Accounting for News:
A discourse analysis of the talk of television journalists

Sally Reardon

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Candidate's Name: Sally Reardon

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Introduction:

This research is concerned with how journalists discursively construct their world of work and identity. In studies of news production journalists are frequently utilised as a source of information and explanation about processes and news values, as a means of describing the 'real' world of news. However, conversations with journalists have been largely treated by scholars as the transparent neutral information about production practices rather than a discursive practice in itself. In this piece of research the talk itself is moved centre stage and becomes the focus of analysis. Discourse analysis has been extensively applied to the output of television news yet this methodological approach has been underdeveloped in the area of production studies. This research project aims to address this gap by drawing on the work of discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell 1987, Potter 1996, Billig 1996) to examine the rhetorical discourse of television journalists. I will argue that a more discursive approach to news production studies yields a more nuanced understanding of the culture and practice.

Declared interests:

It is important at the outset to declare my interests. I have worked in television news for Reuters Television, Sky News and Associated Press Television News (APTN) in a number of roles, starting as a lowly Forward Planner at Reuters Television and ending up as Europe and Africa Editor at APTN via a stint on the foreign desk at Sky News. This study has been a long time in the making, not only in the time I have spent in academia, but in the 19 years working in those television newsrooms. It is born out of a desire to 'make strange' what I repeatedly do, and to examine how practices and values at some points change and at others remain constant, amid remarkable developments in media structures and technology.

To do this I asked fellow workers what they thought. These long semi-structured conversations or interviews with colleagues form the basis of this thesis. The people interviewed have held or hold some of the same jobs that I have been employed to do. Many of them I have worked with side-by-side and during the research I continued to freelance and therefore directly worked with some subjects. Interviews were carried out in cafes and more often bars and restaurants, sometimes at people's homes, an informality not often available to media researchers. This closeness to the subjects of study could be a cause for concern.

Can a journalist be objective about a subject in which they are so embedded? There is no definitive answer to this, but immersion in academic discipline has helped.

As I have moved from one news organisation to another I have noticed how I have been socialised into that particular culture and taken on its discourse. I have also noticed that many discursive and practical elements remained constant enabling me to make the transition into each new role. On arrival in academia I again had to learn a new discourse, this time not journalism but journalism studies.

Academia has done a good job at 'making strange' journalism. At my entry to the world of media studies, journalism, as described by scholars of the subject seemed a bizarre activity removed from my personal experience. As Barbie Zelizer remarked on her transition from practice to theory she felt she had entered a 'parallel universe', where 'nothing I read as a graduate student reflected the working world I had just left. Partial, often uncompromisingly authoritative, and reflective far more of the academic environments in which they'd been tendered than the journalistic settings they described, these views failed to capture the life I knew' (Zelizer, 2004, p2). However, as I read more, and considered more I did become socialised into the world of journalism studies.

This theoretical and research knowledge helped with creating a certain distance between myself and the industry. This is balanced by experiential insight which has played a pivotal role in designing the research and interpreting the data. Knowledge of the field of journalism at practice-based level and a more removed analytic or reflective process have been my twin guides and informed my every step during the course of this research. I hope the 'outsider' academic rigour of investigation coupled with an insider's knowledge has maintained the 'strangeness' of both journalism and academia in order to investigate both.

The Study:

As Barbie Zelizer points out, if the state of our news media is important then how it is studied is important (Zelizer, 2004). Although journalists are frequently asked about their working lives and opinions they are often not conceptually important in the construction of news being instead the soft cogs in the wheels of the news industry. The journalist's role in shaping news has often been written out of the process. Instead overarching structural and commercial pressures have been viewed as the primary defining factor in the production of the news output. This piece of research is situated in the field of news production studies, interested in the process of how the news is produced. Yet it seeks to move away from

structural processes and routines to a more discursive approach. It argues that news production is a discursive practice as well as a structural practice and that understanding how the 'soft cogs' contribute to the mediation of the product is as important as the structural. This is not to return news production to an all-powerful 'Mr Gates' of the 21st century (White, 1950). Instead, it is to gain a more nuanced insight in to production values and practices taking place at newsroom level and to understand how the larger social and industry issues are absorbed or resisted.

In this research I look at a particular form of media production, that of television news in the UK. Specifically, I put the reporters, producers and editors centre stage and look at how television journalists discursively conceptualise their role, their work and their identity. This is important because discourse is constitutive. In other words, how people describe things has consequences in the 'real' world. Foucault characterizes discourse as having the power to produce the things of which it speaks. Discourse is constitutive either allowing certain meanings, or ways of talking to thrive or disallowing alternative meanings. The silencing or emphasising of particular practices or values in news production could have implications for output.

I embrace a wide range of discourse analyses. Whether one is coming from a critical discourse analysis approach or sociolinguistics or discursive psychology one is taking language as a central focus of study in its own right rather than as a route to reality. Here discourse analysis is seen as functional; it does things. It is not merely a description of the real world. Verbal acts are social acts, carried out through interaction, and are, as such, fluid, contingent and mutable rather than static portrayals.

I have drawn on the work of discursive social psychology which looks at how people account for themselves and how they construct a plausible and justified course of action, opinion or identity (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter, 1996, Wetherell, 1998). It provides the useful notion of the 'interpretive repertoire'. Potter and Wetherell propose this as a collection of grammatical and linguistic terms and metaphors drawn upon by a speaker to account for actions or opinions (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). These repertoires often reflect wider social discourses of, for example, identity or ideology. In examining these repertoires they argue it is possible to distinguish the tools with which speakers construct arguments and to look at why certain repertoires are favoured over others. Therefore, the focus for the analysis in this research is to firstly identify how journalists discursively configure their role and secondly, to look at what repertoires of explanation they turn to aid this construction and why.

Twenty-three television journalists, working as reporters, producers or editors, from BBC, Channel 4, Sky News, Reuters Television and Associated Press Television were interviewed

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at length and these conversations were analysed in detail to tease out the different discursive constructions and repertories centred round the issues of news values and news practice.

This research took place over a period of great upheaval in the media landscape. When I started the project in 2005, Facebook had been launched the previous year and Twitter was still to be launched. Now one in seven of the planet's population has a Facebook account (socialbakers.com, 2013) and over half a billion have signed up to Twitter (Holt, 2013). Social media and networking are having profound effects on the media environment. This has led, not unsurprisingly, to an academic outpouring on the subject. However, while there has been a tendency towards the 'new' in media studies the audience has not abandoned the 'old'.

Reports of the death of television news have been greatly exaggerated (Mason, 2006). In spite of portents of doom for the medium it continues to play a significant role in the public's consumption of news. Television has maintained is position as the most accessed source of news for information on domestic and international affairs, ahead of radio, print and the internet (Ofcom, 2012, Towler, 2003, Papathanassopoulos *et al*, 2013). In the UK, whilst the print media is viewed with scepticism television news organisations and television journalists continue to be the more trusted source (Ofcom, 2012, Gunter, 2005, Cushion, 2009).

UK consumers of online news have been found to favour 'old' media brands over the news with a large majority of those getting news on line accessing 'traditional' media sites such as the BBC (Ofcom, 2012). People still watch television news and many also access online news but it is not an either/or usage. Research shows how the different sources are used in a 'complementary way' (Reuters, 2012, p12) with people both watching news on the television *and* online often from the same provider. The Reuters institute research on media across a selection of European countries and the US show 'traditional media brands picking up the majority of the digital audience in most countries' (Reuters, 2012, p13). In the UK and the US television news organisations are the most used (Reuters, 2012). In the world of internet, blogging, rumour and opinion, most people using the internet go the sites of existing media organisations because they trust them (Ofcom, 2012, Freedman, 2006).

Television also holds a place of influence in the wider media landscape. While the internet is an increasingly important source of information, a large part of the information circulating is culled from traditional media. In the late 1990s it was estimated that a billion people a day saw some agency pictures (Tunstall and Machin, 1999). In 2013, according to its own research, half the world's population see or read an AP story each day (AP, 2013). Reuters covering the same ground is likely to have a similar reach. The images and accompanying

words circulate widely on the net are picked up and reproduced countless times (not always with due credit). When working as a daily editor for an agency during the Israeli ground invasion of the Gaza Strip in 2008 I was bombarded with emails from activists complaining about lack of coverage from the Palestinian side. The emails directed me to pictures showing what was 'really going on'. These pictures were all supplied by agencies (including the one at which I was working) or other television organisations such as the BBC. The interchange of imagery and words between 'old' and 'new' is not one way but two, with both feeding off each other.

News production is evolving rapidly in some areas. Yet we need to be careful not to assume *everything* has changed or that change is only driven by one media. The practice of news gathering and editorial decision making remains, at its core, remarkably resilient. Coverage of the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt has been hailed as a Twitter revolution. However, this oversimplifies the case. Cottle's examination of the media's involvement in the revolution taking place across the Arab world shows how global media and communications systems work in complex 'interpenetrative' ways over time and space. Whilst social media provided images and information to the international organisations, these organisations then 'boomeranged' these same images back into the various countries, also adding their own on-the-ground reporting and giving legitimacy to the protests ahead of many Western governments (Cottle, 2011).

Television news is, in some respects, set apart from other types of journalism such as online, print and radio. Factors such as government regulation; the type of audience; the speed of delivery; the profile of employees; news values all vary to some degree from other media. However, television journalists do not work in isolation. Neither do many journalists *only* work for television, with many having worked online and many simultaneously writing blogs and online news pieces as well as television packages. This cross fertilization of journalists is perhaps more hectic and rapid then previous crossover points in media history when print journalist migrated to 'new' broadcast media. Some 'new' online journalism has at times rejected traditional media practice taking on very different editorial strategies (Gillmor 2004). Elsewhere, online journalism has been found to have adopted the practice and processes of 'old' media (Singer, 2005, Loke, 2011, Haas, 2005).

Therefore, given television news' central position in news production and dissemination across the media landscape there is a continuing need to examine television news production in all its complexity. This research aims to make a contribution to this over the course of the next seven chapters.

Summary of Chapters:

I begin in Chapter 2 by reviewing the relevant scholarship on the notions of news values and news practice and the attempts to theorise news production. News production is a complex business, the product of many, sometimes competing, factors. These factors are both external and internal and include production practicalities, the needs of the owners, the needs of advertisers, the culture of professional journalism, culture of specific organisations and media, as well as the wider social, political and cultural milieu in which the news is being produced. In looking at news products, the 'point' as Jackie Harrison explains, 'is to analyse both the way these messages are produced (their values and material/economic base) and the way they are articulated (their linguistic and symbolic structure)' (Harrison, 2006, p128).

While it is important to look at the political economy of news production, I argue that much previous work has focused on outlining structures and cultures but with less to say on how these structures and cultures are 'articulated', formed or perpetuated at the micro level within the newsroom. I propose that the discursive approach is needed in studies of news production since it can give insight to how certain repertoires of explanation are emphasised at the expense of others which in turn can inform the news agenda. It also allows the examination of how wider social factors such as commercialisation and technological changes are played out at the newsroom level in and through the discourse of those producing the news.

Chapter 3 presents a more detailed outline of my methodological approach. Drawing on the ideas and research of discursive social psychology it takes a functional position towards language (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter, 1996, Wetherell and Potter, 1992, Wetherell, 1998, Wetherell and Edley, 2009) making the discourse the object of study rather than treating language as descriptive of reality.

The specific area of focus is the discourse of television journalists when talking about their opinions on their own stories, as well as a number of specific stories brought up by the researcher. The analysis is based on the interviews with the television journalists currently working for UK-based news organisations.

Using the analytic tools of interpretive repertoires and the use of rhetoric to build 'common sense' accounts of the world, chapters 4 to 7 each examine different aspects of the journalists' construction of their work, values and identity. One of the striking qualities of the constructions which emerge from the analysis is that they display a consistency across the accounts regardless of the interviewee's job or employer. In spite of working for different types of news organisations (agency and broadcast) or for different broadcasters with quite

disparate audience profiles the discursive constructions are utilised by all the various groups of workers interviewed.

Chapter 4 looks at the discursive construction of news and news practice by the group of interviewees, and how these constructions are built as factual and 'out-there'. Two distinct repertoires of explanation are identified. Firstly, news is configured as a 'found object' or as a number of discrete pre-existing objects which the journalist merely gathers in. The focus is shifted away from the subject and onto the object, where the object – news – has agency. The second repertoire constructs news as a 'manufactured object' where agency lies with the subject – the journalist. Here the journalist creates and crafts news. How these two repertoires tap into wider notions of journalism and how tensions between the two are played out within the discourse is examined.

In both repertoires news values are implicit yet largely unacknowledged. In Chapter 5 the issue of news values is explored in relation to the two repertoires of news which are employed differently according to the content of the news story. Hard news stories are mostly presented as a 'found object' with little in the way of detailed explanation of why these events merited coverage. News values are conspicuous by their absence and where they are explicitly mentioned they are not consistently applied. The chapter also examines how the 'manufactured object' repertoire is also brought into play but at certain junctures only. The construction of tabloid stories is unpacked as a counterpoint to hard news. These types of stories present difficulties in explanation for the speakers as neither of the two repertoires can be applied un-problematically and the various ways the speakers work to resolve this are complex.

In Chapter 6 the issue of audience is examined, firstly in terms of how it is fashioned and refashioned according to the discursive needs of a speaker, and secondly, how certain types of knowledge of the audience are privileged over others. As shown in Chapter 5 news values are often missing in the discourse of explanation for newsworthiness. In place of intrinsic news values, the driving force for coverage is placed with the audience. The construction of this audience is flexible and contingent on the context of the journalists' arguments. In some configurations the audience is a whole entity, in others the audience is 'particularised' (Billig 1985) or broken down into rhetorically useful groups to justify coverage decisions. The second part of the chapters deals with how knowledge of the audience is expressed. Personal contact with the public is constructed as 'real' knowledge of audience views and desires. Information gathered by the media organisation such as viewing figures or demographics are configured as dangerous, either because they do not tell the 'real' story or they risk compromising journalistic independence. According to this discourse, having

knowledge of the audience is vital to the 'good' journalist, but only in relation to certain types of knowledge.

Chapter 7 looks at how the journalist's identity is constituted and how category entitlement (Sacks 1992, Potter 1996) is employed to reinforce opinions and justifications for editorial decision-making and news practice. The entitlement to the category 'journalist' is carried out via two cultural repertoires of journalism. The first draws on ideas of the 'natural', and constructs the speaker as an innate journalist, embodying the role. The second draws on nurture, where the speaker is brought up in the profession and absorbs the skills and art of the trade being handed down by the previous generation born out of a 'golden age' of journalism. Both these 'roles' or repertoires draw on wider cultural perceptions of the journalist and are largely positive epitomes of the journalist. These repertoires work to emphasise the speaker's entitlement to the category journalist and thus to pass judgement on news work and news values discussed in the previous chapters. Two further points are made in Chapter 7. It is noted how the speakers disavowed any formal training outside of the profession posing some questions for media educators about the transmission of the theoretical learning into the practical environment. Also the prevalence of 'golden ageism' in the discourse coupled with antagonism towards the new could have consequences for the profession in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

In Chapter 8, I conclude by drawing together some common themes in the discourse of the speakers and discuss the implications of this discursive approach on both the study of news production and on the profession of journalism. Firstly, the fluid, contingent nature of the talk means notions such as news values and the needs of the audience shift according to the needs of the speakers and therefore present problems for researchers trying to establish consistent attitudes or views about news practice. Secondly, the various configurations of journalism and journalists cohere together to present the news and the journalists producing it, as 'natural' and by implication inevitable and immutable. Thirdly, the repertoires of explanation are poorly resourced and maintained leaving journalists with little room to reflect on practice. All present obstacles to the possibility of challenging existing practice, yet these repertoires can also be a site of resistance to certain industry pressures.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review: Practice and People

Introduction

The study of the news media has often been occupied by two questions. First, why do we have the media we do? Second, what are the consequences of this form of media on individuals and society as a whole? Various traditions have grown up in order to answer one or both of these questions. Study of the form of media has been the subject of sociological enquiry looking at the super structure of media organisations and political and economic pressures on them. The language and form of the product has also been interrogated for clues as to the priorities and values of news production and the ideological messages being disseminated. Sociologists, and cultural studies, have often been concerned with the consequences, how messages 'embody meaning and invitations to their audiences' (Barker and Petley, 1997, p9) and 'socio-psychological effects of media consumption' (Hemmingway, 2008, p13).

Squeezed between the twin academic towers of the political economy of news and the reception of the audience is what Cottle describes as the 'middle ground', that of production, an area under-theorised and under-researched (Cottle, 2003, p11). This area seeks to understand the processes involved in the creation of the news product, and why those specific processes have evolved.

The chapter will look at the evolving theory and methodology employed in journalism studies to account for news values and news production. I begin by briefly outlining some of the normative ideas about the role of journalism in society as these normative ideas have informed much of the research carried out over the last 70 years or so. Following this I look at production through the lens of news values and discuss how these news values lead us into the various aspects of the production process. From this starting point I will discuss what the various studies of the production of news have revealed about the production of news with particular reference to the role of the journalist within that production process. I argue that while production studies have given valuable insight to some aspects of news work it has also often been overly preoccupied with external or structural concerns

leading to an over-deterministic, static model of production and side-lining the role of the producers. In the final part of the chapter I look at more recent work on production using a more discursive approach. This approach carries the possibility of a more nuanced and detailed understanding of news values and work.

The Role of Journalism in Society

US sociologist Gaye Tuchman describes how she was inspired in the 1960s to study news because of concern over the coverage of the Vietnam War. Her starting point was one shared by many. 'I reasoned that the news media set the frame in which citizens discuss public events and that the quality of civic debate necessarily depends on the information available' (Tuchman 1978, p*ix*). The role of the media in civil society has long been seen as pivotal in creating and strengthening an open and informed debate about social issues within a democracy. The unique position of media in disseminating information makes in central in providing people with the tools to question and debate social norms and values. As Schudson explains:

> Democracy does not necessarily produce journalism, nor does journalism necessarily produce democracy. British journalism arose in a monarchy. American journalism, a journalism of colonial territories under a monarchical, colonial power, preceded American democracy. Where there is democracy, however, or where there are forces prepared to bring it about, journalism can provide a number of different services to help establish or sustain representative government." (Schudson 2008, p8)

Journalism takes place in many different economic and political contexts, yet within a liberal democracy there are a number of recurring themes (or 'services', as Schudson terms them), are worth noting here, as they have been the site of much theorising and investigation over the decades.

At is most basic journalism performs the task of surveillance. Humanity seems infinitely interested in what is happening in their society and beyond. Journalists act as 'sentinels' or as Shoemaker and Cohen put it, 'socially sanctioned, professional surveyors for the rest of us' (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006, p3).

But who or what should they be surveying and what form this surveillance take forms the basis of normative ideas about the role of journalism. As James Curran writes, within traditional liberal theory there are three strands to the role of journalism (Curran, 2002). Firstly, the media can act as a 'watchdog', to survey and monitor the state and its institutions and to expose corruption and abuses of power by its agents. In liberal theory this means that the media must exist in a free market, independent and at a safe distance from the threat of any government intervention or regulation and licensing. Secondly, the media can be seen as an 'agency of information and debate which facilitate the functioning of a democracy' Curran, 2002, p225). Here again, the liberal argument goes that this debate can only happen in a free market where a wide range of opinion can be published or aired – a 'free market

place of ideas'. Thirdly, the press can act as the voice of the 'people', representing their concerns and views to those in power.

These last two ideas tie in with Habermas's notion of the public sphere, a place where the individuals can come together to discuss social issues. Placed between the private sphere and the sphere of public authority, it is a site for discussion, open to all, free of commercial and political influence, based on rational debate and an attempt to come to consensus on issues. The media's role in the public sphere is to provide reliable, interest free information and facilitate debate (Habermas, 1989).

These normative roles for journalism have become a benchmark, for many, for the examination of the working of the media. Media research has often centred around the media's perceived failure to live up the ideals. Habermas's ideal was squandered, he argues, by the growth of capitalism and the commercialization of the press which sullied the free, untainted discussion, as outside political and commercial interests intruded and distorted arguments (Habermas, 1989). Political economists also argue that the growth of capitalism has meant that the media are more 'lapdog' than 'watchdog'. Curran points out that the watchdog role is compromised in terms of monitoring those in power. Commercial and economic power needs as much surveillance as those in political power but in the 21st century most media is owned by big business, compromising any watchdog role of the corporate sector (Curran, 2002). Equally, he argues, creating a space for a market place of ideas and opportunities for the public to participate in social debates has ironically been shown to thrive in the public service model, regulated and licensed, rather than the unfettered free market (Curran, 2002).

Equally under scrutiny is the manner in which journalism is pursued. Normative ideas about the practice of journalism include objectivity and balance in reporting, independence from political and corporate power and responsibility towards the public to inform. Harrison sees the core values of news as 'accuracy' and 'sincerity' and that one of the roles of journalism in society as the 'individual and collective responsibility of the journalist and the journalism profession' (Harrison, 2006, p3).

These normative ideas of the role and practice of journalism have inspired much investigation. To return to Gaye Tuchman – her initial desire to examine news production was provoked by observations that the current media were failing to live up to the normative roles assigned to it. Much of the research below is also centred around how well or badly the media has performed its democratic role as watchdog, or disseminator of information, or voice of the people, and to investigate why these imperfect forms of journalism exist with the

view that understanding the processes and practices would help identify what might be possible and worthy to change.

News Values

Of the billions of happenings in the world only a tiny proportion make it on to our screens or into our papers. Academics have long attempted to define what it is that distinguishes any one of these events from another and makes them into news. In this section I will examine the various attempts to identify and systematise news values and the factors which influence them. Roscho sums up the problem in defining news when he wrote: 'News is more easily pursued than defined, a characteristic it shares with such other enthralling abstractions as love and truth.' (Roshco, 1975, p32). However, this has not prevented many scholars, including Roshco, from attempting some sort of definition of newsworthiness.

Media academics have conceived news values as a set of criteria which an event or issue must meet in order to be selected for coverage, and that these values are operationalized by journalists as they go about their daily news routines, although this is rarely seen as a conscious process. For example, in Hannerz's study of foreign correspondents he noted that in order for news producers to pick the items to become news, they use their set of news values (again, largely unconsciously) as a way of checking if an event fits what the media outlet is looking for (Hannerz, 2004). But what is it they are checking?

At the broadest level 'what makes news?' has been divided into two categories – what is of public interest and what is interesting to the public (Halberstam, 1992). The first area of interest centres round the ideals of journalism to inform the public about their society so that they may fully take part in that society and democratic process. It also stems from early thinkers about the purposes of news such as Robert Park who looking at US media concluded that news aids social cohesion (Park 1940). Tuchman sums up this argument as: 'The purpose of news was to locate what everyone had to know to act in their environment and through their actions to build a common identity' (Tuchman 1991, p81).

The second concerns stories that the public like to hear about but that do not necessarily 'need' to know. For example, the case in Austria of the father who kept his children locked up in a secret cellar for 24 years is not a story which would affect anyone living in the UK (unless they personally knew the family) yet seems to attract a huge amount of interest amongst the public. However, again, scholars, such as Halberstam, see this as part of why people follow news as it 'serves to establish an on-going sense of community and connection to the world around us' (Halberstam, 1992, p18).

Shoemaker and Cohen proposed a subtle shift in this division by changing the categories of information into stories which cover people and events which deviate from the 'norm' either in a positive or negative way; and stories about people and events which have social significance (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). These two types of interest, they argue, have grown out of two types of evolution. The deviant stories reflect a biological imperative to take notice of difference, and the socially significant stories have grown out of a cultural evolution. Events which bridge both categories and are especially 'intense', as Shoemaker and Cohen term it, that is, stories especially out of the 'norm' and very socially significant are more likely to become news (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006).

Many scholars have attempted to define more specifically newsworthiness from these very general categories. The study of Norwegian foreign news by Galtung and Ruge was one of the first to systematically identify a set of news values (Galtung and Ruge, 1970). Galtung and Ruge's list of criteria have been hugely influential and worth examining again here. They looked at the presentation of three foreign crisis in four Norwegian newspapers in the early 1960s and from this put forward a number of factors of which a story would need at least one or more in order to cross from being an event to a newspaper story.

The first eight factors are based on what they call common-sense perception psychology and consist of:

1. Frequency. How often a certain type of event happens within the news cycle.
2. Amplitude. The size or magnitude of an event, for example an earthquake, can make it newsworthy.
3. Un-ambiguity. The less ambiguity contained in a story the more likely it will become news.
4. Meaningfulness. An event needs to have *cultural proximity* or *relevance* of an event to the imagined audience.
5. Consonance. A story needs to chime with what the audience expects to see. For example, the Turner Prize is always *expected* to be controversial
6. Unexpectedness – or rarity. Ad hoc events out of the normal routine are more likely to make it as a news story.
7. Continuity. Once a story has become a story it will continue to be defined as news.
8. Composition. A story may or may not be included in a paper or bulletin depending on what other stories have happened. Lots of foreign news may lower the threshold for a home news story to balance the content.

(based on Galtung and Ruge, 1970)

Galtung and Ruge went on to identify a further four factors based on 'culture-bound' elements. These consist of:

9. Elite nations. The world is divided into levels of importance to any one country. The more a story concerns one of the elite nations the more likely it will become a story.
10. Elite people. The presence of the powerful in a story also makes it more likely to make news.
11. Personification. Personalizing a story by centring it a round an individual or small group of people makes the story more likely to become news.
12. Negativity. Bad things happening to people are more likely to make news.

<div align="right">(based on Galtung and Ruge, 1970)</div>

There are obvious limitations in the original research. It only dealt with newspaper coverage in Norway, and only looked at three foreign crises. Galtung and Ruge, at the time acknowledged the limitations and presented their list as a number of factors for news selection but never claimed it was exhaustive (Galtung and Ruge, 1970). It is also worth remembering that the newspaper editors observed by Galtung and Ruge were evaluating a piece of journalism, that is, they were assessing a Reuters wire. Therefore the story had already been mediated, passing through another organisation's news values before arriving on the editor's teleprinter.

In spite of certain shortcomings, this list has, however, become a bench mark for the analysis of news values for many that came after. Others have revised and updated by further studies of practice and content analysis. Herbert Gans (1979) added 'surprise stories' or 'Gee-Whiz stories' which did not conform to any of the above but made editors sit up (Gans, 1979). Reuters wire service, for example, even had a specific slug line of 'odd' or 'odd bizarre' for these types of story. A girl found in the forests of Thailand allegedly having been brought up by wolves could be a 'Gee-Whiz' story. Others have sought to refine Galtung and Ruge. Galtung and Ruge factors are very event driven whereas Harcup and O'Neill found in their newspaper study a sizable proportion of news that was not (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001). In their own content analysis they found a lot of good news stories which seemed in contradiction of the negativity factor. This reflects what Roscho proposed – that an event being 'unusual' is a more important factor for newsworthiness than negativity (Roshco, 1975 reprinted 1999). Positive stories, of people triumphing over adversity or London's hosting of the Olympic Games are often featured in papers and television bulletins. Harcup and O'Neill's news values also included a honing of the 'elite people' category, dividing it into elite power and celebrity (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001).

Most of these lists of news values are concerned with the qualities intrinsic within the story. The number of deaths or the magnitude of the earthquake or the rarity of multiple births can be identified and then measured against a journalist's internal checklist and then selected or rejected. They are also framed by journalists as common sense. The news values 'unusualness' or 'unexpectedness' is one such example. 'Dog Bites Man' is not a story but 'Man Bites Dog' is newsworthy goes the old cliché. It is worth noting that journalists do not talk about news values in the same way as academics. In Harrison's discussions with journalists they gave reasons such as 'It's the sheer scale of the thing', 'It's a first', 'It's on the front page of all the newspapers' (Harrison, 2000, p140). They may not use the terms 'amplitude' or 'frequency' (Galtung and Ruge, 1970), or 'competition' (Bell 1991), yet the two versions seem to correspond. Being aware of these different discourses of news is important when I come to examine news values in Chapter 5.

