

**Attitudes Toward Journalism in Kuwait:  
The Educational Process of Students in an Emerging Democracy**

By

Mariam F. Alkazemi  
Eisa Al Nashmi  
Wayne Wanta

Paper presented at the Third World Journalism Education Congress, Mechelen, Belgium,  
July 2013

Alkazemi is a doctoral student at the University of Florida, Al Nashmi is a faculty member at Kuwait University, and Wanta is a professor at the University of Florida.

## **Attitudes Toward Journalism in Kuwait: The Educational Process of Students in an Emerging Democracy**

### Abstract

Kuwaiti students intending to major in mass communication face a long process that begins in high school. A survey of students at Kuwait University examined if the process led to disillusionment of the mass communication field and/or mass communication education.

Findings show that all respondents viewed the field of journalism positively. Respondents also viewed journalism education in a positive light. Students majoring or minoring in journalism differed from majors in other disciplines in several ways: They were more likely to be female and younger, and were more likely to agree with statements that mass communication is a good field for women, journalist make a good living, the field is highly respected, and friends would support their decision to major in mass communication.

The results also suggest that the more active the students were in selecting a major, the more positive they felt about mass communications education. Students who had published works or internship experience were more likely to declare a major in mass communications. All students agreed that their education increased their appreciation for the field of mass communications.

## **Attitudes Toward Journalism in Kuwait: The Educational Process of Students in an Emerging Democracy**

Journalism education in Kuwait differs from the traditional model of the United States in several ways. Prospective journalists go through a lengthy process that begins in high school. The early declaration of majors is limited by several factors including grade point average.

Our study examines the implications of this process. Do students become disillusioned with the journalism field? Do students lack a commitment to continue in the journalism profession? What are the potential problems in the journalism field that students foresee? How do these attitudes differ from students majoring in other disciplines? Why did students decided to major in journalism?

These questions were addressed through a survey of journalism students at Kuwait University, the oldest, most established university in Kuwait. An online questionnaire was distributed and data were collected from 426 students enrolled in a mass communications course. The purpose of the survey was to identify factors that may serve as an incentive for students to declare a major or minor in mass communications, as well as obstacles they may face.

A quota sampling system ensured that our sample was representative of the students who take courses in the mass communications department at Kuwait University. Students were asked about their perceptions of their education, their professional goals, their perception of potential problems they may face in the media industry, and those who declared a major or minor were asked about their decision to major or minor in mass communications.

Scholarship suggests that the obstacles and incentives that journalists face in developing nations are rather distinct (Musa & Domatob, 2007). In many of these nations, the media are

struggling to define both the role of journalism in society as well as an ethical code for professionals in the media industry (Musa & Domatob, 2007). The purpose of this paper is to identify how mass communications is developing in Kuwait, which is an emerging democracy.

### **Journalism in Emerging Democracies**

In defining development journalism, some scholars have explained that the media have a role in advancing democracy, human rights and other social issues (Musa & Domatob, 2007). Journalism plays a very influential role in improving the quality of life of citizens of developing countries, and in advocating for policy that would lead to a peaceful society (Musa & Domatob, 2007). In many post-colonial societies, the mass media were used to fight for independence of colonizers (Musa & Domatob, 2007). As the nation becomes more independent, national leaders use the media's power to advocate for their "personal political campaigns" (Musa & Domatob, 2007, p. 322).

Leadership in the Arab world often engage in such tactics, and even some Arab intellectuals comment on the scarcity of Arab intellectuals who are willing to engage in public debate and unwilling to censor themselves (Lynch, 2006). For example, Pintak and Ginges (2008) quote a reporter, who described the necessity of "personal censorship" because he "had been dragged into court three times" (p. 195). Other scholars elaborate on this concept by explaining that Arab media freedoms face pressures from both government and the media (Amin, 2002).

Between the 1950s and the 1980s when the Arab media in Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco conditioned journalists to support the government, many journalists fled to the Gulf Countries Council (GCC) states (Amin, 2002). Amin (2002) argues that "journalists, publishers and other media practitioners in the Arab world continue to be victims of harassment and

political pressures, including dismissal, censorship, restraints on travel, physical assault, threats, arrest” among other challenges (p. 127). While pointing out that some scholars (e.g., Hafez, 1993) argue that freedom of expression is emphasized in all Arab constitutions, Amin (2002) argues that the political culture of the Arab world set journalists up for failure by providing “low salaries, a lack of adequate legal protection, excessive bureaucracy, and administrative constraints that affect journalists’ performance and make them vulnerable” (p. 127).

