

Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria in the media: France vs America, a Contrastive Analysis

***Saint-Martin & Saint-Barthélemy and the Metropole
vs
Puerto Rico and the United States***



L'ouragan Irma, dans les Antilles, le 4 septembre. HO / AFP - Le Monde

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Après le passage de l'ouragan Irma qui a dévasté l'île de Saint-Martin, la plage de l'hôtel Mercure à Marigot, le 6 septembre 2017 © AFP / Lionel CHAMOISEAU - France Inter

This is a stolen identity
Because I'm bent on forgetting me
All left is my eyes
And I think their gonna die
Don't look in, you can see me
I'd rather wear this stolen identity
Exactly what they want to see
[...]

Now I've found the perfect mask
And I'll shake these thoughts with this flask
Because with this failure goes a past
That he never wanted to see
A part that was forced to bleed
But with this identity goes stitches
Though it bleeds, though it itches
But I'm sewn up, strung out, all you'll ever need
Though these stitches bleed

Kathryn Garner - 'Stolen Identity'

ABSTRACT

Former colonies of the British Empire are usually associated with the notion of postcolonialism and show how the population has had to cope with the inherited habits, rites and way of living of the English after such a long “occupancy”. It is the case in India, for instance. However, France was also an important coloniser at this time and spread its culture and language across the world. Like the United Kingdom, some of the territories that were colonised are still under the influence of their colonisers or even still part of the same country (part of the Commonwealth for example). In this study, I decided to research the way the media depicted people and events during the passage of Hurricane Irma in September 2017 on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean’s France, and compare and contrast it to the response of the US to the passage of Maria through Puerto Rico.

In order to have a broader overview of the material I was studying and expand my knowledge of the topic, I used the theories of various authors. Firstly, Saïd (1978) and his work on postcolonialism and the *Orient*. Moreover, I draw from Levy and Chevannes (2009) as well as Barclay and Asava (2013) who talk about the notion of identity in these once colonised (or still part of their colonisers’ country) territories. On the topic of identity, I also decided to make use of Dervin’s (2011) theories on identity and identification.

With the theoretical framework in place, I chose to execute my research with the method of the literary analysis. I consequently constituted a corpus, composed of fifty-one online newspapers’ articles, from Metropolitan French websites and French Caribbean ones for the one part of my study, and from mainland American websites and Puerto Rican ones for the other part. The articles selected were chosen after numerous keywords’ *Google* searches and archives’ searches on the newspapers’ websites. After looking carefully at each and every article that constituted my data set, I tried to compare the way the facts, and more particularly, the responses of the governments to the disaster, were depicted in each paper, and on each side - meaning French and American, but also islander and mainlander.

As the results of the study go, there were no prominent divergences between the reactions of the French Antilles vs Metropolitan media, in the full data that I had collected for France as a whole. However, the results for the American media showed that the facts in themselves showed a sort of postcolonialism, and the opinionated articles on both sides tended to support the Puerto Rican inhabitants asking to be treated equally to any other state.

To the question “*How was the response from the homeland French government to hurricane Irma in the French Caribbean represented similarly or differently in the media from the one from the US homeland government to hurricane Maria which struck Puerto Rico in the same period?*”, I could answer that, from what I have seen and studied, the reactions were pretty divergent. It challenged my idea of the fact that France, not having come to an end with its past as a coloniser, would have acted disinterestedly towards its territories’ victim of Hurricane Irma. What I found was quite strikingly the opposite. The US reacted the way I expected France to do, although America was born from an association of colonies.

Nonetheless, my study is far from exhaustive and further research with a bigger range of countries possessing overseas territories and comparison of such depictions in the media over time could be manners to improve the relevancy of this study. The notion of identity, however, is ubiquitous in the texts and reveals that there still is an opposition between national governments and the overseas territories in general. That could be explained by the fact that they do not live in the same areas and have a different history upon which they built themselves and their cultures.

Keywords: identity, representation media, postcolonialism, France, Caribbean, America

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INTRODUCTION

“The measure of a man is what he does with power” - Plato

“I think the first duty of society is justice” - Alexander Hamilton

“Power has only one duty - to secure the social welfare of the people” - Benjamin Disraeli

All three men summarize the fact that, whenever one has power, one needs to use it carefully, to benefit the society, to do good. In the dynamic and uncertain world we live in, the question of power and who to give it to is rightfully ubiquitous.

Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump, being the leaders of France and the United States, respectively, have this power. When the government gains power, it also implies a sense of duty, such as looking after its citizens in the whole nation, whether it is divided in different territories around the globe or not. In this work, my aim is to show how the media depicted hurricane Irma striking France in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy, and the response of the French government, and contrast and compare it to the way the American government handled the situation of Puerto Rico being destroyed by hurricane Maria. In order to do so, I focused my work on elements of the written press, harnessing online newspapers' articles from France and America. My goal in this thesis is to see if the reactions of both countries were similar or different and to see on which criteria the divergences were based, as well as finding a plausible explanation for these responses to be different or similar.

My corpus is composed of fifty-one articles collected on newspapers' websites from the French Antilles, Metropolitan France, Puerto Rico and the United States. These documents were studied to see if some signs of a superiority assumed by the motherland would be seen in the media depiction of the disaster, which touched overseas territories for both countries. Nonetheless, studying the representation of one event by the media also implies studying the same event in facts, although it is through the media eye. In this study, the research I conducted gave results contrary to the ones I, as a French Metropolitan citizen and student in Intercultural Communication, would have expected.

In this thesis, you will find the process I went through to get to the results I will explain at the end. Below is established the case I am working on for this study as well as its relevance to the field of intercultural communication. Theories by various authors from the field of interculturality such as Dervin's (2011), but also postcolonial theories such as Saïd's (1978)

were used in this work. That is why I explain further how they relate to my topic, and how they helped me confront my ideas and the results I obtained in this research into a broader landscape and broader studies that had been conducted before. In this thesis, the method I applied to conduct the research is also detailed, along with an analysis of the data I collected and the facts it revealed. Finally, a couple of leads for further research are going to be explained, as well as the limitations that the research you are about to discover imply.

In order to understand my subject better, and to understand how this particular topic matters to me, as well as to the Intercultural Communication field of studies, I point out at the facts and their relevance in the community of interculturality in the next section.

CONTEXT, CASE & RELEVANCE

In an ever changing globalised world, the notion of identity and belonging becomes more and more difficult to define, and boundaries get more and more blurry. This case illustrates the way countries which are spread around the planet can deal with a national situation in various manners, considering they are touched by events like natural disasters more or less often for instance. Their knowledge on the topic, from one territory to the other can be more or less developed, and so their way of coping with a situation of crisis is also likely to differ. The reporting of such events in the news can be equally divergent. In this study, the case of France and Hurricane Irma is treated alongside the case of the United States and Hurricane Maria.

In early September 2017, Hurricane Irma swept the North Caribbean, damaging a lot of territories, destroying almost entirely some regions or islands. The hurricane passed the French islands of Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy, as well as Guadeloupe. After the disaster, help was sent and solidarity amongst the victims of the hurricane was quickly seen. Economic matters were also taken care of by the government, insurances doing their best to give their allowances to the inhabitants as fast as possible, and solidarity funds were created to cope with the event and the much needed reconstruction of the islands.

