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday for being so forthcoming with information regarding their failing health.

“These are welcome departures from the tendency to keep the public in the dark about official matters that has been part of our political culture for so long,” declared the editors (Independent 1998, 8). The former Prime Minister’s attacks on the fledgling

newspaper seem all the more unfair in view of these examples, hence the conclusion of one Independent editorial: “We implore Mr. Panday to give up the senseless, and entirely unjust, war he is intent on waging against the constitutional rights of the media. Both he and they have more important things to do” (Independent 1997b, 8).

The life and death of the Independent are reflections of the pressures editors of independent papers have to face in pseudo-democratic states. Although the fight for press freedom is a dynamic issue among journalists worldwide, local Trinidadians are not overly concerned. They are aware of the “acrimony that has followed almost everything the press has written about Government actions” (Solomon 2000). But as Pires explains, “Trinidadians have a seven-day memory span: they will be angry and indignant for a short time, after which all is forgotten” (Pires, 1999).

The *laissez-faire* attitude of the general population is responsible for the astonishing brevity of public outcry in Trinidad and Tobago. The locals have resigned themselves to political wrongdoing (Trinidad Express 2000). If the public had objected to the government’s treatment of the media more forcefully, the Independent staff may not have had such difficult experiences.

On the other hand, it may take a greater international awareness of the rift between the media and government in Trinidad and Tobago to force the parties to find workable solutions to their problems. The island’s administration does not want to be perceived as undemocratic or authoritarian, because such an image flies in the face of the new international penchant towards social equality and freedom. It could lead to sanctions, to a decrease in foreign investors, even to a decline in income from foreign aid.

On the other hand, editors and journalists in Trinidad and Tobago should reflect on some of the tenets of social responsibility presented by the government, seeing it not as a threat, but as a suggestion.

APPENDIX A
INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL CODED 'RESTRICT MEDIA'

Crossing the line

Wednesday, July 2, 1997

The campaign of the UNC-led government against the media has now gone beyond the stage of complaints about "lies, half-truths and innuendos," demands for the dismissal of journalists and draconian Green Papers on "reform" of media law. It has taken the form of an illegal attempt by the police, on the orders of the Acting Prime Minister, to seize a tape recording made by a journalist in the open and legitimate exercise of his profession.

Journalist Anthony Hector, covering the visit of Acting Prime Minister John Humphrey to the site of a proposed hotel and golf course at Canaan, recorded an argument between Mr. Humphrey and Mr. Hochoy Charles, Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly. On Mr. Humphrey's orders, a senior superintendent of the police attempted to take possession of the tape recorder and cassette, for the stated purpose of erasing the tape. Mr. Hector agreed to erase the tape himself and did so.

A photographer from the Independent was also debarred from taking pictures of the incident.

Mr. Humphrey's action in ordering the erasure of the tape was arbitrary and illegal, as was the attempt by the police to carry out the order. Mr. Humphrey's claim that the meeting was private has no validity. It was not in fact private, for the press had been invited to cover the event. But it could not in any case have been private in any meaningful sense. It is the job of journalists to run after ministers and record anything that they do that is newsworthy. Mr. Humphrey would not have objected to photographs or recordings if he had been kissing babies, assisting disaster victims or doing anything else that put him in a favourable light, whether the press had been invited or not. If he does not want his arguments with other politicians to be made public, he should conduct them behind closed doors.

The security forces, for their part, cannot hide behind their political superiors if the orders they receive from those superiors are illegal. People were hanged in Nuremberg for disregarding that fundamental principle. All functionaries must be continually aware of the legal limits of their authority and act accordingly. Mr. Humphrey should have been quietly advised by his security detail that neither he nor they had the authority to do what he was proposing. This is quite apart from any advice he might have received from his political entourage as to the undesirability of losing his temper in public.

Mr. Hector was under no obligation to surrender his tape to the police or anyone else, and was justified in resisting any attempt to seize it. We could even wish that he had not erased the tape himself, but waited for the police to take it by force. The charge of illegal seizure might then have been added to the suit for assault that Mr. Hector, in our opinion, has every right to bring against the police and perhaps the Acting Prime Minister.