In seeking to define newsworthiness, in this type of approach to news selection Harrison points out: 'newsworthiness resides in the properties inherent in a contemporary event itself and not in the news organisation's predispositions or value system' (Harrison, 2006, p136). However, even some of Galtung and Ruge's values are concerned with the process of news gathering rather than elements contained within the event itself. Bell points out that Galtung and Ruges's 'continuity' and 'composition' are about the needs of the newsroom rather than the content of the story, whether it be a newspaper or television. Bell develops this by proposing three types of factors in news selection, firstly the elements of the story, secondly, the news process, and thirdly, the quality of the source material. He adds the following to the news gathering factors (Bell, 1991):

1. Competition – as the flip side of continuity. As much as a story may be picked up by other news organisations once it has been deemed news, all news organisations also want to have unique stories.
2. Co-option – when a story which would not otherwise make news is co-opted into a larger on-going story.
3. Predictability – if a story can be planned ahead it is more likely to make as a story.
4. Prefabrication – the availability of ready-made text, for example, press releases make it more likely to become a story.

(based on Bell, 1991, p159)

Harrison adds to Bell's third category of Bell's – that of the quality of the 'news text' by including the availability of pictures of the event to her overview of identified news values. (Harrison 2006, p137). News selection choices can also be influenced by production factors

such as technological and format conventions. These various lists show news values can evolve over time, as Harcup and O'Neill reveal in their research. Values identified by Galtung and Ruge are not present or are added to in the Harcup and O'Neil sample. Even in 1940 Robert E. Park wrote that 'news value is relative' (Park, 1940, p680) and content analysis has illustrated shifts in the output of news over time as external and internal production factors are brought to bear on content (cf Barnett *et al,* 2012).

News values are rarely solely about 'common sense' choices or technological limitations. They are also driven by the wider ideological context within which news production sits. Hall talks about formal news values of the newsroom and the informal world views of wider society saying: '…behind the particular inflections of a particular news 'angle' lie, not only the 'formal' values as to 'what passes as news in our society', but the ideological themes of the society itself' (Hall, 1981, p231). News selection is not only a product of a set of news values, but is of the social context.

A set of identifiable elements intrinsic to a particular event or issue used by journalists to select stories is a simple and beguiling concept. Yet story selection is rarely if ever this simple. As attempts to pin down new values have developed, other factors of newsworthiness have had to been taken into explanations. Production factors such as time and technology (Hoskins 2001); the specifics of each different medium (Hoskins 2004, Bourdon, 2000); external factors such as commercial and ownership pressures; and professional ideology and culture, all bring something to bear on news selection to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, these news values become one part of a range of operational imperatives and constraints specific to each outlet which can shift and alter over time.

Also news values are not static common sense views of what viewers want to see. Instead they are culturally, politically and socially constructed. One scholar and former journalist, drawing on evolutionary psychology work on 'risk signals', has rather hopefully attempted to reduce news values and selection to the mathematical formula $N = f (C, Sc)$[1] (Venables 2005). Yet news values are constantly shifting and being challenged by other production factors.

In understanding the process of news, the concept of news values has a valuable place among the range of factors in editorial selection and production. However, the study of these news values can be limited methodologically if confined to content analysis. Although the content analysis of factors go some way to explaining the formal structure of news selection they do not account for the processes and culture behind what makes something

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[1] The formula was based on N=news, f=function, C=change, Sc=Security concern.

newsworthy in the first place, nor do they account for the economics or politics of news organisation. Looking at content can only explain what events are covered rather than the process of choosing the events.

Further, there is the issue of extrapolating news values from one media to another. There needs to be a differentiation between different types of news outlet when attempting to define news values (Hoskins 2001). Newspaper and television news values can be very different in the way, for example, they work on different news cycles and operate under different legal and regulatory constraints. For example, the temporal aspects of television news cannot only be investigated through content analysis as the editorial process for achieving the coverage is opaque to the viewer. In White's 'gatekeeping' study he found the pressures of time had a great influence on story choice. The nearer the deadline the stronger the story has to be (White, 1950). Studying output does not shed light on the temporal process of selection since there is no certain way of knowing what was rejected and what was chosen unless one gains some insider knowledge to production.

Harcup and O'Neill (2001) rightly identify in their review of Galtung and Ruge's classic study of newspapers, many stories that appear in the news do not seem to qualify on any of the Galtung and Ruge's twelve factors. Some news items do not entertain or inform and only exist as a news convention. Harcup and O'Neill's updated list of newspaper values attempts to rectify the deficiencies. This has its place, but if we want go further than description to explanation there needs to be a more complete understanding of the newsroom process itself. Studies of news values based on content analysis are prone to drawing conclusions about the working of the newsroom and second-guessing the editor. Although they admit that content analysis can only tell you about how events were covered but not why or how they were chosen in first place even Harcup and O'Neill cannot resist saying:

> …a story with a good picture or picture opportunity combined with any reference to an A-list celebrity, royalty, sex, TV or a cuddly animal appears to make a heady brew that news editors find almost impossible to resist. (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001 p276).

Newsrooms are bombarded with the type of story outlined above. If they were all 'almost impossible to resist' papers would contain nothing but these types of stories which whilst some tabloids are certainly largely filled with celebrity and sex, many broadsheets are not. Television newsrooms are also bombarded but seem to be able to resist a large amount of this material. As Simon Cottle puts it:

> When the analyst infers, as is often the case from a textual interpretation alone, the possible explanations, motivations or reasons that have informed their production,

angels are often to be found dancing on a pinhead of textual analysis. (Cottle, 2003, p5)

Some of the news-gathering factors outlined above can *only* be examined from within an organisation rather than from content. For example composition is very hard to establish solely from looking at content. There is and cannot be an absolute threshold for a story being news according to qualities such as negativity or elite people etc. There cannot be hard and fast rules about what constitutes a story because every story has to be viewed in relation to all the other contenders and in relation to how much time or space is available to tell the stories. Longitudinal studies of content can give broad indications of trends and some patterns but are limited in predicting stories or issues. A G8 summit in Scotland where world leaders meet to discuss eradicating world poverty surrounded by anti-globalisation protestors attempting to disrupt the talks sounds like a good lead story - but not, if four bombs go off on London transport, killing dozens, wounding 100s and paralysing a capital city. If one is using textual analysis when looking at coverage of one type of story, either genre or subject matter needs to be examined in relation to what else was in the news. A lack of coverage of an issue on a certain day may not mean the there is a systematic neglect by the media. This quality of news coverage is well understood by political activists from all strata. The cynical email from a Labour special advisor on the day of the 9/11 attacks in the US that: "It's now a very good day to get out anything we want to bury" (leaked email from Jo Moore, cited in Sparrow, 2001) shows the political elite's understanding of 'composition' news values.

In summary it is important to remember news values need to be consonant with the functions of news. News values have to contend with the need to entertain or to fit in with the medium's ideological and journalistic values. News values are influenced by many factors, some external to the organisation and some concerned with wider society. Television news in the UK has to conform to varying levels of regulations and to be mindful of matters of taste and public service written into their broadcasting licences. News agencies must take into account a broad range of differing journalism cultures and news values across their clientele. Government regulation of media organisations in terms of ownership and output can limit what can be published or broadcast based on perceived ideas of what society finds acceptable. Some are specific to an organisation and concern the ideological values of a newspaper or television channel. In addition there exist commercial imperatives. Other factors involve the routine and practice of journalism to each specific medium. For example, television news places more emphasis on moving pictures and live coverage than newspapers. There also exists the journalistic professional ideology based on notions of public service which can moderate coverage. Therefore a set of news values based on

elements inherent in the story becomes just one part of a vast intersecting group of variables depending on which function or functions are being addressed for each event.

A taxonomy of newsworthiness is not an easy thing to pin down. The list of criteria grows ever longer, a sign of a growing sophistication in understanding of what makes news. Much of the research on news values has centred on newspapers and methodologically on analysis of the product. This can give some insight to shared values in journalism and the differences across some media. This kind of research can describe what values are evident in content. For example the issues of sources can be evidenced from the content and can indicate patterns of ideological discourses and news gathering practices to some degree. However, if we want to go further than description, and interrogate how these values evolve and circulate through the news media industry and how they interact with other production factors we must look at how news is produced. In the next section I will look at the study of news production itself.

Processes and People: Studying news production

In order to investigate how news values identified on the screen are propagated and circulated it is necessary to go behind the scenes and look at the production and the people involved. Studies of news production have fallen into two camps. Firstly there are studies of the routine and practices of newsrooms. Secondly, there is a body of work which concentrates on the journalists themselves. Both types of study have attempted to bring order to the perceived chaos of news production, much like the practice of journalism attempts to do with world events.

From Chaos to Routine: Early Studies

Journalists have often evoked the 'cock up' rather than conspiracy argument to explain what they do. This is perhaps best summed up by a less than serious proposition by David Randall to put in any paper the following disclaimer:

> This paper and the hundreds of thousands of words it contains has been produced in about 15 hours by a group of fallible human beings, working out of cramped offices while trying to find out what happened in the world from people who are sometimes reluctant to tell us and, at others, positively obstructive. (Randall, 2007, p16)

This could equally be applied to television production. One journalist writing in the early 1970s describes news output as the product of 'random reactions to random events' (John Whale 1970 cited in Golding and Elliot, 1979, p6). The strictures of time and resources often mean a less than perfect product and the appearance of the daily paper or news bulletin

comes about more as a happy accident than any serious design, so the argument of the industry practitioners goes. The study of news production has put this defence to the test and found it wanting. Rather than being a happy accident the newspaper or bulletin is a product of entrenched routine, organisation and professional practices and culture. Studies of news rooms and interviews with news practitioners have identified a number of factors which influence news production and have concentrated on different aspects of the routine and practice of journalism and on the role of journalists themselves. Early studies have looked at individual agency within the organisation – studies such as David Manning White's 1950s work on gatekeeping (White, 1950). His analysis of one newspaper wire editor's decisions over a week gives a valuable insight in to how much of the news on offer was rejected, in this case 90%. Reasons for rejecting stories often amounted to 'no space'. This became more frequent as the news day wore on, which highlighted the constraints of time on editorial decisions. Other reasons for rejection were often based on the personal opinion of Mr Gates, leading White to conclude that editorial judgement was highly subjective and based on 'the gatekeeper's' own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations' (White, 1950, p72). This grants Mr Gates a large amount of autonomy in selecting and rejecting news stories.

Later work on this autonomy in gatekeeping has been reviewed and refined. Gieber's 1964 examination of White's findings coupled with his own research with a group of 'Mr Gates' questioned the individual autonomy instead concluding: 'A discussion of 'subjectivity' in news selection must take into account the limitations imposed by bureaucratic pressures' (Gieber, 1964, p 220). News is not what the newsmaker says it is. Instead it is what the news organisation decides. Shoemaker's remodelling of gatekeeping does return some degree of autonomy to the news producer in editorial decision making. However these decisions are again bounded by the expectations of the organisation and outside influences (Shoemaker, 1999).

Other early work looked at how journalists conformed to organisational policies. Warren Breed's study of newsroom practice examined how the organisation's policy is maintained even when it is not written down or explicitly propagated. He found several factors for social control, the most important being the esteem and respect of work mates. Breed concludes:

> The newsman's source of rewards is located not among the readers, who are manifestly his clients, but among his colleagues and superiors. Instead of adhering to societal and professional ideals, he redefines his values to the more pragmatic level of the newsroom group. (Breed, 1955 p84)

He also noticed that although there was much discussion of ethics and impartiality this was overridden by the need to provide stories. This kind of theme is present in the discourse of the subjects of this research and will be returned to in Chapter 4.

More broadly, early sociological observations of newsrooms, began to expose the fallibility of the notion that news merely reflects the world 'out there'. David Altheide's study of US television newsrooms in the early 1970s proposed that the practicalities of the way news is organised leads to certain types of news making and story-telling or, as he termed it, 'news perspective', concluding that 'events become news when transformed by the news perspective, and *not because of their objective characteristics'* (italics added) (Altheide, 1974, p173).

Fellow US sociologist, Gaye Tuchman's observations in print and television newsrooms in the late 60s and early mid 70s came to a similar conclusion. News is socially constructed and that 'professionalism and decisions flowing from professionalism are the result of organisational needs' whether they be political, economic, or professional (Tuchman, 1978, p2). Her examination of the organisation and structure of news production in the newsroom

looked at how the mass of events is tamed by an organisation's use of resources. A news web is spread out to 'catch' suitable events to make into news. Deploying resources to sites of power such as government and a structural and cultural reliance on elite sources ensure that the status quo is maintained and that news is embedded in legitimizing power (Tuchman, 1978). Fishman sees this as society being bureaucratically organised. If a journalist needs to cover the story of a building burning down or a health issue there is always an official to provide an account (Fishman, 1980). Becker's 'hierarchy of credibility' also points to journalists' reliance and belief in official information. The higher up the bureaucratic ladder one goes the more credibility that source holds (Becker, 1967).

Researchers carrying out comparative studies of television news in a range of countries found similar characteristics in news production. Golding and Elliott (1979) looked at television news in Ireland, Sweden and Nigeria in the early 1970s and found that news output in terms of format and content were remarkably similar in spite of being produced in very different socio-economic and cultural contexts. They conclude that the individual has little impact on the news itself because of the organisational imperatives and structure of production.

These studies indicate that the news production process does not just report news but constructs news infused with the ideological values of the powerful. As Golding and Elliott put it: 'news is more nearly a reflection of the forces that produce it than of the events and

processes in social reality it claims to portray' Golding and Elliott, 1979, p206) Stuart Hall *et al* have proposed that the structural relationship between those in power and the newsroom mean that journalism reproduces 'the definitions of those who have privileged access, as of right, to the media as 'accredited sources'' (Hall *et al*, 1977, p249). The structural over-accessing of elite and institutional sources means certain voices are heard whilst others are effectively silenced.

Researchers have also looked at professional ideology and journalistic culture as part of the production routine. Tuchman looked at the way journalists use objectivity as a way to protect themselves from criticism by using official sources (Tuchman, 1978). Soloski sees this professional ideology of objectivity as a means of controlling journalists. Employers can rely on journalists to abide by the profession ideology without having to resort to disciplining themselves, giving the impression of free rein to the workers (Soloski, 1989).

One other area of study worth noting here is the role of technology in news production. Technological developments have always played a part in the development of the mass media and its output. As MacGregor states, 'With the possible exception of the military there is probably no other industry that relies much on technology as broadcasting does' (MacGregor, 1997, p174). At the beginning of the 21st century technology is fast evolving. Satellite communications has enabled live news coverage from just about anywhere, which can be instantly distributed via 24-hour news channels on television and radio, mobile phones, the internet, and then instantly commented on. Recent interviews and studies of news rooms seem to show a number of different responses to new technology. From a workers' perspective some researchers have found that it is the organisational culture that has changed work practices rather than the more technological determinist approach (Ursell, 2001). Other studies have found television journalists wary of and welcoming in almost equal measure (Aviles et al., 2004). Some have found that it is in fact 'business as usual' (Cottle and Ashton, 1999). The specifics of getting pictures in and putting them out may have changed but the routine and values employed may not have changed that much. As Mark Deuze points out, new technologies 'tend to amplify existing ways of doing things, are used to supplement rather than radically change whatever people were already doing' (Deuze, 2008, p11).

It is important to steer clear of technological determinism where change is merely the outcome of technology. Technology alone does not alter news practice. As Curran puts it, 'the invention, development and application of new communications technology are usually influenced by the wider context of society, are not simply the product of some inner technological logic.' (Curran, 2002, p53). Or, as Raymond Williams has argued, the

developments in communications have been 'at once, incentives and responses within a phase of general social transformation.' (Williams, 2003, p11). The role of technology is complex and some academics have attempted to reflect this in recent studies of practice (Hemmingway, 2008). These new approaches will be discussed a little later.

These newsrooms studies have helped bring order to the chaos. When I was employed as a Planning Editor in various organisations, my non-journalist friends would ask 'how can you plan the news – surely it just happens?' The research into newsroom practice has often succeeded in explaining how the world is routinised in virtually every area of production, from management control, the deployment of resources and journalists, the use of sources, and the use of news values, technological developments, journalistic professional ethics and ideology.

However, the emphasis on these organisational routines and structures has often side-lined the mediating agency of journalists thus tending towards organisational functionalism, with 'Mr Gates' becoming more and more a background figure. The individual agency or 'discretion' (Hannerz, 2004, Tunstall, 1971) of the journalist is subsumed by the routine of the process and becomes merely a cog in the machine reproducing the dominant ideology. As Morrison and Tumber put it:

> …the critical politicizing of research in the area of mass communications has meant that the journalist as news gatherer has been pushed out of sight. He no longer fits, or rather researchers cannot find a place for him, in the grand indictment of the news as the reproduction of dominant ideology. (Morrison and Tumber, 1988, p*x*)

In the face of the social, technological and commercial pressures I am not proposing that the individual journalist possesses over-riding agency to make the news. Instead I am suggesting that journalists are an important element in the production of news in that they are the conduit for the dissemination of practice and values whether reproducing the status quo or resisting it. In the next section I look at the role and culture of journalists.

The Cog in the Machine: The role of the journalist

Research into the routines of news production has examined both the workings of newsrooms and the staff in them, while other studies have looked at journalism 'in the field', that is, the work carried out by reporters and news producers outside the newsrooms, either in beats in the organisation's home country or abroad. These studies have used a number of methodologies to glean information about the production of news from anthropological

approaches, ethnography, participant observation, surveys and in all cases, interviews with practitioners.

The early 'studies' of reporters, such as Hohenberg's, were in reality not very different to the many journalist autobiographies published each year, consisting of a series of anecdotes mixed with a certain amount of historical data (Hohenberg, 1964). In 1965 when Tunstall began his study of specialist reporters in London 'not a single social science study of any aspect of British journalism existed' (Tunstall, 1971 p5).

Morrison and Tumber in the 1980s was an early attempt by social scientists to 'map' one location – London – and to clarify the definition and role of the foreign correspondent (Morrison and Tumber, 1985). Hess in the 1990s attempted to look at how American foreign correspondents reported the rest of the world to the US (Hess, 1996). Anthropologists have been attracted to the study of journalists as a distinct 'tribe'. Hannerz provides an overview of the culture and practice of foreign correspondents by travelling the globe, interviewing and spending short periods of time with a large number of reporters (Hannerz, 2004). Another anthropologist, Pedelty in contrast spent a long period of time with just one group of foreign reporters - a 'deep hanging out' method (Pedelty, 1995). Others have made use of extensive interviews with journalists about a particular event to understand the culture and routine of reporting. Interesting examples of this include Tumber and Morrison's examination of the the Falklands War coverage which is largely drawn from interviews with the small number of journalists who saw at first hand the unfolding conflict (Morrison and Tumber, 1988). Also, parts of Tumber and Palmer's look at the 2003 invasion of Iraq draws heavily on first-hand accounts, not just journalists but also military and political figures (Tumber and Palmer, 2004).

What all these studies have tended to illuminate is the complex relationship and hierarchy between the reporter, their fellow journalists and the editorial staff 'back home'. They have also examined some of the myths of the journalist such as autonomy and freedom. In many of the studies of field journalists, reporters have stressed that the distance between the reporter and the headquarters leads to a loosening of editorial control. This takes a number of forms. In some cases it was felt that because the story was so far away and less politically sensitive to the domestic audience the reporter had more freedom to cover the story from an angle of his own choosing (Morrison and Tumber, 1985). Others stress the physical distance meant the reporter had more freedom to pick stories and investigate hunches without having the editor breathing down their necks (Hannerz, 2004). 'Happiness is in direct proportion to one's distance from the home office' says one reporter quoted in Hess's study (Hess, 1996, p66).

Autonomy and freedom feature high up on the criteria for a successful and fulfilling life as a journalist (Henningham and Delano, 1998). In Weaver's summing up of the various surveys carried out around the world into journalist's attitudes, there was a direct correlation between job satisfaction and perceived level of autonomy (Weaver, 1998). However, this enduring idea of autonomy is perhaps more mythic than most of the images of journalism. Franklin argues that there is little lee-way for the journalist to exert his or her influence on cover and that autonomy is a myth (Franklin, 1997; Franklin, 2004). Commercial and political pressure and editorial control from above coupled with the entrenched routines give an individual little room to manoeuvre.

Pedalty sees the pressure to conform as a more subtle process. As well as drawing on the political economy approach he also brings in Foucault's notions on discipline. This discipline is more potent than structural limitations in controlling journalists as Pedalty outlines:

> Although there are repressive factors in reporting, the more powerful influences are disciplinary. Certain forms of knowledge are favored and certain discourses privileged. (Pedelty, 1995, p5)

Commercial and political pressure, editorial control from above coupled with the entrenched routines of news production give journalists little power over their working destinies. This aspect of journalistic identity and myth-making is highly prevalent in the subjects of this research and will be returned to in Chapter 7.

Added to this is the fragility of employment. Journalism has always been a precarious occupation. Writing in the early seventies Tunstall's study of specialist correspondents concludes that uncertainty is the driving force for much of their occupational behaviour (Tunstall, 1971). This is not just referring to the nature of news but rather the nature of employment in news. The lack of clear career paths, and promotion criteria in the 1970s were factors in this uncertainty. Since then the deregulation of the media industry and the growth of casualisation has added to this uncertainty. The growth of the internet and social media is also adding pressure to journalists as many more people begin to call themselves journalists, but who have little connection with traditional media organisations.

Another feature of the culture of journalists is the camaraderie and competition in the field. Morrison and Tumber note that co-operation is part of the occupational ideology of journalism (Morrison and Tumber, 1985), as is fierce competition. There is a constant tension between not missing a story that every other outlet is running and searching for the elusive scoop – or the story no other outlet is running.

Loyalties often shift about when fighting for stories. Alliances are made and broken in the field and in the organisation's main newsroom. Journalists flock to the same stories and spend a lot of time with each other both at work and socially (Donsbach 2004, Patterson and Donsbach 1996). Often details of stories are discussed by rival journalists so that they all get the same 'facts'[2].. Before going on stories field journalists tend to find out if the opposition is going too. This can impact on whether to cover a story or not.

Where an individual fits in the organisation is important to the editorial process. Like all other organisations news organisations divide on several levels and there is a discourse of division throughout the news departments. There is the usual division between management and shop floor. There are also divisions between newsgathering and output, between those based in the London headquarters and those in the field. There are divisions between journalists and so-called 'techies' such as camera operators and picture editors and between staff employees and freelancers. These divisions have been noted by many of the newsroom participant observers, as well as former journalists (MacGregor, 1997, Schlesinger 1987). They remain still potent in the 21st news environment and there is much potential work to be done in examining how these discourses of difference impact on editorial decision making.

Many of the above studies have made extensive use of interviews with journalists and have un-problematically drawn a number of conclusions. Hannerz repeats a good number of stories told to him by correspondents about how they had treated their stringers and retainers (Hannerz, 2004). Although concluding that arrangements were 'diverse', only positive treatment stories are cited leading us to conclude that apart from the dangers from the local regime stringers are well treated. It does seem unlikely that a correspondent would tell Hannerz about how badly treated stringers were at their own hand or their company's. This may or may not be the case for some but more importantly, the accounts given by journalists need to be interrogated for what the discourse reveals about the practice and values of journalism rather than as a record of reality.

Even in 1988 Morrison and Tumber were aware of the problems of taking the accounts of journalists at face value, writing that they:

> ...cannot treat journalists, any more than any observer, as if they are simply pairs of eyes. They must be seen as active, thinking human beings who make judgements, but at the same time it would be wrong to take the journalist's account of what he was doing as the account of what was going on: what he thought he was doing and

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[2] I have watched the British royal press pack decide amongst themselves the name and age of a boy Prince Charles had just met. Some had different ages and names so they got together in a huddle and came to a consensus.

what he was actually doing, if the same, would presume perfect knowledge of events. (Morrison and Tumber, 1988, p*xi*)

Yet, many studies still continue to treat the utterances of journalists as the 'truth' about the 'reality' of the state of journalism. In one international survey of journalists' perceptions of the internet most respondents stated that they had little difficulty in adapting to the net. Later in this same survey this opinion or perception of a smooth transition becomes a fact as the authors state that journalists 'as a group' are at ease with the new technology 'having adopted it with relatively little difficulty…' (O'Sullivan and Heinonen, 2008, p367). This kind of leap from people's subjective accounts of their own activities to a statement of fact should be avoided.

Again in a series of interviews with US online e/print journalists on the introduction of comment pages on the website the journalists' reactions are treated as a description of an objective truth. Attacks on the subject of stories by commenters left the journalists feeling 'helpless' (Loke 2011). From this is drawn the conclusion that lack of management leadership and training was to blame. This causal connection is not well evidenced solely from what the journalists say.

Large quantitative surveys of journalists also treat responses as neutral information and supporting evidence of what one suspects is a pre-ordained theoretical position. Some researchers have applied quantitative methods of questionnaires to elicit responses from working journalists. In Tuggle and Huffman's 1999 study of journalists' attitudes to live news they used a posted questionnaire. This yielded 220 responses from television news directors and senior reporters across the United States. The overall results were fairly negative towards live coverage, but this seemed in response to fairly leading statements which respondents were asked to rate as how much they agreed with them. Statements such as 'My station often goes live for the sake of live' or 'Going live with a breaking story increases the chance of the reporter repeating rumors (sic) or unsubstantiated information, when he or she would not have done so in a packaged piece.' led to some fairly predictable negative answers from journalists (Tuggle and Huffman, 1999) The more interesting data came from responses the open-ended questions where journalists could add comments. Another problem with this kind of research is its self-selecting nature. It is difficult to know if there is genuine discontent or if only the moaning minority replied.

What survey work can do is to provide some pointers towards some interesting questions. Strömbäck *et al* (2012) used a national mail survey of journalists in Sweden to examine the difference between what journalists think *ought* to be news (which Strömbäck *et al* define as news values) and what *is* news (defined as news or news selection). This is an interesting

idea to unpack and the survey seems to suggest that journalists have two separate sets of perceptions about what should be news and what is news. This matches similar findings of Shoemaker and Cohen who found that what is deemed news and newsworthy are two different concepts in the talk of journalists (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). This in turn supports discourse based work, discussed later in this chapter, that different constructions of news work co-exist in the talk of journalists. In future chapters I will look at the various competing constructions and how journalists discursively manage them.

Organised chaos: 'Second wave' studies

Attempts to describe and theorise the news environment can at times be tempted into oversimplification. However, the production of news is complex and new ways of describing and explaining need to be developed. John Law sums up the case:

> *….*if much of reality is ephemeral and elusive, then we cannot expect single answers. If the world is complex and messy, then at least some of the time we're going to have to give up on simplicities. But one thing is sure: if we want to think about the messes of reality at all then we're going to have to teach ourselves to think, to practise, to relate, and to know in new ways. (Law, 2004, p2).

News production and output is a fast changing landscape and journalism as a profession (or trade) is indeed what John Law would call 'messy'. Many of the studies into the process of news production were carried out some decades ago and brought some order to this mess. But many also started from a top down premise in an effort to place a pre-existing theoretical framework onto the mess below. A large proportion of these theoretical frameworks saw news as being produced from above through structural and political economic pressures with little room for the producers of news. However, more recent studies of newsrooms have moved from 'routine' to 'practice' taking in Foucault's ideas of social process and discursive practice within news-making. As Cottle says:

> …negative ideas of power, control and regulation imposed from outside or from above, are also broadened to include a more discursive appreciation of the role of human agency and meanings within prevailing administrative procedures and /or 'regimes of truth'. (Cottle, 2003, p17)

Work being carried out by a growing number of academics/practitioners is narrowing the gap in understanding between academia and news production and is attempting to account for the complexity and nuance of practice. These new studies draw on a number of approaches including traditional ethnography, engagement with journalists in interviews and more radical theoretical departures such as Actor Network Theory (ANT). Although often quite different in method and theory they do share in common a more 'bottom up' approach to news practice and stress the importance of this practice as fundamental to an understanding of news both

at newsroom level and in a wider social context . They also seek to look at the 'mess' of practice in a more detailed fashion.