Despite such obstacles, Arab journalists see themselves fulfilling a watchdog function for political reform. Pintak and Ginges (2008) found that journalists from various parts of Arab world, including the GCC, the Levant and North Africa, shatter myths about the Arab media. More than half of their sample believes that the media’s top five functions include: political reform, educate public, news for social good, voice of the poor and civic engagement (Pintak & Ginges, 2008). According to the study, whose sample includes 601 journalists, the top five functions of a journalist is to investigate government, foster Arab culture, advance spiritual values, defend Arabs and enhance Arab unity (Pintak & Ginges, 2008). Further, the study shows that the five top issues facing the Arab world are: political reform, human rights, poverty, education and Palestine (Pintak & Ginges, 2008). Additionally, the study demonstrates that 32 percent of Arab journalists identify as being part of the Arab world first and 25 percent identify as being part of the Muslim world first, while 15 percent identify as being a part of a nation first (Pintak & Ginges, 2008).

The question of identity has been a theme of scholars of the Arab media (Kraidy, 2008; Cherribi, 2006; Hafez, 2002). For example, Kraidy (2008) argued that reality television in the Arab world consisted of adapting European shows to create a hybrid culture and identity that is both Arab and modern. Similarly, Cherribi (2006) argued that *Al-Jazeera* was using issues such

as the French ban of the veil to build a Muslim and Arab identity that is larger than that of any individual nation. Looking at the national identity of several Arab and Muslim nations, Hafez (2002) noted that media rights are available to Arab media practitioners, while “limiting them owing to political national, religious and cultural considerations” (p. 236). Clearly, the issue of identity is robust enough to be considered by many scholars of the Arab media.

The identity and value of journalists can be taught in journalism education programs. Yet, Amin (2002) argues that graduates of journalism education programs are not well-prepared for the obstacles they will face in their careers. While students may learn about the role that a press must play in Arab societies, which are evolving towards democracy, the reality of the media industry does not allow students to play that role (Amin, 2002). Even research conducted by faculty at journalism education programs are supposed to promote “the politically established goals of national development and national unity and discouraged from developing programs critical of the principals, values and national traditions of Arab society” (Amin, 2002, p. 129). The current study explores the role of journalism education in Kuwait.

### **Journalism in Kuwait**

Prior to the independence of Kuwait from Great Britain, Kuwaitis relied on news from Egyptian and Lebanese publications (Alfraih, 1999). In order to learn about local happenings, Kuwaitis would spend time in public opinion forums called *diwanias* (Alfraih, 1999). Between 1928 and the early 1960s, attempts to create journalism associations in Kuwait occurred when politicians sought the aid of Iraqi and Levantine journalists (Alfraih, 1999). Around the 1950s, Kuwaitis interested in Islamic activism contributed to the media industry by providing columns with analysis and commentary (Alfraih, 1999). Most publications at this time were monthly or weekly newspapers (Alfraih, 1999).

The first daily Kuwait newspapers were established in the 1960s, and are still in circulation today (Alfraih, 1999). *Alrai Alam*, which translates to Public Opinion, is the first daily newspaper and was established two months before Kuwait declared its independence from Great Britain (Alfraih, 1999). Several other newspapers began as weekly publications and became daily newspapers that are still in existence today (Alfraih, 1999). These include: *Alwatan* (The Nation), *Asseyasah* (The Politics), *Alanba* (The News), and *Alqabas* (translation unavailable) (Alfraih, 1999).

Starting in the 1970s, the Ministry of Information would create procedures that resulted in the imprisonment of journalists at times (Selvik, 2011). Very few changes occurred until after the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, when *Alwatan* was sold to a member of the royal family and when *Alrai Alam* was published under new ownership in 1996. The next changes occurred in 2006, when Kuwait passed media reform laws that, among other things, allowed more opportunity to create licenses for private newspapers and decreased the government's ability to shut down a newspaper's operation (Selvik, 2011). Since 2006, the number of daily newspapers in Kuwait tripled (Selvik, 2011).

It is important to note here that the term for a journalist in Kuwait is *sahafi* (male) and *sahafiya* (female). The Arabic roots of these terms come from the word for newspapers, *suhuf*, which is the root for the singular word for a page, *safha*. In other words, the nature of wording for journalist implies a paper format. This is a very important distinction to make for two reasons.

First, there is a distinction among Kuwaitis about their decision to be a *sahafi* (journalist) and an *'ilami* (media practitioner). This is an important distinction in Kuwaiti society because it is not uncommon in Kuwait to hear Arabic sayings like, *journalism is the profession for those*

*who have no profession*. The current study explores differences in attitudes towards journalists and media practitioners in Kuwait.