In mid-September 2017, Hurricane Maria struck the North Caribbean again, destroying and damaging some infrastructures in the regions that were only partially touched. The hurricane passed through Puerto Rico, destroying two thirds of the island, shutting down the electric system, for instance, and leading to lack of food and drinkable water on the American island. However, in this case, the help sent was said to be too slow, insufficient, and different from the one sent to Florida after Irma, or to Texas after Harvey, in early September 2017 and late August 2017, respectively. The fact that the island of Puerto Rico already has a status different from the fifty states composing the US made the thought of abandon even more striking to the inhabitants and the politics that defended the case of the territory.

In general, on the one hand, the dichotomy between the overseas territories owned by France, and the Metropole is talked about whenever catastrophes like hurricanes happen in the overseas territories, and can usually be seen through the testimonies of victims, or interviews of politics. On the other hand though, I feel like dichotomies in terms of treatment of the citizens and so forth, between territories owned by the US, as well as between the different states that form the nation, are not a common discussion in America.

That is why my aim in this research is to see if there is such a big difference in the depiction of the hurricanes in the media (online newspapers) in Metropolitan France compared to in the French Caribbean, and carry on the same research for mainland America comparing it to Puerto Rico. As the research goes, a balanced number of articles from each party, America with Puerto Rico, and France with the French Antilles have been studied, in order to determine if postcolonialism can be felt through the media from these different regions.

Both parties were taken into account in order to have a non-biased point of view, and enrich the study and its relevance to the field of intercultural communication. Indeed, even though the two areas studied are part of the same country, it does not mean that their cultures are similar. They can be opposite or close, depending on who you ask it to, their individual experiences and stories. Being part of a same country implies a national identity. Nonetheless, living in different parts of the world, French and American inhabitants can have a different idea of what it is to be French or American, but also belong to different cultures, ethnicities and ways of living which shape their opinions and everyday lives, and lead to a totally different vision of the world.

Being French, this topic awakens my interest and matters to me. Being part of a master programme in intercultural communication, I have learnt a lot about the way people's identities are shaped and influenced by a whole range of different factors. Nationality can impact identity. Education can also have an influence on identity. So can people we surround ourselves with, and so can geographical region in the world, ethnicity, cultures we identify with, etc. Questions of culture and identity have always fascinated me and I have not found a lot of work which compared the way inhabitants and the media from the same country react to the same event although they are not in the same place and not touched by the events at the same level. I feel like comparing the Francophone handling to an Anglophone one and the way each government coped with the same type of situation echoes with my English studies background and also adds relevance to the study.

The French Antilles, colonised by the French in the XVIIth century, with Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy experiencing French presence on their territories starting in 1648, and being independent overseas territories only since 2007 (independent from the French Overseas Territory of Guadeloupe), makes the research of a notion of postcolonialism in these articles and the treatment of these hurricanes that touch the overseas territories more than the mainland legit. For Puerto Rico, the United States took over the possession of the island from the Spanish

in 1898 and made it an “organised but unincorporated” territory of the US in 1917. The past of the different areas studied as coloniser and/or colony will allow me to see if a kind of superiority of the motherland over the overseas territories is shown in the texts, and eventually compare and contrast both cases. From this comparative and contrastive analysis, I will be able to draw conclusions as to what happens, why is it happening, if it is the same for both cases - or if not - why so, and how can we interpret the results of the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – History, identity and representation in the media

To broaden the relevance of this study, I decided to draw upon various theories that I found were adding to the case. The themes treated in this theoretical framework and in the present thesis can be seen as all intertwined yet distinct. Theories drawn upon link History and postcolonialism in the Caribbean and Africa, identity and representation, and the role of the media. My thesis focuses on France's and America's cases.

My approach to analyse the depiction of a natural disaster is to study the depiction of Hurricane Irma in different online newspapers in order to see if there is a difference in the way events are reported and talked about in these particular media. I then decided to compare and contrast the case of France to the case of Puerto Rico and the United States. In order to explain the divergences or similarities that I could find throughout my analysis, I decided to link the study of the media depiction to the notion of postcolonialism (Saïd, 1978; Stam & Shohat, 2012; Levy & Chevannes, 2012), as the overseas territories that France possesses were colonised. Although the people living in these regions are most likely to feel French, divergences in the feeling these people have about the French History and their different geographical location in the world can influence their identification with such or such culture and ethnicity. Hence, this study is also linked to the notion of identity and national identification as developed by Dervin (2011).

1. Postcolonialism & History

The input of Saïd (1978) on the way Europe and Western countries in general see their former colonies, the Middle East - or overseas territories in the case of France and the French Antilles, is truly of use in this research. It allows for a vision of the Orient and the relationship the West has with countries they are said to consider inferior, or that should adapt to European ways of living. Saïd uses the term of *orientalism* to define the way Europeans think of the peoples outside of their boundaries, living in cultures which they are unfamiliar with. The theory of cultural representation he talked about in *Orientalism* (1978) qualifies the unknown peoples with essentialist and definitive point of views and ideas, which eventually leads to social constructs. In his work, the central notion of *orientalism*, defined as “Western knowledge over the Eastern world”, debates the dichotomy between a European (and then American) world's superiority over eastern regions like Asia or Africa. The book argues that orientalism makes for a bipolar clash, between, on the one hand, the West, rational, strong and masculine, in opposition to, on the other hand, the East, irrational, weak and feminine (1978). the theory that

Saïd defends in *Orientalism* (1978) helps me with the notions of cultural representation, social constructs, the (foreign) Other in general, as well as stereotypical depictions. Indeed, Saïd's (1978) point of view on the Orient can be applied to colonialism and postcolonialism to a broader extent than just the case of the Middle East, and the cases that I am studying in particular.

"Africa and France: Postcolonial Cultures, Migration, and Racism" (2013) by Thomas Dominic illustrates the relations between Africa and France over the V^e République's rule. In this chapter, he argues that while France was telling its citizens that they were in a process of decolonisation, they were in fact doing the opposite.

"The French thought that they were in the process of decolonizing when in fact de Gaulle was doing all he could, with Jacques Foccart's help, to extend colonialism into a neocolonial period. This is what I have called la Françafrique. [...] The objective of this alignment was of course to "maintain these colonies in the Western orbit" (Vershave and Hauser, as cited in Dominic, 2013, p. 93).

He argues that the only goal of the government was to decolonise their possession, but still "maintain[ing] a structure of dependence" (2013, p. 92). This text is interesting because it shows that in 2013, France still had not come to an end with regards to its past as a coloniser, and it can also apply to the overseas territories the country still possesses. Dominic also points out the criticised actions of the French government, which tries to keep up the ties with their former colonies by, for example, awarding most of the leaders of the latter colonies with the Légion d'Honneur medal, and inviting them to Historical French celebrations. In the chapter I used, he states:

"Critics have drawn attention to the questionable nature of these associations, pointing to the unresolved question of French colonialism [...] and the under-appreciation for the contributions and sacrifices made by African soldiers during both the First and Second World Wars" (2013, p. 91).

Concerning the overseas territories such as Saint-Martin or Saint Barthélémy, which have only been independent from Guadeloupe since 2007, France having a full Ministry dedicated to the overseas territories shows the care they bear for the remains of their past as a coloniser. It also allows me to make a link between both the political situation of France and the more and more complex notion of identity in countries that experience a lot of mixing. All in all, this text reports on the postcolonial matters that France has to face, being a former coloniser and still owning overseas territories.