Machin and Niblock's recent look at newsroom practice is a good example. This work seeks to tap into the reflective knowledge of journalists in order to understand how the various theories of news stand up in the face of *actual* experience of news production (Machin and Niblock, 2006). Rather than academics outside looking in on the production of news this kind of work relies on those on the inside reflecting on what they do and looking out with the help of the researchers. This type of self-examination or 'reflexivity' holds the possibility of very detailed analysis of journalism practice. Secondly, Machin and Niblock hope this engagement with journalists will result in practitioners reflecting on practice when they are dragged back into the maelstrom of a news desk.

In Machin and Niblock's *News Production* they spend time with a number of journalists to examine various aspects of production theory. Some theories, such as that of the socialisation of journalists, stand up well whilst others, for example those around conflict reporting, are found wanting. Although the sample is small, it is an interesting attempt to build a more layered understanding of the oft mentioned but little considered complexity of the working journalist's lived experience. As Niblock notes, elsewhere: 'journalism practice is neither seamless nor unified' (Niblock, 2007, p29). The Machin and Niblock method of engaging with practitioners, they claim, can enable journalistic ideas about autonomy and creativity, which are often seen as mythical beasts by many commentators to be re-examined.

Machin and Niblock's approach is also creating a space for journalists to re-examine their own practice and close the theory/practice divide. Some practitioners are already taking up the challenge. Editorial workers from television are, in increasing numbers, making the move from industry to academia and using their first-hand knowledge to examine news practice. Others have remained behind reflecting on practice for academia whilst continuing to develop that practice in the newsroom (cf. Owen and Purdey, 2009). Niblock is quick to point out that this self-reflexive research must be put into some kind of context for evaluation and the problems that practitioners may have in accessing the critical vocabulary with which to reflect on their own practice. This lack of critical vocabulary is an issue which will be taken up subsequent chapters.

In Machin and Niblock's own work they have tried to bridge the gap between academia and practitioners in order to deepen understanding of news work. However, there are some problems with their approach. Firstly, by concentrating so much on pre-existing theory there is the danger of closing down complexity rather than opening it up. By asking the journalists

only about what has already been described may stop them talking about what is important to them on a day-to-day basis. Interesting avenues of investigation may be cut off. Secondly, as with much use of interviews, the information contained in them is treated as transparent. Extracts of interviews seem to sometimes contradict each other, but rather than follow up why these may occur the information is taken at face value. In Machin and Niblock's valiant attempt to give voice to working journalists they seem to have given them *carte blanche*.

A somewhat difference approach has been taken by Emma Hemmingway in her study of digital news production (Hemmingway, 2008). Here Hemmingway has taken the ideas of Actor Network Theory (ANT) developed in studying the construction of scientific knowledge by Latour and Woolgar (Latour and Woolgar, 1979, Latour, 1999, 2005) and applied it to media practice. ANT seeks to trace how networks of practice are constituted by the participants within them. ANT uses traditional ethnographic methods of observation alongside interviews with network participants – or actors. Where it differs from other ethnographic research is that it seeks to synthesise the social with the technical or scientific world, seeing no ontological difference between human and non-human actors (or actants as Latour prefers). It therefore gives equal weight to human and non-human actors' activities in the network and gives technology agency alongside human agency. Hemmingway has taken this theory and applied it to her study of a BBC regional newsroom. She argues that media studies is based on a premise that media has some kind of influence on society. Therefore it is very important to find a way to make news production 'descriptable' (Hemmingway, 2008, p38) at a micro level, and that ANT offers a method of mapping and rendering a description.

Although fraught with problems, as I will discuss below, Hemmingway's starting premise helps move away from the meta-theory that news is merely the inevitable result of outside influences and structures. Instead she argues that news work should be seen for itself, to place it at the centre of study rather than a periphery or wholly resultant of other forces. She is not arguing for a technologically determined theory, rather she is suggesting:

> News production should not be viewed as shaped and conditioned by a series of external forces; rather it should be recognised as a non-reducible, semi-autonomous constellation of forces that are not merely phenomena of a more generic societal-structural logic, but whose socio-logic operates on interpersonal levels within a whole range of network actions. (Hemmingway, 2008, p27)

There are, as Hemmingway herself admits, problems with ANT. Firstly, Latour's insistence on 'symmetry' (or non-differentiation) of human and non-human elements to the network ignores the issue of human intentionality. People scheme and plot and fight for certain outcomes – something a piece of technology cannot do. Therefore it is debatable whether a machine can have the same sort of agency that a human might possess. Connected with

this is the placing of all action and outcomes on the network and failing to take into account what people and organisations bring to a network. Latour (and Hemmingway) would argue that networks have no discrete beginnings and endings and that the study of any collection of relations is part of a continuum. However to see all associations and power relations as solely created by what Latour sees as resistance to trials set up within the network is to define power as something created within a network (Latour, 2005). This as John Law has critiqued means power ceases to be something people can store away and use later – again all intentionality is removed (Law, 2004). Nick Couldry (2008) sees ANT as having a useful place in media studies in its scepticism towards essentialist notions of the media's place in society yet also sees the limitations of ANT's scope.

> Power differentials between human actors matter in a way that power differentials (if that is the right term) between non-humans do not: they have social consequences that are linked to how these differences are interpreted and how they affect the various agents' ability to have their interpretations of the world stick. (Couldry, 2008, p102)

Hemmingway agrees that human subjectivity is not the same as non-human and needs to be addressed in any ethnographic study. She attempts to deal with this, not by doing away with ANT, but instead applying it even more rigorously. Through a series of ethnographic observations she concludes ANT has 'outgrown its progenitor' and that by strictly applying the method it does usefully describe issues of human intentionality and motivation.

This method does indeed yield some very interesting observations on the workings of a newsroom and the detailed mapping of relations. Her dissection of news sense or 'nouse' as she terms it, is a very good examination of how is it is used to illicit or spread power and does get to grips with the issue of journalists' autonomy of action.

Although very different from Machin and Niblock's approach I have a similar problem with Hemmingway's study. Hemmingway uses a mixture of traditional ethnographic observation along with interviews with network participants and her own experience and participation in the network. Her proposed goal is to create a way to make news production 'descriptable', yet her use of interviews with journalists at face value can seem to distort this description. For example, quotes used sometimes lead Hemmingway to conclusions I could not find in the quote or that I would interpret very differently. This is not to say Hemmingway is wrong about her conclusions. Rather it is the random nature of the interpretation. She writes she has included quotes 'picked at random'. Surely in ANT's attempt at a precise account of relations and actions this randomness is out of place. Hemmingway's attempt to render the production of news more visible to the outsider and to identify associations and patterns within the newsroom gives an interesting and at times insightful look at the minutia of how

news is made. And she recognises it is important to differentiate between human (and non-human) participants in the news process. However, a more rigorous approach to dealing with these human actors' accounts of the network would strengthen the findings.

Others have used ANT but done away with the ethnographic aspect of the research instead wholly relying on interviews. Micó *et al* (2013) instead basing their ANT analysis of convergence in newsrooms on a series of in-depth interviews with journalists. Here they are even more reliant than Hemmingway on the accounts given by the actors (with the 'actants' having no 'voice'). They found that different actors had different accounts of innovation dependent on where they were in the network and that change was stymied by a lack of effective management communication. However, it is possible to challenge any assertion that these interviews make the reality of the process any more descriptable. Again interviews are taken at face value with no possibility within the study of accessing any benchmark 'reality'. Perhaps it would be more useful to see the interviews as a discursive activity.

Some media scholars have taken a psychological approach to the study of news values and production. Donsbach for example attempts to go beyond description of news production to an explanatory theory for particular practice and news values through the application of psychological theories. He proposes that two specific psychological patterns of human nature are influential in news work. Firstly, there is a need for 'social validation' and to 'preserve one's existing predispositions' (Donsbach, 2004, p136). These two needs are especially strong in journalism due to the nature of the work. Journalism requires continual value judgements and perceptions about events, under pressures of time and competition, with no clear criteria and which the results of are almost immediately broadcast to the public. In order to cope with this environment, Donsbach argues that journalists create a 'shared reality'. Donsbach's proposals seek to identify and, more importantly, explain why certain journalistic news practices exist over others. This work is attempting to move away from sociological structural processes in accounting for practice. However, as yet, it seems there is little real empirical work being done. Donsbach's evidence for these ideas are, as he admits, "scattered bits and pieces of evidence usually gathered for different purposes" (2004, p146) and is mainly based on quantitative surveys and questionnaires. There is also, again, the problem of treating the testimony of journalists at face value, as an account of reality or of the interior cognitive processes of an individual, an issue I will return to in chapter 3.

While I may not agree methodologically with Donsbach he does make the important point raised earlier that:

> Within the theory of news values, the selection (or, better, editorial emphasis) of a news story is explained by the existence and prominence of certain features of the news (like negativism, personalization, etc.). However, this is not an explanatory concept as it only describes the structure of media reality. It does not answer the question of *why* specific factors are more powerful than others (Donsbach, 2004, p135).

What these new studies have in common is that all put the practitioner centre stage and see the study of news practice as the starting point for investigation rather than the end result of other influences.

What they also have in common is their treatment of the interview source material. What journalists tell them is treated as a factual evidence of a phenomenon, sometimes with limited additional empirical backing. This is not to say we should ignore what journalists say. In fact, I would argue just the opposite – we should be paying closer attention to what journalists say in order to understand the discursive work being done by practitioners to explain and shape their identity and work environment.

<u>Towards a discourse approach to production studies</u>

News has been theorised as a product of routines structured from above and within the news environment and as a practice carried out by journalism professionals. Structured routines left little place for the 'cogs' or journalists in the process. Practice centred studies have reintroduced the practitioner as an agent in the process. In the study of routines the talk of journalists has been largely ignored, in the practice-centred studies the talk of journalists has been often treated at face value. In this final section I want to argue for a more discursive approach to the study of news production, with an emphasis on how news is talked into being. In this model the talk of journalists is central to understanding how macro issues of production and values and practices in the newsroom are articulated and circulated and how micro issues of practice evolve. It is also 'analytically sensitive to the 'mediating' agency of the cultural producers' (Cottle 2003, p13).

The heart of news production is the editorial decision making process and the construction of a news story is a complex and diffuse process. As Cotter points out the story of a news story is one 'of multiple texts and multiple authors' (Cotter, 2003[3]). No television news story makes it to air without having been through a long series of decisions, from the moment a journalist becomes aware of it to the final wording of the introduction by the presenter. Even live coverage with its minimum of intervention is still the product of a number of editorial

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[3] Accessed online – no page numbers provided.

judgements, (albeit, instantly made), from the team in the field to the editors in the newsroom.

Discourse analysis has been used extensively to examine the text of news products and has been extremely useful in unpacking the narrative structures of stories and dissemination of ideological messages embedded within the discourse (cf Bell, 1991, Van Dijk, 1988, Fairclough, 1995). But discourse analysis can have a greater role to play in the study of news production. As Cotter points out, the discourse of news is made up of 'two key components: the dimension of the text or story, and the dimension of the processes involved in the production of the text' (Cotter, 2003[4]). In other words, discourse analysis can be utilised to examine how news is talked into being by the producers.

The role of language in news production is a growing area of interest. Catenaccio *et al* (2011) for example, argue for a linguistic approach to the study of news production saying that: 'a great deal of discourse-analytical research on the news has disregarded the production process' (Catenaccio *et al*, 2011, p1846). This approach highlights the multi-directional production process and how discursive practice as well as cultural and social context brings news into being. Catenaccio *et al* see the value added of a linguistic approach at the conjunction of 'production' and articulation' of news discourse' (Catenaccio *et al*, 2011, p1847). Using practice based ethnographic work combined with extended interviews and 'careful, close, linguistically sensitive micro-analysis and rich observation of the way news values are articulated in the actual writing and speaking processes and vice versa' can bring news production into sharper focus (Catenaccio *et al*, 2011, p1847).

Daniel Perrin's also concentrates on the linguistic evolution of news production. Through progression analysis (PA) combining keystroke programming, participant observations, interviews and overheard news room discussions he illustrates how good and bad practice can be achieved by individual reporters working in newsrooms (Perrin, 2011). This level of detail can show the construction of the story both in the writing but in the handling of the social situations in the newsroom. Van Hout and Jacobs also utilise key stroke technology to look at how a story is identified and developed as well as participant observation and interviews – following Peterson's (2001) idea of news, moving away from structures to a more contingent, 'interpretive practice' (Van Hout and Jacobs, 2008). Peterson himself attempts to capture a different area of discourse – that of spoken contact with sources. He examines the 'un-writable' discourse of journalists as they negotiate and interpret their sources and move from the spoken to the written story. As stated above, Peterson sees

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[4] Accessed online – no page numbers provided.

news practice as an 'interpretive practice' saying journalism 'embodies social creativity' (Peterson, 2001, p201).

All these approaches put the journalist centre stage as a site of interpretation and articulation of values and practices. These approaches use fieldwork but also rely heavily on interviews with the journalists often asking the practitioners to reflect on their activities. However, at times in this type of work it is unclear exactly how the discourse of the journalists is analysed. Sometimes the words are taken at face value. In Perrin's study (Perrins, 2011), the journalist's claim that he changed newsroom practice on many previous occasions is treated as a description of reality rather than a rhetorical account.

Other work has taken a more systematic approach to the analysis of news talk both in the production of news and in reflection on practice. Laura Ahva has used interviews to ask Finnish newspaper journalists about practice, specifically public journalism projects which allowed for 'professional reflexivity'(Ahva, 2012, p790). The participants constructed journalism as having a number of roles which appeared in the study to be shifting as journalist became more involved in public journalism, leading Ahva to conclude that the journalist identity can be re-articulated. This work is interesting in that it suggests that the discourse of professional journalistic norms is 'highly *contextual'*, shifting across time and place, and that enduring images and notions of the journalist can be dislodged (Ahva, 2012, p796). This interplay between contextual accounts of practice and the enduring use of professional norms will be taken up in further chapters.

Gravengaard's work on the language structure of concepts around news makes a more subtle point about journalists' discursive construction of the role of journalism. Using interviews with journalists to analyse the metaphors used to conceptualise their work Gravengaard, found that several 'multi-layered conceptions of newswork' were described in the discussions and that rather than being mutually exclusive they were indeed 'co-present in the journalist's consciousness' (Gravengaard 2011). In my study there is much evidence of a number of competing repertoires on which to construct journalism and these will be discussed in the coming chapters.

Other recent work has centred on talk in action *inside* the newsroom. Cotter's work of 2010 draws on interactional sociolinguistics and ethnographic traditions again using newsroom observations but also extensive interviews with journalists to interrogate the construction of news (Cotter, 2010). She looks at specific 'speech events' in the production process such as the 'morning meeting' where editorial staff gather each day to discuss which stories to pursue and which to drop. Using discourse level analysis she traces how news values are invoked to argue the case for story inclusion/exclusion. She argues that news values are

'easy to see' in the output of news but 'less apparent is the role of news values in practice, or the multi-stage process of reporting and editing that leads to the fully formed story.' She goes on to say that: 'Even more back-grounded, but essential, is their display in recurrent discursive activities within the news room' (Cotter, 2010, p95).

Work by Gavengaard and Rimstad (2012) has also looked at the morning meeting and takes language use as a central focus. They employ the tools of Conversation Analysis to look at how stories are eliminated from the news agenda during the editorial meetings. Here the methodology is systematically applied which affords close attention to the architecture of the exchanges revealing patterns of editorial selections. This and other work by Gravengaard discussed above, starts to peel back the layers of discursive work being done by journalists both reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action (Schön, 1983). This begins to recognise the role of the journalist in the production process.

Conclusion

Production studies using interviews with news producers have helped to build up layers of understanding of how newsrooms run and the roles of journalists within them. They have attempted to get close to the routine of journalists and their working environment. Tunstall's early description of news being 'non-routine' has, in subsequent studies, been seen as being riven with routines. These routines encompass the gathering of information in the field, the use of sources, the use of journalistic ritual such as objectivity and balance, the culture and myth of being a journalist. The study of production has made clear news is not as chaotic as it first appears to an outsider. However, these studies of routine have at times over-emphasised top down structures and theorised a static model of production. Journalists have ended up becoming merely a cog in the machinery of academic theory which has reduced news production to a 'bureaucratic routine' (Van Hout and Jacobs, 2008, p66).

A lot of studies have focussed on print journalists (with some notable exceptions, cf Born, 2004, Schlesinger, 1987) which have then been used as a starting point for application to other media. This can lead to the missing of crucial details of the workings of specific media forms. Temporal news cycles, for example, are very different between print and broadcast and present specific challenges. The need of television for pictures means that someone has to go and shoot them. The differences between print and television in terms of production, news values and consumption are 'quite profound' (Montgomery, 2007, p3) and there is a pressing need to work toward an understanding of the specifics of various media processes and formats.

Also, some of the studies cited above are now over half a century old. Although still containing valuable insights the media environment has changed and re-evaluations of theory and practice need to be carried out. Later investigations have sought to shift the focus from routine to practice and to bringing back the journalist, in a new raft, or 'second wave' (Cottle, 2000) of studies. Some of these are discussed above, and seem to be attempting to address some of the issues of media specificity and complexity.

However, many journalist accounts used in research are anecdotal either, written by journalists themselves or obtained by researchers to illustrate a case study (Van Dijk, 1988, p 3). It is not hard to get a quote from a disgruntled journalist to back up a theoretical position, as Tuggle and Hoffman have proved above. There is a need to move away from this random anecdotal use of quotes from journalists towards a more systematic analysis of their discourse.

The language and discourse of journalistic output has been subjected to widespread and detailed analysis both in print journalism (Fowler, 1991, Van Dijk, 1988, Conboy 2006) and broadcast talk (Matheson 2005, Hutchby, 2006, Mongomery, 2007). However, when interviewing journalists this kind of analysis has largely been suspended with conversations with practitioners being treated as transparent transferals of information. It is ironic that the words spoken by reporters to researchers are not scrutinised with as much rigour as the words written by the same reporters in their newspapers and news bulletins.

News is not driven entirely by routines, news values, technology or management. The practice of news production is a complex interplay of outside pressures and shifts which are absorbed or resisted at newsroom level. As shown above, individually and collectively news workers mediate the products both reflecting management needs and the needs of journalistic professionalism. This interplay is as much about talk as process, as practitioners talk news into being through a discourse of newsworthiness and production procedures.

Recently, there has been a turn towards a greater emphasis on the linguistic and discursive aspect of news production. These micro analyses of the processes of news practice trace the evolution of news values and practice in individual stories and journalists. There has also been work on the discursive construction of news work.

This matters because discourse can have material consequences and impact on social actions. Discourse analysts Fairclough and Wodak describe discourse as 'socially *constitutive* as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people' (Fairclough

and Wodak, 1997, p258). The cogs in the news wheel are not merely performing duties, they are agents in the process.

Accounts of news work have differed sharply between academics and journalists. Firstly, the explanation employed by many scholars is that news is an inevitable product structured by the institution with little agency of the journalists. Secondly, journalists portray their work as being the product of free agents who fight against institutional constraints (Peterson 2001, Van Hout and Jacobs, 2008). By looking at the discursive construction of news work and news values created by practitioners a middle line is struck. It does not suggest that journalists are autonomously able to create news nor does it reduce them to automatons. Instead it is sensitive to how the discursive constructions are constituted in and through practice and how they bring something to bear on the process. It also allows for reflection on the wider social context of news as well as the micro level context of news production

While some work discussed above has begun to look systematically at the talk of journalists I propose in the next chapter a research project which hopes to go further towards a systematic analysis of the discursive constructions of news values and practice, using the analytical tools of discursive social psychology.

Chapter 3:

Methodology: Attending to Talk

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined how studies of the newsroom and journalistic practice have done much to explain some of the routines and processes of news production. I also argued that a more discursive and context sensitive approach towards news production has the possibility of leading us in to new areas of understanding about the evolution of news values and patterns of practice. In this chapter I will outline the design of a study of news production and values through a discourse analysis of conversations I held with 23 television journalists regarding their work and lives. I will also flesh out the discourse approach I take and why.

Talking to journalists

Studies of newsrooms and those who work in them, as discussed in the previous chapter, have helped to make sense of structures and practices of production. Recent studies have started to move away from a stress on the routine to more de-centred models of practice. In many of these studies, journalists have been used as a primary source of information about practice. This is necessary to the field of study for two important reasons. Firstly, access to newsrooms is often severely restricted if allowed at all. Georgina Born's study of the BBC is frequently occupied with her battle to gain admittance to meetings and areas of interest (Born, 2004). Even when access is granted, this can be tenuous, and limited in time and range. This struggle for access seems likely to get worse as image conscious media conglomerates become even more research shy (Paterson and Domingo, 2008). The minutia of the delicate process of editorial decision-making, in particular, is a difficult area in which to gain sufficient time and access to analyse. Therefore, without the entry to the places where decisions are made the researcher is forced to talk to the people involved, that is, the practitioners.

Even if one is lucky enough to gain entry to the newsroom or bureau, this does not negate the need to talk to journalists as they are often necessary to explain what is happening when

processes and practices are obscure to the outside observer[5]. Part of the reason it was difficult to pick up on processes is that newsrooms have become quieter in recent years as communications between news editors, reporters and sources has moved from the phone to email or other text-based communications. For the participant observer it is harder to 'eaves drop' on a conversation when this 'conversation' takes place in a silent digital world. Also news production, especially in the digital world takes place in multiple temporal and geographical locations. Even if a researcher has permission to read the electronic communications of a journalist over their shoulder it does limit the researcher to one person whilst electronic conversations are happening on only the other side of the desk unobserved, let alone in the various far flung sites of production. This problem has been identified by a number of researchers (Hemmingway, 2008; Paterson and Domingo, 2008), and seems likely to increase as more and more news work is carried out in the digital domain. Matthews and Cottle have gone so far as to question the efficacy of this kind of research saying that organisational studies and ethnographies of news makers is 'a methodological stance that is rapidly becoming of limited insight in an increasingly virtual news production environment that extends beyond one location' (Matthews and Cottle, 2012, p106).

I would not want to dismiss this approach out of hand as it can and does yield interesting data as evinced in the previous chapter. The more important point I want to make is that production research needs to make use of interviews with journalists to untangle some of the mysteries of process. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the interviews with journalists have often been treated as transparent information. The journalists supply useful quotes to back up a pre-existing theory of news production, or are simply giving 'facts' about that production. Yet, as sociologists have long asserted, interviewing people is not a value free activity. As Deacon *et al* put it: '…although giving a straight answer to a straight question is considered a social virtue, asking and answering questions is rarely, if ever, a straightforward matter' (Deacon *et al,* 2007, p64).

In response to this researchers have attempted to 'read between the lines' of the interviews to see how it matches up to some notional 'reality'. However, this kind of research is predicated on the idea that what people say can be measured against some independent objective 'truth'. That is, that some accounts are 'true' and some not. I want to move away from this realist approach that separates some accounts from others and instead turn to a

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[5] As a participant observer at a British national newspaper I spent a number of days sitting in the newsroom watching the home desk go about its daily routine. However, even though I had spent many years working in newsrooms as a practitioner, this did not give me enough necessary knowledge to completely catch the processes of decision-making and editing by observation alone. This was because my experience lay in *television* newsrooms not print - a valuable lesson in understanding the need for media-specific theory and research.

more relativistic approach, one in which discourse is treated as the subject of study for itself rather than as a window to an objective reality. I intend to move the journalists' discourse to centre stage rather than an afterthought. And I want to do this because this discourse not only *describes* new production but also, I would argue, in part, *constitutes* news production.

In the field of media studies there has been a great deal of examination of the output of news using the theoretical framework of linguistics and discourse analysis (Bell,1991, Fairclough, 1995, Van Dijk, 1998, Fowler, 1991, Conboy, 2006, Matheson, 2005, Hutchby, 2006, Mongomery, 2007). However, this method has not been fully exploited in production studies. Below I set out a plan to look in detail at the discursive construction of editorial decision making, news values and journalistic identity, specifically for television news. My approach to discourse analysis follows closely from work carried out in the area of discursive social psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Wetherell and Potter, 1992, Potter 1996) which lends itself to the study of news for reasons I will outline in the following discussion.

In this chapter the first section will outline the method and design of the study, including the selection of participants and the method of interviewing. The next two sections concern the two analytical frameworks adopted. The first deals with the 'how' of the analysis, the second with the 'what'. The 'how' section explains the discursive methodological approach taken in analysing the raw data of the interviews. The third and final 'what' section details the areas of news production focused on for examination.

The chapter draws on research into production but also on my time spent working in three organisations' newsrooms (Reuters Television, Sky News and Associated Press Television News) since 1994. This experience is of course partial and makes no claim to be comprehensive. However, this time working in an evolving medium for news outlets, at the hub and on occasions in the field for both broadcast and agency has informed the questions asked and the people chosen for study.

Method

For this research project extended face-to-face interviews were carried out with 23 television journalists, namely correspondents, news editors and producers from three main British broadcasters, BBC, Sky News, and Channel 4, and the two largest news agencies both headquartered in London, Reuters Television[6] (RTV) and Associated Press Television[7]

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[6] Reuters Television is now part of Thomson Reuters a Canadian company, but its television headquarters remains in London

(APTN). Roughly an equal number from each organisation was interviewed – 5 each from Channel 4, Sky News and APTN, and 4 each from BBC and RTV. Some people were based at bureaus abroad and the rest were based in London but travelled if stories warranted. The interviews concentrated on the journalists' working lives and the stories they worked on. Below I will detail the design of the research project, specifically the selection criteria of the participants and the method of interviewing.

<u>Who is a journalist?</u>

This study deals with the discourse of television journalists. But who exactly is a television journalist? Journalism is a strange occupation, hard to categorise. Historically, there has been a split between those who saw it as a profession and those who saw it as a trade or craft (Hampton, 1999, Bromley, 1997). In the late 1960s having a degree was still fairly uncommon with only a third of London reporters having one (Tunstall, 1971). Over the last 40 years this seems to be changing. By the late 1990s research showed that only a third had *not* had exposure to higher education (Henningham and Delano, 1998), and by the beginning of the 21st century nearly everyone entering the profession had a least a degree with nearly half also having a masters qualification (Journalism Training Forum 2002).

Even with the increased 'professionalisation' of journalism it still remains rather an odd one. As Rosen says, it is neither a science nor a business (Rosen, 1999) and compared to other professions journalism, in McQuail's terms, is 'weakly institutionalised' (McQuail 1994, p198) and that this is associated with the lack of definition in the unique core skills of journalism (McQuail, 2005 p289). In spite of the numerous college courses there still remains no entry standard or license to be obtained before you can walk into a newsroom and start writing. If members of the profession act in unprofessional ways there is no mechanism for striking them off. The profession is not a business in the sense that journalists generally do not own the paper or programme they work for. Many journalists have little theoretical knowledge of their craft and books by academics on the state of journalism are seldom read by practicing journalists (Harcup 2012).

Reflecting the lack of a definition of agreed core skills, within the industry, there exist many different types of 'journalist' who perform different tasks across and within media organisations. Journalists move between roles and positions within an organisation and between organisations. The increasing convergence of different media is blurring the discrete lines between media production and output. Newspapers now run online editions incorporating moving pictures as well as text and photos. Television stations also run

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[7] The Associated Press headquarters is in New York. However, the television division and its international newsroom is based in London.

complimentary websites requiring television journalists to write text stories. However, there remains a good deal of specialization due to the culture and practical considerations of production. Multimedia newsrooms such at Associated Press or Reuters in London incorporate internet, photos, wire services and television in one space which enables the rapid sharing of information and images. Yet each area is staffed by specialists with little cross over in personnel.

Within a television newsroom journalist roles are divided into a number of departments, the hub of which is the television output of home and foreign desks. Around these can be circled a number of different types of media, for example radio and online, and a number of semi-autonomous specialist strands such as entertainment, sport, business, and weather. For the purposes of this study I will be concentrating on the core activities of the newsroom 'home' and 'foreign'. A further division is between those who are out in the field and those who are in the newsroom, or 'gatherers' and 'processors' as Tunstall termed them (Tunstall, 1971). Within the office there are the news gatherers and the news producers or 'intake' and 'output' as they are sometimes know. The newsgathering side deals with organising and directing coverage in the field. The news producing side takes the semi-raw material brought in from the field by news gathering and polishes and packages it to fit into the given format of a bulletin. These two departments are often engaged in quite different journalistic activities. News gathering can have a great influence on what stories are commissioned and brought in whilst production can have a greater influence on the treatment and temper of the story telling. These divisions are not absolute and morning meetings attended by both gatherers and producers are used as arenas to hammer out a consensus.