Second, when Kuwaitis were interested in contributing to newspapers, they did so by writing columns, where current events were analyzed and social commentary was made (Alfraih, 1999). This pattern continued until the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq in 1991. In that time period, more than 240 magazine and newspaper licenses were approved by the Kuwait Ministry of Information, which felt that technological advancements should be accompanied by a new philosophy for media (Alfraih, 1999). Kuwaiti media experienced an opening to new ideas and a deregulation from the government (Alfraih, 1999).

This innovation in the Kuwaiti media reflects a characteristic of Kuwaiti society, culture and politics that makes Kuwait a unique case interesting for scrutiny. The Central Intelligence Agency's *World Factbook* demonstrates that Kuwaiti society is more diverse than other GCC states. While the population of Kuwait is estimated to be 2.7 million by July 2013, 1.3 million residents are not Kuwaiti. Of the residents, 85 percent are Muslim—of whom only 70 percent are Sunni and 30 percent being Shiite. The remaining 15 percent includes Christians, Hindus and members of other faiths. Only 45 percent of the residents are ethnically Arab, with 35 percent of other Arab ethnicities, 9 percent South Asian and 4 percent Iranians. More than 90 percent of both males and females are literate. Clearly, Kuwaiti society is diverse and possesses a culture of innovation unseen in the rest of the GCC.

This innovative characteristic is seen in the Kuwaiti government. For instance, the Kuwaiti government is a parliamentary monarchy. Kuwait's parliament is so effective in advocating for the people, Ottaway (2011) argues that "the ruling family has been forced to co-exist with the cantankerous parliament" (p. 3). While women won the right to vote in municipal



elections in Saudi Arabia in 2011, Kuwaiti women have won the right to vote and be elected to parliament since 2005. In fact, several women parliamentarians and ministers have served Kuwait since then. This is an example of how the innovative nature of Kuwaiti society manifests itself in government.

Kuwait's media are not exempted from this innovative characteristic. According to the Central Intelligence Agency's *World Fact Book*, Kuwait's (2013) media included privately owned television and radio broadcasters emerged in 2005. According to Freedom House (2011), an organization which ranks the freedom of the press internationally, Kuwait is the only GCC state with a *partly free* press. This can be starkly contrasted to the remaining GCC states, whose media systems are rated as *not free*. Further, the Oxford Internet Institute (Graham & Stephens, 2012) showed that Kuwait has a high number of tweets per internet user, and that it produces more tweets than its much larger neighbor, Saudi Arabia. Despite these privileges, the former attitudes that journalism is not a suitable profession for Kuwaitis persist. The current study explores the degree to which journalism education in Kuwait influences such attitudes.

### **Journalism Education in Kuwait**

Established in 1966, Kuwait University is the oldest university in Kuwait. A public institution, it is home to 16 colleges, including the College of Arts, which is home to the Department of Mass Communications. Students have the option of selecting four specializations in this department: journalism, radio and television, public relations and advertising.

Journalism is not very attractive to students, even those interested in the communication field. Most students in the journalism department are studying public relations and broadcast. Both majors are relatively less rigorous and do have some good job opportunities. Also,

specifically with broadcast, the opportunity of being famous and working on TV shows is big—many younger faces on TV are actually from the journalism department at Kuwait University.

To be eligible for being a student in the mass communications department, a student's journey begins long before university. During high school, students choose an arts or a scientific pathway. If they choose an arts pathway, then they can only apply to an art major at Kuwait University--so an arts student can never be an engineering major at Kuwait University if they chose an arts pathway during high school.

After students select their pathway, students have fewer majors to choose from. The next step in this process is determined by a student's GPA. Each major has a minimum high school GPA requirement. Some majors such as business have a high GPA requirement, and others like in the social sciences have a lower one. Journalism is in the mid-range. Thus, while students in some other Arab countries are assigned a major, such as the process in Iraq where the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education determines students' majors (Pavlik, Laufer, Burns & Ataya, 2012), students in Kuwait have a certain degree of restrictions on selecting their major that depends on a humanities or science track they chose in high school.

In addition to the lack of a robust environment for journalism, which Amin (2002) argues is characteristic of journalism education in the Arab world, prospective journalism students in Kuwait face several challenges. For instance, language is an issue. There are insufficient Arabic-language textbooks, and the department's professors were trained in the United States in the English language. Yet, faculty with American degrees are expected to teach in the Arabic language, which can be contrasted to some majors like business that have an English curriculum. This is additionally difficult because the nature of journalism requires linguistic ability, and Kuwaiti vernacular is a dialect that contains letters that have no equivalent in the correct *fusha*,

formal and written Arabic. The lack of Arabic language scholarship in mass communication increases the challenges that faculty and students face when working in the Arabic language

Another issue which faces students is that the journalism major is stigmatized in the Kuwaiti culture. Some members of society may see the profession as lacking substance, while others may feel it is inappropriate for women. Here, one may keep in mind that newsrooms are generally not occupied by Kuwaiti citizens, who often can increase their income by teaching—especially since the Kuwaiti government recently gave huge pay raises to teachers. In other words, many obstacles challenge the future of prospective journalism students. The current study examines these challenges by employing survey methods.

