

# **Cassie Doyle**

## **Project report**

### **BCM390, “Media, war and peace”**

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The project report assignment had two parts. For details of the assignment see [http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/BCM390\\_15outline.pdf](http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/BCM390_15outline.pdf)

*Cassie Doyle* prepared

(1) an information pack in the form of a poster;

(2) a fictional dialogue on doing the project.

See following pages.

- The link to this document is from [http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/mwp\\_tops.html](http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/mwp_tops.html).

# #BoycottBali

BCM390 Final Project  
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(AFP, 2006)



(Supplied, 2015)

## Background

On the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran were executed by firing squad on the Nusakambangan prison island, Indonesia. These two men had been sentenced to death in early 2006 on drug charges (Alford, 2010). Chan and Sukumaran were a part of the Bali 9, and along with 7 other individuals had attempted to smuggle in 8.3 kilos of heroin from Indonesia to Australia on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2005 (Moore, 2005).

In December 2014, new Indonesian president Joko Widodo made clear he would not be granting clemency for any individual convicted for drug trafficking (Guardian Australia Staff and Agencies, 2015). Hence Chan and Sukumaran's bids for presidential clemency are rejected, and those previously sentenced to be executed for drug trafficking begin to face the firing squad (Alford, 2010).

The death of Chan and Sukumaran was deeply contested in Australia prior to their executions by the public, media and government. After an almost decade long battle to save the lives of the convicted pair, Australia was outraged with the loss of its two citizens in April. While public opinion was somewhat divided, both media personalities and government officials labelled the situation to be senseless and unacceptable (Knott and Willingham, 2015).



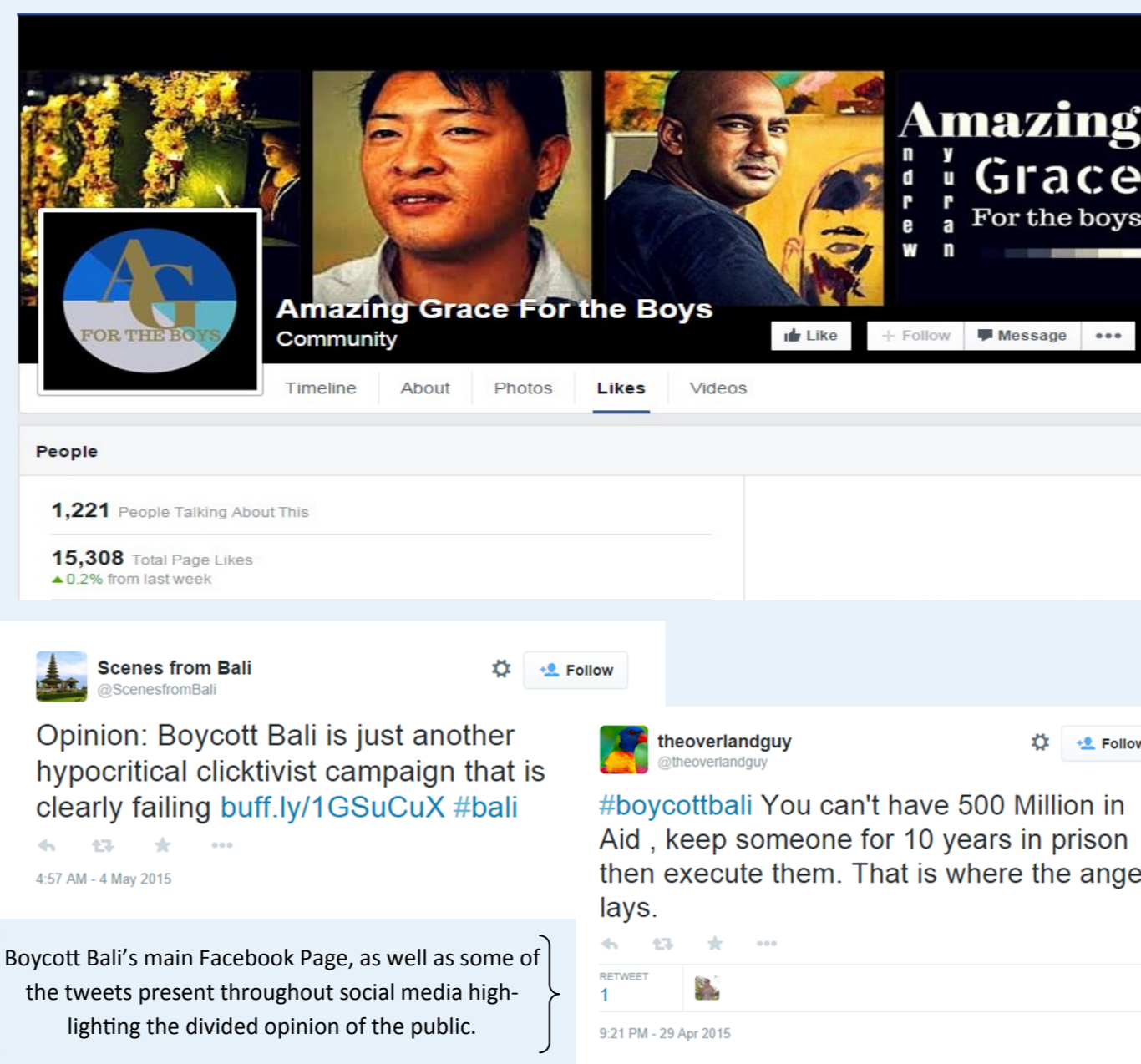
The Australian Newspaper Headlines 10 years apart showing the shift in media portrayal over time (NSW State Library, 2015)