Moreover, Robert Stam and Ella Shohat (2012) in the work “Race in Translation: Culture Wars Around the Postcolonial Atlantic” address the different points of view French intellectuals have on the subject of postcolonialism. Chapter 8 of the work, “French intellectuals and the Postcolonial” (2012) is interesting to draw from because it puts France at the center of the study, and analyses as well as reflects on its role of coloniser and how it has not accepted quite as well its history as so, like, for instance, the British did. It gives a comparative opinion and introduces the reader to various authors, giving leads to try and understand some of the political situations in France and the political ideas and morals that rule the country in general. For example, one of the focuses of the chapter is the way History is taught in French school textbooks and the media (Stam & Shohat, 2012). Thinkers came with the idea that

“it is today difficult to ignore “postcoloniality”, given the extraordinarily tensions that go with it: the extension of comparison between the colonial situation and the situations of social, economic, cultural, educational, and religious marginalization [...]. All these signs make the colonial fracture a multifaceted reality that can no longer be ignored” (Deltombe & Rigouste, 2005, as cited in Stam & Shohat, 2012, p. 253).

The authors also explain that the terms of postcolonialism and postcolonial theory, along with the notion of multiculturalism, for example, are strongly associated with anglophone countries, and not really present in France as such, replaced by studies such as anthropological and historical studies (2012). To summarize, this chapter rejects the overall amnesia concerning the French colonial present in the country. But it also allows for an overview of the different ideas that theorists reflected on in order to include the past of France as a coloniser into the French History.

2. Identity construction in relation to History

To add to Saïd’s (1978) point of view, I took into consideration the work “African Caribbean Worldview and the Making of Caribbean Society: History, Biology, Culture” by Levy and Chevannes (2009). Chapter 6 of the ouvrage talks about the difficult notion of identity linked to the history of the Antilles, as their cultures are influenced by so many other ones, such as the ones of their former colonisers and of the native peoples.

Chapter 6 “Museography and Places of Remembrance of Slavery in Martinique, or the Gaps in a Memory Difficult to Express” (Levy & Chevannes, 2009) puts the term of *patrimonialisation* at the core of the theory. The notion of *patrimonialisation* links to a will of the people of the overseas territories to erect museums and other places of remembrance in the Caribbean in general, but in Martinique in this particular text. The inhabitants are described as

needing to expose their history, their link to slavery, and their version of it in order to figure out and be able to relate to their past. There is a similar will “to locate, name, collect and categorize everything that is supposed to have come from the past, as if memory was no longer able to circulate on the habitual paths of intergenerational transmission” (Halbwachs 1997, as cited in Levy & Chevannes, 2009, p. 115). “Is one right to wait for patrimonial action to participate in the emancipation of memory and its extirpation from the places where it was reduced to silence?”(2009, p. 115) ask the theorists. People from the Caribbean, according to Levy and Chevannes (2009), feel the need to build places where the history of the Antilles is shown. In fact, finding one’s identity can be hard to do when one is not aware of, or has nowhere to see their past. The work of Levy and Chevannes (2009), by treating the difficult question of memory in Martinique, consequently leads to the notion of identity and identities in the French Antilles, as one’s memories and History is allowed to shape a part of one’s identity.

Chapter 11 “Creoles as Linguistic Markers of National Identity” (Levy & Chevannes, 2009), which focuses on Jamaica and Guyana, puts language as one of the key elements to the creation and development of identities. “Caribbean language development is a product of its colonial past and is guided by both current global economic forces and a search for a Caribbean identity” (Levy & Chevannes, 2009, p. 202). The quest for one’s identity and identities in the Caribbean, a region that gathers influences from a lot of different cultures can be, as mentioned before, a hard one. Thanks to - or because of - its colonial History, a past usually drowned into the western Histories, and traits taken from various cultures that came into the picture at one moment, the Caribbean is more multicultural than ever. Chapter 11 of “African Caribbean Worldview and the Making of Caribbean Society: History, Biology, Culture” (Levy & Chevannes, 2009) explores the way Creoles, which are made out of different languages, and a result from the melting pot that happened in the Caribbean during colonial times, shape a part of identity for people living in Guyana and Jamaica, and in the Antilles in general. This particular chapter helps me have an idea of the identity issues the Caribbean has been and is still dealing with, and how language is at the center of culture in the Antilles.

On the same subject, Dervin (2011) talks about the notions of cultural identity and the construction of it. Really known for his work of the subject, he argues about the pluralisation of identities, the Self and the Other, or social constructs, for instance. In his work “Cultural Identity, Representation and the Other” (2011), Dervin emphasizes the fact that social representations are essential to our view of the world as they are, for instance “a sociocognitive practice which allows us to create sociality, position ourselves, assert identities and defend ourselves when

“attacked” by others” (Howards, 2002, as cited in Dervin, 2011, p. 4). Moreover, he argues that “representations emerge from the interrelations between ‘self, other and the objectworld” (2011, p. 5). These notions about identity in general will help me understand the preconceptions that I had entering the present research, as well as interpret the results that I will obtain. Linking the idea of identity to my initial topic also allows me to relate this study with the field of intercultural communication.

3. Identity, Representation and the Media

In this research, I decided to study the depiction of two hurricanes, Irma and Maria, through the scope of the media I chose to analyse written newspapers because they are one of the oldest means of “mass communication” in the world and a lot of people still have access to them nowadays. On the theme of media and as to why I have chosen this means of communication – newspapers –, I chose to draw from “MediaWriting: Print, Broadcast, and Public Relations” (Whitaker, et al., 2012). This work explains different theories of media writing, media watching and what the challenges are, to people writing and watching the media. It also talks about the notions of agenda setting, framing, gatekeeping, to explain how the media work, and how the information is selected, shaped and presented to the audience, and the reader in the case of written press. This theory and the notions it puts forward helps me understand how choosing newspapers’ articles as my data can be tricky and tells me how and why I need to take extra care of what I see and think is written. I have also decided to take this particular work into consideration because it gives me clues as to how to act and to which extent I should be careful when reading the articles I study, and the press in general. It considerably helps me compare and contrast my initial ideas with the results I obtain from my research.

4. Research Question

The study of these texts, along with my research and the analysis of the articles I selected to determine if the way the media depicted the hurricane Irma differed from one part of France to the other, and compare it to the way the depiction of response of the US to Hurricane Maria swiping through Puerto Rico will allow me to answer the following research question:

How was the response from the homeland French government to hurricane Irma in the French Caribbean represented similarly or differently in the media from the one from the US homeland government to hurricane Maria which struck Puerto Rico in the same period?

Answering the above-mentioned question also allows me to respond to a subquestion that focuses on the events depicted, and less on the way they are talked about:

How were the responses of the French government to hurricane Irma striking its overseas territories and the American government to hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico different?

CORPUS & METHOD

Although this might not be the method procedure you were expecting, I below explain how I gathered my data set, as well as to how this research process helped me shape a better approach to the subject I had chosen. Usually, people try and collect the most data they can in order to answer a predefined question. In my case, the research question was not designed until I gathered a first set of documents, and figured there was not enough material and what I wanted to show was difficult with the particular articles I had selected. That realisation made me rethink my methods to choose articles, and led to another research session. In the end, my research question was modified quite a few times, and really defined only when I had collected a broad range of data, that could cover my topic to the fullest extent.

I have chosen to study two hurricanes that happened in close areas and in the same period of time. Indeed, Puerto Rico and Saint-Barthélemy & Saint-Martin belong to the Caribbean region, and, while Hurricane Irma struck the French area on September 6, 2017, Puerto Rico was swept by Hurricane Maria on September 20, 2017. Comparing two different areas, being territories under the government of a mainland (respectively France and America) seemed interesting to me as to have a sense of the divergent manners a country can cope with a situation such as the passage of a hurricane on their overseas territories. That is why I decided to compare different events, thinking they would approximately have the same importance in both areas but that the reactions to the situation might be differently seen and depicted by the media in each country.