### **Hypotheses**

Given the unusual nature state of journalism and mass communication in Kuwait, the purpose of the current study is to examine students' attitudes toward journalism in Kuwait and to identify factors impacting students' decision to major in mass communication.

Our research question is:

**R<sub>1</sub>:** What are attitudes do Kuwaiti students have toward the journalism and mass communication profession and mass communication education and do these attitudes differ from students majoring in other disciplines?

We test five hypotheses dealing with Kuwaiti students' decisions to major or minor in mass communications:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Students' intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend on demographic variables, such as sex, age, citizenship, and father's education level.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Students' intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend on students' goals prior to beginning journalism education.

**H3:** Students' intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend on students' experience.

**H4:** Students' intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend inversely on the potential problems that may be social, economic or political.

**H5:** Students' perception of their decision to major in mass communications is positively related to their perception of the quality of their education.

## **Method**

The survey data were collected from Kuwait University, the most established institution of higher education in Kuwait. Kuwait University is involved in several international research initiatives, as demonstrated by its hosting the 15<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Arab-U.S. Association for Communication Educators (AUSACE) in October 2010 (Center, 2010).

A quota sampling technique was employed to accurately represent students who enroll in courses in the Department of Mass Communications at Kuwait University. A request was submitted to Kuwait University to determine the number of students majoring, minoring and taking classes in the mass communications department. University officials responded to this request by revealing that 582 students minor in mass communications, and that more students are enrolled in mass communications courses and fewer students declare a major in mass communications. As a result, the survey questionnaire was forwarded to instructors who teach courses that often attract students who major in or intend to major in mass communications, students who minor or intend to minor in mass communications or students who are only enrolled in a mass communications course. Students received extra credit for their participation. The sample consists 93 students (20.0%) who (intend to) major mass communication, 125 students (28.0%) who (intend to) minor in mass communications, and 191 students (42.8%) who are enrolled in a mass communications course.

A total of 446 respondents took part in the study. Of those, 426 completed the survey. The majority of the respondents were Kuwaiti citizens (83.4%) and the mean age was 20.46 with a standard deviation of 1.44 years. More than half of the students who answered the gender question were female (55.8%, N=249).

## **Results**

To answer the research question, we first asked respondents about their attitudes toward the journalism profession, including their perceptions of the future of the journalism and mass communication field. Appendix A lists mean scores and standard deviations for each of the survey items. A higher mean would indicate a more negative response. A mean of 3.0 would be neither positive nor negative.

In the questionnaire's first section dealing with goals, two items had mean scores that were on the agree side of the mean. Generally, students stated that they believed mass communications is their ideal job and that they have looked up to people in the mass communications field prior to their collegiate careers. One item was more negative than positive. Students generally disagreed with the statement that the privatization of the media in 2006 creates opportunities for them. The fourth item had a mean very close to neutral (3.02): I knew mass communication was the ideal job for me before college. In other words, roughly half the students agreed and half disagreed with the statement.

Students were also highly optimistic about the future of journalism and mass communication. Respondents answered with a positive response for all items except the one item that was worded negatively. This negatively worded item – “Working in media is considered shameful and dishonorable” – produced a mean of 4.13, which was furthest from the neutral

score of 3.0 of any item. Students, then, strongly believed that working in the media is honorable. Students also voiced strong agreement that the journalism field is highly respected in Kuwait.

Subjects also agreed that mass communications is a good field for women, were hopeful about the future of mass communications ethics in Kuwait, feel good about the future of transparency, were optimistic about the future of journalism ethics and were not worried about restrictions in the media in Kuwait.

Next, respondents were asked about their attitudes toward journalism education. As with the items dealing with the journalism profession, students were highly positive about journalism education. Students were especially in agreement with the statement that “My education has increased my appreciation for mass communications,” with a mean score of 1.80. They also discuss topics outside class, believe their communication skills have improved and classes are preparing them well for the field.

We also asked respondents about how they decided on mass communications as their major or minor. This question was not asked of students majoring in other disciplines. According to the results, students decided to major in journalism on their own. They also agreed that they chose to study what is important to them. Friends’ support and parents’ support were next, followed by salary considerations and family. The last factor influencing students’ decisions to major in journalism was the prospect of becoming famous.