## Boycotts

Boycotts entail the avoidance or withdrawal from a social or commercial relationship, usually as punishment or protest (Dictionary.com, 2015). A boycott is an instrument that is often utilised by a seemingly powerless group against the powerful to bring about change (Koku, 2011, pg. 83). In the case of 'Boycott Bali', everyday Australians who disagree with the recent actions of the Indonesian government are aiming to protest Indonesia's capital punishment laws, as well as their treatment of Australian drug traffickers by boycotting Indonesia as a holiday destination.

Boycott Bali certainly generated media attention around the time of the executions, making headlines around the world. However the attention gained by the mostly uninformed social media campaign has certainly been a lot more successful than the boycott itself. Philippe Delacote suggests that boycotts involving consumerism are likely to be ineffective in all cases for three main reasons (2009). Firstly, consumer boycotts require a strong collective action, which reduces the likelihood of success as it is difficult to direct and inform a large unconnected group. Secondly, consumers which have the most ability to impact a company (or in this case Indonesia's tourism sector) also are likely to most harshly suffer the costs of boycotting a product or service. And lastly, the overall amount of individuals which actively support a boycott generally is not high enough for a reasonable amount of time to be able to impact the profit of a company or economy (Delacote, 2009, pg. 308).

This closely reflects the boycott Bali campaign. The Bali boycotts main flaw is the type of consumerism the protest plays on. Tourism and holiday planning is not an everyday expense, nor is it an area of spending that is easily altered. This boycott is more likely to have its impact through its media coverage, rather than through the boycott itself.



Boycott Bali's main Facebook Page, as well as some of the tweets present throughout social media highlighting the divided opinion of the public.

## THE MAIN ARGUMENT

The #BoycottBali campaign was heavily scrutinised both online and throughout the media. From my content analysis of both twitter and Facebook and the hashtag #BoycottBali, it is clear there are two main arguments surrounding the death of Chan and Sukumaran. Firstly, many Australians believe that these men broke the laws of a country in which they were fully aware carried the death penalty, and it is of their own actions that they have faced the consequences for. In retaliation to this, a majority of Australians posted on social media that Indonesia had no right to take the lives of Australian citizens, especially after they had been fully rehabilitated over the last ten years.

According to a Roy Morgan poll taken on the 27th January, 51% of Australians believe that Australians convicted of drug charges in Indonesia should not be exempt from the death penalty, and 48% were against the use of the death penalty of Australian drug traffickers (Roy Morgan Research, 2015). However almost one month later, a poll conducted by the Lowy Institute discovered that 62% of Australians believe the executions should not proceed, with 69% of Australians opposing the death penalty for drug trafficking (Oliver, 2015). The number of Australians in support of Chan and Sukumaran's executions also dropped to 31% at this time (Oliver, 2015).