Television news is also divided into broadcast and agency news organisations. The two agencies examined in this study are Reuters and the Associated Press. Both organisations deal in the provision of news stories to media subscribers and both organisations have specialised departments such as print, television and photos tailored to meet the requirements of their clients. The basic difference between broadcast and agency has often been characterised as the broadcaster being the retailer of news and the agency being the wholesaler. Broadcasters subscribe to an agency news service, usually on a three year contract costing anything from several thousand to several million dollars depending on the size of the broadcaster and its audience (Baker 2004). For this the broadcaster will receive a number of stories a day via satellite or internet delivery.

In many ways the news gathering and producing activities of both broadcast and agency are not so different. Both send out teams to shoot stories, bring them into the headquarters where they are fashioned into a suitable format for airing. The two diverge in a number of

aspects. Agencies do not use on-screen reporters and there is an emphasis of routine coverage for example of 'handshakes' of various foreign ministers visiting other foreign ministers or routine press conferences. This coverage enables broadcasters to do the more interesting 'side bar' stories.

Another important difference is the 'audience' of an agency compared to a broadcaster. For a broadcaster the audience is the viewers at home. For an agency the audience is layered. According to the Associated Press, half the world's population will see some AP output on any given day (AP website). Even more independent assessments of agency audience reach put the figure at over a billion people each day (Tunstall and Machin, 1999). This is much larger than any individual broadcaster – even the BBC. However, more immediately the agency audience is much smaller than any broadcasters – consisting of other journalists sitting in newsrooms around the world, scratching their heads wondering how they are going to fill their bulletin that day.

For both agency and broadcast, all these employees whether in the office or out in the field, in front of the camera or behind, bring their own weight to bear on each news story, albeit to varying degrees of efficacy. All these people I will call journalists when talked about collectively as they all engage in the activities of journalism. That is, they seek to present an account of a recent event or new information about an old event; it is an event of interest and interesting to the general public; and the account aspires towards an accurate and true portrayal of an event as far as the temporal and physical constraints allow. In short they are all involved in editorialising and thus are part of the discourse.

Selection criteria of interviewees

For this study I have selected a specific group of people to interview based on a number of factors. Firstly and perhaps most crucially, is availability. Access to journalists is notoriously hard to negotiate. Therefore, I began the task by asking friends and colleagues if they would agree to be interviewed. I then used a 'snowball' approach by asking them if their friends and colleagues would be willing to participate (Deacon et al 2007, p54). Secondly, the participants were chosen if they fitted two criteria concerning the organisation the journalist worked for and their particular job.

Firstly, all participants needed to be working for a news organisation based in London with an international element to news coverage. London was chosen as the city as it is one of, if not *the* world's, international news centre. Global market leaders like BBC and Sky are based here as are the two global television news agencies – Reuters and Associated Press Television. Other international organisations with headquarters in their home nation still

choose London as hub for European and/or Middle East coverage. Companies which fell into the category for research were the BBC, ITN/Channel4, Sky News[8], Reuters Television, and the Associated Press Television.

Research around the world has found huge variation in how journalists view themselves and their role (Patterson and Donsbach, 1996, Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). Weaver's meta-analysis of several studies carried out in several countries show significant differences in how journalists see their role. For example out of nine countries surveyed British journalists were the least likely to consider accurate and objective reporting as important in the job (Weaver, 1998). A more recent comparative study of 18 countries found similarities across cultures in some respects such as an emphasis on the watchdog role, but Western journalists tended to shy away from any interventionist role in contrast to the more 'active' attitude of developing countries and transitional democracies (Hanitzsch *et al* 2011)[9]. A study of newspapers coverage of the phone hacking scandal which led to the closing of Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World* tabloid also shows marked differences between attitudes to journalism's methods and ethics. UK discussion focussed on the context of the hacking – that is, who was being hacked, rather than condemning the method outright. US debate was more concerned about the practice of hacking and worries over US journalism being 'infected' by Murdoch's methods (Carlson and Berkowitz, 2013).

These variations between countries led to the decision to focus the research on London news organisations to give consistency and completeness – that is, it was possible to talk to employees of all five of the identified organisations. Obviously, any further work in this area would need to be mindful of extrapolating from one national study on to other nations.

The second criteria revolved around the specific jobs of the participants. It was decided to concentrate on core workers in news work. Therefore an interviewee needed to be employed in one of the following job areas: news editing from senior newsroom management down to programme editors; reporting; producing.

News editing is mainly a desk based job in the newsroom. Broadcast programme editors will be on the production side and in charge of that day's bulletin and all the stories both home and foreign which will be included. Broadcasters will also have home and foreign editors who are news gatherers of that day's stories – talking to the reporters and producers in the field and in London on story content and editorial lines. A broadcaster may also have home and foreign planning editors who look at future events to plan coverage both logistically and editorially. Agency news editing consists of a day-of-air editor who is in charge of news

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[8] Sky News also supplies Channel 5 with news content
[9] The Hanitzsch *et al* (2011) study did not include the UK.

gathering that day's stories. There is likely to be an 'output' editor who oversees the edited stories being sent to subscribers. Agencies and broadcasters often have some sort of planning editors who work on future stories and coverage logistics.

The second area of work consists of reporting. A reporter is the face of the broadcaster and is what the public associate as a television journalist. Initially a reporter starting out will be part of a pool of labour based in the regions or London and assigned daily by the home or foreign editors. Sometimes this means repackaging agency pictures and putting on a voice-over. Sometimes it means going out in the field to shoot a piece then return to the newsroom to edit and voice. As reporters move up the hierarchy they may specialise, for example, as a royal correspondent or home correspondent or move abroad to become a foreign correspondent. A reporter will cover, write and edit stories through negotiation with his or her producer, the camera operator, and the editor in the newsroom. As mentioned above, news agencies do not use on-camera reporters. This is because the subscribers come from all over the world and broadcast in hundreds of languages so need to put their own voice track on agency pictures. Broadcast viewers are generally unaware that news pictures have been provided by agencies partly because most broadcasters do not need to credit them on screen. This perpetuates the image of broadcaster as being able to generate cover everywhere rather than being reliant on others (Paterson and Sreberny, 2004).

Both broadcasters and agencies employ people in the third job category – that of producing. Producers in broadcast work with reporters to cover stories both in the newsroom in London and out in the field. In the newsroom they will chase down pictures and sources, set up interviews, oversee graphics and work on the editorial line with the reporters. Out in the field they are expected to be in charge of logistics such as where the team may sleep or eat and again, to again chase sources, set up interviews, gain official permissions to film and all manner of issues that arise when away from the newsroom. They are also nominally in charge of the reporter or reporters and have editorial control. In practice this will depend on the individual reporters' and producers' relationships and their ability to negotiate. Agency producers work in similar ways except they do not have to deal with reporters. The agency producer will write the stories and edit the pictures themselves often, but not always, in conjunction with the text reporters from their organisation.

These three areas of activity make up the bulk of a newsrooms editorial staff and have the most influence on the day to day editorial decision making process. I have not included picture editors or camera operators as discrete jobs. The roles of filming and editing pictures are often carried out by producers and reporters themselves in smaller operations. Also picture editors and camera operators rarely initiate coverage of an event.

Approximately half of the participants in the study came from news gathering and half from output. This division is sometimes a blurred one as many producers for example will work in the field news gathering on one day and be editing for production in the London HQ the next. Participants were involved in foreign and home news, with this division constantly being crossed as home reporters are sent on foreign stories (especially now that many organisations have drastically cut back on foreign correspondents). News editors often work both foreign and home desks and programme editors oversee total programme output and therefore keep across both areas. Producers work on whatever story the editor assigns them - be it foreign or home news. For broadcasters 'foreign' is usually denoted as any news event happening outside the country from where they broadcast.[10] For international news agencies there is no 'foreign' and 'home' as such. Instead news is divided into domestic and international for each country. For example if a shadow culture minister in Hungary is found to be laundering money the story is likely to only be of interest to Hungarians and is judged as domestic, and the Hungarian broadcasters would be presumed to cover this story themselves. Therefore agency cover would not be deemed necessary. However, if Hungary declares war on Poland that is of interest beyond Poland and becomes international and worthy of cover.[11]

The journalists: Participant demographics

Having identified the roles and organisations to be examined and having negotiated interviews with relevant people, though a statistically small group they are perhaps indicative of some trends in this area of journalism. The interviewees' ages ranged from 30 to 55 years old, with the average age of just over 40 years old. This relatively mature age is probably a reflection of the jobs they were doing at the time of the interviews. The three roles chosen – news editor, producer and correspondent often take time to achieve.

The interviews were more or less divided into equal numbers of men and women, with 13 men and 10 women taking part. This was not a conscious decision, more accident than design. However, that I did not need to consciously seek out women may reflect the growing number of women in the industry working at the level of editor and reporter now.

All but three interviewees were graduates. Of the three that were not graduates one had left after 'O' levels and two after 'A' levels. They made up 3 of the 4 people interviewed over 50 year olds. The other over 50 person had started at college but dropped out after a year when he got a job in journalism. He was the only drop out I interviewed. Of the graduates no one

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[10] There are variations on this as in some UK newsrooms the Republic of Ireland is still regarded as 'home'.
[11] There has been various critiques of the Anglo-American slant in the coverage by the two agencies coverage. And indeed even Nigel Baker, a senior manager of AP admits coverage tends towards the richer clients (Baker, 2004). All clients are equal but some are more equal than others.

admitted to having majored in journalism. One person had studied Communications and one had studied media as a joint honours. The subjects studied by the other interviewees were largely made up of various combinations of English literature, European languages, politics, economics and history. Geography and science were studied by one interviewee each. Postgraduate study was undertaken by five people taking masters in either international relations or journalism. Fifteen described having undertaken some sort of apprenticeship or internship.

Only two respondents said they had worked for only one employer. The rest listed an often varied career of moves from format to format and organisation to organisation. Nearly half had worked in print at some stage - usually at the beginning of their careers – often an initial internship. A few had started in broadcast then taken time out to do print then returned to broadcast. Seven had worked for radio divided between BBC local and regional radio and IRN regional stations. Nearly half had only worked in television. Seven had worked for the BBC at some point earlier in their career even if they did not now work for the Corporation. The second most mentioned previous employer was CNN.

In terms of language the participants had grown up in various locations in North America, Latin America, Europe and Australasia speaking a number of languages as their mother tongue. Many have moved around the world working in different countries and languages often operating in a language other than their native tongue. Therefore differences in conversational style are bound to be present. However, in spite of the interviewees coming from a number of countries and speaking collectively many different languages at home and at work, the discursive threads identified and discussed in Chapters 4 to 7 are surprisingly consistent. This may be due to factors such as all the participants presently work for companies based in London, whose operating *lingua franca* is English. All participants spoke in fluent English during the interviews. For those working for broadcasters their audience is English speaking. Perhaps this consistency indicates how the discourse of television journalism is absorbed by the individual workers across geography and language.

It is important to emphasise that many of the people who participated in this study worked for a number of organisations during their careers and were employed in many of the different jobs. The fragility of television employment means that many did not have a clear upward trajectory in their careers. Redundancy, sacking, career breaks for travel or children, overseas placements often resulted in people moving around the industry and having to take what work was available. There were no discernible patterns of employment with regard to gender or age or organisation or job. Instead there was a general pattern of a small group of individuals shifting between organisations. Many individuals knew others from across the

sector having worked with them at other organisations. For example two people I interviewed currently working at the same organisation I had worked with at two other separate places. They now worked together and had many contacts in common. There is a relatively small number of people working these areas and this constant flow between newsrooms means there is an intricate network of contacts, peer group knowledge and shared discourse of news.

Interviewing method

For this research project I carried out a series of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the selected participants in order to access the discourse of news practice. Interviews were held in a variety of locations such as participants' homes, cafes, restaurants, bars and hotel rooms. None were carried out inside the place of work. However, some took place during lunch breaks or at dinner across the road from the work place. Each interview lasted approximately one hour (some considerably longer) and in each case it was explained to the participant that the interview was confidential and anonymous. In the final write-up all names and identifying comments have been disguised. For example when people have referred to other individuals (sometimes well-known broadcasters) these names have also be disguised if the inclusion of comments could compromise the anonymity of the interviewee.

Interviews were chosen over other possible methods of investigation for a number of reasons. Firstly, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, although practice-based work has much to say about news production it also has its limitations. Newsroom activity is often hard to capture due to the increasing digital nature of communications as well as the multi-locational and multi-temporal factors inherent in current news production. Also all the field based work also includes interviews with the practitioners so that the interviews carried out for this research fit into a broad base of interview data.

Secondly, interviews allow for intervention. There are subjects and issues I particularly wanted to concentrate on and the semi-structured format of the conversations enabled a focused investigation on the areas of interest. The ability in an interview to direct the questions and subject area enable a more direct route to the issues under investigation (McCracken, 1988). Each interviewee was asked the questions detailed below in the same order. However, supplementary questions were added if interesting points needed pursuing as the interview progressed.

Thirdly, and most crucially, interviews allowed access to the discourse of news production. The interviews were carried out in a 'free format' to 'encourage interactive dialogue' which would most closely match normal conversation (Deacon et al, 1999, p63). This was aided

by the relaxed atmosphere of the encounters over dinner or drinks with the interviewee often the friend or colleague of the interviewer. The point of these conversations was to reproduce at some level the everyday talk of journalists in order to look at how certain practices and issues were talked into being. Therefore the interviews were conversations and not interrogations. Points of interest were pursued but it was not the aim to back the individual into a corner, nor to encourage speculation on previously unexplored issues, as this then accesses and creates a different type of discourse.[12] Work carried out on audience reactions has taken a similar approach, using conversations with viewers groups as a means to gain access to the 'discursive practice' of the audience (Jensen, 1991, p140) and work on discursive repertoires have also used interviews to gain entry to constructions of race (Wetherell and Potter, 1992) and gender (Gill, 1993). Those who took part were all practicing journalists at the point when I spoke to them. Most were either in the middle of a shift or had finished a shift that day or the day before. This 'on-site' (ie still employed in the industry) type of interview enables a more immediate response to events as they are developing rather than talking to those who had retired or left the industry (off-site) and were speaking from a distance (Hannerz, 2004).

The aim of this project was to come to a better understanding of the way the news is produced by examining the discourse of decision making in news selection. Therefore the main subject areas were the editorial process of covering stories and the evolution of news values. I wanted to use recent news stories the interviewee may have been involved in to talk through the coverage. This, I hoped, would enable the interviewee to discuss actual events rather than speculating on hypothetical situations. Talking about these events would draw out a number of repertoires around issues such as notions about the audience, news values and practice, and professional identity and ideology.

The Questions

Each participant was asked the following questions which covered their careers, their present role, stories they had worked on and their personal achievements. Below is the list of questions and the rationale behind each one.

1. Basic Demographics

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[12] I have on occasions been interviewed by researchers, as a journalist. Often the questions referred to issues I had not previously much thought of, or even thought of at all. I found myself struggling to come up with a coherent argument – that is to find a previously unused 'interpretive repertoire' to explain myself. This type of interview has its place in the examination of news but was not appropriate for this particular study.

Each interviewee was asked their name, gender, age and how they would describe their ethnic identity. The ethnic identity is an open question rather than giving the person a list of choices.

2. Personal history

Here the interviewee was asked to give a brief history of their career in journalism, and how they first began and why they chose that particular profession. This question and the next were asked at the beginning of the interview as it tends to help the person relax. It is generally easier to talk about one's working life than questions about work ethics and methods, especially on first meeting someone. It was hoped this question would also begin to reveal how people frame journalism as a profession and identity. Journalism is often seen as a crusading vocation yet in studies where journalists are interviewed the discourse can be very different. For example in Henningham and Delano's survey of British journalists only 2 percent mentioned public service as a motivation for entering the profession (Henningham and Delano, 1998). British students undergoing journalism education in the early 21st century and subsequently entering the industry, exhibit similar views (Hanna and Sanders, 2007). This question hoped to tease out these conflicting images. .

3. Present employment

The interviewee was asked their job title and to give a brief description of what that job involved and where it fitted into the organisation. This question was also an 'easy' question to answer and again an interviewee should feel happy to answer. This question also sought to look at the journalist's identity and where they fitted within this culture, and where divisions lay. It also was there to look at what was deemed important to mention. Loyalties often shift about when fighting for stories. Alliances are made and broken in the field and in the London newsroom. Journalists flock to the same stories and spend a lot of time with each other. Therefore this question attempted to address the discourse of identity both collective and individual.

4. Everyday routine

The interviewee was asked to describe an average day as far as that is possible. Sometimes this may have been two or three 'average' days for example if people are in the newsroom or out in the field overseas or in the UK. Again this question opened up issues of identity and began to address routines and process.

5. Editorial process/news values

This section comprised of questions about news values and the production process and took up the most time in the interview.

5a. Counting backwards the interviewee was asked about the last five stories they had worked on. In each case the interviewer asked what made the event newsworthy. Often discussions ranged over more than five stories as comparisons were made.

5b. The interviewee was asked about stories that have not made it to air, firstly by trying to remember actual examples or more generally the types of story which they did not think would make it and why.

5c. The interviewee was asked about the case of 'Maddie' (Madeleine McCann), the British girl who disappeared when her family were holidaying in Portugal in 2007, specifically how it was covered and why it was a story.

5d. The interviewee was asked about the use of 'live' coverage by their outlet – how it is used and what it adds to stories.

With these questions I wanted to invite the interviewee to explore how and why events evolved into news; what their role was in coverage; and what made each event newsworthy or not. As stated before, by talking about stories the person actually worked on this was intended to keep the discussion focussed on the journalist's lived working life rather than asking them to hypothesis on practice. Also it enabled me to ask essentially the same question several times but each time applied to a slightly different situation - that is – what made each story worth covering? This helped draw out the possible diversity of discourse around the subject (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). I also wanted to look at the absences both in what stories did not make it to air and in how discourse of news values stumbles and is at times mute on certain issues and stories.

The purpose of the Maddie and 'live' questions was to use them as basic control questions. The people I interviewed came from a number of organisations and job roles and the interviews took place over an extended period of time so it was possible that none of them would have worked on any of the same stories. Therefore it was useful to get them to speak about at some stories or types of coverage to see if there are patterns which are consistent in both the interviewee's personal stories and the more general 'control' stories.

The Maddie question was chosen because it was a story which dominated British (and well beyond) news coverage in the summer of 2007 and re-emerged over several years. This story was both a 'home' story and a 'foreign story' and was covered by all the British broadcasters, international news agencies as well as television stations across Europe, the

US, the Middle East and beyond. It also continued for many months. These two aspects meant many people I interviewed would have worked directly or indirectly on the story.

Also this story raised issues about news values. The coverage of the Maddie case was criticised at the time for concentrating on one pretty blonde middle-class girl when hundreds of other less photogenic children disappear daily, an issue brought up obliquely in interviews (see Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion). Even supposed highbrow news organisations such as Channel 4 and the BBC covered the story extensively as the story became 'too big to ignore'. I was interested in how journalists accounted for this story and how issues around news values were resolved discursively.

The participants were all asked about the use of live coverage generally. Live television coverage of news has grown over the last few decades linked to the proliferation of 24 hour news channels and the development of relatively cheap transmission technology (Lewis et al., 2005). As news values 'timeliness' and 'liveness' have become increasingly important factors in the editorial decision making process, if not a priority. As one executive at BBC News 24 comments: "The format is news, business and sports, but more live than Sky." (cited in Born, 2004 p409).

However, 'liveness' is as much an idea constructed by broadcasters as it is a real event being broadcast. Liveness on television is what Bourdon calls an 'institutional performance' (Bourdon, 2000, p534). It is not, as Couldry puts it, a natural category but 'a constructed term' (Couldry, 2003, p98). Live offers a discourse of authenticity and veracity. Feuer explains how live coverage 'reverberates with suggestions with "being there"' (Feuer, 1983, p14). Although live coverage of actual breaking news is still fairly rare 'liveness' is always immanent, as Marriot terms it (Marriott, 2007) and when nothing is happening at the scene 24-hour news channels plugs this gap with graphics and a multiplicity of live locations allowing a director to flood the audience with the impression of activity.

It is also unclear what effect this emphasis on 'liveness' has on the quality of new coverage. For example, Dutch researchers, Snoeijer *et al* showed audiences the same politics story either as a live 2-way or as an edited news package and found that viewers had better recall of the story if they had seen the news package rather than the live 2-way (Snoeijer *et al,* 2000). Also, as former Sky News executive Nick Pollard admits, live coverage is a costly in terms of technology and manpower (Pollard, 2009). With a finite budget and resources this kind of coverage can only mean other stories are *not* covered.

Therefore the question on 'liveness' sought to draw out discourse on new technological and format developments and whether they were constructed as positive or negative changes, if

they were framed as changes at all.

6. Audience

The interviewee was asked about who the audience is for their news programme and why. This was followed by a question about how they know about the audience. The audience was often invoked when editorial judgement was under discussion. 'It's what the audience wants' was a frequent refrain when justifying coverage. I wanted to explore this framing of the audience and how it is used in story coverage. On the one hand the audience is cited as the reason for coverage and on the other as not being important. In his review of surve

ys of journalists Mark Deuze points out that in the work place:

> Outside forces are kept at bay primarily by the rather self-referential nature of newswork, as expressed through the tendency among journalists to privilege whatever colleagues think of their work over criteria such as viewer ratings, hit counts or sales figures. (Deuze, 2008 p18)

Therefore this question sought to look as how the audience is used flexibly to support decision making at certain times and at others to be ignored on grounds of professionalism.

7. Personal agency

7a. The interviewee was asked which story they have covered they regard as their proudest achievement and which their worst.

7b. The interviewee was asked if they thought the way they worked was in any way different from other people and in what way. If they do not think it was different, why was that?

These questions dealt with how the individual agency of the journalist is framed. As discussed in Chapter 2 the issue of the role of the journalist in the production process is an area of much debate. While the image of the autonomous journalist is a seductive one, many have argued the 'reality' of news work often means there is little wriggle room for an individual to make changes in the system. I was interested to see which journalistic identity the participants drew on and to explore its relationship to editorial judgement.

8. What have I missed?

The final question I have taken from Hannerz who interviewed various foreign correspondents and foreign editors and often ended the interview by asking whether he had

failed to ask about anything he ought to have asked about (Hannerz, 2004). I asked participants what I had missed which opened up a space for the journalists to frame the discourse themselves. I also expected this to be an opportunity for individuals to repair any mis-answers they perceived they had made.

Analytic framework: methodology

As discussed in Chapter 2, a more discursive approach to the theorisation and analysis of news production would be a fruitful re-orientation for future studies in this area. Researchers are now beginning to pursue a number of lines of enquiry (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion). In the following section I will outline the particular discourse road I intend to travel and why.

Discourse analysis and social psychology

One area of study which has taken up the notion of discourse is social psychology in a radical rethinking of the field. In Potter and Wetherell's influential book *Discourse and Social Psychology* they lay out a proposal for a new type of psychology with discourse analysis at its heart (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Potter and Wetherell move to a functionalist approach to language rather than realist. That is, they see language as being used to do things rather than just as a description of an objective reality. By 'doing things' I mean that language is not neutral but rather called into action by the speaker to perform a variety of functions depending on the specific situation. I do not mean that a speaker necessarily has consciously devised a plan of 'action' every time they speak, rather that people over a lifetime of use have become practiced at using language, rather like riding a bike. One can be pedalling and obeying traffic laws yet one's mind is not necessarily consciously engaged in the activity.

Traditional social psychology has used language as a window into the interior world of the individual. Potter and Wetherell argue against this epistemology, saying that language itself needs to be looked because it is constitutive and has consequences, or, as they describe it:

> …we are not trying to recover events, beliefs and cognitive processes from participants' discourse, or treat language as an indicator or signpost to some other state of affairs but looking at the analytically prior question of how discourse or accounts of these things are manufactured. (Potter and Wetherell 1987, p35)

This discursive approach draws on a number of disciplines and theories. Firstly, J. L. Austin's speech act theory has been highly influential. In Austin's philosophical attempt to

define the linguistic differences between various types of sentences he looked at statements, or as he termed them 'constatives' which described things and 'performatives' which did things, such as 'I name this ship'. During a series of lectures delivered to Harvard University in 1955 he reasoned that the distinctions were not reliable and that *all* language performs in some way (Austin, 1962). No statement is *just* a statement.

Although Austin's project was primarily a philosophical repost to positivist approaches to language and he gives little in any practical sense of how to analyse language in the rough, dealing as he does with idealised sentences, he does however, point researchers in a useful direction. He sees language as having a force. As Potter explains, 'Austin emphasised the *practical* nature of language. Language is used to do things; it is a medium of action' (Potter, 1996, p11). Austin also saw how certain 'performatives' could be misunderstood or 'infelicitous' and therefore saw language as only working within a set of cultural conventions understood by the speakers.

The ideas of Austin that all language was active in doing things as well as describing things and that it gained meaning from social context was also an idea taken up by proponents of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology as developed by Harold Garfinkel and others, looks at the ways people make sense of their social world. As John Heritage explains, Garfinkel proposed that people have 'shared methods of practical reasoning' (Heritage, 2001 p49) in order to achieve this and these methods are brought about through social interaction. Therefore ethnomethodologists are very interested in how language is used in this process. Lawrence Wieder used the ethnomethodological approach when looking at institutional rules (Wieder 1974). He identifies a 'code' or a set of rules (in this case in a half-way hostel) but illustrates that this is not a static arbiter of behaviour – instead the code is a tool used by inmates in a number of different ways depending on the context. In other words, it was not a case of what people did for the code, but rather what the code could do for them in different situations. As Wieder explains: ''telling the code', and any particular instance of formulating the code, exhibits, rather than describes or explains' (Wieder, 1974, p185). Instead of taking the code at face values Wieder showed how it was manipulated and utilised by both staff and inmates at the hostel. He took the discourse of the code as a focus of the study rather than seeing it as an 'explanatory resource'.

The two main aspects of ethnomethodolgy of interest here are the indexicality and the reflexivity of language. Indexicality refers to the context of any spoken utterance. That is, a sentence can only be understood in a specific way when heard in situ. For example, a producer in a news room may say 'kill the babies'. Out of context this could be read as an instruction for someone to carry out multiple infanticide. In context it can be understood as

an instruction to drop a story about a multiple birth. People working in a newsroom would pick the second reading as they can construct meaning from shared resources – that is a shared newsroom discourse. Reflexivity refers to how language is not simply describing something, it is doing something. Potter and Wetherell assert that language is not just used to describe certain events or actions it is a 'potent and *constitutive part* of the events or actions' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p21).

An off-shoot of ethnomethodology, Conversation Analysis (CA) developed by Harvey Sacks and his colleges Gail Jefferson and Emanuel Schegloff (Sacks 1992) has also examined interaction. It has taken the ideas of indexicality and reflexivity and applied them to micro analysis of spoken conversation. Indexicality is used in looking specifically at the sequencing in talk and reflexivity as the interaction between the speakers. CA's concerns lie in the revealing the architecture of naturally occurring interaction and has been used to look at institutional practice such as doctor/patient communications as well as interaction between people in everyday routines. Versions of CA have also been employed to examine conversations between news producers (Gravengaard and Rimstad 2012) as well as the output of news (Hutchby, 2006). It's systematic approach to has also enabled a more repeatable, verifiable body of data using verbatim texts rather than researchers' impressions of what is going on.

Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis again point to the importance of understanding language as being formed through interaction rather than pre-packaged and that language performs a number of functions some of which have consequences. However, these approaches do not have much to say about the wider social context which may determine why certain discourses appear. Ethnomethodology has been criticised for its lack of a critical aspect. That is, it attempts to reveal the structure of the prevailing discourse but makes no critical evaluation of what the alternatives may be or what the discourse tells us about the social world that created it. A similar argument has been directed against Conversation Analysis which is conceived of as 'basically independent of the motivational, psychological or sociological characteristics of individuals: the institution of interaction largely antedates the characteristics of those who staff it' (Heritage, 2001, p52). This stance of taking people's talk in their 'own terms' has been sharply questioned by more critical discourse analysts and discursive social psychologists as, at best, ignoring outside sociological differences which would be in play in any 'conversation' and at worst, not following its own rules by making prior assumptions about the participants in the analysis (See for example the exchange between Wetherell, Schegloff and Billig on the pages of the journal *Discourse and Society,* Schegloff 1998, 1999, Billig 1999a, 1999b, Wetherell 1998).

In the debate about the relationship between individual conversations and the wider social context of that talk I think it is useful to look at the work of Michel Foucault on discourse and power. Although coming from a different tradition from those discussed above there is a commonality regarding the construction of the objects and subjects through discourse. For Foucault discourse was a system for the production of knowledge and meaning. Foucault is not interested in discerning the veracity of discourse but in how knowledge is produced or, as he terms it, in how 'regimes of truth' are constructed. His work on these regimes of truth showed how they were time and location specific and how they conjured up the objects of which they spoke.

Foucault's use of discourse broke away from the division between language and actions. Hall describes discourse in the following terms, perhaps more succinctly than Foucault himself:

> It attempts to overcome the traditional distinction between what one *says* (language) and what one *does* (practice). Discourse, Foucault argues, constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. (Hall, 1997 p44).

Crucially, Hall goes on to say 'It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others' (Hall, 1997 p44). Discourse is constitutive either allowing certain meanings, or ways of talking to thrive or disallowing alternative meanings. Foucault characterizes discourse as having the power to produce the things of which it speaks. For example, in his examination of the discourse of sex in *The History of Sexuality* he proposes that the Victorian talk of sex made certain objects sexy. Repression did not lead to the disappearance of talk about sex instead it heightened sexual discourse (Foucault, 1978). For Foucault power is relayed through discourse and that power relations circulate throughout society rather than just from top down yet can be hierarchical and oppressive. As Foucault explains:

> Power relations are rooted in the system of social networks. This is not to say, however, that there is a primary and fundamental principle of power which dominates society down to the smallest detail; but taking as a point of departure the possibility of action upon the action of others (which is coextensive with every societal relationship), multiple forms of individual disparity, of objectives, of the given application of power over ourselves or others, of, in varying degrees, partial or universal institutionalization, or more or less deliberate organization, one can define different forms of power. (Foucault 1982 cited in Curran, 2002, p110)

The strength of Foucault's ideas is that discourse is historically specific and deals with discourse in its own right rather than as a description of an objective reality. It is concerned

with society's construction and circulation of versions of 'truth'. As Foucault says in a 1977 interview:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned: the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth: the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980, p131)

This notion of regimes of truth running throughout society is persuasive. However, just as the ethnomethodology and CA have received criticism for ignoring the outside world, Foucault's approach has been questioned over paying too little attention exactly how a discourse functions and evolves at the micro level. As Potter says: 'The limitation which this approach is that the discourses in this view become pre-formed coherent entities which act as causal agents' (Potter, 1996, p87). This means that the Foucauldian approach can fail to address the minutia of context specific encounters between subjects and fails to sufficiently explain the processes which produce certain discourses and objects.

This is not to say that Foucault's ideas are rendered moot by these weaknesses. Many scholars working at the micro discursive level have drawn on Foucauldian ideas to inform their work. For instance, Deborah Cameron cites Foucault when examining issues of expertise and power saying 'words can be powerful: the institutional authority to categorise people is frequently inseparable from the authority to do things to them' (Cameron, 2001, p16.) This kind of work pays heed to the wider significance of power relations whilst also working on a micro level of discourse. The awareness of this wider notion of 'expertise' is helpful when attempting to explain the why and, as importantly, how people construct certain accounts over others. Issues of entitlement to expertise emerge strongly in the conversations held with journalists and take on a variety of forms. These are discussed in Chapter 7.

To return to discursive social psychology, in recent years, some proponents of the field have moved closer to the aims and methods of CA. Others have attempted a marriage of macro and micro analysis, taking in post-structuralist ideas whilst also using some of technical tools of CA. Wetherell explains this as 'critical discursive social psychology'.

> It is concerned with members' methods and the logic of accountability while describing also the collective and social patterning of background normative concepts....It is a discipline concerned with the practices which produce persons,

notably discursive practices, but seeks to put these in a genealogical context. (Wetherell, 1998, p405)

This approach steers a course between seeing language as fluid and contextual, but also understanding that language use is bounded by certain functions and limitations on meaning. In other words there is a limited amount of discursive resources we can call up in our own conversation yet what we do with these resources is not completely bounded by these resources, being able, as we are, to use them in all sorts of different ways dependent on context and the goals we are attempting to achieve. Jan Blommaert uses a similar idea when he talks about the individual's ability to 'mobilise specific resources for performing specific actions in society' (Blommaert, 2005, p58). Therefore, on the one hand 'although we talk 'in our own words', these words my not actually be 'ours' at all, in the sense they are not original or unique to any one individual' (Cameron, 2001, p15). On the other hand discourse does change contextually and over time, meaning we as individuals have the means to use these resources in new and unusual ways. Michael Billig describes this as the 'general paradox of language' where the 'speaker simultaneously is in charge of language and is captured by it.' (Billig, 1991, p8)

In this research I am interested in what tools are available to convey certain meanings and opinions in my conversations with the journalists, and to examine why these discursive routes are chosen over others. It is an attempt to not only describe language in use but also to perhaps explain why it is used in certain ways by maintaining a wider social contextual emphasis. Therefore I will be working from a similar starting point as discursive social psychologists. That is, that I take a functionalist approach to language rather than realist. By this I mean that language is used to fulfil a number of functions. It does not transparently describe the 'real' world so that we can use these descriptions as indications of how things are. Language serves a wider function than simply the relaying of bits of information or being merely descriptive. Discourse is active in the production of meaning and constitutive in construction of the actual world.

This study is also concerned with actual talk rather than an examination of abstract language structure. All discourse is contingent on the situation of the particular speakers. I am not concerned here with testing the veracity of any of the accounts against the 'real' world situation. This is not to say objects in the world don't exist – rather than how we make meaning of them is contingent (Edwards *et al,* 1995). Also the world 'out-there' is not separate from the human social world – as soon as people attempt to describe or explain the world 'out-there' then a discursive construction comes in to play (Potter and Edwards, 1990). Therefore I am taking a symmetrical stance in that I will treat all the discourse equally.

However, what I am concerned with is how discourse could potentially affect the actual social world. Following Foucault, discourse is constitutive – it can allow certain meanings, or ways of talking to thrive or disallow alternative meanings. This means that what people say may have a bearing on what people do – for example what kind of news stories are chosen or ignored, what can be spoken of and what cannot. As mentioned discourse analysis has been used extensively to examine the products of various media including news media. Here I want to use it to look at the production side of news.

Discourse analysis in action

One of the main tenets of discourse analysis, as proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), is the examination of variation or inconsistency *within* as well as between people's discourse and one of their main criticisms of traditional social psychology is that it has often worked to suppress this variability. Traditional aims have been to uncover, though talk, the underlying attitudes present within a person. However, people often say contradictory things in the same sentence. For example a male journalist may say 'I am not against women working in news, I just don't think they make very good reporters'. This leaves the traditional approach with a problem. Which part of what the person said is the 'true' attitude?

Potter and Wetherell argue that traditional approaches have overcome this by suppressing the variations in a number of ways. The first has been through the over reliance on content analysis. In the case of social psychology this is the use of coding of transcripts of conversations with people. To do this consistently requires the construction of categories to code. These can be so broad as to eliminate inconsistency and can also isolate out any contradictions said by the same person.

> These significant nuances would be lost if researchers simply aggregated terms. Classifications of this kind should not come from the researcher's commonsense semantics, but from a detailed analysis of participants' own use of discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p124)

It can also ignore context. If taking the view that language has a number of functions at different given times and these can be many and various then coding can lose the subtle constructions made up over a number of responses.

The second problem with interpreting transcripts can be what Potter and Wetherell call 'selective reading' (1987, p42). If a researcher is using a realist approach to language he or she pick out what they think is important as they go through the transcript. As Potter and Wetherell explain:

The great danger here is that the researcher making selections will simply mirror his or her prior expectation. In this situation the data can be used to simply buttress the favoured analytic story rather than be used to critically evaluate it. (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p42)

In resolving the question of the male journalist's attitude to women the researcher may decide to privilege one part of the discourse ('I just don't think they make very good reporters') as being the 'true' attitude and that the other part ('I am not against women working in news') is not, therefore drawing a conclusion that he is 'really' a sexist.

However, for a functionalist approach to language the variations in talk are fundamental as they expose the different uses of the 'regimes of truth' that people draw upon. One of the ways Potter and Wetherell carry out analysis is through the use of the idea of an 'interpretive repertoire' which they describe as 'a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise and evaluate actions and events' (Potter and Wetherell 1987, p138). These interpretive repertoires are not static. The use of them in talk can twist and turn according to specific needs.

In this they draw on earlier work by Gilbert and Mulkay on repertoires of explanation. In their work in the area of Sociology of Scientific Knowledge they looked at how scientists explained their rationale for their scientific theory choice (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1982, 1984). They found that in the written scientific papers and in the interviews carried out with scientists a number of different ways of accounting for different theories. These repertoires were employed at specific junctures. If talking about their own theory choice the scientists used what Gilbert and Mulkay termed the 'empiricist repertoire'. This empiricist discourse used a number of grammatical and metaphorical tropes to construct theory choice as rational and obvious. In contrast, when the scientists talked about competing theories, a contingency repertoire came into play which cast opposing ideas as based on subjective opinion. This contrasting of one's own work as common sense and objective with the work of others as contingent and subjective builds up a powerful rhetorical case for one's own position.

This revealing of the inconsistencies in the discourse showed that even in 'hard' science speakers work up subjective positions. This notion of the interpretive repertoire has been taken up by researchers to look at how accounts shift according to the need of the speaker in a number of contexts. James Moir's study of occupational career choices illustrates the use of interpretive repertoires in a series of interviews with people about why they choose certain types of work. He identifies a range of ways in which the participants made their accounts of career histories 'coherent and credible' and how the respondents' discourse

shifted to and fro as they attempted to gauge what was expected of them by the interviewer (Moir, 1993).

More importantly the use of these interpretive repertoires can expose the issues of inequality and bias. For example, in Wetherell and Potter's study of how notions of race were used in language they identified a range of interpretive repertoires which were brought into action at different times and in different contexts (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Wetherell and Potter were interested not in comparing racist claims against some objective true account of race. Instead they examined how these repertoires were constructed as being the 'truth'. One of the repertoires identified drew on a scientific discourse which was presented as a factual account and at certain times used to justify racism. Therefore they propose that ideology is a 'material process' and that in order to examine this it is necessary to look at the construction of 'common sense' and factuality. They are not saying that racism only exists in words but that it is perpetuated and constituted through discourse.

Here and elsewhere Wetherell and Potter use a further notion – termed 'practical ideologies'. This they explain as the 'contradictory and fragmentary complexes of notions, norms and models which guide conduct and allow for its justifications and rationalization' (Wetherell et al 1987, p60). Wetherell el al's study of how gender and employment opportunities are constructed found that the respondents drew on two main repertoires. One in which equality was seen as a positive thing and one in which practical issues supposedly prevented equality being achieved. Whether these practical issues were actual or not is immaterial. What is important, and quite disturbing, is that these practical issues constructed the situation as natural and therefore largely immovable. Therefore these practical ideologies limited explanation and reinforced gender difference.

Similarly, Rosalind Gill's study of employment in radio stations looked at the interpretive repertoires of male DJs to justify the lack of female DJs (Gill, 1993). One of the reasons the male DJs said women did not apply for the jobs was because women were doing more interesting jobs, evoking some idea that women had more social mobility than the poor male DJs. This deflected any possible criticism away from themselves. This was just one way Gill uncovered as accounting for the lack of women and these repertoires were used in combination.

> What I have tried to show is that far from the broadcasters each
> espousing a particular attitude or advancing a specific explanation to account for the lack of women DJs, each had a whole range of ways of accounting, which they drew on selectively in the interviews. (Gill 1993, p89)

Here these justifications formed part of a 'practical ideology' which reinforced the status quo of gender roles. Therefore, this type of discourse analysis can be used to investigate the transmission of ideology in the construction of the social world.

This discursive approach has much to offer the study of news production. Much of television news production is about communication both in the organisation of delivery and in the writing and speaking of the output. Some of the criticisms of traditional social psychology discussed above such as it's over reliance on content analysis, problems with categorisation and the dangers of selective reading could equally be applied to some areas of study of the media. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the discourse of journalists interviewed in many pieces of research has been taken as realist. That is, it merely describes the 'real' world of news. Parallel to this many researchers have critically examined the discourse of media texts produced for the public's consumption and have found them to reproduce ideological positions. It would seem only sensible to treat the discourse of those making these media texts in a similar way.

For example, we can look at Palmer and Fontan's work on the role of fixers in Iraq. They interviewed a number of journalists who had worked in Iraq. On the subject of the ability to speak Arabic some journalists said they thought it was an advantage whilst others said it was a drawback. Palmer and Fontan note that 'one journalist even made both sets of assertions at different times' (Palmer and Fontan, 2004). This might have been the moment to begin a re-evaluation of the accounts of the journalists and why these contradictions appear. Instead, Palmer and Fontane continue with 'It is worth noting that these journalists were predominantly reporters who were sent to Iraq (and other places) for relatively brief tours of duty, rather than people permanently based there or even in the Middle East' (Palmer and Fontan, 2004 p9). This gives no discussion of why the journalist has put forward competing accounts of the advantages of Arabic speaking and one wonders why they thought to mention it at all. Without access to the full transcripts of the interviews carried out by Palmer and Fontan it is not possible for me to draw any conclusions about this variation in accounts. However, a discourse analyst would have been looking for these very contradictions and examining the context of when each account was used and to what effect.

Therefore, the discursive social psychology approach to the study of news production is useful on a number of levels. It has been applied extensively to spoken discourse, an appropriate starting point for examining interviews. It looks at how people express opinions and account for those opinions – an activity intrinsic to much of the work of journalism. Journalists spend all day verbalising judgement and opinion in the newsroom, out in the field

and socially. It is systematic, in that it avoids cherry picking or being overly anecdotal. It looks at the body of discourse and uses a grounded method of identifying patterns of language use rather than imposing the researcher's pre-existing bias. It is also context sensitive in that it seeks explanation in the wider social world to theorise why certain discourse is chosen over others.

Discourse analysis is not just an interesting academic game – it has serious intent in the investigation into individual and social construction of the world. How we make sense of the world through discourse has consequences in the actual world in that discourse in part constitutes practice. In this present case it can help in understanding the construction of practice and ideology in television journalism by 'making strange' the platitudes of journalists which have been taken at face value for too long. Within the study I will be looking at what kind of discursive tactics the interviewees use to form their accounts and make them credible. I will also attempt to identify what 'interpretive repertoires' and 'practical ideologies' are being used to construct the journalist's news values and identity.

Interviewer's reflexivity

Within discourse analysis research it is not possible for a researcher to set themselves outside the discourse of the research. The researcher picks the topic, frames the questions for the interviewee, and has his or her own views, theories and beliefs. Gender, age, class, sexuality, power relations can all affect the dynamics of an interview. Also prior knowledge or experience of the area of research can play a large role in study design and analysis. Researchers need to be reflexive about their role. Rather than attempt detachment, an impossible task, it is more useful to acknowledge and utilise this position. As Brent MacGregor, himself a news professional and now an academic, notes:

> Such methodological concerns obviously don't disappear simply by acknowledging them, but such acquired experience enables one to comment in a way that many media scholars cannot. The point surely is to make a unique contribution, perhaps biased in its own way, to the understanding of the subject under study. (MacGregor, 1997, p21)

In this particular project I have three levels of involvement. Firstly, the generic issues of the researcher, secondly, the issue of personal experience of newsrooms and thirdly most of the people interviewed were previously known to me professionally and socially. This personal involvement informs the area of study, the dynamics of the interviews and has implications on interpretation of data.

Within media studies, there is precedent for the poacher turned gamekeeper. More and more journalists are moving between academia and practice and using their experience to

inform research, becoming so-called 'hackademics' (Harcup, 2012). Tuchman describes this research rationale as 'retrospective participant observation' (Tuchman 1991, p81).

Many recent newsroom studies have stressed the need for researchers or at least part of the research team to be practitioners or former practitioners. Having prior knowledge of the environment under examination can be a short cut to basic understanding and interpretation. Paterson and Zoellner see the 'efficacy of professional experience' in studying production for giving insight to processes (Paterson and Zoellner, 2010, p97). Others see this prior experience as a way of looking at journalism from within rather than from outside (Machin and Niblock, 2006). Hemmingway in her study of digital newsrooms using Actor Network Theory goes further. She sees her past as a journalist as an asset because her use of 'autobiographical reflexivity…occupying different positions within the network' has helped her to uncover the workings of the newsroom. Her experience lets her step into the network rather than merely sitting on the side lines observing (Hemmingway 2008, p35).

However, it is important to stress that I am not arguing for a journalists' monopoly on the study of journalism. Whilst for some studies this practitioner experience can be an advantage, in other research it may be inappropriate or cloud the objectivity of the analysis. As with other fields of study it has taken an outsider's careful observations and objective analysis to make strange the accepted practices and culture of a society. As evidenced below, Gilbert and Mulkay coming from a sociological position shed light on the construction of scientific theory selection that 'hard' scientific 'insider' knowledge would have been of little help and perhaps even a hindrance.

This research has trodden a fine line between using 'insider' knowledge to inform the design and direction of the study, whilst simultaneously attempting to overcome the dangers of being too close to the subject. It combines 'retrospective participant observation' and extended interviews. Throughout the interview stage of the research I continued to work as a television journalist. Several times I was directly working with some of the interviewees, either on the same day in different jobs or doing the same job on alternative shifts. At times during the interviews the interviewee and the interviewer embarked on discussions about stories jointly worked on either currently or in the past. This on-going participation in news work has, I found, helped to maintain my knowledge of the processes and issues I was interrogating in a very fast moving environment. It also maintained, more importantly, my close relationship with the interviewees. This was particularly important as a high level of trust was required if I was to access the everyday discourse of news workers. A 'hackademic' must be wary of making assumptions about a description without carefully examining the actual discourse. An over familiarity with processes can risk the researcher

missing or ignoring important details (Paterson and Zoellner, 2010). There is a need to 'make strange' what is familiar. The discourse analysis I use in this study attempts this 'making strange' by looking at the *whole* discourse presented in the interviews rather than cherry-picking what the researcher 'sensed' was important. Therefore prior knowledge of newsrooms was helpful to me in setting the questions to be asked and for understanding technical and site specific descriptions. It also helped, as mentioned above, in relaxing the interviewee and making the situation more 'natural'. It must be acknowledged that the interviews are staged and not naturally occurring yet whilst it is impossible to set up a completely natural situation, knowing some of the interviewees as friends and or colleagues helped put them at their ease. A point of trust had already been established. Also often the interviews took place in bars or restaurants over food and drink – a familiar situation which would have happened with the participant before – just without the tape recorder and my list of questions. Although the interviews were not 'naturally occurring' they did take place very naturally.

Other interviews were with people I did not know but we had mutual friends in common as a kind of vouch safe. A functional approach to language must take into account the different situations in which the discourse occurs. A conversation between friends can be very discursively different to a conversation between strangers. However, there is some work on the talk of journalists which suggest that discourse at work and after work is not so different when discussing news practice (Gravengaard 2012). This may be because journalists spend such a lot of time with each other socially (Donsbach 2004, Patterson and Donsbach 1996). However, this similarity cannot be assumed.

For a discourse analyst all texts are constructed to perform some function including the text I am writing right now. But rather than become paralysed by this I hope I have used my *a priori* knowledge of the television news industry to gain a more detailed comprehension of terms and situations and have attempted throughout the project, from interviews to analysis, to make my role as transparent and unambiguous as is possible.

Analytical framework: subject matter

The study is concerned with how television journalists describe their work practice. Specifically I want to concentrate on three areas journalism; the explanation of news values and news practice; the construction of the purposes of journalism; what qualities a journalist needs to perform as a professional. As a starting point I will be drawing on work on theorising and researching news production discussed in Chapter 2 to examine how some of

the issues about journalism are used within the discourse of the participants, if they are used at all. This may also lead to the discovery of new discourses of journalism.

<u>News Values and Practice</u>

As discussed in the previous chapter, attempts at identifying criteria for news are many and various, leaving a huge list of possible factors in story selection. These range from Galtung and Ruge's 'common sense' values (Galtung and Ruge, 1970), to issues of entertainment, ideological influences at organisational and professional levels, temporal and visual considerations, and medium-specific characteristics as well as the foibles of the individual within the organisation. For the purposes of this analysis I have organised these factors into four areas which could be utilised by speakers to explain and justify editorial decisions. These areas are the content of the story, the ethics and values of journalism, the needs of the media organisation and production factors. These subjects are all of great interest to media academics in explaining the output of news, but it is unclear which, if any, are prominent in discussions with journalists and if so how are they configured.

1. Story content: This concerns factors identified as 'news values' from the classic study of Galtung and Ruge (1970) to more recent attempts to understand the intrinsic qualities or elements an event or issue much contain in order to cross the threshold to become a news story. (See Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of news values). The study seeks to investigate if and how journalists use the idea of news values in editorial decisions. Are any news values absolute or are they used flexibly to justify certain decisions or defend certain positions. 'How many dead and what nationality are they?' is a question often asked in news rooms. Yet how do these numbers change according to the speaker's context.

2. Journalism's ideology: This area concerns the professional ideology of journalistic standards such as objectivity, impartiality and balance. This also includes the such premises as being first as an object of journalism (Bell, 1991). Within this area there exists also the tension between two often competing notions of the purpose of news, that which is in the interest of the public to know, and what the public find interesting.

3. Organisational: This area is concerned with the views and needs of the organisation. This includes any ideological slants on coverage intrinsic to the culture of the organisation. It also covers the economic constraints placed on coverage in general and on the stability of future employment for individuals.

4. Production factors: This area includes factors such as the pre-planning of stories, and the news cycle. It also concerns the treatment of stories, such as the possibility of running an event live, the availability of pictures and sources and the treatment of stories.

These production factors have been extensively written about in academic terms but are they employed as factors when journalists talk about what they actually do? If issues such as death tolls, the role of the audience, and financial pressures figure in discussions are they consistent across the interviews or does the discourse vary according to context?

How journalists see journalism

The previous area of investigation is based on academic theorisation of news production and values based on newsroom studies and research on output. This section deals with how journalists themselves have been observed to frame news and its purposes. McQuail sums up the view of journalism from the newsroom in the following:

> Practitioners of journalism generally view it as a practical task of reporting on current events to be accomplished as well as possible in circumstances that are much less than ideal… Journalism can be, and is, accomplished without reference to any theory, relying on some communication skills, common sense, a basic honesty of purpose and a 'feel' for the news and what underlies it. (McQuail, 2008 p47)

This second framework of analysis looks at how journalists frame the activity of journalism. A useful starting point is Barbie Zelizer's (Zelizer, 2004) identification of five ways journalists have used to describe journalism. These five repertoires consist of journalism as sixth sense; as a container to be filled; as a mirror on society; as a child which needs nurturing; and as a service to the public.

The 'sixth sense' is also referred to as a 'news sense' or what McQuail calls a 'feel' for news (McQuail, 2008). This quality is something that a journalist has, innately, rather than is taught, this, in spite of the burgeoning amount of manuals on how to be a journalist. Because this sense is naturally occurring it precludes any critique of the news values or practices of journalists. As will be seen in the following chapters the embodied journalists who can 'sense' when a story is a story is employed across the interviews.

However, theoretically, this sixth sense is more realistically characterised as reflective practice. Journalism practice is inherently reflective because one needs to think back on your experience of past stories and events in order to be any good at it, rather than consult a manual. As Niblock puts it:

> Hierarchical ranks of seniority in most mainstream newsrooms are based on longevity of experience; "being able" to do good journalism as opposed to simply

> "knowing how" develops through immersion in experience rather than by possessing a body of pre-existing knowledge about how journalism should be. (Niblock, 2007, p25)

Journalists make future decisions based on past practice, yet this reflective nature of the work is rarely articulated. Instead the notion of the 'sixth sense' is more often the recourse in discussions with journalists.

A second way of conceiving of news can also be that of a container to be filled up with stories. A bulletin or a newspaper is often referred to as a news 'hole'. Stories are covered because nothing much else was going on and a gap needed stopping up with something. Or if there were too many events going on not all of them would fit so some are dropped. This reflects the news value of composition whereby a news product must consist of a variety of stories. A disaster story is complemented with a softer story. Another disaster story will not 'fit'. Given the development in online news by television companies can the notion of a limited space for news be maintained? Or is it clung to as a discursive avoidance tactic to absolve the practitioner of blame for editorial decisions.

The mirror metaphor of journalism is an old and enduring one. In it journalism merely reflects an objective reality of the world. There is little mediation by the journalist (Allan,1999). This again can absolve responsibility for coverage from the journalist as the journalist becomes merely a holder of a mirror. Subjective agency is written out in this image. Is this image still present in the discourse of journalists after so much wider public debate and awareness of the constructed nature of news?

Zelizer's fourth metaphor is that of journalism as a child, to be looked after. She quotes the phrase used at print deadline of 'putting the paper to bed' (Zelizer, 2004 p31). I propose a slightly different image. Instead of child, the news is often evoked as a monster to be kept well fed lest it consume the journalist. 'Feed the beast' is used in newsrooms I have worked in. There has to be constant vigilance to keep it under control. This reflects a more active role for the journalist rather than a simple mirror holder.

The final description of journalism Zelizer identifies is journalism as a public service. Here, journalism is the watchdog of the powerful on behalf of the public. Journalists strive to elucidate and explain events and issues to the audience so that they may participate in democratic society. Here the agency of the journalist is to the fore, with the onus to actively engage with shaping coverage. Is this agency prevalent in the discourse or a more passive mirror holder preferred? How is this public constructed? Is it invoked as a driving force in news selection? Does the audience become a 'practical ideology' (Gill, 1993; Wetherell et al., 1987) to be used to account for decisions?

The above possible repertoires of meaning for the activity of journalism range from the journalist being a conduit of news to being a more active creator of news. In the following chapters I will examine how these ideas of agency and subjectivity are played out in the interviews.

The identity of the journalist

The third framework for analysis centres on the identity of journalists and what it takes to be one. As discussed in Chapter 2, the nature of journalism and the journalist has historically been a matter of debate. In the present climate this debate is even more acute as developments of news technologies and news practices now mean growing numbers of people are titling themselves 'journalist'. This is coupled with public concern in the UK over the practices of traditional journalism exemplified by the recent Leveson Inquiry and the reporting – or lack of it – of the Jimmy Savile scandal.

In the past journalists have fallen back on a number images of the journalist. One discourse popular in manuals of 'how to be a journalist' is that of the dedicated professional - curious, brave, with a honed 'news sense' and an absolute commitment to journalism (cf. Ray, 2003, Yorke, 2000, Boyd, 2008) A second repertoire of belongs to the memoirs and autobiographies of the great and the good of journalism (Marr 2004, Adie, 2002, Sergeant, 2002, Snow, 2004, Bell, 1995). Here the discourse of luck is prominent. A casual bumbling is more usual. Being in the right place at the right time is a common feature of journalists' discourse. Other discourses take in notions of autonomy and freedom in the work and a how news is 'different every day'. Through the interviews with practitioners I will explore the identity and characteristics of journalists and journalism using the framework of these competing discourses of hard working professionals and the accidental journalist and to look at the right to call oneself a journalist is worked up.