Finally, we asked students about their commitment to the mass communication field. Again, students were highly positive. They most strongly agreed with the statement that they intend on continuing a specialization in mass communication. They also strongly agree with the statement that studying mass communication was their first choice, followed by their intent on

entering mass communication, and support from their parents. Students strongly disagreed with the statement that they have some regrets about majoring in mass communications. Some of the questions in this section again were only asked of students majoring and/or minoring in mass communications.

### *Hypotheses results*

The first hypothesis stated: “Students’ intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend on demographic variables, such as sex, age, citizenship, and father’s education level.”

**Table 1.** Results of Logistical Regression

<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Sex	-1.406	27.386**	0.245
Age Groups	-0.817	65.216**	0.442
Father’s Education Level	-0.033	0.112	0.968
Kuwaiti Citizenship	-0.318	0.538	0.727
Importance of Parental Pride	0.292	2.170	1.339
-2 Log Likelihood		387.185	
Chi-Squared		120.100**	

\*\*p< 0.001

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine how demographic variables determine students’ (intention to) major or minor in mass communications. Predictors that were entered into the regression model were sex, age groups, father’s education level, Kuwaiti citizenship and the importance of making one’s parents proud.

Age groups consisted of six groups: there was one group for students aged 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22. Finally, there was a group for students aged 23 or above. Sex consisted of a nominal measure including two categories: male and female. Father’s level of education included six categories: less than a high school diploma, high school diploma, some college, bachelor’s

degree, master's degree, and doctorate. Kuwaiti citizenship consisted of a nominal measure with a category for Kuwaiti citizens and a category for non-Kuwaiti citizens. The degree to which it is important for a student to make his/her parents proud was measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

The analysis showed that the data fit the model fairly (-2 Log Likelihood=387.185) and the overall model was significant in distinguishing people who recommend the company as a good place of work versus those who do not, Chi-Square(5)= 120.100,  $p<.001$ . The model accurately classified 76.5% of the students who do or do not intend to major or minor in mass communications.

Among the five predictors entered into the model, only sex ( $B=-1.406$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and age group ( $B=-0.817$ ,  $p<.001$ ) were significant. The odds of having students (intending to) major or minor in mass communications increased by a factor of 0.442 as students age increased ( $\text{Exp}(B)=0.442$ ) and increased by a factor of 0.245 if the students were female.

The second hypothesis stated: "Students' intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend on students' goal prior to beginning journalism education."

**Table 2.** Results of Logistical Regression

<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Ideal job in mass communications	0.611	31.602**	1.843
Ideal job in mass communications before college	0.337	11.782**	1.401
Always have looked up to people in mass communications	-0.160	2.140	0.852
Privatization creates career opportunities	0.248	5.215**	1.282
-2 Log Likelihood		489.707	
Chi-Squared		100.516**	
* $p<0.05$			
** $p<0.001$			

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine how students' professional goals classify people who do or do not (intend to) major or minor in mass communications. Predictors that were entered into the regression model included the degree to which considered their ideal



job to be in mass communications, have wanted to work in mass communications prior to their collegiate careers, have always looked up to people in mass communications, and see the 2006 media law reform as creating professional opportunities. All these predictors were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

The analysis showed that the data fit the model fairly (-2 Log Likelihood=489.707) and the overall model was significant in distinguishing students who (intend to) major or minor in mass communications and those who do not, Chi-Square(4)= 100.516,  $p < .001$ . The model accurately classified 72.3% of the people into groups of students who do or do not intend to major or minor in mass communications.

Among the four predictors entered into the model, three were significant. These three were considering one's ideal job to be in mass communication, having always wished for a job in mass communications, and the belief that the privatization of media created career opportunities in the media. The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.843 as they considered their ideal job to be in mass communications ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.843$ ). The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.401 if they've considered their ideal job to be in mass communications before their college career ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.401$ ). The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.282 if the students believed that the privatization of media in 2006 created career opportunities for them ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.282$ ).

The third hypothesis stated: "Students' intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend on students' experience."

**Table 3.** Results of Logistical Regression

<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Internship experience	0.239	7.353*	1.270

Twitter experience		0.018	0.037	1.018
Blogging experience		0.009	0.009	1.009
Facebook experience		-0.127	2.121	0.880
Instagram experience		0.049	0.305	1.050
Kik experience		-0.216	5.612	0.806
Feeling good about experience		0.066	0.365	1.068
Show friends and family work		0.183	3.735	1.201
Know people in mass communications		0.055	0.348	1.057
Part time mass communications job		-0.957	5.867*	0.384
Have had work published		-0.102	0.167	0.903
-2 Log Likelihood	530.572			
Chi-Squared	50.900*			
*p<.05				
**p< .001				

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine how students' professional experiences classify people who do or do not (intend to) major or minor in mass communications. Predictors that were entered into the regression model included: internship experience, Twitter experience, Blogging experience, Facebook experience, Instagram experience, Kik experience, feel good about mass communications experience, show work friends and family work, and know people in mass communication. All of these predictors were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Two other items were measured on a nominal scale, with respondents indicating yes or no. These items were: whether or not the student has had work published in a media outlet and whether or not the student has had a part-time job in mass communications.