In this research, the method I used is a literature review, which I will explain step by step further on. This type of text analysis, the literature review, consists in analysing various texts in order to compare and contrast them with one another (Lamb, n.d.). My overall method of analysis for all articles was, after having selected them, to carefully read through them, looking for terms that would imply postcolonialism or a type of superiority of one party over the other. In my case, the texts that were used were online newspapers' articles which all focused on hurricanes Irma and Maria. These articles also depicted the consequences of the hurricanes in the days and months following their passage in the North Caribbean region, and particularly Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthélemy and Puerto Rico. Overall, I chose to work with a data set composed of various articles from the different parts of the world studied in this research: the French Caribbean, Metropolitan France, Puerto Rico, and the United States mainland. As my research treats the way French media, and American media position themselves in situations of

crisis as such, the newspapers selected to examine the French part of the study were all French newspapers, from the Metropole and from the Caribbean Islands touched by the hurricane, while the articles selected for the US continent were in English and, except from one, the ones for Puerto Rico were in Spanish.

The newspapers I chose to work with are (cf *Table 1* below): *Le Monde*, *Ouest France*, *La 1ère* and *France Antilles* for the French ones, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *Pasquines*, *Primera Hora* and *El Vocero* for the American part. In total, the samples I collected are divided as follows: twenty-three articles from Metropolitan France online newspapers (twenty-two from *Le Monde*, and one from *Ouest France*); fifteen articles from the French Antilles (fourteen from *La 1ère*, one from *France Antilles*); and thirteen articles about the management of the situation in Puerto Rico, five articles taken from Puerto Rico based online newspapers (*El Vocero*, *Pasquines*), as well as an interview video (*Primera Hora*), and seven articles from America wide newspapers (*USA Today*, *The New York Times*). This data set was carefully selected among all the articles that popped up when I searched for the keywords - which I will explain below - on the online newspapers' websites.

France				America				
Antilles		Métropole		Puerto Rico			Mainland	
La 1ère	France Antilles	Ouest France	Le Monde	El Vocero	Pasquines	Primera Hora	USA Today	The New York Times
14	1	1	22	3	1	1	5	2

Table 1 - Number of articles used from each newspaper according to the country and the region.

In order to find articles related to my research question, I looked up keywords in both search engines and in newspapers' websites and archives. Indeed, on websites like the one of the newspaper *Le Monde*, articles that are no longer on the main page are classified in the archives of the website. This makes the archives the most valuable data bank that I could rely on for this website. With a subscription to this newspaper, I could access all the articles available on *Le Monde's* webpage.

The very first part of my research focused on French media because my first idea was to exploit French newspapers and their depiction of the same phenomenon in different parts of the world (French Antilles and Metropole). But adding the Puerto Rican variable makes the case

more interesting, and allows us to compare the reaction to this issue by both governments. As a consequence, the second part of my research consisted in finding articles depicting the situation that happened in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, as well as the reactions of the people of Puerto Rico to the announcements and measures taken by the US Federal Government.

The first search I did was in Google, looking up 'irma ouest france' as I wanted to find articles from this newspaper - a local Metropolitan one - that talked about Irma. The results of this first search only showed a couple of articles related to the subject I was interested in. That is how I figured that the research would not show all the possible results linked to the keywords, and went directly on the website *OuestFrance.fr* to collect broader data and have more opportunities to choose good articles. Out of all the articles (thirty-four) concerning Irma on the website, a few of them were long articles that went in details into the economic situation after the disaster, or the government's visits to the destructed islands. On the contrary, most of the documents I was able to find were short and related to economics, aid and the role of the government in the reconstruction and decision-making. I realised that it was really important to get articles from both the US and France that detailed the situation or the event.

I did the same type of research to find articles written in the French Caribbean newspapers, *France Antilles* and *La1ère*. I first visited the *France Antilles* website, which was mostly dedicated to Martinique as my keywords for this research were 'irma martinique'. Only a couple of articles were talking about Irma in Martinique as it has not touched the island, as only high speed winds were blown all over the territory. Thanks to this search, my focus shifted from initially being on this particular island, to harnessing the articles focusing on Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy, as they are the French Overseas Territories that have been the most devastated by the catastrophe. Some articles also included Guadeloupe and the consequences of Irma on that island. In these French Caribbean newspapers, I found articles that were talking about the same topics that I had found on *Ouest France's* website: economics in general after the hurricane swept upon the North Caribbean, how the government reacted to the disaster, and the measures they took afterwards.

On my second research session, I had selected two newspapers from which I could find interesting detailed articles on Irma and its economic consequences. The one from the French Antilles is *La1ère*, while the one from Metropole is *LeMonde.fr*. For these websites, I first googled 'irma' and the three first results that came out were related to the hurricane, including a "A la une" section, having two of the latest articles on the subject listed, one from *Le Monde*,

and one from *La 1ère*. I then switched to the “news” tab of Google to find articles in the media, particularly. After clicking a couple of the articles on the first page, I found myself with having articles both related and unrelated to economics in my tabs. Keeping the articles that I found relevant to my topic open, I went on to the websites of both newspapers in order to dig deeper into their archives and be able to have a complete view of what I could work with.

On *Le Monde*'s website, having access to the full archives and articles, as I mentioned before, I did an advanced search, with ‘irma’ as a keyword, looking it up in the full text, a timeline of the past year and classifying the articles from the oldest to the latest. In total, I found 208 articles, the first one related to the hurricane being on September 5, 2017, and the first three being unrelated to the hurricane. After going through the whole 21 pages of articles found in the archives, it proved that only 50% (104 articles) of the articles previously listed were fully dedicated to Hurricane Irma. While I was scrolling down the lists of articles, I also clicked on the ones that were relevant to my research, and after reading them, and clicking articles linked in the previously chosen ones, I ended up having three articles relating Irma to economics.

On the website of *La 1ère*, the search with the keyword ‘irma’ yielded 8052 articles on 86 pages. A cursory review of the articles listed on the first ten pages, opening some articles revealed that I needed to narrow my search. Typing ‘irma exonération’ returned only eight results. Out of the two types of search that I had done on this website, I preselected four, which narrowed down to three after I re-read all the articles I had found.

In total, the first part of my research for a good data set led me to finding eleven articles, some of them not being as related to economics or comparable to the others, some not being deep enough, and others being lengthy and developed, and really worthy of interest, and making me able to have great material to draw from. In the end, I initially chose to work with the seven above-mentioned articles as they were the most suitable for my study.

However, throughout the writing of the thesis, my focus shifted a bit, and I incorporated Puerto Rico and the US reaction to the passage of Maria on the American island in order to compare it to the French reactions. My data set also appeared to be really small and needed to be broadened. That is why I did a search on the websites of *La 1ère* and *Le Monde* for more articles on Irma. This second research session happened around a month after the first one.

On the website of the newspaper *Le Monde*, I looked up the keywords ‘irma gouvernement’ in order to have enough results about the reactions to the catastrophe and the

reactions to the role of the government in the management and reconstruction equation. It was searched in the full text of the articles, and the timeline in which the articles were searched was from September 5, 2017 to March 12, 2018 (day of the search). Overall, the search engine found seventy-two articles. Thirty-four were fully dedicated to Irma, and twenty of these proved to be of good interest for the topic I wanted to explore.

On the other hand, *La 1ère's* website offered two hundred and thirty-two articles when I looked up the same keywords in the search engine. There was no way to classify the articles from one date to another, or to make them appear from the oldest to the latest. It was sorted by relevance. I browsed through the first half of the pages, and found eleven articles that were truly related to my subject, focusing on the handling of the government, people's reactions to the hurricane and the role of the state.