How one constructs the 'self' as a journalist has important consequences of how one operates. Journalism is being challenged in the new media landscape where everyone with access to the Internet can be a journalist. As Singer has argued – journalism used to be a practice – only available to a few. Now that everyone can do it perhaps there is a need to redefine journalism as a code of ethics (Singer, 2006). This has been taken up by other commentators such as Borden who calls for 'a robust group identity' for journalists 'that could distinguish them from others in the media marketplace and reinvigorate the occupation with a new sense of purpose' (Borden, 2007, p137). In this study I will examine the discourse of subjectivity through these competing interpretive repertoires and the role it plays in the wider construction of journalism practice.

Conclusion:

This chapter has outlined the nuts and bolts of the research design and the methodological approaches to the analysis of the interviews conducted with UK television journalists. The next four chapters deal with various aspects of the interviews and the discursive construction of news work, news values, the news audience and journalists' identity. Chapter four opens the discussion with a look at the interpretive repertoires for news practice and values.

Chapter 4
Analysis 1. News as 'found' and 'manufactured' object.

Introduction:

In this chapter I examine the discursive construction of editorial and news production practice as accounted for by the journalists interviewed. More specifically I identify and examine the interpretive repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1992) utilised by television journalists to construct news values and news work. This is carried out through a discourse analysis of the face-to-face interviews with journalists from the BBC, Channel 4 News, Sky News, Associated Press Television and Reuters Television.

The interviews were semi-structured, each participant being asked thirteen questions which covered the story of their career; what job they now did and what it involved; why certain stories were newsworthy and others were not. (For a more detailed explanation of the questions see Chapter 3.) The stories discussed were, in part, raised by the participants when asked to talk about their personal experience and, in part, raised by the interviewer who asked about a number of specific stories.

The analysis focuses on the news stories the interviewees chose to discuss, how these stories about stories were articulated through various interpretive resources for news work and news selection or news values. I explain how these accounts are rhetorically constructed as factual. I then identify the competing repertoires of news work. In this I am following a broad discursive social psychological approach outlined in Chapter 3 and draw on the work as developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987) and others (Edwards and Potter, 1992, Burman and Parker, 1993). The first part looks at use of rhetoric developed by Potter and others, and the use of certain types of repertoires as developed by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984). In the latter part of the chapter I will look draw more on the notion of interpretive repertoires as developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1992). This discourse analysis, whilst carried out at a fairly micro level, diverges from the more conversational analysis-minded social psychology more recently employed by scholars such as Jonathan Potter and Derek Edwards. Instead the analysis will be attempting to contextualise the findings on a more macro level of wider social and cultural themes around news work and newsworthiness. This follows more closely to work such as that carried out on identity by Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (Wetherell and Edley, 2009, Edley and Wetherell, 1995).

It is important to note that this chapter and the one that follows takes as its starting point production processes and news values, that is, 'what makes news', according to the interviewed journalists, rather than 'what ought to be news'.

At this point it is pertinent to restate what is meant by interpretive repertoire. An interpretive repertoire is a set of linguistic terms, a grammatical style and usually one or more metaphors to explain certain practices or opinions. These repertoires are the 'building blocks' (Wetherell and Potter, 1988) for constructing a coherent explanation for thought processes and actions and are built from a limited range of linguistic resources – often metaphors – and a certain style of speaking. As discussed in Chapter 3 the development of this kind of analysis owes much to the work of Gilbert and Mulkay (1982, 1984) in the area of Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK). In interviews with scientists they identified two main competing repertoires for accounting for and justifying scientific theory choice. They also identified variations within and across different accounts. They described how the use of each repertoire formed a pattern, each being used at specific junctures when a scientist was justifying his or her own views and those of similar views and undermining the views of oppositional scientific positions and advocates. This work lays the bare the social construction of discourse and what work is being done by the discourse in different contexts.

This work on repertoires and variation in use has been taken up and developed by researchers in other areas of study and has been employed across a number of settings such as issues of race (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Foster 2009), career choice (Moir 1993), and gender construction (Gill 1993). The emphasis for the identification of these repertoires is to look at what function they serve for the speaker in conversation and semi-formal interviews but also their function in written texts (Edley 1993) and in formal spoken texts such as television broadcasts (Potter 1996). What this work has done is to examine the architecture of accounts and how they are constructed to make sense. It also highlights the contingent nature of the accounts and what these repertoires achieve ideologically (Edley and Wetherell 2008, Wetherell and Potter 1988).

In this chapter I look at the rhetorical construction of the editorial process and news practices. The analytical tools discussed above can be used to look at what repertoires of meaning are privileged over others, and what are missing from the discussions. In this way it may help to explain why certain events or issues become stories at the expense of others. Firstly, I look at the rhetorical tool box for constructing 'reality'. Secondly, I outline the two overarching constructions of news found in the interviews - that of 'news as a found object' and 'news as a manufactured object'.

Found or created? Accounting for news work

In this section I want to look at the structure of the accounts for how events are selected for coverage. Throughout the interviews each participant was asked to talk about stories they had been working on in the previous few days or weeks and to explain why each was newsworthy. Editorial judgement or a person's 'nose' for news is a powerful indicator of a 'good' journalist, as any manual on how to be a journalist will attest (cf. Boyd 2008, Ray, 2003). Therefore accounting for how this judgement is exercised is a loaded activity for participants. Participants called upon a range of interpretive resources to construct their accounts of editorial decisions and news work.

The most significant characterisation of editorial work was to construct news as a 'found object', lying about waiting to be spotted by someone – perhaps a journalist, perhaps someone else. News is rhetorically constructed as 'out there' (Potter 1996). This construction works to minimise the involvement of the journalists in interpreting or creating news and therefore minimises accountability for decision-making. It works to distance agency and thus responsibility for coverage from the producers of news and places the responsibility on the shoulders of the events.

Parallel to this, though less common, was a second construction of news work where journalists take back some responsibility onto their own shoulders – where news is a 'manufactured object'. This is news work portrayed as a creative process where stories are crafted by journalists. Here journalists take an active role in *making stories* rather than *gathering news*. This active role echoes certain tenets of journalism such as curiosity, originality and the ability to always return with a story no matter how unpromising the raw material seems at first.

These two constructions of news – that of 'found object' and 'manufactured object' were employed together in the interviews often interwoven within a single account of a story. Yet they each tap into different, seemingly contradictory, notions of professional journalism. The first, 'found object', invokes news as a knowable reality, 'out-there' removing subjectivity from the journalist. It invokes one of the foundational tenets of journalistic professionalism – that of journalistic objectivity. The second construction, 'manufactured object', puts the journalist centre stage as a creative force with a subjective influence on the end product. This is at the heart of the paradox of news work. On the one hand journalists are called upon to be objective truth tellers and on the other hand they should be creative and bring subjective judgements about stories to bear on coverage (Ettema and Glasser 1998).

In the following sections the way these two repertoires of news are played out will be investigated. Firstly I will flesh out the ways 'out-there' is constructed through the use of empiricist discourse (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1982, 1984), corroboration and consensus, and the use of detail or lack of it in accounts (Potter 1996). Secondly, I will detail how these tools are used by the journalists in this research to construct news work in these two contrasting ways.

The rhetoric of 'Out-there-ness'.

One of the defining qualities of the journalists' accounts of news work is how they build the accounts as factual and therefore inevitable. There are a number of rhetorical tactics used in fact-building but here I want to concentrate on what Potter terms 'out-there-ness' where the focus of the discourse is to 'draw attention away from the concerns of the producer's *stake* in the description – what they may gain from or lose – and their *accountability*, or responsibility, for it' (Potter, 1996, p161, original italics). Language is used to construct a 'real' world by pulling the listener into the situation being described. The listener is asked to see the situation described in the same way as the teller positioning them both as looking 'out-there' at the 'real' world.

This out-there-ness is achieved through a number of rhetorical tropes or 'externalising devices' (Potter, 1996, p159). Three areas in particular I will examine in detail – empiricist discourse, consensus and corroboration, and use of detail. These rhetorical tools are utilized throughout the journalists' accounts and form the backbone for the interpretive repertoire of news as 'out-there', and presents news work as a product of common sense and inevitability. Some of these same tools are also used to support the second repertoire of manufactured object by drawing in the listener to the speaker's view of the world.

Before looking at the journalists' discourse I first want to explain in more detail the three aspects of constructing out-there-ness.

Empiricist Discourse

As mentioned above, in their work with scientists on theory selection Gilbert and Mulkay (1982, 1984) described two competing and contradictory repertoires used by the interviewees. These they termed an empiricist discourse and a contingent discourse. Here I

am going to concentrate on the empiricist discourse as it contains a number of features which are also present in the interviews conducted with the journalists for this study. The empiricist discourse worked to create a factual, realist account of the world, free from any taint of the scientists' own subjectivity and was used when the scientists were discussing their own scientific position. The contingent discourse was used when discussing conflicting scientific positions. It threw doubt on opposing arguments by implying research was not rigorous and therefore open to subjective interpretation.

Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) identified three main qualities of an empiricist repertoire used by the scientists they interviewed both in their formally written papers for publication but also in the semi-formal interviews. These qualities consisted of grammatical distancing or impersonality, the primacy of the data, and the following of accepted procedure. The grammatical distancing was more prevalent in written papers but also leaked into conversation and drew attention away from the speakers' involvement or possible bias by removing all references to themselves. Instead, 'tests were carried out' rather than 'I carried out some tests'. The second quality, of the primacy of the data, took the form of the construction that data speaks for itself. The researcher is merely a cipher or 'neutral medium through which empirical phenomena make themselves evident' (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, p56). The third quality of following of procedure further removes the researcher's subjective part in the process. Instead they were following universally accepted methods.

These rhetorical tropes frame accounts as neutral and out-there. All three serve to eliminate the producer of the accounts, as summarised by Gilbert and Mulkay: 'Empiricist discourse is organised in a manner which denies its character as an interpretive product and which denies that its author's actions are relevant to its content' (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, p56).

Whilst Gilbert and Mulkay were looking at 'hard' science theory their work has been developed in other types of accounts and subject areas. Potter points out that Gilbert and Mulkay's notion of an empiricist discourse was proposed as a 'seamless whole' (Potter 1996 p154). However, it is possible to investigate if certain parts of this discourse are in evidence in non-scientific settings. The main elements of fact construction and the transferal of agency from the scientist to the data have been found in other professional areas – in particular journalism. Scholars have found aspects of the empiricist discourse utilized in journalism both in the output of press (Edley 1993) and broadcasting (Potter 1996). In Edley's examination of the coverage of Prince Charles the press made use of empiricist discourse constructed through grammar to make certain reports seem 'true' and about a world 'for all to see'. Potter (1996) also shows how the use of impersonal grammar in radio reports

removes the producer's stake in the report and positions the report as merely reflecting the 'real' world. This type of discourse is employed by the journalists in the interviews and will be discussed in detail below.

Consensus and corroboration

A second 'externalising device' Potter outlines is the use of consensus and corroboration to build up a speaker's account as factual and reliable and free from special interest of the speaker (Potter, 1996). Consensus and corroboration work is carried out by discursively evoking reliable experts or witnesses to events or views. The more a witness is removed from possible interest in an outcome the more reliable they may seem and therefore their witnessing creates a stronger account in terms of factual-ness.

As Robin Wooffitt writes: '…where speakers are in an inauspicious environment, their descriptions can be designed to circumscribe the range of negative or unsympathetic inferences which may be drawn by a recipient' (Wooffitt, 1992, p2). Wooffitt studied the ways people described and accounted for paranormal experiences – in most Western societies a very inauspicious environment in which to find oneself. One way of corroborating an account was the use of what Wooffitt termed 'active voicing' where conversations are reconstructed in the discourse. This reconstruction of the interaction between the speaker and other figures in the scene adds a concrete feel to the account. Again, it draws in the listener to imagine the scene.

Although journalists are not generally arguing for the existence of supernatural beings, they do face awkward questions about their work practices and coverage, (The Leveson Inquiry into press practices in 2012 being a case in point). During the interviews even questions from a colleague or a friend of a colleague were still met with some suspicion on the part of the participants. Therefore, the ability to construct one's activities as being backed up by independent witnesses or experts helps maintain a sense of the accounts as describing an objective reality 'out-there'.

Detail

The third area Potter identifies as creating 'out-there-ness' is detail and narrative (Potter 1996). Here I want to concentrate on the use of detail as it is employed by the journalists in quite powerful ways during the interviews. Giving detail in accounts can be carried out on a number of levels. What is important here is what is detailed (and what is left out) and how

that detail is organised. Any activity we do contains an almost infinite number of possible relatable details. Daily activities of travelling to work, for example, consist of a whole range of activities from dressing appropriately for the weather, taking the train, who sat next to you, what you read in the paper during the journey and so on. When giving an account of the journey the speaker picks out what is pertinent in the context of the question and questioner.

Detail can serve a number of functions. It can build up a narrative and picture which makes the speaker's account seem more believable and more qualified to pronounce on things (Potter 1996). However, as Potter points out, the more detail a speaker gives the more ammunition they may be passing to the listener to use to undermine the speaker's version. Details can be examined for anomalies or inconsistencies. Therefore in certain cases the speaker may move to a very vague description to avoid being taken to task over specific details. In the interviews with the journalists both vivid and vague descriptions are used to build up a version of reality and out-there-ness.

All of the above ways of creating an account that is believable, reliable and factual are present in the journalists' interviews. In the next section I will detail exactly how they were employed to create the interpretive repertoire of news as 'a found object' and simultaneously in places news as 'a manufactured object'.

News as 'found object': 'Out-there-ness' in journalists accounts of news work and news values

All the rhetorical tools discussed above were utilized to some degree in the accounts journalists gave in explaining how news work results in certain events or issues becoming news and some not. It is important to stress these tools were used across the interviews with marked consistency regardless of the demographics of the participants or their employment situation. This was a surprise finding. Prior to analysis it was expected there would be differences in the accounts given that the participants were employed by very different outlets. However, accounts were constructed using the same rhetorical tropes and interpretive repertoires whether the speaker worked for Sky News or Channel 4 News, or for an agency or a broadcaster.

The accounts predominantly constructed news work as 'out-there' and news as a 'found object' – an object existing in the 'real' world for all to see if you looked hard enough. I now

want to look specifically how this was carried out in the interviews through empiricist discourse, consensus and detail.

<u>News as discrete object</u>

News in the interviews is objectified grammatically. A whole range of vocabulary and phrases are used to make stories concrete, discrete entities. Stories are 'found' or 'missing', they are 'picked up' and 'uppicked', or they are 'dropped', 'shot down', or they have 'money thrown' at them. Throughout the interviews the participants constructed news as grammatically out in the world.

The news stories are typically described in the singular – there is *the* Middle East story or *the* Peru earthquake or *the* Iraq War or *the* Iran story. Stories are talked of as separate single entities lined up in a row, rather than a set of interconnected, on-going situations. The lack of explanation for the complex interplay of events and issues has often been criticised by scholars of the media, particularly television news. A lack of context leads to the audience not having the means to make connections or understand on going conflicts as shown in focus group discussions with both audience and producers, for example on the conflict in the Middle East (Philo and Berry, 2004). The construction of news as a series of discrete, separate objects may have bearing on this and this point will be explored further in the next chapter.

As single objects the stories have a life of their own. In these accounts news stories have agency. Stories 'struggle' and 'sink' or 'turn violent'. Here, for example, is one editor from Sky News talking about the conflict between Georgia and Russia.

> AM: And then, come Saturday, it was obvious that it [Georgia] wasn't going away.

'It' was the story that was stubbornly standing its ground on Saturday so that the journalist could no longer ignore it. Rather than the journalist being active in the creation of this story it is 'Georgia' who is making the running. Grammatically the journalist is written out of this account.

In the following description by a world affairs editor the story about Iranian anti-government demonstrations it is the story which determines the framing of the coverage rather than the journalist.

> TM: So there's all those things going on, it's pictorially a good story, it turns into an even better story because of the riots. And I don't mean better and good in terms of good and evil, I mean in terms of visually being interesting and

getting an idea of what's going on. That's what matters, that's good and better.

Again, this story has a life of its own. 'It's pictorially a good story' and 'it turns into an even better story'. The journalist is grammatically removed from any involvement. It is the story that turns itself into a better story rather than the journalist choosing to apply and emphasise news values of negativity (Galtung & Ruge, 1970) or violence onto the narrative of the events. The speaker is making explicit news value judgements in terms of the quality of the visuals yet it is the story grammatically making the running rather than the journalist framing the story as such. Agency lies with the story not the journalist.

In each case the story is grammatically structured as taking the lead as this extract exemplifies.

> AM: Another one recently was Thailand, and I can't remember the detail of it, but again it just sank to the bottom.

Again, grammatically the journalist is removed from the action. 'Thailand' 'sank to the bottom' rather than the journalists deciding not to broadcast it.

With the news turned into a series of objects the role of the journalist shifts. Instead of taking an active role in creating stories the agency of the journalist is reduced to gathering, ordering and corralling these objects. In the extract below by an agency editor, the journalist's job is 'just' to keep them in some sort of order.

> LF: Let's see. That would be Editor of the Day. Er… though there's some other title to it, but anyway. Um Editor of the Day and then you just – you're, you're the traffic cop for the stories of the day. That's what you have to do…
>
> Int: (laughing) so that's what you have to do…
>
> LF: Like the traffic cop, you know, or like the control tower for stories. (Laughing) some can land, some can't, some have to stay on hold.

Thus, as shown above the news is grammatically constructed as being made up of lots of small but whole entities which have their own life and agency, with the journalists being largely absent from the activity except to keep order. The transfer of agency from the subject, that is the journalist, to the object, the story, is strongly reflective of the grammatical distancing employed by Gilbert and Mulkay's scientists (1982). In places the journalist can put a stop to the arrival of a story – when it is 'shot down' or cannot 'land'. Again this agency is grammatically removed. The speaker says some cannot land, not that she decides what

can land. There is implicit but unacknowledged agency and the story remains a concrete object, which may have missed its chance for airing due to being pushed out by other objects which have 'landed'.

News is 'obvious'

The second characteristic of empiricist discourse is the use of the notion that the data speaks for itself and this is prevalent in the news work discourse. Here the 'data' is constructed as the 'fact' of the 'real-world' present in the news object. Where Gilbert and Mulkay's (1984) scientists would cite the data as speaking for themselves, the journalists cite the real world as speaking for itself. So, stories are 'no-brainers' and news is 'obvious'. This obviousness is accompanied by listing some of the actual elements of a story as the following extracts from Channel 4, BBC and AP employees show.

> EW: because there's obviously some stories that are immediately obvious.

> BMD: Well, it's managing the stories, the treatment of them. If it's a bang bang story in Afghanistan, it's obvious.

> BMD: …there's certain things you have to do, so John McCain's speech overnight - you're going to have to do it, unless something mega happens. So there are certain things you've got that are 'must dos'.

> BD: it's going to be a huge story because either Mugabe loses and its going to be massive or even if he wins it's you know, it just one of those obvious stories.

> JI: But the Michael Jackson story has obviously been huge and…

These two rhetorical tools - the use of the 'obvious' and listing of story elements is enough to warrant coverage. This works rhetorically as a way of shutting down discussion as the 'reality' of the news is unequivocal. It deflects the onus for explanation back on to the questioner. It is a way of stating that of course it was a story, and if you the interviewer cannot see that you must be lacking some 'normal' real world acuity. News is effectively black-boxed where 'a matter of fact is settled' and one only needs to 'focus on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity' **(**Latour, 1999, p304). News needs no further explanation. News is news is news. There are a number of news values being alluded to in these accounts such as violence ('bang, bang') or celebrity (Michael Jackson), elite nations

(US politics), but these are not rhetorically ascribed as subjective evaluations. Instead they are grammatically connected to the 'obvious' with the 'internal complexity' glossed over.

I was only following orders: News as procedure

The third facet of empiricist discourse is the following of universally recognised and approved procedures. This kind of construction was evident in the descriptions of news work. There are a set of rules to be followed to make news. Sometimes these procedures are explicitly expressed, as for example below when the interviewer explains the subject of her research:

> Int: It's about how television journalists see what they do, and why they think a story is a story.

> TM: The second bit I like; why we do what we do. I mean the second bit is actually quite easy, why we… That story is obvious because of a, b, c, you can explain why you do it, why it's important, where it fits in, but the first bit about why you do it…

Here is another example of how coverage routines are 'obvious'.

> AnM: When breaking news stories happen there's obviously logical ways of covering them.

As well as the logic of the routines, the procedural nature of news work was often expressed in long lists of activities and processes outlined by the participants in describing the development of news stories and daily routines. Although news work was often constructed as being unpredictable and that it 'varies hugely from day to day' the descriptions of the day's activities were remarkable similar across the interviews. These descriptions were of a work day that is highly procedural and routinized. This happens when asked specifically about their daily routine but also throughout accounts about specific stories. In the interviews each participant was asked to talk through their day's work. The overwhelmingly predominant construction of work followed a set pattern whether voiced by broadcast or agency journalists. It started with a claim that news work was difficult to detail due to its varied nature. This was followed by a detailed outline of a rigid set of tasks and duties: Here, for example, is a chief correspondent's account of his day.

> SR: I suppose that perhaps goes to the root of what a lot of journalism is, there is no average day, and you're really fortunate if there isn't because then they become very un-average, or they become really average. I suppose it's split

in two. If it's quiet and nothing's been happening and I've had time off, because it's likely I've been on a break, I will then have to go into the office, get in the morning and they'll assign a reasonable sized story, usually it will be the lead or something they want some work on for that day, and then we'll put it together with the producer, do some of the interviews. Usually these days there has to be a live element to it, you know, 5 o'clock, and I'll aim to work towards the 5, 6 and 7 programmes…

In spite of the above interviewee saying there is no average day he then goes on to describe a very specific routine. No matter what the story he is assigned he will have a package and live coverage for the 'five' show.

This pattern is repeated across the job spectrum as this editor's and reporter's accounts illustrate:

JM: There's really no such thing as an average day.

Int: But say you're in the office like today.

JM: Average day here would be I'd get up and tried to read as much as I can about what's going on. I get the Herald Tribune delivered at home [indistinct] of American related stories, for example, America's take on what's happening in [indistinct] and then I'll try where I can to at least cruise through the websites and newspapers while I listen to World Service and probably the Today programme... and I listen to the radio on the way in, so by the time I get in I've gone a day's work. When I get in and look at… I'll take ten minutes to see what the agencies and Reuters is reporting, and I'll talk to someone in the newsroom about what pictures are available for particular stories.

AM: Well, it varies hugely from day-to-day but it's all intake, it's no sort of writing or cutting, or anything like that, it's all intake. What I do is planning and Senior News Editor shifts, and then sometimes the DNE[13] shifts, or on the road. So it sort of falls into four different categories, if you like. But I suppose essentially, I'd say the majority of my time is the 6/6.30 starts, and you're reading in the day before. I'm normally up around 4.45 and then just flick through internet and TV at home, kind of thing, just scribble a few notes, and then in work for 6, and then 7 o'clock meeting is the first one. And that's when you sort of start to pick up on a few of the things that other people have seen, or want to do. And then 8 o'clock meeting is then, that's when you've got… that's when you have your comprehensive list which you are presenting for all output programmes, well, aside from the news at 10, but certainly the daytime outlook programmes.

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[13] DNE is the acronym for Deputy News Editor

This routinize procedural account is woven into discussion about news practice and specific events. The following of procedures for news coverage is framed as a positive activity in that it provides the best service to the audience and takes out subjectivity. The two extracts below are by agency workers:

> JL: I really like that thing about the agencies, that they can't afford to muck about…. Get the pictures, delivere the pictures to the clients, move on, and get the next set of pictures, do the same thing all over again.

> AS: If I was on as Output Editor which I often am, then my day would be really designating who was going to do what, which stories they should concentrate on.

> Int: Right.

> AS: Liaising with intake to find out when pictures are coming in from around the world, and then pushing them out, and making sure that the right people are doing the right jobs.

One might think that broadcast journalism would be different but here is someone at Sky News taking about hurricane coverage:

> KM: The classic, again with Hurricane Dean for example, yesterday we were on, it got down-graded to category 3[14], we put it on air, flashed it, you know, did a little phoner with the National Hurricane Centre to just kind of mark it and then we moved on to the rest of the news.

These accounts are mundane and matter of fact. The speaker is just carrying out normal, routine procedures for getting stories out on air. Bringing the stories in and pushing them out.

These procedures can take on a more explicit form of check list or a type of news value.

> BMD: He used the R word, it's a Minister saying he's resigning. A former member of that cabinet, a politician of that stature calling on his own Prime Minister to resign, that's one of those obvious ones, do you know what I mean? It's a no-brainer.

Using the 'R word' starts the procedure of coverage. As soon as the journalist hears that word he can recognise it as a story. By inference anybody else could follow this check list to

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[14] 'Category 3' refers to the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale used by the US National Hurricane Centre, which categories hurricanes into five levels according to the intensity of the wind speed , with Category 1 being the lowest and Category 5 the highest.

come to the same conclusion. After all, this story is 'obvious' and a 'no-brainer'. If one follows procedures one can't go wrong.

These procedures are framed as common sense and inevitable. The implicit application of culturally and ideologically founded news values such as described by Galtung and Ruge and others are embedded in the accounts yet these are not explicitly acknowledged. Instead the turn of events are grammatically and systematically constructed as a given, outside the subjectivity of the journalists involved.

Everybody else was doing it: Consensus and collaboration

Consensus and collaboration is utilized to reinforce the facticity of accounts. It helps avoid accusations of overt subjectivity if third parties can be shown to have come to the same decision. It also backs up the speaker's assertion that this was an inevitable outcome of the events or story in question. In the interviews the means of creating consensus was to call upon other journalists, including other media outlets as witnesses or endorsers of ones actions. This other media could be television, radio, press or web. Repeatedly the competition is cited as an endorsement for editorial decisions.

> SR: Then this trip has to been to continue with filming of that and my last story, which was quite a good one last week or whatever it was, a few days ago, was the Head of the British Forces saying he needs to double his troop numbers, which became quite a big story, was covered in quite a lot of papers.
>
> AM: And everybody… you know, the people there, ITN and Channel 5, and I'm not sure Channel 4 were there, but everybody will have ranked highly, if you like, for every channel, there wasn't a single channel that didn't carry it.

Bringing in other media as corroboration for story selection strengthens a case. For a witness to be accepted as reliable they must be stripped as much as is possible, of any stake in the account (Potter 1996). A rival media organisation would have nothing to gain from making another organisation look good, therefore to say the story one chose was also chosen by other news outlets corroborates ones decision. This helps to create the 'out-there-ness' of news by building up a range of corroborating evidence provided by third parties and reinforcing the discourse that coverage was based on common sense. The widely proclaimed journalistic value of scoops or uniqueness in coverage is absent in these accounts as it does not help back up the commonality of news values. A discourse of

'difference' where a speaker differentiates his work from others only emerges in the 'manufactured object' repertoire which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Vivid and vague description

Vivid and vague descriptions are used throughout the accounts in describing the world of news work. During the interviews there were many detailed, vivid accounts of work processes. Vivid description here works to create a believable world of work, drawing in the listener. It was often employed, as described above, when listing procedures carried out during the day. These accounts were often rhythmic and pacy, seeming to recreate the experience of the work being described. Below are two extracts from editors explaining their daily routine.

> AnM: So an average day, you know, you start at, the job starts at seven thirty so I probably get up, I log on, I look at, I turn on the television and probably look at Sky and BBC24, I see what's going on. I would have had a handover the night before so I have an idea what planned coverage. I listen to the radio on my way to work on the bus. And then when I get into work, you know, the day starts. And, you know, it can be absolutely horrific. There's about 50 phones and you have people that you are working with, people that help answer the phones, but essentially you have to field phone calls from the bureaus who are ringing up to, you know, tell you about their stories. You have to make sure you keep across wires and that you have several sources of information coming into you that can help you know what's going on. And then you have two editorial meetings a day that, you know, obviously, you discuss things that are going on with the management and the rest of the crew, you know. So that's kind of an average day.