We await with interest the results of the investigation of the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago into this latest incident of government intimidation of the media. Both politicians and police must be made to understand the limits of their powers.

APPENDIX B
INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL CODED 'SOCIAL/POSITIVE'

Probe those cops

Saturday, August 9, 1997

It is very gratifying that the enquiry into the police shooting of Stephan Pereira, Marcus Antoine and Lawrence Jobity should have been brought about by a public outcry.

There are no doubt some among us who would be inclined to shrug the killings off with a good riddance". It is therefore heartening to see that so many of us, despite the constant menace of violent crime under which we live, find the idea of a police execution squad abhorrent. We hope the police hierarchy find it equally unacceptable.

For some time now there have been ample grounds for suspicion that the police, frustrated at the acquittals and dropped charges necessitated by the intimidation and murder of witnesses, have taken the law into their own hands and begun to shoot suspects instead of arresting (or re-arresting) them.

Even the reports of the police themselves on the incidents strain credulity. In the killing of Anthony Lizard" Bridgelal eyewitness reports called the police version into question. Imran Ali and Bunny Bran, suspects in the murder of former Attorney General Selwyn Richardson, were also killed in separate incidents by the police. Bran and three others were outnumbered four to one by members of the Anti-Kidnapping Squad in four vehicles. In that case the police claimed to find two handguns; in the case of Ali, one.

In both cases, as in the La Paille killings, the men were said to have been under surveillance, and were supposedly on the way to commit a crime, not fleeing after committing one. In none of the three cases was there any damage to the police cars, nor was any policeman wounded, even though the police say they were fired on first.

Even in cases of lesser notoriety, we have become accustomed to reading that the police see someone behaving suspiciously", approach him, find themselves fired upon, and, in an exchange of fire", blow the person away with no harm to themselves. It is routinely said that prisoners escaping half naked from prison vans or police lockups are dangerous and may be armed", an obvious prelude to shooting them on sight.

However severe the problem of crime may become, the police must not be allowed to set themselves up as judge, jury and executioner. Not only would this destroy the rule of law and set at nought the principle of due process, but the next step could easily be police hiring themselves out as paid killers, as in Brazil.

It may even be time for the police to tighten up generally on their use of firearms. Not just fatal shootings, but any incident in which a firearm is discharged should be the subject of an obligatory report and, if necessary, an enquiry. This in fact was the case in the past, before the police began to carry firearms as a matter of course.

Professional bodies, and particularly the police, are notoriously reluctant to condemn their own members. The enquiry announced by the Assistant Commissioner (Crime) is to be an internal one. We sincerely hope it will be an enquiry and not a cover-up. The only way we can be sure of this is for the evidence and the result to be made public. Otherwise there will be a strong case for a permanent civilian police review board to investigate cases of this kind.

APPENDIX C
INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL CODED 'PANDAY/NEGATIVE'

Full untruth

Friday, September 5, 1997

Princess Diana's relationship with the press may have been an ambiguous one. Mr. Basdeo Panday's relationship with the press is perfectly straightforward. Everything is grist to the mill of opprobrium in which he seeks to pulverize the media. Including Princess Diana.

And no occasion is too inappropriate for the Prime Minister to seize upon as an opportunity to vent his pet hate. At the Emancipation celebrations, he chose to do it before a visiting Head of State and our own President. He did it again at his Party's convention. Most recently, he has chosen as his forum the inauguration of this year's School Feeding Programme, and as a pretext the death of the Princess of Wales.

The accident in which Princess Diana died, Mr. Panday would have us believe, is an example of what can happen when the press indulges its tendency to publish anything about anybody". Governments, he argues, have a duty to protect their citizens against things like that". He did not say which citizens, apart from himself, had asked for protection.

The link between the Princess' death and her pursuit by the paparazzi is tenuous at best. The link Mr. Panday is trying to demonstrate between the activities of paparazzi and press in Europe and the media in Trinidad and Tobago is simply non-existent. He should thank his lucky stars that this is so.

In any case, what the European press publishes as a result of the efforts of the paparazzi are photographs, not the lies, half-truths and innuendos" Mr. Panday sees, but has never identified, in the local media. What they publish as a result of telephone interception are transcripts of erotic conversations, not the racially divisive" material that Mr. Panday's overheated imagination purports to discern.