For the Puerto Rican side, I learnt that mainstream newspapers in the mainland United States were *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. My aim in this research was not to find a data set as broad as the one for France, but after looking up 'irma' in all three newspapers' websites, *USA Today* and *The New York Times* appeared to have more options to choose from. However, the articles mostly talked about Hurricane Maria, which struck Puerto Rico quite heavily, compared to Irma. That is how I chose to focus on Maria for the Puerto Rican side, contrastively to Irma on the French Antilles one. On *USA Today*, most results that I saw were unrelated to the government's response to the hurricane in Puerto Rico, but I was finally able to find five articles that were talking about the handling of the situation, the consequences of Maria and the "why" of all this. On the website of *The New York Times*, the situation was mostly the same: most of the articles were not related to the way the government responded to Hurricane Maria passing through Puerto Rico, but more opinionated articles on the place of Puerto Rico in the American politics, and the treatment of the island as a whole, not solely during and after Maria. That is why out of the most relevant articles the webpage sorted for me, I only found two that were close to what I wished to find to document my study.

I had to look up "puertorican newspapers" in order to have a list of websites' names that I could potentially draw from. On the table provided by Wikipedia, I was able to find a couple of newspapers that published daily in Spanish. After trying different ones, the address that worked and gave appropriate results were *El Vocero* and *Primera Hora*. From the latter, I selected a video in which Carmen Yulin, the mayor of San Juan, PR, is interviewed. The other articles that I found were really short and as my data set for this part of the topic is smaller, I wanted articles

that were more lengthy and detailed. That is what I found on *El Vocero's* website. This newspaper provided me with four articles on the government management of the situation in Puerto Rico, and the people's reaction to it, even months after the hurricane left. In both cases, I looked up the word Irma first, but results that I actually took into consideration for Puerto Rico were the ones I later obtained, looking up 'maria'. These articles talking about Hurricane Maria were explained a situation in Puerto Rico that was the more comparable to the one of the French Antilles. In total, I gathered four articles from *El Vocero* that treated my topic. One of the articles that I found on Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico based newspapers is one taken from *Pasquines*, that somebody advised me to take a look at. This last article literally compares that way the federal government of the United States responded to the passage of hurricane Irma in Florida and the passage of hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

With this last article on Puerto Rico, my overall data set on Puerto Rico and the government response to Maria going through the island comes down to thirteen documents to draw from, while my data set for Irma and the French Antilles has narrowed down to thirty-eight articles. While studying all these documents, I became aware of disparities that happened on the management of the crisis on the French side vs on the American side, and the depiction of this same crisis and crisis handling by the media. That is what I am going to explain now that I will go to the data analysis.

ANALYSIS & RESULTS – All different, all the same?

The subtitle for this chapter was chosen after the results of the research. In the following paragraphs, I will explain how the notions of difference and similarity are relatable to the topic of media representation and to the facts exposed in the newspapers. Are we all unique in our universality? The following subsections will give you an insight as to why I selected these five particular words (“All different, all the same?”), and each part will give examples to illustrate the heading they are related to.

Out of all the articles that I ended up studying, there was a real consensus on the facts described by each country’s press. On the French side, people praised the government’s reaction, while the Americans were divided as to how the situation had been or was managed. In fact, “pro-Puerto Rico” parties criticized the way the federal government treated the situation, comparing and contrasting its handling to the handling of the crisis in Florida after Irma, or in Texas after Harvey. Whereas in France, even though the government was criticized, mostly by the political opposition, it was also praised, by locals and by the politicians handling the consequences of the disaster at their level. For example, the ministry of Overseas Territories, and the delegates in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy were pleased with the reactivity of the President and his politics, as well as with the means deployed to bring essentials to the destroyed areas. Nonetheless, the representation of the events on each side of the same country was similar in France and in the United States, and it was clearly seen that the articles I picked seemed to be, for the most part, unbiased and meant to be the closest to the event they were depicting.

France possesses various territories and islands all over the globe, and has to care for them as a part of the nation. During and after the passage of Irma in the North Caribbean and in the French Antilles particularly, the questions of aid concerning food and water, as well as officials’ visits to the destroyed islands, and processes to rebuild the territories were posed. As Saint-Martin is divided between French and Dutch leadership, comparisons were made between both governments coping with hurricane Irma, the French part usually saying the Dutch had done a better job, and contrastively, the Dutch praising the French reactivity to the disaster (Stroobants, 2017). However, media coverage showed that the response of the Antilles and the Metropolitan France were rather positive. The facts talked about in the media on both sides were pretty much the same, with a similar depiction in both cases.

Now you might think, journalists are supposed to be objective on any type of situation, and their papers are also supposed to be unbiased. Nonetheless, it can be hard as a person to put one's opinion or life experience aside when it comes to catastrophes like Irma on one's territory. Entering this research, I expected to find articles that were more opinionated on the Caribbean side, criticizing the response of the government and insurances, never coming soon enough. I also expected to find that the Metropole to have praised the government aid and signified that for a couple of islands at the other end of the ocean, France could not do more than what it did. But that is not what I found.

In all articles from my data set, from the Metropole, Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy were treated and talked about like any other department or region of the nation. The empathy for the people was strong and the fact that *Le Monde* dispatched journalists to the places of the disaster might have made the stories more convincing. Indeed, having reporters in the region where the event took place calls for interviews, and people come closer together living these situations from up close than from far away. The articles mostly focused on three events: the visit of Emmanuel Macron to Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy less than a week after Hurricane Irma struck the islands, followed by the visit of the prime minister Edouard Philippe, for the reopening of schools and the return of the students and teachers to their educational facilities in early October, a month after the disaster, and finally, the economic consequences and funds raised by Europe and France to help rebuild the destroyed infrastructures and businesses. The topics are the same in both parts of the world, Europe and the Caribbean. Although the actions that were undertaken by the government were mostly praised, a few politicians of the French opposition parties also criticized the work the reactivity of the officials. However, it only concerns a small part of the opinions that were given on the situation; many words or interviews of the different intermediaries present to assure support for the communities are ubiquitously illustrating of the good reaction of France in various documents.

These differences of point of view between the politicians when such natural disasters happen in a country's overseas territory lead to the question of the place of overseas territories in the national culture and imagination.

1. All different, all the same? The question of the place of overseas territories within the national imagination

In an article from the online newspaper *Le Monde*, Emmanuel Macron is said to have taken along with him on his visit to the islands, a couple of ministers, "avec pour objectif

d'assurer ce petit bout de France perdu dans la Caraïbe qu'il n'est pas abandonné" (Barroux, 2017). Moreover, this catastrophe, the first at this scale and in the Overseas Territories for the new French government, made them realise and try to make decisions in order to improve the relations with the French territories around the world, to be able to help them all individually better. In a speech given at the Assemblée Nationale after hurricane Irma, Edouard Philippe declared that "Notre volonté, c'est évidemment de faire prospérer ce qui est une chance pour la France, d'accompagner les territoires qui ont des problématiques différentes, des aspirations différentes" [car] "on ne peut pas traiter de la même façon les questions qui se posent aujourd'hui à Saint-Martin, les questions de la Guyane, ou les questions de la Nouvelle-Calédonie". The fact that the government is aware of the uniqueness of each of the parts of the nation makes it obvious that they do not treat Overseas Territories' inhabitants as "second-class citizens" (La 1ère, 2017).