> CK: Yes… I listen to the news at 7 on the World Service [BBC]…And if there is something then that I feel I need to call the desk then I'll call them just to make sure that we have done something overnight or that we get something moving. Then I get in about 8.30 and I go through the evening's, the night handover. I've basically got an hour before the morning meeting. A lot has to happen in that hour. Go through the, um, night handover, try and look through the bulletins since 1630gmt which is when I left. Sometimes I see that sometimes I don't. Go back to 1630 the previous day. I try and go through the bulletins just to see if there is any specific video I need to have a look at. You know, what was really good, the big story, blah blah blah. Um…and then…I would have done some emails by the time I had got into the office. Um…then read some wires…um…read the BBC website, read what Reuters are doing, what Eurovision's doing. And go onto the Yahoo website as well. We've got quite a good headline service for AP, AFP, Reuters and CNN. And in the remaining time I flick through the British newspapers. And then it's 9.30. And I

am supposed to have an idea of what's going on (laughs). And that's the morning meeting then.

The accounts work up a pressurised and fast moving environment but simultaneously work up an account of repetition and inevitability. They rhetorically try to match the production of news itself as a mad rush of activity but also call up repeated processes and procedures to follow in order to achieve a successful outcome. These kind of vivid descriptions create a world out-there. To describe in such vivid detail gives a concrete feel to the accounts. It also reinforces the inevitability of news procedures. There is little individual agency outlined in these descriptions. Instead the journalist is following a set list of tasks.

Detail helps the speaker draw the listener into the speaker's world. All this detail creates a picture of a 'real' world painted in vivid colour, with pace and action and drama. However, as discussed above, a lot of detail can lead to a lot of questions. Side by side with this type of vivid description was a great deal of very vague accounting. Everyone interviewed, without exception, exhibited a great deal of difficulty in remembering what stories they had worked on recently, even what they had worked on the previous day. And when they did remember detail was very sparse. In the extract below the Sky correspondent is discussing a story he did the previous week.

> SR: No, I'll tell you what I did; I did the Wales line on the couple who were murdered in the Bahamas, or Barbados, Bahamas.
>
> Int: Oh yeah, yeah.
>
> SR: So I spent a few days down in South Wales, again where I started, learnt my trade. So that was quite a big story that was about three days until we got somebody out to…
>
> Int: Antigua, wasn't it?
>
> SR: Antigua, yeah, Antigua, so I did that for a bit.
>
> Int: And why was that a story do you think?
>
> SR: A honeymoon couple.
>
> Int: Yeah, I mean I just wondered why?
>
> SR: A lot of people go on holiday.

Here the reporter says he has spent three days in a village covering a story but is very hazy over detail. Even the location of the murder evades him – and has to be supplied by the

interviewer. According to Potter (1996) vagueness is a way to rhetorically avoid difficult questions. If one does not provide any detail about that world then one cannot be taken to task over it and here the speaker evades the need to reflect on editorial decisions and values.

Here an editor is talking about the stories she did the previous day about a US envoy's trip to the Balkans.

> AnM: He's been on kind of a, I think he's been, he went to Kosovo the day before and then he went to Serbia yesterday. He's going around, kind of, you know, trying to work out what's going to happen with Kosovo. And to be honest with you that's a story that I left, I, I placed that story quite low on yesterday's news agenda so I left that to Jason (Intake Editor) to deal with, so really didn't, I mean, I know that we got comment in from him but I didn't really, I didn't really take that much notice of that story. It wasn't really, the thing about Kosovo I knew, it's not really, it wasn't really on our news agenda.

Again detail is thin on the ground and the story itself is dismissed as unimportant. The stories still exist out there as discrete entities but sometimes the journalist is seemingly uninterested in them, keeping them at arms distance. This swinging to and fro in distance from the stories happens throughout the interviews. In the following chapter I will look in more detail at this use of vividness and vagueness and how its use is patterned across specific types of stories.

The news as a series of 'found' objects is constructed through a number of rhetorical devices. These, as Potter summarises, enable the 'transfer of explicitly formulated agency from the speaker to the facts by broadly grammatical means' (Potter, 1996, p158). The use of empiricist discourse, corroboration and consensus and the employing of vivid and vague descriptions all work together to construct the impression of a fact-based reality of news work – work in which the figure of the journalist is largely absent. However, there is a second construction of journalists' activities in which the individuals re-enter the newsroom. It is this construction that I will now turn to below.

News as 'manufactured object': Writing the journalist back in

Whilst in the previous section I argued that the journalist's role was reduced to keeping order over a number of pre-existing discrete news objects, this discourse is challenged at various

turns when a competing interpretation of news work is employed – that of news as a 'manufactured object'.

The empiricist discourse is undone in this second repertoire. In contrast to the news as a 'found object' repertoire, in the 'manufactured object' repertoire the journalist is grammatically at the centre of the action rather than written out. The 'data' becomes malleable and the procedures are pushed to one side in favour of creativity and rule-breaking. However, these accounts still have to be rhetorically constructed as believable and acceptable behaviour to the listener. In this, this repertoire uses some of the same rhetorical tools as the repertoire of news as a 'found object' – particularly the use of corroboration and vivid description. However, the corroboration draws on different notions of journalistic practice than the found object. Instead of notions of objective reality being 'out-there' to be reported, the journalist is now positioned as in the thick of the creative, story-telling action. This construction does not call on objective reality as a justification for coverage – instead it calls on professional practices of creativity, curiosity and personal skills such as the maintenance of objectivity which is corroborated by fellow journalists and the audience and is evoked through vivid description.

<u>News versus a 'story'</u>

This repertoire is in part constructed through differentiating between different types of coverage. Throughout the interviews there is often a discursive difference between the terms 'news' and a 'story'. 'News' is frequently used when talking about 'no-brainer' coverage. 'News is news', out there and obvious. The use of the term 'news' occurs when participants try to separate certain types of coverage. In these instances news is used as a contrast to the other type of entity – a 'story'.

The terms 'story' and 'news' were often both employed to describe similar activities. But when the discursive need arises to differentiate certain activities these terms took on specific and different meanings. News as a no-brainer, and 'straight' contrasted with a 'story' which was employed when a participant utilized the 'manufactured object' repertoire. This differentiation is just one way in which the journalist is written back in to the process of creating and crafting news coverage.

This division between 'straight news' and a journalist's crafted piece is found throughout the interviews. Here, a world affairs editor talks about his most recent trip and story coverage:

> TM: Israel and Gaza over the last two weeks. I got about five quality reports out, three from Gaza sit reps[15], which I actually think are often more worthwhile than straight news reports. Because if a shell has landed on the beach and killed seven kids, and you do that story, I actually think people may well be less informed about what's going on there than they would on a background report. Obviously it'll run lower down, but I think they'll learn more.

The crafting of a story rather than 'straight news' is framed as a positive for the audience as they are being informed with 'quality' pieces even if it is a disadvantage to the reporter by it being 'run lower down' the bulletin, in a less prestigious spot.

In the following extract an agency senior producer running a South American bureau bemoans having to cover 'basic news' with no time to think 'creatively'.

> FE: No, no I don't. I feel that (5 second pause) I mean, it's really rare that you feel like you have the chance to make a difference, in the sense that and this is especially working for [name of agency], for an agency, um, the emergency, the trying to serve with the basic news, trying to be what they need, your perception of what they need is, which is what is basic that people should know especially on the big stories, especially on the big moments when it's, when you can really make a difference it's so big, the output side, that you don't have really time to think creatively, to think about something else, another side of the story.

'Basic news' is still 'out-there' being gathered but there is a notion of journalism being about more than that is introduced with 'the chance to make a difference' and to tell the 'other side of the story'.

Age and experience: Serving the audience

As mentioned above the notion of journalism being 'a chance to make a difference' is introduced in the manufactured story repertoire. Consensus and corroboration for this are worked up in two ways interconnected ways. Firstly, the notion of the journalist as a creative, uniquely-skilled individual is repeatedly invoked. The art and skill of the individual is corroborated by recourse to age and experience and of fellow journalists (a theme which will also be taken up in Chapter 7). Secondly, this kind of creative journalism is constructed as being of benefit to the audience and takes on a moral dimension.

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[15] 'Sit rep' is short for situation report – a report to generally update and give a bit of context to an ongoing situation.

Therefore, in the manufactured story repertoire stories are 'worked on' and moulded in a certain way to make a good story for the public. This moulding is carried out by experienced, talented journalists as this Channel 4 foreign correspondent outlines.

> JM: I think every journalist [indistinct] particularly as they get longer in the tooth of what makes a story a story. To me, while news is news, a story can sometimes be different than news and to me, it's more… it hinges on key elemental human emotions and tapping into that and if you can do that. To me, the ultimate challenge is, particularly in remote places and hard to get to stories where the story's too obscure, nobody's going to be interested, in trying to imagine somebody sitting in a living room [indistinct] in er Darfur or a coke addict's room in Guinea Bissau or a war in Gabon is in some way relevant to them, because ultimately the people at the sharp end are people just like them. And that's what they can understand what it must be like to have your daughter killed in front of you because to them, that would be a horrific thing to happen too. It's the ability to communicate that and make it real for people.

Above the 'news' only becomes a 'story' when a journalist uses his long years of skill and innate talent to tell the story. It draws on vivid detail of the circumstances of the stories and invokes the audience as corroborator of the journalist's judgement about the importance of the story.

Below experience is again used to construct consensus whilst simultaneously bolstering the speaker's uniqueness.

> SR: Yeah, yeah, but that's where you actually have to… you know, think, okay, I'm going to write myself out of this problem. I think other younger and less experienced journalists would a) get more hassle from the desk, I don't get any hassle from the desk. If I say nobody's going to speak, they're going to have to be pretty brave to say, 'you're not telling the truth.' I mean I went back to the same houses four or five times, I mean I didn't leave it once, but in the end I had people in tears and I'm saying, 'right, okay, I'm really sorry, I just have to keep asking.' So that was that.

Corroboration is supported particularly by 'active voicing' (Wooffitt, 1992) where conversations are reconstructed in the accounts to add validity. In the above extract the speaker's version of events are supported by the 'direct' quoting of his boss and colleagues. This active voicing is used again in the following extract to add veracity to the speaker's account of news work.

KM: Yesterday I saw Buzz Aldrin on Fox. I got very excited because I have a personal in Buzz Aldrin (laughs) and I rang them up and I rang up, he was in Los Angeles, I rang, I rang him up in LA and I said 'would you mind waiting around for an hour so that we could chat to you live on air'. And he agreed and I got him on. And it was only because I, I, first I approached the team that was on air at the time and they had no interest what so ever. But because of the shuttle that's how I sold it. So the next team I said 'look, it's the shuttle, we can talk to him about that, space, you know, general stuff, and because it was sort of fairly quiet news day as well, they said 'fantastic, let's do it.'

Instead of the story speaking for itself as in the empiricist discourse, here the journalist speaks for the story. Unlike, the empiricist discourse, here the 'facts' of the story are more plastic and can shift according to circumstances. Routines can be altered.

Vivid description

Vivid description is also employed to rhetorically add weight to the accounts being given. This vivid description takes the form of long detailed accounts of the chaotic nature of the business and the individual's important role in fashioning the material. In the 'found object' repertoire vivid descriptions are used to support a discourse of news being out-there to be found through recognised procedures and processes. In the news as a manufactured object the vivid descriptions are used to bring the journalist back into a leading role of creating news. In many of these instances of vivid description the accounts are long, fast-paced in an attempt to rhetorically reconstruct the experience of being in the newsroom. The descriptions seem to try to match the pace of the actual production of news and evoke the mad rush of chaotic activity.

In the following extract, from a much longer description of the evolution of a story about violence in Eastern Congo, the Channel Four editor details the confusion and difficulties she faced and how they were resolved.

EW: So we didn't actually get the piece in until ten minutes before we were on air. So it was very hard to gauge where it should be in the programme and how much prominence we should give it, and how important it was. So from what they told me over the telephone, it was very, very strong, but a) we knew it was a risk that they wouldn't make it in time for the programme, so satellite links and things. And b) I was struggling with the detail of the story to be able to kind of sell it in the headlines and in the intro. So I was on the phone to the team at kind of 6.55 reading out what we'd written for our headlines saying, is this right? And we were calling it a refugee camp but they were saying, well, it's not really a refugee camp, it's a town, a proper town but a lot of refugees

have gone there. And we didn't really know who had killed these people. Because originally we were saying they were killed by rebel forces, but then they were saying that, actually someone told us that this town has been looted so many times by all different sides that we can't be sure that these dead people were dead as a result of the rebel forces. So it was very, very… it was a difficult one from my point of view to be able to be really clear in the rest of the programme. They were very clear in their scripts, but I couldn't see their scripts and I couldn't see the piece until ten minutes before it went out, so that was a really tricky one from an editorial point of view.

Here is another Channel Four editor explaining the journey to air for a story.

BMD: Yeah, where the bombings went wrong and they came in and they killed seven and it looks like they killed a lot more. But that could come in a five o'clock and that could be a lead story and it's amazing. If it comes in at five o'clock, it's impossible because they've over-egged it in the copy and you don't run it. It doesn't come in at all, you can't do anything with it and it's on the ten o'clock news and that's the lead. …what are you going to lead on if that's not… [indistinct] unbelievable, drop everything and say when's it coming and we go, we don't know. No? okay, what are the options? When is it going to come in? And then it might be coming in at seven o'clock and what do you do if it comes in at seven o'clock? Do you run it as a live - hang on, there are bodies here. So that's the sort of decisions you're making all the time, practical as much as editorial - which is the better story. Normally it's obvious what the better story is.

Both the above accounts create a sense of drama and chaos which the speaker brings to order as she struggles with issues of objectivity. This vivid accounting invites the listener in to share the experiences of the speaker and to come to the same conclusions about the course of action and decisions made.

In the manufactured object discourse the journalist is centre stage and is a creative, thinking person, moulding material to make a good story both in terms of displaying the qualities of journalistic professionalism such as objectivity, but also as a way of informing the public. There is both personal achievement and public service in this kind of account. This is created discursively by writing the journalist back into the story through grammar, corroboration and vivid description.

When worlds collide: Reconciling the 'found' and the 'manufactured'

At many instances the found object and manufactured object repertoires meet in the same account and become intertwined. The journalist moves in and out of the accounts, sometimes grammatically absent, sometimes becoming the agent of creation. For example

in this account given by a BBC foreign correspondent the story is sometimes the object 'out-there' and sometimes it is the journalists who are creating an object.

> KA: Somalia became a story as soon as we talked, talk about pirates, people could understand about pirates. There was a big story about pirates there, which to be honest is a bit of a side-show, it's not really the central story, but it's something that people can grasp because it's such a good story.

Somalia is the impersonalised object in this extract. Somalia 'became' rather than 'we made it' a story. This is further reiterated when the interviews says 'there was' a big story…there' grammatically structuring the idea that the story as an entity was waiting to be found even though in this account it is the 'side-show' and the 'central story' is still waiting in the wings. Yet agency creeps in as 'we talked about pirates'. Here it is the journalists who created the interest in the story by introducing the term 'pirates' thus framing the events in an appealing way to the audience.

Below a Channel 4 producer is talking about the Burma earthquake in 2008:

> NM: today they were bored of it, well seemingly it was. One is that you've been telling the same story for four or five days. Until something changes, ie they find you know hu… I mean they found devastated villages, the story we have done we've seen the bodies. Now, the first few days they were like this is really weird there is like so many thousand dead but we haven't seen anywhere in the video, you know, it's quite odd so like go and find the bodies and then they found bodies and that happened yesterday and the day before you saw, you started to see bodies then today the story really was about, there's two stories one is that the spread of disease is going to happen but hasn't happened yet so that's something to watch, so our guy is staying there for another four days for example in order to do a [indistinct] pieces. Didn't file today won't file tomorrow presumably, unless something particular happens, filming for a big piece that will be then about what happens now, longer term. Um, the other story is aid, like will it rain with aid (laugh) which is shipped in and helicopter dropped which is will they do that again when it's kind of a bit of a lull given the timing.

The above story is framed as a series of elements which have already or will occur and will be then reported regardless of journalistic intervention or decision to frame coverage in certain ways. So the reporters in the field were told to find the bodies but grammatically 'you started to see bodies'. This shifts from journalistic agency back to objectivity. There '*will* be a spread of disease' and then we will film it. However, at points the story is being fashioned by the editorial team. The opening statement that 'they were bored of it' is indicative of this journalistic intervention into the shape of coverage. It is also indicative of the operation of value judgements or news values in coverage. Yet, these news values remain

unacknowledged in the discourse. There remains a tension between the two differing accounts of how news works – the objective versus the subjective.

This tension is summed up in the following comment:

> TM: It would be pretty worrying if we all were the same and we worked off a formula. I mean of course there is a formula and you go over there and see it and report it and tell it and hopefully explain it, and gather your… yes, there is a formula, you can't get around that. It's like a footballer saying I play football like no one else does. No, you've got lines and you play within them.

This extract acknowledges the news 'formula' as something inevitable, like rules which 'you can't get around'. However, simultaneously, he attempts to explain himself as unique and creative in making news.

Conclusion

To sum up, news stories and news work in these accounts are constructed using two interpretive repertoires – that of news as' found object' and news as 'manufactured object'. In the first, news consists of discrete objects, 'out-there' in the world waiting to be plucked by the journalist and put on air. In the second, news is a creative process where stories are manufactured by the journalist.

These two repertoires have been identified in other research of news room talk. Gravengaard (2012) lists five metaphors used by journalists in Danish newspapers. Among these five are News work as Selection and News work as Construction. News work as selection positions news stories as 'entities in the world independent of the journalists' (Gravengaard 2012, p7) and stories float down a metaphorical river to be jumped on by reporters. The journalists I interviewed also frame stories as independent entities although the explicit metaphors employed, such as air traffic controllers, or 'story rustlers' emphasis the *gathering in* of stories which are flying or running about rather than the jumping on board. In these interviews this construction of the 'found object' goes further than the journalist's selecting. It is, as Stuart Hall wrote: 'Journalists speak of 'the news' as if events select themselves' (Hall 1981 p234). The effect of this construction of news work and news is that the journalist is to a great extent 'written out' of the decision-making process and instead becomes a gatherer of pre-existing stories where the agency for selection lies with the story.

This kind of construction can be seen as connected to notions of journalistic objectivity whereby the journalist is merely reporting facts and is removed from making subjective judgements. Whilst it is argued that journalists have evolved to understand that 'facts' may be manipulated, McNair argues objectivity is maintained by journalists following an agreed routine of reporting – an unwritten code of professional conduct which lives up to the objectivity required by journalism (McNair, 2003). This following of procedures ties in closely with the repertoire of 'found object' described above. Sticking to the rules discursively protects the journalist from criticism of subjectivity or distortions. Tuchman calls the use of the idea of objectivity a 'strategic ritual' where journalists 'evoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits' (Tuchman 1972 p296).

This kind of narrative of news work is also reminiscent of the metaphor of journalism as a mirror (Zelizer 2004) whereby journalism is merely reflecting reality back to the public rather than employing any subjective involvement. There is no explicit identifiable reference to the mirror but the rhetorical construction of news attempts to draw in the listener to see the world in the same way as the journalist - both looking out at reality.

However, the journalists do, on occasion, step in and reintroduce their own agency. At these points 'news' becomes a 'story' initiated and created by the journalist. Here the journalist takes something unformed and by crafting and moulding this unpromising material creates something exciting or worthy out of it. This construction taps into another image of journalism and journalists – that of the curious and creative story teller, helping the viewer to a deeper understanding of issues and events. Any of the many, many books on how to become a journalist from feature writing to sports writing, from interviewing techniques to setting up as a freelancing expound the virtue of curiosity and self-starting work practices where the journalist has in the back of his or her mind a number of stories brewing (cf. Adams 2009, Reinardy & Wanta, 2009, Wheeler 2009, Leverton 2010). This taps into the popular ideology of the journalist as an autonomous maverick, with large amounts of freedom to do what they want, when they want, a notion largely dismissed as more imagined than real (Pedalty 1991, Franklin 1997, 2004). However, it is an image which persists in the discourse of the interviewees in this research.

What is interesting to note is the prevalence of these two repertoires across the accounts regardless of the employer of the participant. Although the output of the two agencies does not radically differ, agency output *is* markedly different to broadcast news. Within the broadcasters Channel 4 News is heavily weighted towards to 'hard' news while Sky has

'lighter' news agenda with celebrity and sports making up a significant part of the output. However, these differences are not reflected in the discourse of the participants when discursively framing news work and values.

Also there is a tension within and between these two versions of news work. Firstly, if the journalist is merely a traffic cop, whilst this removes the subjectivity of news production it also removes any unique role for the individual journalist. The journalist's identity as somebody especially skilled to carry out the job of journalism is compromised. With the 'found object' repertoire if subjectivity is removed it follows that anybody can find these objects if they learn and follow the procedures.

Similarly, there is a tension within the manufactured object repertoire. Whilst the quality of story-teller is a lauded attribute there is a danger that this story-telling may stray in to the realm of *making up* stories, a challenge to notions of journalistic professionalism. Giving the 'facts' and telling the 'truth' about the world has long been one of the tenets held by journalism and journalists (Allan 1999). Stories framed as objects found living independently reinforces the notion of journalists as mirrors – just reflecting the truth back to the public. However, if a journalist starts to relate how they were instrumental in making a story – this moves dangerously close to making things up – which is the ultimate transgression in journalism. As MacGregor notes, for journalists: 'Suggestions that they are creating a social construction, a man-made product, are almost always seen by journalists as a criticism of their professional abilities rather than an explanation of what they do' (MacGregor 1997 p52). So there is an issue at the heart of these accounts which is problematic to resolve. It is good to be a proactive, original journalist – yet it is bad to be too 'creative'.

These two over-arching constructions are embedded grammatically and systematically in the discourse of the interviewees. Discursively managing of these two repertoires during the conversations I had with the participants of this research was a complex operation where the participants moved between objectivity and subjectivity and between passivity and agency often in the same account of a story.

What is also apparent is the use of implicit value judgements or news values in operation in both repertoires but which lie unacknowledged and unchallenged in the accounts. In the following chapter I attempt to untangle at what different points these two intersecting repertoires are employed in relation to the specifics of stories brought up during the interviews and to the use of notions of news values. Through this I hope to illustrate the

differing functions of the two repertoires in constructing journalistic values and professional practices in specific stories.

Chapter 5

Analysis 2: What makes news: The case of the buried news values

Introduction

As Michael Billig has argued when analysing the opinions and ideas of people the researcher must attend to '*what* is being said not just *how* it is said' (Billig 1991 p20). Billig rightly stresses that when people talk they are doing so in a particular context to achieve certain goals. However, 'the speaker's utterances have content as well as context' (Billig 1991 p20). In the previous chapter I have concentrated on some of the rhetorical tools used to make an argument and how these tools have been deployed to build a common sense view of news as a number of discrete 'found objects' or news as a creative construction, the 'manufactured object'. In this chapter I concentrate more on the 'content' of the discourse, about what is cited as being worthy of coverage. I examine how the two repertoires discussed in Chapter 4 are played out within the prism of the news values invoked during the interviews when explaining which events make news. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first will look at the general construction of news stories and news values. Secondly, I will look at how 'hard' news is specifically constructed and thirdly, in contrast, how tabloid stories are constructed differently.

What is perhaps the defining quality of the discourse of news values is their explicit scarcity in the journalistic discourse. During the initial stages of analysis I carried out a content analysis of the stories mentioned by the participants in order to get some overview of news values cited. In the process of attempting to make some quantitative description of these news values, it was like trying to catch a cloud and pin it down. In spite of over three hundred stories being mentioned and the interviewer repeatedly asking, Paxman-like, what makes that a story, there is very little explicit explanation in the interviews of news values in the academic sense and what little there was covered a very narrow range. Instead there was prevarication, long silences, vague assertions, repetition of 'facts', and repetition of how profound the journalist's role was in making a good story. Where mentions of specific reasons for newsworthiness were forthcoming these were not uniformly applied to stories. News values were invoked but with little detail or explicit explanation. This initial content analysis is discussed in more detail below. I will look at these various means of describing a story's value in news terms and how they differ according to the context of a story's subject matter.

There are two interconnected points to be made at the outset. Firstly, the interviews are not pieces of naturally occurring conversation in a news room. As such they are reflections-on-action rather than reflections-in-action (Schon,1983). By that I mean the interviewees were looking back at what they had done rather than what they were in the process of doing or going to do – even if this looking back was only as far as earlier that day. Secondly, therefore, the reflecting back nature of the interviews puts a large amount of the discussion of news stories into the realm of what makes or made news rather than what ought to make news. As discussed in Chapter 2, this division between journalists' ideas about what makes news and what ought to be news has been investigated by Strömbäck *et al* (2012). This division is worth noting. As a 'reflection-on-action' the interviews centre round actual stories rather that what ought to make news on a generic level.

In the following section I will outline definitions of news values, and differences between hard news stories and tabloid stories concluding with a breakdown of the stories discussed by the participants. This will be followed by an analysis of the construction of news values in general and the difference between specific constructions of hard and tabloid news.

News values and stories:

<u>News values</u>

Before looking at the discourse itself, it is perhaps helpful to be reminded of how news values are defined and what specifically has been identified by academics as a news value. News values have been proposed as the 'ground rules' brought into play by journalists when faced with a decision over whether to select an event or issue for broadcast. The seminal piece of work on news values in Norwegian newspapers carried out by Galtung and Ruge (1970) in the 1960s was one of the first to systematically map the elements a story needed to contain to put it on to the news agenda. These elements included the size, frequency and rarity of an event, whether it is meaningful to the target audience, whether it conforms to what the audience expects news to be, if it fits in with other news happening in that news cycle, if refers to 'elite' nations or people, if the story is about people or of 'human interest' and last but not least the value of negativity – or the old adage 'if it bleeds it leads'.

Over the last several decades these values have been reassessed, honed and added to as news media has evolved. In their reassessment of Galtung and Ruge, Harcup and O'Neill added celebrities to the elite people category, as well as good news stories and

entertainment stories (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001). Novelty or surprise, what Herbert Gans termed the 'Gee Whiz' stories also feature on news values lists (Gans 1979).

As well as value or cultural based judgements, many production considerations also come to bear on news selection. Elements include the availability of pictures, the timing of events in the news cycle and where an organisation's resources are deployed (Harrison 2006, Hoskins 2001, Tuchman 1978). Exclusivity is important to news organisations as well as not missing a story all the other outlets are covering (Bell 1991).

Format and style also influence coverage making it necessary to differentiate news values and news media. Specific media hold specific values. As discussed in Chapter 3, television is the media of time or timelessness in that it can present events to the viewer as they unfold. The trajectory of rolling 24-hour news is towards the presentation of 'liveness', be it actual or immanent (Marriott, 2007), in ways which mark it out from print media. As such television is orientated towards to being 'present' at the story through actual reporting from the scene to the creation of a visual and textual discourse of 'being there' (Marriott 2007).

News values are used (usually unconsciously) by journalists to decide whether an event or story fits in with the various needs of the outlet for the story, as well as the professional needs of journalism. One area which became noticeable in the interviews was the differentiation in the discursive construction of 'hard' and 'tabloid' news. Before looking at the specifics of this in the interviews I want to briefly examine how these two types of news have been defined.

Hard and tabloid news values

The 'hard' news of war and international politics is the presumed goal of most would-be journalists as opposed to the 'soft' news of human interest stories, sensationalism and drama (Baum 2003) which represent the antithesis of objective, balanced journalism. Journalist autobiographies are rarely written by entertainment correspondents or reporters from glossy fashion magazines. *The Devil wears Prada* (Weisberger, 2003) may have been partly based on the author's experience at Vogue but as a novel was highly critical of the media in sharp contrast to most autobiographies by war journalists which laud their

profession or trade, (if not the management or structure of it). Most autobiographies are written by foreign, war or political correspondents all covering 'hard' news. The romantic image of the journalist ferreting out information about important stuff the public needs to know is an enduring one in both factual accounts and fiction.