Those who attribute Diana's death to harassment by the media are talking not of inaccuracy or libel but of invasion of privacy. Mr. Panday, to our knowledge, has never been photographed with a long-focus lens while disporting himself with a member of the opposite sex. Or if he has, the press has been too discreet publish it. Nor has he been overheard likening himself to a tampon or being called Squidgy". The complaint that the press had published too many photographs of him with a glass in his hand came not from him but from Wade Mark, and was proven to be quite unjustified. The complaint, that is, not the innuendo Mr. Mark was claiming to see.

Mr. Panday should have limited himself to deploring the Princess' death and extending condolences to the British Royal Family, government and people. In that, he spoke for all of us. To use the tragedy for political ends is shameful. And the population has not failed to notice that while he was exploiting the death of a foreign personality for his own cheap purposes, neither he nor any member of his government saw fit to make a statement on the death of Dr. Patrick Solomon, let alone attend the funeral.

We implore Mr. Panday to give up the senseless, and entirely unjust, war he is intent on waging against the constitutional rights of the media. Both he and they have more important things to do.

APPENDIX D
INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL CODED 'UNC/POSITIVE'

Go after them

Tuesday, October 7, 1997

LEGAL AFFAIRS Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar must be commended for moving with alacrity to handle the most dangerous situation that has arisen in the Registrar General's department of her Ministry.

According to an exclusive report carried in the last Weekend Independent the Registrar General's Department, where all Government records dealing with births, marriages, deaths, land titles and other legal documents are filed, has been infiltrated by drug barons and other criminal elements.

Drug dealers, according to the report, have been paying corrupt public servants to falsify, fabricate and duplicate their birth and marriage documents and have falsified land and property deeds. This is a bid to beat the new legislation which provides for the confiscation of properties and bank accounts of convicted drug dealers.

The matter was brought to the attention of the Minister by the Registrar General. Mrs. Persad-Bissessar then took the issue to Cabinet which has appointed a Task Force to deal with the problems.

No doubt Government's desire to act would have also been spurred by the complaints of the foreign embassies, especially the Americans and Canadians, who, according to the report, have complained of the unreliability of local official documents.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar has stated that computerization of the country's official records is one safeguard against the possibility of similar incidents recurring. She was, however, reluctant to commit herself to a promise of criminal prosecution for anyone found to have been involved with tampering with the official documents. While one can be appreciative of the Minister's desire not to preempt the findings of a final report, it must be obvious that anyone discovered to have compromised the integrity of the records must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

It is the possibility of such strong action, and not the installation of computers, that will act as a deterrent. Like the police service, salaries in the public sector are relatively low and the corrupt public servants who have decided to augment their incomes by illicit means would have been more easily coopted because the chances of discovery and prosecution are so slim.

Given the ease with which the drug lords have been able to penetrate the department housed in the same building as the country's two Houses of Parliament, Government's decision to relocate the office of the Registrar General is definitely a prudent one, as even those offices run the risk of being compromised.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar's department may definitely be in need of computerization, but what is ultimately going to prevent anyone from accepting the blandishments of the drug barons is the high probability of detection and vigorous prosecution. It is up to the Government to ensure that these exist.

APPENDIX E
INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL CODED 'SOCIAL ILLS'

Waiting to happen

Wednesday, September 10, 1997

THE MOST striking aspect about the Chaguaramas accident that took the lives of four people was not the number who died, but that so many people survived given the circumstances surrounding the vehicular mishap.

According to newspaper reports yesterday, the car in which the victims were travelling, returning home from a day at the beach in Chagville, contained 12 people. Toyota Cressidas like the one driven by Augustus Lewis, as taxis are licensed to carry five passengers. What on earth could have convinced the two adults who were in that car that it was safe for 12 people, even allowing for the fact that the other occupants were children with ages ranging from two to 17?

But that was not all. Not only did they cram themselves into the car, but they did so with a driver who was admittedly drunk, and who had threatened to kill himself if they did not let someone else take the wheel.