Nevertheless, in the American media, that is what is depicted as felt by the Puerto Rican citizens after Hurricane Maria. Indeed, the behaviour of the president of the US led the island to think that he cared more for the inhabitants of Texas (Hurricane Harvey) and Florida (Hurricane Irma), both touched by the same type of disaster in late August and early September respectively. In fact, the President took almost two weeks to visit Puerto Rico after it was struck, while he visited the continental states only a couple of days after. The controversy on the way he and his government managed the crisis compared to the two above-mentioned ones is something that has been going since the hurricane first struck, and that is still going on, six months after it left. The reaction of Trump to the job of the people working in Puerto Rico to restore power, drinkable water, and food access, for instance, has been drastically different from one state to the other. While in Texas he declared "We love you, you are special, we're here to take care", coming to San Juan, he told "local officials that they were throwing the federal budget "out of whack." He raised eyebrows when he threw rolls of paper towels at residents waiting for supplies. And he told Puerto Ricans that their death toll was nothing compared to the "real catastrophe" of Hurricane Katrina". Further proof of his unwillingness to help the island he said that FEMA could not stay in Puerto Rico forever. However, FEMA is still present in Florida and in Texas to help the states reconstruct themselves. (Gomez, 2017). Through Donald Trump's discourse and acts towards Puerto Rico, the inhabitants felt like their President had forgotten his responsibility towards the US heritage, which includes the American colonies and territories around the globe like Puerto Rico. The media that spoke about the different altercations between the mayor of San Juan and the Trump led government reacted

the same way, even comparing the amount of help that was sent to other states to the one the island received. Hence the “second-class” feeling of the populations towards living goods and the restoration of power, amongst others (The New York Times, 2017).

The media depicted the situations in Puerto Rico and in the French Antilles similarly, sticking to the facts, although some articles were opinionated. In the present case, it is the facts themselves, and the reactions of the governments that differed, not the representations the newspapers did of the hurricanes, both in France and in America.

2. All different, all the same? The question of education

Moreover, the visits of the President of France, followed by the visit of his Prime Minister, two months after, showed the people that the government was there for them, and able to help, to be present for its citizens around the planet. Indeed, the Prime Minister Edouard Philippe came in to follow the reconstruction of the island, as well as, more particularly, the coming back to school of the students, in schools reopening after the catastrophe. The fear of a “blank year”, scholarship wise (“personne ne peut dire ni quand, ni si les enfants rejoindront leurs bancs”, Barroux, 2017), for all the pupils of the 21 schools of Saint-Martin, of which 18 got destroyed or damaged (Le Monde, 2017), was something the government strongly wanted to achieve. They were able to succeed in this project of reconstruction two months after the hurricane struck, as kids went back to schools - of fortune, and part-time in some schools - in order to go on with the year 2017-2018. The number-one priority for the inhabitants and the government was above all to have safe infrastructures to welcome people in (“d'abord s'assurer de la sécurité du bâti et de la sécurité publique”, La 1ère, 2017). On the contrary, in the case of Puerto Rico, the articles that I found and hence studied did not mention education whatsoever, or if so, talked about the perspective of students continuing to earn their degrees once the situation had settled a bit more. This shows the state of emergency the territory was in, having way more to do than to worry about schools, because they had no power, no food (even more so in remote areas), or not even drinkable water.

3. All different, all the same? The question of financial help

Another striking point of the comparison between these two cases is the amount of help the areas struck by Irma for French Antilles, and Maria for Puerto Rico got from the government and funding institutions. In addition to the aid sent from Bruxelles (49 million, Le Monde, 2017), the French government also aided, like any of its other region or department, sending help from dispatched planes [“Je comprends votre impatience, mais on n’a jamais fait un tel pont aérien

depuis 1945”, (Barroux, 2017)], as well as reinforcing the security on the territoires, increasing the number of uniforms present. As one more proof of their empathy for the victims of Irma, the government also announced, shortly after the first measures to cope with the crisis were taken, that businesses in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy would be exonerated from patronal charges for the full year following Irma, hence until November 2018, added to an aid going from 1.000 to 10.000 euros depending on different conditions, for firms to restart functioning normally. Annick Girardin, minister of French Overseas Territories, declared to the press that “un moratoire social et fiscal sur les dettes des entreprises” was undertaken, along with “une aide exceptionnelle pour le redémarrage des entreprises sinistrées” (Ouest France, 2017; Le Monde, 2017; FranceAntilles, 2017; La 1ère, 2017). On top of these various allowances and plans aimed at a a sooner come back to normal life [“le « retour à la vie normale » est « la priorité absolue »” said Macron during his visit to Saint-Martin (Le Monde, 2017)], an agreement between the collectivity of Saint-Martin and the government was found and signed in order to rebuild the infrastructures in more secure ways, and resist other natural disasters like Irma better in the future (La 1ère, 2017).

Indeed, the different visits of the officials to the French regions touched by the disaster, as well as the agreements signed to rebuild the island in a safer, more sustainable way, are there to show the engagement of the French nation in time. The government declared, before Edouard Philippe did his first visit in the French Caribbean: “Au-delà de la promesse tenue, l’objectif de cette visite est de montrer que l’Etat est auprès des sinistrés même une fois l’émotion passée, [explique-t-on à Matignon.] On ne cherche pas à faire un coup de com’ mais à montrer de la considération dans la durée.” (Pietralunga & Barroux, 2017).

On the American side though, there is no mention whatsoever of a specific amount of money, of dedicated governmental funds or an increase of the police forces on the territory. Although I doubt that no financial help was sent to Puerto Rico whatsoever, none of the articles that I studied for the Puerto Rican case mentioned the funds allocated to rebuild the country. When reading these articles though, it feels like Puerto Rico will have to rebuild from its ashes, without the help of the actual country it belongs to, that is supposed to help the island like any other of its federal states.

4. All different, all the same? Really?

Overall, a great difference was seen between the reactions to the disasters striking both countries. On the one hand, in France, the aid and funds were welcomed and appreciated, and

so were the various measures taken by the government to ensure further security in its overseas territories. The critique was also spread amongst the leaders of opposite political parties (Pietralunga & Bonnefous, 2017), and a “commission d’enquête” was dispatched to determine whether or not the territories were made ready to be struck by Irma and whether or not help was sent over quickly enough. However, some other politicians, such as the ones currently part of the government, interpreted these critiques in situation of crisis as a thirst for opportunities to league against what is done by the opposition, and execute a political battle. On the other hand, in Puerto Rico, the help was not sent like it had been in other federal states. The politicians present on the island and political figures from Puerto Rico, such as the mayor of San Juan, vividly criticized the way Trump’s government responded to the catastrophe, characterizing it as too low (Krugman, 2017) for the richest country of the world, irresponsible and inhumane in the sense that lives of people were endangered. Inhabitants’ lives were at stake because of a lack of reliable and constant electricity supplies, as well as no drinkable water, and food being sent to the island but having trouble commuting to the more remote areas of the island. However, while “a Real Housewives of New York star, Bethenny Frankel, was able to get dozens of planes with aid to remote places, transport people to hospitals and form coalitions with people she had never met before, the government seemed to be unable to do the same things, with more means. Restaurateurs and chefs Jose Andres and Jose Enrique have been able to serve about 25,000 meals per day.” (Rivera, 2017). The work of the government being under the work of a few private citizens, celebrities and artists, leaves people underfed, or at least not fed like citizens living in bigger ideas. Indeed, although they were not isolated regions, the food did not reach the Puerto Ricans in some suburbia. “Aid is slowly being distributed, but not necessarily where it’s needed. Better logistics are needed” (Rivera, 2017). And one thing is not to be forgotten: The federal government is not doing Puerto Rico a favor by helping the island recover; it’s a federal responsibility.” (Rivera, 2017).