The analysis showed that the data fit the model fairly (-2 Log Likelihood=530.572) and the overall model was significant in distinguishing students who (intend to) major or minor in mass communications and those who do not, Chi-Square(11)= 50.900, p<.001. The model accurately classified 64.8% of the people into groups of students who do or do not intend to major or minor in mass communications.

Of all the predictors in the model, only two were significant. These were experience gained in internships and in part-time jobs in mass communication. The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.270 if students had a mass communications internship ( $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.270$ ). The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.270 if students had a mass communications part-time job ( $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.384$ ).

The fourth hypothesis stated: “Students’ intention to major or minor in mass communications will depend inversely on the potential problems that may be social, economic or political.”

**Table 4.** Results of Logistical Regression

<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
Good living	.366	8.521*	1.441
Media ethics	.136	.813	1.145
Journalism ethics	-.191	1.541	.826
Worried by restrictions	-.060	.343	.941
Good field for women	.320	9.175*	1.378
Transparency	.002	<0.001	1.002
Respected Field	-.381	8.933*	.683
Not a shameful field	.083	.455	1.086
Family will support me	.164	2.323	1.178
Friends will support me	.303	6.280*	1.354
-2 Log Likelihood		516.417	
Chi-Squared		60.610*	

\*p< .001

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine how perceived potential problems classify people who do or do not (intend to) major or minor in mass communications. Predictors that were entered into the regression model included: the ability to earn a good living, media ethics, journalism ethics, media restrictions, whether it’s a good field for women, transparency, the degree to which mass communications is a respected field, the degree to which

mass communications is not a shameful field, the degree to which family will support a career in mass communications and the degree to which friends will support a career in mass communications. All of these predictors were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

The analysis showed that the data fit the model fairly (-2 Log Likelihood=516.417) and the overall model was significant in distinguishing students who (intend to) major or minor in mass communications and those who do not, Chi-Square(10)= 60.610,  $p < .001$ . The model accurately classified 68.3% of the people into groups of students who do or do not intend to major or minor in mass communications.

Of all the predictors in the model, four were significant. These four were the ability to earn a good living, the degree to which mass communications is a good field for women, the degree to which mass communications is a respected field and the degree to which friends would support a career in mass communications. The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.441 as students believed they could earn a good living in mass communications ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.441$ ). The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.378 as students believed mass communications is a good field for women ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.378$ ). The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 0.683 as students felt mass communications was a respected field ( $\text{Exp}(B)=0.683$ ). The odds of students majoring or minoring in mass communications increased by a factor of 1.354 as students felt their friends would support them ( $\text{Exp}(B)= 1.354$ ).

The fifth hypothesis stated: "Students' perception of their decision to major in mass communications is positively related to their perception of the quality of their education."

Table 5. Pearson's Correlation: Education vs. Decision

	Year	Effectively Prepared	Improved Skills	More Appreciation	Discuss Topics
I studied mass communications because I want to be famous in Kuwait.	-0.072	0.058	0.1110	.142*	.106
Studying mass comm as a major or minor was my first choice.	-0.074	0.262*	0.301*	0.251*	0.283*
My parents support my decision to study mass communications	-0.030	-0.031	0.050	0.110	0.242*
I made the decision to study mass comm on my own.	-0.730	-0.003	0.205 *	0.340*	0.326*
I chose to study what is most important to me	-0.072	0.234*	0.421*	0.474*	0.366*
I do not have some regrets about majoring in mass communications.	-0.314*	0.045	0.184*	0.140*	0.135*
I intend on entering the mass comm field.	0.034	0.100	0.288*	0.252*	0.106
I intend on continuing my specialization in mass communications.	-0.137	0.073	0.296*	0.295*	0.207*

\*p&lt; 0.05

\*\*p&lt; 0.001

A series of Pearson correlations were computed to examine the associations between students' attitudes toward journalism education and factors influencing their decision to major or minor in mass communication. The results are shown in Table 5. Several correlations were statistically significant.

Two factors related to the students' decisions to major/minor in mass communication correlated positively with four education variables. The more students agreed with the statements that mass communication was their first choice for a major or minor and with the statement that they chose to study what was important to them, the more they felt they were being effectively prepared, were improving their skills, had more appreciation for mass communications and often talked about topics outside the classroom.