The boycott Bali campaign gained a great deal of support and media attention at the time of the duos death; however it was a flawed campaign. One thing that the media did accurately report on what the close minded effects that boycotting Bali or Indonesia would have. #BoycottBali was intended show the Indonesian government that killing Australian citizens would have repercussions. However a common element missing from both social media arguments and news pieces was the fact that boycotting Bali is more likely to have a much more devastating effect on its innocent citizens than the government itself (Carland, 2015).



Ambassador withdrawn. Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop address the media after the executions. Photo: Alex Ellinghausen

## The History of Executions in Indonesia and around the World

Capital punishment refers to the punishment of an individual by death. In Indonesia there are sixteen crimes that are punishable by death, with the most common being murder, terrorism and drug trafficking (Cornell University Law School, 2013). According to the most recent information released by Indonesian officials, there were 133 people on death row on the 31st December 2012 – 71 of which have been convicted of drug offenses (Cornell University Law School, 2013). In 2008, eight prisoners were executed by the Indonesia authorities, two of which were for the possession and smuggling of narcotics (Kontra, 2013). No executions were performed between 2009 and 2012, as well as in 2014. Although, in 2015, 14 prisoners have already faced the firing squad between January and April – which included the two Australians Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran (Kontra, 2013).

Today, 36 countries actively practice capital punishment. According to Amnesty International (2014), 22 countries were known to have had executions carried out in 2013 and at least 23,392 people worldwide were under sentence of death at the end of 2013. The highest amount of executions is said to be in China, although their execution figures are not published (Amnesty International, 2014). It is estimated 2,400 executions were performed in China in 2013, as well as 39 in the US, 8 in Japan and 7 in Vietnam (Amnesty International, 2014). According to a 2012 report by Harm Reduction International there are 33 countries and territories that retain the death penalty for drug offences, of which includes the United States, Vietnam and Thailand.

## The Social Media Campaign

#BoycottBali first appeared in our newsfeeds in late January 2015 after clemency for both Chan and Sukumaran had been denied by Indonesian president Joko Widodo (Guardian Australia Staff and Agencies, 2015). It must be noted that the three months leading up to the duos deaths saw the most frequent media coverage and social media trending for the #BoycottBali campaign, which has heavily declined in coverage since the two faced the firing squad. Along with #BoycottBali, #BoycottIndonesia is another popular hashtag used to promote the boycott of travelling to the popular holiday destination. The #BoycottBali social media campaign was most strongly present on 2 platforms, being Facebook and twitter. Numerous Facebook pages and twitter accounts were set up to promote and support the boycott campaign. These platforms also saw an immense use of the hashtags #BoycottBali and #BoycottIndonesia, with these hashtags trending on both platforms (The Debate, 2015). Other social media sites like Tumblr and Instagram also saw a burst of hashtags supporting the Bali boycotts (The Debate, 2015).

'Boycott Bali for the Boys' Facebook page was created on the 8th January and is the main social media page with 15,395 likes to date (2015). The page states its main objective is not to in anyway negatively impact the Indonesian people; however it aims to show the Indonesian government that capital punishment is greatly unsupported (Boycott Bali for the Boys, 2015). The page initially began in an urgent plea to spare the lives of the convicted drug traffickers, however continues well after the pairs execution providing a platform for discussion, and further links supporting the boycotting of Bali, and the end of capital punishment across the world. The page also uses the hashtags #keephopealive and #standformercy (Boycott Bali for the Boys, 2015).

"We don't for a moment wish to negatively impact the lives of the ordinary Balinese or Indonesian citizen by promoting the Boycott Bali campaign; we merely want the Indonesian government to listen to the Australian people!" says the official Facebook page promoting the Bali boycotts (Boycott Bali for the Boys, 2015).

Paul Koku (2011) states that the emergence of social media has revitalised the way boycotts are able to be organised and run. Individuals who have been wronged or outraged by an organisation or nation can turn to platforms like Facebook and twitter to raise their concerns and voice their opinions, as well as easily find networks of people with similar interests and viewpoints. The use of social media in boycotts allows for 2 main actions to be taken according to Koku (2011) – being the ability to spread boycott information, and the ability to join retaliatory actions against a target. This has already been seen in many social media planned boycotts against nations. For example the boycott of China and the purchasing of Chinese products due to the prevalence of child labour in sweatshops (Koku, 2011). However, this is contested by Jiyeon Kang (2012) in which he argues that when social media is involved in the organisation of a boycott it can simply enable slacktivism, where online campaigns are liked or re-tweeted in order to feel good about oneself, with no actual commitment intended.