5. All different, all the same? The question of representation and identity

Although my research question focuses on the way the media depicted the (governmental) reactions of France and America to hurricanes Irma and Maria, respectively, sweeping through their overseas territories, the articles that I found, by talking about the catastrophes themselves, also depicted the facts. I contrasted and compared above the ways both countries dealt with the crisis, through the help of newspapers’ articles from two parts of the same countries. However, I did not yet talk about the manner in which people experiencing the disaster in real time, portrayed themselves as a community, and portrayed other people, and

vice versa with the mainland journalists talking about the islanders, and portraying themselves as well.

Contrastively to my first idea, for the French case, inhabitants who experienced the hurricane, on one side, and government help and uniforms on the other side, were portrayed similarly. Indeed, the islanders were not victimised but more praised for the solidarity that showed shortly after the catastrophe, along with their sense of community and the way they made life go on despite the hurricane. Although the media were empathetic towards the “victims” of Irma, it was more of a humane reaction that showed than one translating some sort of postcolonialism from the mainland.. That strongly contrast with the theory by Stam and Shohat (2012) who argue that, on the contrary of anglophone countries and other former colonisers, France has not yet come to an end with its past. Even though France once was a coloniser, and that was still the case not so long ago, it has trouble to make it a full part of its History, studying the wars of independence of various region rather than studying slavery and the different colonies as such, like anglophone countries do.

Maybe that is why, entering this study, my ideas and expectation as to what I would find out were quite different than what I actually found. In fact, my initial expectations were to find postcolonialism in both countries’ depictions of the hurricanes. On the one hand, my French background and what I knew of our history, as well as what I later found through literature, went towards my expectations. But the articles proved to be totally otherwise. French citizens have been depicted the same way, both the islanders, touched by Irma, and the government and the people involved on the reconstruction of the infrastructures and the life in general in the overseas territories. Postcolonialism was not at all ubiquitous, or even slightly present in the French articles - both from the Antilles and from the Metropole. On the other hand, however, my English studies’ background and more particularly, the courses that leant towards British and American Histories, made me think that the Americans would react to the situation way more emphatically than the French, having a past as a colony and not as a coloniser. Nonetheless, the US and Puerto Rico did not react the same way to the situation. The postcolonialism that I would never imagine finding in a US colonies related type of situation, was there. Not in the articles themselves, but in the facts that they depicted, the situations or the government’s portrayals. Instead of sending help and coming quickly after the hurricane, Trump took two weeks to visit Puerto Rico. A month after the disaster, electricity was still not re-established in most parts of the island. The food was not distributed to every area concerned. Perhaps that

shows the lack of interest the President has for territories which cannot even vote for the elections and defend themselves in the next ones...

DISCUSSION

All in all, these results were quite striking and contradicting the idea that, through my various reading for this study, as well as my background as a French citizen and resident, I had expected the outcome of the research to be.

My research question, **“How was the response from the homeland French government to hurricane Irma in the French Caribbean represented similarly or differently in the media from the one from the US homeland government to hurricane Maria which struck Puerto Rico in the same period?”** allowed me to draw from various theoretical works, that could be divided in three themes: *identity & representation*, *History & postcolonialism*, and *the media*. Indeed, the study I conducted focused on the notions of identity and representation because I wanted to look at how inhabitants from different regions of the same country could be depicted differently in accordance to the people depicting them and talking in general. Moreover, the fact that France has a past as a coloniser, and that I studied the representation of the relations between the national governments and their overseas territories had influenced my opinion and expectations. As for the US, they were born from an association of colonies and after their independence, they inherited and fought for additional possessions. As for my choice to use the media depiction and not literary oeuvres, I decided to use newspapers' articles because journalists are supposed to be unbiased, but usually, the national or regional identity still comes out of the newspapers' portrayals of people, and the way they talk about such and such event happening on its territory, mainland or overseas.

Saïd's (1978) point of view, explained in *Orientalism*, argues that Europeans and Western countries in general tend to look arrogantly at countries such as the Middle Eastern ones, for example, as well as Asia and Africa. He talks about the fact that Westerners feel and act as superior to the countries they once colonised, and try and impose their ways of living on the areas they think are less able to function by themselves. Given the theoretical ideas of Saïd (1978), I was expecting to find a lot of differentiating between the European part of France and its overseas territories, which have been colonised, and experience the same phenomenon when comparing America and Puerto Rico, its overseas territory that my study included.

However, when we confront the results I obtained in the research, with the theory of *orientalism* Saïd (1978) wrote about, it is the total opposite of what I expected. The representations the media did of the people of both areas studied in each country are similar, as inhabitants of the touched areas are depicted as victims of the natural disaster, but also as

people running businesses, having families and part of one country. Governments and politicians are also depicted as helpful, and having duties towards their citizens, wherever they are in the world.

Nonetheless, when it comes to the facts that are talked about in the media, the Americans and the French had different responses towards the crises situations implied by the strike of Maria and Irma respectively. On the one hand, the French usually praised the government's actions and the aid sent concerning food, water and uniforms for instance, and the critiques that appeared were mostly from the opposition political parties, and more about logistics than about a question of postcolonialism. Whereas, on the other hand, the Americans openly criticised the government for its lack of care for Puerto Rico, comparing the situation on the island to the ones in Florida and in Texas, that were touched by hurricanes shortly before, and saying that the government had to take responsibility and accept its duties towards the territory they acquired in 1898. The reaction of the American national government towards Puerto Rico, in that way, goes along with Saïd's (1978) theory, showing that Trump's government considers Puerto Rico, being an "organized but unincorporated" US territory, as a lesser territory than any other of the fifty states composing the US.

Although the media I studied do not talk about it, the will for remembrance and recognition of the Antilles' Histories can be felt through the way journalists mention other natural disasters that happened before in the same regions, comparing them to the situation they portray at the time of the articles. Reading Levy and Chevannes' (2009) chapter on *patrimonialisation* throughout the Caribbean, taught me that, even though it is not felt in the way articles are written, West Indian people are still caught between the various identity influences that they experienced since they were colonised, and before. In the case of France, there is a will of the government to improve the conditions in which infrastructures are built, for example, that are not aligned with the norms in practice on the constructions in the Metropole. The very fact that France designed a plan to rebuild and structure constructions more safely than ever before is a testimony of the History of the French Antilles, linked to the one of France as a coloniser. It means that until then, Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy, as well as, most probably, all the other French overseas territories, have been left out of some laws and precautions taken when it comes to the security of construction and hence the inhabitants.

In the case of Puerto Rico, the sole fact that historical dates were mentioned in some articles is a testimony of the awareness of inhabitants that their history yet needs to be

recognised as such, and that there is a real lack of interest from the government for the island, felt by the Puerto-Ricans themselves. That goes along with the theory of Levy and Chevannes (2009) that the Caribbeans need their history to be exposed and known to a larger extent and a broader audience than just the heirs of this very history.

Sham and Shohat (2012) also argue that the very way history is taught in France, by the media and in schools, is biased and Euro-centered, excluding a large part of the past of France as a coloniser. As the French government makes the programmes the same for every single school of the nation, the overseas territories learn the same facts and events of the French History, but not a lot about their own past, as a geographically different part of the nation. This can also explain the fact that West Indians want their History to be recognised as such, and as part of the French History for some important parts. This also corroborates the notion that identity can be hard to build when one is taught that one is not part of this nation's or this one's History. In my research, the data I gathered however did not depict a different portrait of the islanders or the mainlanders in the French media; they were all put on the same level.