Three other decision items – making their major decision on their own, having no regrets and intention of continuing their specialization in mass communication – correlated with three education variables: that they felt they were improving their skills, had more appreciation for mass communications and often talked about topics outside class.

Agreement with “I intend to enter the mass communications field” correlated with improved skills and appreciation for the field. The decision to major or minor in mass communication to become famous in Kuwait correlated only with appreciation for the field. Parents' support correlated only with discussing topics outside the classroom.

## **Discussion**

This study examined attitudes toward the field of journalism of Kuwaiti students enrolled in mass communications courses and the factors that were associated with their decision to major or minor in mass communications. Because of the lengthy process of declaring a major in mass

communications, we were interested if the process created disillusionment with the field, whether attitudes differed between mass communications majors/minors and other majors, and what main factors were associated with their decision to major in mass communication. Several trends emerged.

First, all students regardless of major viewed mass communications in a positive light. The respondents especially viewed the mass communications as a highly respected field. They felt that their family and friends would support their chosen field, and that they would make a good living in the field.

Second, students held very positive attitudes toward mass communication education. They especially felt that they were improving their communication skills through their coursework.

The logistic regressions examining differences between majors/minors in mass communication with majors in other disciplines also showed several clear trends. First, gender and age differences were found, with female students and younger students both being more likely to major or minor in mass communications.

Not surprisingly, mass communication majors and minors were more likely to agree that journalism was the ideal job for them. There was no difference in the two groups on the statement that they have always looked up to journalists.

Mass communication majors and minors also were more likely to have internships and part-time journalistic jobs than were other majors. Again, this would be expected. They did not differ on their use of Twitter, Facebook or other social media.

Mass communication majors and minors also differed with other majors on several perceptions about problems in the field. Generally, the mass communication students were more

positive about the field – agreeing with statements that mass communication is a good field for women, journalist make a good living, the field is highly respected, and friends would support their decision to major in mass communication.

The results also suggest that the more active they were in selecting a major, the more positive they felt about mass communications education. Students who made their own decision on their major and who majored in a subject they wanted to also stated that they were being well prepared for their career, were improving their communication skills, had a greater appreciation for mass communications and talked about topics outside the classroom.

Overall, then, it appears that students majoring or minoring in mass communication have an optimistic outlook on the field and the quality of their educational experience. While students face a long process to declare a major or minor in journalism, the process does not seem to be negatively influencing their views of the field and their education.



## Appendix A

### Questionnaire and Frequencies

<b>Goals</b> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.716)	<i>M</i> (SD), N
My ideal job is in the mass communications field.	2.65 (1.21), 426
I have wanted to work in mass communications before beginning my collegiate career.	3.02 (1.38), 426
I have always looked up to people in mass communications.	2.45 (1.16), 426
The privatization of the media in 2006 creates career opportunities for me.	3.32 (1.14), 426
<b>Potential Problems</b> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.732)	<i>M</i> (SD), N
I will make a good living with a job in mass communications.	2.55 (0.99), 417
I am hopeful about the future of media ethics in Kuwait.	2.65 (1.10), 417
I am hopeful about the future of journalism ethics in Kuwait.	2.79 (1.04), 417
Restrictions of the media in Kuwait do not worry me.	2.82 (1.18), 417
Mass communications is a good field for women.	2.61 (1.15), 417
I feel good about the future of transparency as related to mass communications in Kuwait.	2.75 (1.08), 417
The journalism field is highly respected in Kuwait.	2.51 (1.07), 417
Working in media is considered shameful and dishonorable.	4.13 (1.08), 417
My family will support me if I decide to work in mass communications.	2.37 (1.22), 417
My friends will support me if I decide to work in mass communications.	2.69 (1.29), 417
<b>Education</b> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.603)	<i>M</i> (SD), N
In which year of university are you?	2.27 (1.04), 419
My classes are preparing me well for the field of mass communications.	2.10 (1.05), 419
My communication skills have been improving since I started classes.	1.80 (0.93), 419
My education has increased my appreciation for mass communications	2.02 (1.06), 419
I discuss topics of my classes with people outside of the classroom.	2.83 (1.05), 419
<b>Decision</b> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.659)	<i>M</i> (SD), N
It was my first choice to major in mass communications.	2.46 (1.23), 199
I studied mass communications because I want to be famous in Kuwait.	3.14 (1.29), 199
Studying mass communications as a major or minor was my first choice.	2.11 (1.29), 199
My parents support my decision to study mass communications.	2.35 (1.12), 199
I made the decision to study mass communications on my own.	1.47 (0.80), 199
I chose to study what is most important to me.	1.60 (0.96), 199
I do not have some regrets about majoring in mass communications.	1.85 (1.14), 199
I intend on entering the mass communication field.	1.76 (1.14), 199
I intend on continuing my specialization in mass communications.	2.35 (1.20), 199
<b>Experiences</b> (Cronbach's alpha = 0.725)	<i>M</i> (SD), N
I have had a mass communications internship.	3.25 (1.38), 420
I have had a mass communications part-time job.*	1.87 (0.34), 420
I have had work published or appear on various media outlets.*	1.67 (0.47), 420