## What has been left out in Australian Media?

- That the death penalty for drug smuggling happens in over 30 different nations and boycotting Bali can most certainly be argued to be hypocritical.
- That although the loss of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran is very sad, eight people were killed that night. Most Australians could not tell you the name of one other life lost. Of course Australia is concerned about its own citizens, but at the end of the day we are all humans, and human life should not be valued differently. Framing ideology means that in Australian media we are presented as the 'us' and all others are presented as 'them', and this describes the reporting of the Bali Nine executions and the Boycott Bali campaign (Rosas-Moreno, 2013).
- The act of boycotting Bali is most likely to impact innocent citizens that rely on tourist or foreign aid dollars to survive (Carland, 2015). Indonesia has strong views on drug traffickers and the use of the death penalty, and even the large amount of discussion generated by the social media campaign is nowhere near strong enough to alter the standing laws of Indonesia. If pleas directly from the Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister cannot change the mind of the Indonesian government, a Facebook page is certainly not going to do any impact.

## BCM390 Dialogue

Student Number - 4501500

### Morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> of April – Morning after the Executions

Cassie: Hey mum, did you hear that the two Bali nine ringleaders were executed overnight?

Mum: I did Cass. It is very sad news don't you think?

Cassie: At first I did not think that I had feelings either way towards the situation. To me these men had done the wrong thing, well aware of the punishments. But waking up this morning to this news has left me feeling devastated.

Mum: It certainly has been a very controversial topic in the media lately. I am not surprised you feel confused about the situation as the media has presented a range of different viewpoints. Just by watching the news this morning I have heard an array of very convincing viewpoints. One being that these two men have merely payed the consequence of their own foolish actions which is no one's fault but their own. On the other hand, I have also heard the argument that these men have had ten years to be rehabilitated, and were no longer the convicted criminals that had originally been sentenced to death<sup>1</sup>.

Cassie: I would really like to look further into Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan, and the way the media has covered their story over the last decade. I feel this may help me create a clear perspective of the situation, as well as allow me divulge deeper into the facts that are not being presented by the mainstream media. I have an assignment coming up for my subject *Media, War and Peace*, and I think it might be a good idea to use this as a case study. Not only is this a fitting example as the death of Sukumaran and Chan are very prominent in the media right now, but as a topic close to my heart I may be able to gain a clearer perspective on the whole thing.

Mum: Great idea Cass, I do remember you telling me about this assignment. This seems like a great topic that is incredibly relevant right now. However from what I remember you telling me, you need to pick a central theory in which you will be discussing, and then relating to a case study. How do you plan on tackling the executions?

Cassie: As executions are not a covered theory in class, I will have to relate them to another theory we have discussed. For example, I could discuss the growing social media campaign to boycott Bali after the executions<sup>2</sup>. By using boycotts as my main theory, I can then relate this to the case study of

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the prisoners on death row have been awaiting execution for ten years or more, with Chan and Sukumaran being imprisoned for just under ten years before their execution. This waiting period was one aspect of the #BoycottBali campaign that the Australian public had most concern with. It was argued that after serving ten years of jail time, these convicted drug smugglers were no longer the same young men that had heading the Bali Nine operations.

<sup>2</sup> Boycott Bali is a consumer based boycott aimed to protest the recent executions of Australian citizens that is primary carried through the use of social media and hashtags. While originally these protests had begun in aim to stop the executions, they now remain to prevent other Australians from being imprisoned or sentenced to death in Indonesia.

the execution of Chan and Sukumaran's death leading to the creation of the Bali boycotts. As well as focusing on the new ways social media are emerging in the organisation of boycotts. Does that sound like an interesting idea?

Mum: It sure does. But before you decide it will be best to do some preliminary research to make sure there is enough information out there that will help you get your point across. As well as to help you decide what you are going to say. Once you have gathered some material, let me know your ideas and if this topic is going to fit the criteria of your assignment.