According to Ronnie Letren, one of the survivors of the accident, while on their way to Port of Spain, Lewis, the driver, began speaking of killing himself, his fiancée, Brenda Simmons, and her daughter, Aschell. But the other occupants of the car took it as a joke until he drove the vehicle into a truck parked at the side of the road.

Brenda's sister Eleanor Simmons, went even further, and said that Lewis had been making similar comments while on the beach. She quoted him as suggesting that Akeen Simmons, one of those critically injured in the car, be allowed to drive or else I will kill myself, Brenda and her daughter." Akeen is only 13.

It is easy on occasions like these to transfer blame to the police, the government or some distant party whose intervention could have prevented the tragedy.

But as harsh as it may seem, the adult victims of that tragic crash must share some of the blame for putting their lives in the hands of a drunk driver with suicidal tendencies in an overcrowded vehicle. It is even more tragic that among the dead and injured are children who were placed in a helpless situation by either a parent or an irresponsible adult.

If there are any lessons to be learnt from this tragedy it is that we should always remember that we hold our lives in our own hands. Given the rising incidence of suicide no one should easily dismiss threats by anyone to take their own life. Had the occupants of that ill fated vehicle taken up the driver's offer to pass the keys (although certainly not to a 13-year-old), the road fatality figure may have been four fewer today.

Most accidents can be prevented by exercising the proper care and precaution.

When however, people throw care and caution to the wind, a highly probable outcome is the tragedy we had in Chaguaramas on Sunday evening.

APPENDIX F
INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL CODED 'UNC/NEGATIVE'

Outright lies

Monday, January 12, 1998

What little credibility remains to the Panday government (as it was repeatedly labeled in the Minister of Finance's budget speech) must surely have been exhausted by the lies told inside and outside of Parliament over Ken Soodhoo's appointment to a post on the NP executive.

Ambiguities, evasions and outright lies are obviously a prime weapon in the political arsenal of UNC Ministers. Sadiq Baksh claimed that Ernst and Young had approved the methodology of the airport contracts; Reeza Mohammed claimed IDB approval of his hiring practices, and smeared Wendell Mottley in the ADB bad debt row. Now, Brian Kuei Tung falsely assures the public that Mr. Soodhoo's post was advertised, when the NP Board itself says it was not, and pours scorn on the very idea.

The statements by Energy Minister Finbar Gangar and Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan, Chairman of NP Marketing Company, though perhaps not outright lies, are as close to falsehood as makes no difference. Seepersad-Bachan's claim that big corporations do not advertise their posts takes no account of the fact that NP is a big corporation only in local terms, and furthermore is a State enterprise. It also does not satisfy the public that Soodhoo did not create the post himself. In fact, the Board's release to the media strongly suggests that he did, for it openly states that it was Soodhoo who, while still on the Board, developed the project of which the job was a part.

The most blatant example of misinformation, though, is the assurance given by the Minister and the Board that correspondence with First Citizens Bank showed Soodhoo to be "clean". The Bank's letter was in fact a non-reply to a non-question. Far from clearing Soodhoo, nothing could have been better calculated to stoke the suspicions of any potential employer really interested in the truth. That the Minister himself realizes this is shown by his remark that FCB's letter contained no evidence of wrongdoing that they were willing to share."

A person who has been accused of embezzlement and fired by one State concern is not hired by another to manage \$203 million of public funds, even if the job is a real one. Would Finbar Gangar, Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan or anyone on the NP board hire such a person to manage their own money?

Unfortunately, their casual attitude to financial propriety, and the admiration many in this country have always accorded to smartmen, suggest that they might. The Soodhoo appointment is also further evidence of the network of relationships, political and social, that plays so important a role in the management practices of the UNC administration.

The record of the present government is littered with instances of Ministers (and all its members are Ministers) lying to Parliament, without censure and without apology. This not only reveals a basic weakness in our polity. It also leads the public to wonder what other misdeeds have been committed under cover of lies.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cassandra Debra Cruickshank was born on May 12, 1975, in San Fernando, Trinidad. She attended high school there and moved to Texas in 1994 to complete an undergraduate degree in journalism. In 1997, shortly after her marriage, she moved to Gainesville, Florida, and began her graduate education. In 2005 after having served four years in the United States Navy, she completed a Master of Arts in Mass Communications and continued her military career as a Navy journalist.