Levy and Chevannes (2009) also talk about the History of the Caribbean, but also the notion of identity and the creation of such through one unchanged element: creole. On the notion of identity, Dervin (2011) also explains that identities are plural, and that one individual will have different identities throughout its life, that will also be modified with experience and age, for instance. Meanwhile Levy and Chevannes (2009) explain that "Caribbean language development is a product of its colonial past and is guided by both current global economic forces and a search for a Caribbean identity" (p. 202). Indeed, the creation of one's identity also strongly depends of one's history and what one knows of it. In the case of the articles I studied, the term of identity was not really talked about, although the fact that overseas territories have a status different than the one from the mainland nation they belong to. Geographical factors impact the way identities and cultures are shaped, and two territories, even though they share the same national identity and culture, will not share a lot of their cultural habits and rites. But in a study such as mine, identity obviously plays a role in the writing of each journalist and reporter that covers the natural disasters, and in the fact that I studied the US and France's two areas that shared a same national identity, but have divergent cultural identities.

While in the case of France, a real unity between the government and the inhabitants of Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy was felt through the newspapers' articles, Puerto-Ricans qualified themselves as "second class citizens" given the incapacity of the American

government to give the island the same help they gave other states struck by hurricanes the same summer. That shows that, although people share the same national identity, they can feel different about the treatment they receive from such or such institution and it can impact the construction of their identities, leading them to unite around comforting ideas, like the creole languages (Levy and Chevannes, 2009).

The notion of representation and social construct is also ubiquitous in Dervin's (2011) work. It helped me understand my own preconceptions, first of all, but also apprehend the fact that, in the media, all you see is a representation of the facts, that could have been told such or such other way. I was expecting, entering this research, to find opposite representations of the hurricanes in the media in the US and in France, according to if it was the overseas territory or the mainland territory newspapers that I picked. Representations, and social constructs, argues Dervin (2011), are essential to our vision and understanding of the world; we need them to construct a first idea of what is to come, who one person is going to be, etc, in order to be able to counter or confirm the idea we had. In my case, my - negative - representation of Metropolitan France, that in my head would be pictured as a saviour towards its territory lost on the other side of the Atlantic, but would also have taken more time to respond to an event happening in an overseas territory than in Europe, was challenged. On the contrary, my - positive - idea of the US being really present for their overseas territories, because of their history and the fact that they were born from colonies which associated to form the US, and treating them all equally to any other state of the nation, was also challenged.

All these remarks concerning France, and the results that I obtained through my research were quite surprising to me considering Dominic's (2011) point of view on the fact that France has yet to come to an end with its past as a coloniser. Indeed, he argued that the only goal in France's decolonisation of the African region it once possessed was to maintain a pattern of dependence – which is still ongoing today – as France, for example, conducts various military missions in its previous colonies. I thought that this work would apply to the situation of France and its overseas territories. However, considering the fact that some of the articles talked about the government giving responsibilities to the persons in charge of Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy, as well as the fact that they worked hand-in-hand in the process of first aid and reconstruction, I feel like the pattern of dependence, even though it is present because these islands are entirely part of France, is not quite ubiquitous.

As the choice of written press as my data, I chose to work with the media because I thought it was a mass communication means, that most people had access to, and through which a lot of information we have access to come from. "Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, film, public relations, and advertising, as well as blogs and the Internet, all shape the manner in which we react to the world around us." argue Whitaker, et al. (2012, p. 2). The authors also talk about media theory, media business, and that is why I expected, thanks to their work, to find information distorted from one media to the other for example, and from one region studied to the other as well as a lack of information in some articles where some others were strongly detailed. However, that is not what I found. Indeed, a lot of the articles I found were only depicting facts, and, although the information can differ a little from one article to the other, were really similar in mainland's and overseas territories' newspapers.

All in all, the results that I obtained were pretty contradictory to the theories I had found and relied on. However, while sometimes theories were talking about France and its past as a coloniser, and that I did not find any sign of postcolonialism in the way the French or the American were depicted in the articles. Nevertheless, I was surprised to see that, when it comes to facts, the US acted as I expected France to, and that my own stereotypes and social representation had been biased by the theories I had read, and my background as a French Metropolitan student.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

In this study, I was researching the question ***“How was the response from the homeland French government to hurricane Irma in the French Caribbean represented similarly or differently in the media from the one from the US homeland government to hurricane Maria which struck Puerto Rico in the same period?”***. Along with this question came a subquestion that was inevitable when studying newspapers’ articles on a particular subject: ***“How were the responses of the French government to hurricane Irma striking its overseas territories and the American government to hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico different?”***.

The results showed that the representations were the same in both cases. However, what is interesting is the facts that came out as differing from one country to another. France, even though theories argued that it has not come to an end with its past as a coloniser, acted the same way towards each and every region belonging to the nation. This finding contrasts with the behaviour of the American government, considering the fact that the United States were born from colonialism, as it at first was different colonies geographically close that associated to gain their independence. Entering this research, I expected the Americans to be the more lenient and empathetic towards their fellow citizens in Puerto Rico. “Yes, Puerto Rico is part of the United States” titled USA Today on September 26, 2017 (Gomez, 2017). But the events that were represented in the media showed otherwise, particularly denouncing the way Trump’s government responded to Maria in Puerto-Rico and comparing it to the reaction to Irma and Harvey that had struck Florida and Texas before. Indeed, the American government was said to have failed in his duties and fled its responsibilities towards the island it acquired in 1898.

As far as identity goes, obviously, living under the same flag makes people feel united and belonging to a national identity. However, it is important to remember that, for countries such as France or the US that possess pieces of land all over the world, inhabitants belonging to the same nation can have a variety of different cultures. These cultures meeting and linking also benefit the country and the open-mindedness of the younger generations in the sense of the large melting pot happening in those particular nations, and in the world in general.

The main question that the research I conducted raised concerns of the formation of stereotypes or prejudices, and the fact that some of them do not change although the world around them has been modified a lot. I think it is important for us to always reflect on what is happening around us, and why it is happening. By reflecting on and accepting difference as an

advantage, it is easier to change the things that happen because of over-stereotyping, or essentialist points of view. Of course, everybody's background, cultures and identities impact our vision of the world and our ideas, and that could be one of the reasons of the expectations I had entering this research. Through experiences and interactions, opinions are formulated. But it is also through experiences and interactions that they are the most likely to evolve. So we need to keep on communicating and go outside of our comfort zones.

Nonetheless, this research could have had a broader impact in the field of intercultural communication if the data set had had been wider for example, or if the method I had used had been added to other ones. For example, interviewing people from each side of the study, and having different opinions and justifications, as well as various experiences, might have added to the data and given different results. However, for the time given and the means I had to conduct this research, I did my very best to give the most relevant results and contribute to the field of intercultural communication. For further research, I would like to explore one or numerous other countries' abilities to respond to such catastrophes in their overseas territories, and the way they are related in the media. One country that I can already think about is the United Kingdom, which possesses different lands spread across the globe. I would also like to explore different events than natural disasters, and maybe see if an event happening on the mainland is talked about the same way in the mainland media, and in the overseas' ones.

To conclude this thesis, I would say that the above mentioned points point out at the fact that we all have prejudices that need to be challenged and changed through education, for example. But it can also be changed through encounters, discussions, debates and accepting that people can have different opinions and different justifications for them according to their cultures, their daily lives and their experiences is the starting point.

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