Cassie: Thanks for your help Mum! I will start researching right away!

**Morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> May – 72 hours after executions, 64 hours after withdrawal of Australian Ambassador to Indonesia.**

Cassie: Hey mum. After researching the theory of boycotts and the media portrayal of the recent executions in Indonesia I have decided I definitely want to explore this further as my project report topic.

Mum: That's great Cass! Good to see you are thinking about your project nice and early. Anyway, tell me about the materials you have come across so far, and how you plan to tackle then report.

Cassie: Well firstly I started by finding the main social media page dedicated to the Bali boycotts – which is a Facebook page titled 'Boycott Bali for the Boys'. I spent a fair amount of time analysing the pages posts, the comments it had received, its growth of likes and the conversation that was being sparked. I found the public response to the page and its message to be very divided, just like you had mentioned mainstream television media to be. I then looked through the news articles that have been released over the last few months, in 2005 when the executions were originally sentenced and from the last three days since the executions have taken place. I found these articles to focus both on the executions, as well as quite substantially on the boycott Bali campaign.

Mum: Sounds like you have found some great sources, and are gaining a clear idea of how you will approach your project. In regards to the section you just mentioned about a theory of boycotts, I have also been doing some of my own research into boycotts. You have sparked my interest in this current topic, and I wanted to tell you about an article I read that was posted in the Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media by Jiyeon Kang<sup>3</sup> in which he argues that when social media is involved in the organisation of a boycott it can simply enable slacktivism, where online campaigns are liked or retweeted in order to feel good about oneself, with no actual commitment intended.

Cassie: That is a great theory! It's relevant to this form of boycott, as well as sums up my original theory that this boycott is a sensational one that became popular due to public outrage. However it portrays little knowledge of the full circumstance, and will overall have no outstanding damage to the Indonesian economy.

Mum: I completely agree with you. The one main challenge you will face in discussing your main theory about boycotts is that there is relatively little literature present about the impact of social

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<sup>3</sup> Kang, J (2012). 'A Volatile Public: The 2009 Whole Foods Boycott on Facebook', Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, Vol 56, Issue 4

media on boycotting due to it being a newer form of protest. Similarly, another hardship I feel you will face is due to the executions of Chan and Sukumaran being so recent, there is yet to be any academic writing on its social effects. Other than that, what other aspects of the media have you come across during your research?

Cassie: There are a few things I have found that have not been discussed in the media about the campaign to boycott Bali. Firstly, people are being urged to travel to countries like Thailand or Vietnam instead of spending their money in Indonesia. However it seems to be unknown to most people that both these nations are users of capital punishment. I also find it very interesting that the media reports have been so concentrated on the Australian lives that were lost. It confuses me that six other lives were lost that night, however they are irrelevant in Australian media. I am going to try and focus more heavily on these aspects as I begin to plan putting together my information pack.

### **20<sup>th</sup> May – 3 Weeks since the Executions and Media Coverage of the Boycotts has begun to diminish**

(Draft Information pack has since been devised and viewed by Mum and her friends)

Mum: Hey Cass, I wanted to talk to you about the information pack you had asked me to look over. You said that you wanted to present your information in a poster as it was an interesting and different way to show off your work. However my friends and I feel that the way you have designed your poster draft is unappealing and shows far too much information. We suggest you cull some of the background information you present and focus on the main points you are trying to get across. Also the way you have mimicked a Facebook page set out is not quite clear, and it may make your poster more captivating to diverge from this idea and add more images and colours.

Cassie: These are the same concerns I had about the poster. I think it will be best to stick with the colour scheme of social media (being the blue shades) but I will add more images and separate the information. Hopefully making the poster more appealing!

Mum: Other than that we have no more initial problems with the poster. You have presented a sound argument and present both sides of the story clearly, allowing your readers to be able to make up their own mind about the situation.

Cassie: I have also been able to make my mind up about the whole situation, and am very pleased I have looked at every side of the argument. There was certainly a great deal missing in the mainstream media coverage of the Bali Boycott campaign. It will be very interesting to see if the campaign lasts into the future, or does have any effect on the Indonesian tourist industry. And it will certainly be interesting to view how capital punishment is handled by the Australian media in years to come.

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