In my free time, I create or publish content on Twitter.	2.26 (1.26), 420
In my free time, I create or publish content on blogs.	3.42 (1.36), 420
In my free time, I create or publish content on Facebook.	3.73 (1.36), 420
In my free time, I create or publish content on Instagram.	2.06 (1.31), 420
In my free time, I create or publish content on Kik.	4.08 (1.24), 420
I feel good about the amount of media experience I have.	2.52 (1.10), 420
I show my work to family and friends.	2.50 (1.31), 420
I know people who work in the mass communications field.	2.56 (1.32), 420

\*These items had two possible answer choices (yes/no), whereas the rest were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

## Demographics

### Age

Mean	20.46
Std Deviation	1.44
18 years-old	7.6% (N=34)
19 years-old	17.5% (N=78)
20 years-old	18.6% (N=83)
21 years-old	20.4% (N=91)
22 years-old	14.3% (N=64)
23+ years-old	7.8% (N=35)

### Sex

Male	32.3% (N=144)
Female	55.8% (N=249)

### What's your father's highest level of education?

Less than a high school diploma	13.0% (N=58)
High school diploma	18.4% (N=82)
Some college	14.3% (N=64)
Bachelor's degree	37.9% (N=169)
Master's degree	5.6% (N=25)
Doctorate degree	3.1% (N=14)

### Citizenship

Kuwaiti citizen	83.4% (N=372)
Other	8.5% (N=38)

### It's important to me to make my parents proud.

Strongly agree	83.9% (N=374)
Somewhat agree	3.8% (N=17)
Neither agree nor disagree	2.7% (N=12)
Somewhat disagree	0.9% (N=4)
Strongly disagree	0.9% (N=4)

### Student Status

Mass communications major (or intend to)	20.9% (N=93)
Mass communications minor (or intend to)	28.0% (N=125)
Enrolled in a mass communications course	42.8% (N=191)

## References

- Amin, H. (2002). Freedom as a value in Arab media: Perceptions and attitudes among journalists. *Political Communication*, 19(2), 125-135.
- Alfraih, S. A. (1999). *Hona AlKuwait*. Kuwait: Dar Alqurtas Lelnashr.
- Kuwait University. (2013). Retrieved on May 17, 2013 from <http://www.kuniv.edu/ku/Colleges/CollegeofArts/index.htm>
- Center for International Media Education. (2010). Conferences. Atlanta, <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwdcm/cime/4775.html>
- Cherribi, S. (2006). From Baghdad to Paris Al-Jazeera and the Veil. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11(2), 121-138.
- Freedom House. (2011). Kuwait. Washington, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2011>
- Graham, M., & Stephens, M. (2012). A Geography of Twitter. *Oxford Internet Institute*, Retrieved from <http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/vis/?id=4fe09570>
- Hafez, K. (2002). Journalism ethics revisited: A comparison of ethics codes in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim Asia. *Political Communication*, 19(2), 225-250.
- Kraidy, M. M. (2008). Reality TV and multiple Arab modernities: A theoretical exploration. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 1(1), 49-59.
- Lynch, M. (2006). The Structural Transformation of the Arab Public Sphere. In M. Lynch (Ed.), *Voices of the new Arab public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East politics today*. New York: Columbia University Press, 29-88.
- Musa, B. A., & Domatob, J. K. (2007). Who is a development journalist? Perspectives on media ethics and professionalism in post-colonial societies. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, 22(4), 315-331.
- Ottaway, M. (2011). Bahrain: Between the United States and Kuwait. *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/04/04/bahrain-between-united-states-and-saudi-arabia/t8>
- Pavlik, J. V., Laufer, P. D., Burns, D. P., & Ataya, R. T. (2012). Reforming Iraqi journalism and mass communication higher education: Adapting the UNESCO model curricula for journalism education to Iraqi higher education. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 67(3), 268-285.

Pintak, L., & Ginges, J. (2008). The mission of Arab journalism: Creating change in a time of turmoil. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(3), 193-227.

Selvik, K. (2011). Elite rivalry in a semi-democracy: The Kuwaiti press scene. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47(3), 477-496.

Kuwait (2013). *The World Fact Book*. Retrieved May 17, 2013 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ku.html>