Hard news is almost a taken for granted concept. As Bell says in his explanation of the differences between hard and soft news 'Hard news is a news we all recognise' (Bell, 1991, p147). Yet, as Reinemann *et al* in their review of the conceptualisation of both hard and soft news point out: 'in spite of the fact that most scholars seem to have an intuitive understanding of the concept and despite its ubiquity in the literature, scholars are far from reaching a consensus about how hard and soft news is to be defined' (Reinemann *et al*, 2012, p222).

However, two aspects of hard and soft news have been differentiated – that of the content of the story and of the style and format for telling the story. Firstly, hard news has been used as a term to describe the content of a type of story. Secondly it can be a presentation style and temporal story factor. Bell divides hard news into two categories (which often overlap) of news about international and national goings-on and news about events told in short, fact based ways. (Bell, 1991).

The first category concerns the content of the stories which covers 'politics or diplomacy: news of elections, government announcements, international negotiations, party politics' (Bell, 1991, p147). Hard news stories have been defined as concerned with matters of public interest and covers wars, international and domestic politics, economics and social issues. Gans writes: 'hard (read important) news [is] about current political and other national and international happenings' (Gans, 2004, pxiv).

The second category is more concerned with style and format. The reporting technique and style of hard news is associated with the *who, what, where, when* of a story and to a lesser extend the *why - s*hort, factual reports, simply told and often called 'spot' news. This harks back to the development of the pyramid style of reporting where the most important 'facts' are told first in short, to the point sentences in order to communicate more clearly with the readership (Pöttker, 2003). There is also a temporal aspect to the category. Hard news is often portrayed as 'new' news, reporting on news events or developments that have happened since the viewer last tuned in (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). Hard news is 'breaking' news.

While hard news definitions, taken together, of both content ('important' socially aware news) and reporting style ('factual') hard news values are characterised as upholding the best of journalism. It strives towards an objective, truthful account of the social issues and events which have a bearing on the citizens of that society and beyond. This kind of news is central to both British broadcasters as well as the international news agencies. Bell even likens his two types of hard news as *defined* by news agencies (Bell, 1991 p148). The public service remit of British broadcasting requires news departments of the media organisations cover important events and issues in order to provide the public with need the information they need to engage in society. This is enshrined in British broadcasting policy across all the stations not just the BBC and hard news is still at the core of British and agency output. Both the subject and style of 'hard' news encapsulates the ideals of objective reporting of the 'facts'. However, categories are not absolute. Reporting of crime has been included in hard news as it is reported in a hard style, even if definitions concerning content would put crime in the tabloid camp.

Scholars and practitioners have defined tabloid stories along similar lines to hard news – in terms of content and in terms of style. Firstly, story content associated with tabloid journalism include individual crime stories, celebrity news, scandal, sex, 'other news' of the bizarre or freakish and, as Conboy puts it: 'any form of prurience which can be included under the general heading of human interest' (Conboy, 2006, p12). Colin Sparks sums up tabloid content as being largely preoccupied with entertainment and the personal whilst generally ignoring the political and social (Sparks, 2000, p10).

Secondly, tabloid stories have been defined as having certain presentation and format qualities. An emphasis on big headlines and visuals, sensationalist language combined with a conversational and idiomatic writing style, use of humour and a thumbing of the nose at authority have all been associated with tabloid story reporting (Conboy 2006, Zelizer, 2000). Zelizer sees a place for these kinds of stories in the news landscape, writing:

> Tabloids fill a need for moralistic tales and gossip, for stories of human gore and human interest, for sensational and intrigue-ridden narratives about both everyday life and the unreachable world of the celebrities. Those needs emerge as relevant in every other area of cultural production: fiction, cinema, poetry, art. Why, then are we so outraged when they surface in journalism? (Zelizer 2000, p*x*).

Whilst most would agree that such stories fulfil a need amongst the audience, there are worries about the spread of this type of coverage into more 'serious' news outlets to the detriment of hard news coverage. Concern about the so-called tabloidization of the media

has become, as Martin Conboy explains: 'from political and cultural perspectives, the defining detrimental trend within our news media' (Conboy, 2006, p207). Critics of the contemporary media ecology are concerned there is a growing tabloidization of all news media, with the content and style becoming trivialised. Television news in particular is seen as shifting away from investigative and hard news reporting to the sensational and visually exciting. This shift is driven by commercial pressures to provide the content to the largest possible audience (Franklin, 1997). Some longitudinal studies using content analysis have shown a more complex picture with some decline in hard news with its corresponding rise in 'soft' news on UK television in the 1990s but with a levelling out during the last decade (Barnett *et al*, 2012). In other countries research seems to indicate a continuing decline for example in New Zealand (Connie and Fountaine, 2005). This trend whilst not universal or uniform has been seen across not only commercial but albeit to a lesser extent, public service broadcasters in the UK and is shown through content and the presentation of content where politics is personalised. Bob Franklin, prefers the term Newzak to exemplify the media's increasing shift toward packaging news into 'homogenised 'snippets' which make only modest demands on the audience' (Franklin, 1997, p5).

The pros and cons of tabloid journalism is contested in academic and some journalism circles with some seeing is as a possible force for good in engaging people in the social and political (Langer, 2006, Temple, 2006, Brandt, 1998) with others seeing it as detrimental to the public good. The recent Leveson inquiry into the press practice and ethics, sparked by phone hacking by Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World* newspaper, has seen a public vilification of certain tabloid practices and culture of reporting. Whilst set up to look at newspapers, the tangled web of cross media ownership has brought television and other news media under scrutiny with Murdoch's global media empire becoming the focus of much public anger about the 'tabloidization' of news media (Kellner, 2012). 'Tabloid' journalism has become associated with the worst of journalism.

Perhaps one of the most contentious stories of recent times is the case of the disappearance of the British girl, Madeleine McCann in Portugal in 2007. Many of the participants were involved in coverage of the 'Maddie' story and all were specifically asked about the news value of it. This story attracted huge media attention not only in the UK but globally and the story was covered on a massive scale over a period of months especially by the tabloid press. In September 2007, the British newspaper *The Daily Express* put the 'Maddie' story on the front page every single day. At the time there was considerable debate within the media about the value of this tragic but ultimately tabloid story in which there was only one fact – that a girl had gone missing (Jewell 2008). Editorials and opinion columns of

broadsheet papers criticised coverage (whilst, it must be noted, simultaneously covering the story). Simon Jenkins, writing in *The Guardian* exemplifies the concerns over the extent and quality of coverage at the expense of other news.

> The coverage has been absurdly over the top and cannot have served the interests of the family, or the eventual cause of justice. I was astonished to see the BBC news department sending its star presenter, Huw Edwards, to southern Portugal to handle what was essentially a single thread story with at least two other onscreen reporters in place. The corporation must be stiff with under-employed staff. Presumably as a result of this decision, the McCanns regularly led the 6 o'clock news, ahead of Gordon Brown's leadership bid - even when there was nothing new to report from the Algarve. (Jenkins, 2007)

That this debate was going on during the story is illustrative of the tensions within journalism of tabloid content and style and the blurring of boundaries between hard and soft news both in content and presentation style. In the aftermath of 9/11 soft news outlets embraced a hard news agenda, at least for a period of time (Baum 2003, Bird 2003). This is indicative of a wider trend of convergence of 'serious' and tabloid news output with the tabloids at certain points covering politics albeit from a personalised stance, and the serious media giving more space and time to personal and celebrity stories.

For the purposes of this research I have divided the stories mentioned by the participants into hard and soft stories by reference to the content of each story rather than the presentation or style. This is partly because a large part of the information given about the stories only gives clues to the content of the story rather than the manner in which it was told. Also, this division of content runs parallel to the constructions of 'hard' and tabloid or 'soft' news identified below. However, this is not to say that issues of style and format are never discussed by the participants. As will be shown, changing of format or style is often brought up in when discursive attempts are made to reconfigure tabloid stories as 'hard' or at least 'harder' news.

<u>The stories</u>

As noted earlier, 303 specific stories were brought up by participants. Some events were mentioned in passing while others were discussed in more depth as the speakers sought to explain the value of each event. By specific I mean the story cited by a participant was claimed as an actual news item or proposed as a news item. This is in contrast with discussions of generic stories such as crime or politics. An initial content analysis of these stories was carried out, looking at the content of the story and any mention of a range of news values.

The stories raised were overwhelmingly what would be termed 'hard' news such as international and national conflicts, international and national politics, and natural disasters such as earthquakes and unnatural disasters such as plane crashes. Making up the largest group of stories (40%) were wars and conflicts such as in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Pakistan, Kosovo, Georgia, and the Middle East. Other national conflicts in Africa and Asia were also mentioned. The second largest group consisted of international and national politics, economic and social issues (34%). The third theme of stories was international disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, floods, fires, bus and plane crashes as well as bad weather such as snow causing problems (11%).

Tabloid stories and soft news made up a much smaller number of stories compared with 'hard news'. A handful of 'soft stories' were mentioned (3%) including stories such as first snow in Buenos Aires in 90 years or a feature on Jewish music. Tabloid stories made up about 12% of the sample. A few celebrity stories were mentioned such as the death of Michael Jackson. The rest of what would be classed as 'tabloid' were crime stories – more specifically, one type of crime story – the murder or abduction of girls or young women. Setting aside briefly the Madeleine McCann story which all the participants were asked about, the remaining stories brought up were the Meredith Kercher murder in Italy, the rape and imprisonment of his daughter by Josef Fritzl in Austria, the abduction of Natascha Kampusch, also in Austria, the murder of the British woman Lindsay Hawker in Japan, the murder of two young girls in Soham, UK, two murders of young women in Scotland (names were not mentioned in interviews) and the British nanny Louise Woodward's trial for murdering a baby in her care. It is worth remembering these stories were brought up by the participants before being asked about the McCann case. Sex and death of young women and girls seems to figure largely in the discourse of the journalists interviewed.

Research on news output on British television at the time of the interviews shows a significantly higher proportion of tabloid stories (Barnett *et al*, 2012) than mentioned by the interviewees. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Firstly, the interviewees could pick their own stories to discuss for the most part. This could mean stories which the reflected well on the journalist would be highlighted. These kinds of stories are often exciting adventures in foreign parts or 'big' stories with a significant impact both coming under the 'hard' news umbrella. This may in part explain the glut of 'hard' news stories over 'tabloid' stories. Also the journalists who took part do belong to a cohort of people who largely work in foreign news or are in charge of whole bulletins or daily output which are more heavily

focused on hard and foreign news. Therefore the discourse of the participants needs to be seen in this specific television news context.

With regard to news values, each account of a specific story was examined for any explanatory content. In other words, any mention of a reason for coverage was noted. Possible explanations took in traditional news values such as rarity and unambiguity as discussed by Galtung and Ruge (1970) and Harcup and O'Neill (2001), but also covered production factors such as prefabrication and co-option (Bell 1991), media specific factors such as timings and visuals, technological factors, and management or commercial pressures. I also noted every time the audience was invoked. This was carried out in order to look for possible patterns of explanation which could then be further examined.

As mentioned previously, there was very little explanation that included explicit Galtung and Ruge type news values. For example, the ease of explanation or 'unambiguity' was mentioned only once, as was prefabrication. Logistics of production were mentioned 30 times and included many reasons such as lack of money, bad timing of a story, lack of facilities, danger, breakdown of vehicles or equipment, or beginning 'too late' to cover. Those mentioned did not form any pattern in relation to types of stories. What *were* mentioned frequently were visuals, (in over a quarter of stories) and references to the audience. The 'meaningfulness' of the story to the viewers, and the more general desires of the audience to see the story were mentioned in over a third of the cases. These factors and the other 'missing' news values will be discussed in more detail below in relation to the construction of news.

Before moving on, it is again worth noting that there was no significant difference in story choice or news values across the different organisations or job types. Individuals sometimes concentrated on few stories and values whilst other ranged more widely across values and events. However, this did not have any wider correlation between participant and their job or news outlet. So, editors did not talk about visuals more than reporters as a group, and reporters did not talk about the audience more than producers. People from the agencies did not discuss story selection in any meaningfully different manner to those from broadcasters. Neither was there any notable difference between the broadcasters with regards the construction of news practice and values. The patterns of discourse are dominant across the sample of interviewees perhaps reflecting the deeply embedded shared discourse of journalistic professional practice that spans the industry in the UK even when working for an international organisation and even when the output of the various organisations differs.

Accounting for newsworthiness

In the interviews participants were asked to talk about the last five stories they had been involved with, by working from the most recent backwards. As mentioned in Chapter 4 all the participants professed problems in being able to remember beyond one or two stories, even if they had been working the previous day or days. When pushed the participants would cite stories but only ones they could 'remember'. This meant the stories would not necessarily be ones they worked on consecutively, merely any five they could recall. This obviously opens up room for participants, consciously or more likely unconsciously, to 'cherry-pick' stories that could reflect well on the speaker as discussed above.

The accounts of news worthiness contained a number of elements – silences and pauses, rhetorical 'full-stops', vague description, repetition of 'facts', and a movement between the two interpretive repertoires described in Chapter 4, that of news as a 'found object' and qualifier of newsworthiness and news as a 'manufactured object' with the journalist as a driving force. Interwoven in the accounts was the use of specific and explicit elements as a reason for coverage – what would be termed by academics as news values.

It is important to make clear that the news values discussed below are based on interviewees' accounts. I did not evaluate the actual stories themselves in terms of news values as the focus of this project is to investigate what is present in the discourse of journalists.

Before discussing the news values embedded in the discourse it is perhaps interesting to return to the difficulty the journalists displayed in being able to articulate what made a particular story a story. This difficulty in accounting for what is embedded as common sense work practices has been noted in other research (Örnebring, 2013, p41). Cottle and Ashton report that consciously, at least, journalists have very little idea about what it is they do and are left literally speechless by questions about their trade or profession (Cottle and Ashton, 1999, p37). Editors, especially, make decisions about stories many, many times a day. Wire stories drop onto a television editor's screen every second or so and each time a judgement is made as to whether to ignore it or to take action. This is compounded by other sources of possible stories such as news web sites, other media outlets such as the newspapers or television channels, staff and freelancers pitching stories, and members of the public emails. Reporters and producers also make editorial decisions about story selection, by pitching stories they are working on at home or discovering whilst in the field. They make numerous decisions about how to tell the story with what they include and what they discount in the

construction of packages (as well as receiving input from the programme editors).Therefore any news worker is judging events and issues almost continuously throughout the working day. In addition, this ability to pick up a story or eliminate it (Gravengaard and Rimestad, 2012) is a crucial skill for editors, reporters and producers and one that is regarded as a badge of honour, tapping, as it does, into the notion of instinctive news ability.

When participants were asked why certain judgements had been made there was very often a lengthy pause and the use of rhetorical delaying tactics to defer any answer. This sometimes involved repeating the interviewer's question and sometimes the use of rhetorical questions. For example, when one participant is asked why an audience would care about a particular story answers 'Yeah, do you know, that's a good point and I've thought about it often. I mean do people care about this?' This buys the speaker some time, as well as flattering the interviewer and showing the speaker in a good light as it implies he does reflect on his work in a meaningful way.

Whilst it might be supposed that the journalists have a vast array of news values to call upon to justify story selection the accounts themselves rarely directly reference any specific qualities. As will be illustrated below in place of explicit news values there are repetitions of 'facts', vague descriptions, or detailed accounts of *how* the story developed (not *why* it was developed). What academics have identified as news values are raised but those explicitly brought up centre around a very narrow repertoire of values – these being predominantly visuals, meaningfulness to the audience, and that the audience wanted the story. These values are employed as specific moments according to the story subject matter.

In the remainder of this chapter I will examine how these accounts of news selection and news values are constructed in different ways according to the content of the stories being discussed. I will show how 'hard news' and 'tabloid stories' are differentiated in the discourse of newsworthiness. Also, I will look at how the interpretive repertoires of news as 'out-there' or news as a created product, discussed in Chapter 4, are brought into play at specific moments in the accounts and the troubled nature of these accounts when tabloid stories are discussed.

Constructing hard news

In the interviews, overwhelmingly the subject matter of the stories discussed would be classed as hard news. As pointed out earlier in the chapter, hard news comprising of wars and conflicts (40%), international and national politics and social issues (34%) along with

fatal accidents and natural disasters of all kinds (11%) which combined 85% of the stories discussed in the interviews. These types of stories are constructed as newsworthy by recourse to the interpretive repertoire discussed in Chapter 4 – that of news as a found object constructed through an empiricist discourse and other rhetorical tropes to make 'reality' seem real (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, Potter, 1996). This construction takes the form of the use of statements of 'fact', repeating the details of the story, and vague description which I will look at in more detail below.

Firstly, participants used statements of 'fact' when describing a story. When explaining why an event became news the following accounts are typical: 'it was a very important story', 'a very big story' 'a big story', 'important and interesting' 'she's an important figure' 'a lead story' 'one of those obvious ones'. Here is an example of empiricist discourse, specifically grammatical distancing taking place. If the sentence is written in a different way a very different meaning appears. If 'it was a big story' was replaced with 'I thought it was a big story' then it alters the position of the speaker. In all the instances above the story is 'out-there', already 'important' or 'big' or 'obvious'. This removes a need for further justification or reinforces other arguments for story selection.

This kind of rhetoric was also used when discussing one specific television news value of visuals. Visuals were repeatedly mentioned as a reason for coverage, yet this picture aspect was often brought into play only as a statement of fact. For example, stories were talked about in terms of 'great pictures' or 'great telly'. However, this was then left unexplored. No explanation as to exactly what constituted 'great pictures' was offered within the discourse.

Visuals were often talked of as discreet objects in themselves. So, pictures were chased down and the story became 'a matter of trying to get that video'. The visuals are externalised, out there, and the journalist's job is just to wrangle 'a whole herd' of them as one participant phrased it. For example, in the following extract, the interviewee is asked about what kind of stories their news organisation does not cover.

> CK: Um… we turn down stories on the basis of…um… the news value – how strong the pictures are, what time of the day it is, how restricted the pictures are, which clients want them (laughs) um… yes, how strong the video is. It's very rare that we turn something down which is really sensational pictures.

The editorial factor is constructed as a logistical and commercial decision on whether to obtain a news object – in this case a set of pictures. This is a case of following a set of procedures, again producing an 'out-there-ness' for news. Just as there is no discussion

about what constitutes 'good telly' there is also no discussion about what is 'good pictures'. The editorial role in fashioning news reports is written out. Instead grammatically and procedurally the hard news stories and pictures are objects to be gathered.

A second response to the question of what makes a particular event or issue a newsworthy story was to repeat the details of the story back to the interviewer. The repeating of the story implies self-evidence for story selection. The very details of a story should show the listener the reasons without the teller having to explain because the details show in themselves why a story is a story. This is a use of an empiricist discourse element – that of the primacy of the data (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1982, 1984). Sometimes this was in the form of a bald statement:

> BMD: at the end of the day there is a war going on.

A war is *prima facie* a story, even though wars continue in the world virtually unreported (Allan and Zelizer 2004). Here the news value of a 'war' is brought forth as an obvious story yet, at other moments a war is qualified as not 'interesting' as a producer at the same broadcaster as BDM above says:

> BdP: The reason I really pushed for it [story from Pakistan] is I am sick of the Georgia story. Channel 4 have been on the story for a very long. It's an important story but… it hasn't changed very much.

Here the news values of a war are not sufficient to maintain it as a news story, if it is not prepared to 'change'. Again the producer is grammatically removed as it is the story which has not 'changed' and without that change the story removes itself from the news agenda.

Another use of data as making story selection obvious is citing numbers. For example:

> NM: (interrupting) yeah, I don't know. Well, because of loss of life, because of the sheer number … I think, I think, you know, 100,000 people die in violent circumstances it's news. (Long pause)

Here the speaker uses 'quantification' rhetoric (Potter et al, 1991, Potter, 1996) where numbers adds factual weight to the bald statement and contrast it with subjective value judgements. Earlier in the same discussion the speaker had said:

> NM: it is an actual disaster which is important anyway plus the dead is estimated to be up to 200,000 people so it's quite huge. But what I think makes it interesting is was the fact that it's such a secretive regime anyway, so it's kind

of slightly different to, you know, Pakistan was a big story but, you know, Pakistan military helped, everybody was allowed in as journalists, you know…

In the first extract the number of deaths is the reason it is news. In the second, double the amount of dead is not what made it a story. Instead it is the 'secrecy' of the country which makes it stand out from other similar stories. This illustrates the use of detail in the first extract is to add weight to the story's selection. In the second the number is a way of stressing how 'interesting the story is' in spite of the numbers. Here a vague notion of a secret society is what makes a story worth covering. This is contrasted with a similar disaster but in a country which allowed media access. Here the oft-cited journalistic 'calculus of death' where stories are evaluated on the number of dead and their nationalities (Cottle, 2013, 2008) is used flexibly in the accounts. Numbers sometimes support coverage and sometimes numbers are used to support alternative accounts of newsworthiness.

Detail in the above two extracts is laid out as a given, for all to see. The data is often a list of 'facts' about the particular event. Potter and Wetherell point out, drawing on ethnomethodology, 'when a person is trying to persuade, for example, part of the effectiveness may well depend on producing their talk in a way which conceals that it is an attempt to persuade: for what could be more persuasive than the 'mere description of facts'?' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p41). The following extract is part of a longer discussion with a news editor about a siege in Pakistan that she had been covering.

> AM: you know, you've got to do a siege, a big siege, you know, it's great picture (lot of laughter).
>
> Int: When you say 'you gotta do a siege' why do you think that?
>
> AM: Because people, it's what people, people like sieges. They do. You know, people holed up in a house, it's kind of a, a, its people standing up to the outside world on one level, you know. But these particular guys, well obviously, took hostages and holed themselves up in a mosque to prove their point. I dunno, it's drama, you know, the guns are brought out, you've got the troops surrounding the place, it's a girl's school, you've got people then killed, you've got wounded militants being brought out and, you know, handcuffed and thrown into hospital with handcuffs on… people like a siege.

The above extract contains many of the elements discussed above. There is the bald statement of fact – 'you gotta do a siege' which attempts to shut down the line of enquiry. When pushed the participant starts with a second bald statement that people like them and 'it's great picture'. This is followed by a description of events. Here the vivid detail is used to create a picture of the story and to support the speaker's account as one of common sense

'reality'. This listing also puts the onus back onto the interviewer to show their editorial acumen. The 'obviousness' of the story is out there for all to see. Here however, there is an attempt to bring in some kind of news value as well as the audience. Drama is cited and the detail highlighted adds to this drama. However, 'drama' is left unexplained except by repeating the second assertion that 'people like a siege'. It seems unlikely many of us have even thought about siege preferences, but the speaker's argument is forcefully made though assertion and use of detail – sometimes vague, sometimes vivid.

This use of very specific description and vague assertion can be seen when the interviewees are pushed for reasons. Here a correspondent is being asked what made US President Obama's visit to Moscow a story.

> TM: So there's a narrative there of those new times and we're now in this new time. There's a narrative of Obama on the world stage, we've seen it. We know about how tough Russia is because of various tit-for-tat expulsions and planting flags on the seabed, all the stuff that Russia does, and flying its planes over towards… the whole poisoning people. So really all this plays into that on-going narrative story and seminal moments. You should hit seminal moments for the reason that they're seminal.

This extract is a combination of a detailed list of elements and vague assertions. A rag-tag group of 'facts' are brought together which play into an 'on-going' narrative, and a 'seminal' moment. The connection between these 'facts' and their relation to the 'narrative' is framed as obvious. The argument is circular – it is important to cover important stories because they are important.

On occasions the speakers drew on the repertoire of news as 'manufactured object' in order to gloss the reasons for news selection. Here, rather than describe the story 'out-there' the participants would describe their involvement in the story. This again revealed little in respect to news values or why a story was chosen. But it did serve to reveal the journalist as a professional.

> BD: I remember Uzbekistan, it was the first week I was working there...
>
> Int: Oh yeah?
>
> BD: In Andijan. And I said 'we should go' and they said 'well what are you going to get?' So I said 'I don't know, I've never been there' and they were like, 'well, you know, come up with a pitch and then we'll send you'. And I was like (both laughing) you know, 300 people have died, I don't know how many people have died. We can try to go there, I don't know what we'll get and they were

like ok right. So they were extremely rigorous. It has broken down a bit now.
There are certain places where I can, I can go to Pakistan [indistinct] and I
say we're going to go there because of X, Y and Z they say 'fine'. Because
they are certain I've got experience…

Three hundred dead seems an arbitrary figure here. Here the interviewee uses what
conversation analysts would call 'repair' where speakers 'display an analysis of their own
prior talk, and, in their next utterances, make some correction, amendment or elaboration of
that talk' (Wooffitt, 1992, p85). The interviewee 'repairs' to say he did not know how many
people had died, avoiding damaging detail which he could be pulled up on. This account is
more concerned with constructing the speaker as a trusted member of staff facing down a
sceptical management for whom 300 dead is not alone sufficient reason to cover.

Hard news stories are presented as a *fait accompli.* Both the interpretive repertoire of news
as a 'found object' and news as 'manufactured object' are employed to build up a discourse
of inevitability of news selection. Merely by describing them and asserting their importance,
that is showing the primacy of the data, these stories are presented as obvious.
Alternatively, merely by describing one's own involvement makes them worthy of coverage.
News values in the scholarly sense are largely absent. When they are mentioned in terms of
visuals or other story elements like death toll, or 'drama' these values are inconsistently
applied. More often these values are left vague or unexplained. News values for 'hard news'
are either invoked in variable ways or become buried in the discourse under a welter of
rhetorical vague-ness, and grand assertion. Hard news stories are discursively taken for
granted, needing only to be mentioned or described to merit coverage. Tabloid stories
however, were more problematic to discursively justify. In this next section I will look at how
tabloid stories are constructed.

Constructing tabloid stories

Although there are far fewer tabloid stories discussed than hard news stories it is useful to
examine the tabloid construction as it provides a revealing counterpoint to hard news.
Whilst hard news tends to be supported by few explicit news values and relies on the
repetition of the 'facts' of the case, tabloid stories are more troubling to account for being
loaded with negative connotations. Therefore, accounts of tabloid story selection require
more supporting material and draw on a greater range of news values to justify coverage. At
the same time speakers rhetorically distance themselves from involvement. Below I will
examine how tabloids news is constructed and how speakers work to avoid contamination
from tabloid values.

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, when talking about hard news stories the participants chose one of two interpretive repertoires to explain coverage choices. Firstly, they draw on the empiricist discourse of the 'found object' to distance their involvement in decision making and to add weight to accounts that news is an objective practice. Secondly, they utilise the repertoire of 'manufactured object' where a story can be created by the practitioner to show journalistic acumen. Neither of these options is un-problematically open to the interviewees when tabloid stories are brought up. The public discourse that has framed tabloid reporting as an activity carried out by individuals using intrusive and sometimes illegal means to obtain stories, means that an empiricist discourse is perhaps untenable. To defend tabloid stories as 'out-there' with little involvement from journalists flies in the face of the common sense view of tabloid reporting, which sees this kind of reporting as actively pursued by reporters. The second repertoire is equally troubling. To use tabloid stories as examples of ones reporting prowess makes one too closely associated with disproved-of practice.

This tension is evident in the accounts of tabloid stories raised in the interviews. There appears a discursive need to externalise the story, or distance the story from the speaker's involvement, yet this externalising cannot take the form of an 'obvious' set of elements as used in the found object repertoire used for hard news because the value of tabloid stories is in doubt within the wider public discourse. In the accounts attempts were made to list 'obvious' elements but soon ran into difficulties as the elements cited were much more overtly value judgements or moral judgements highlighting the shortcomings of journalism. For example, in the following extract the speaker begins by asserting it was a story, implying obviousness, but soon runs into difficulties:

> JI: Well, obviously people go missing all the time, but they're not necessary always children, and when I say children, young children, they go missing in fairly exceptional circumstances, if you like. It was quite obvious that this wasn't… I'm just trying to think. I think initially it would've been covered as a story; you know, a British couple have lost a child on holiday kind of like... But I think the reason it became so big was possibly because the McCanns themselves were so kind of proactive, if you like, and courting the media to try to… for whatever reason, whether it was to try to get help in the search, that was inevitably I guess the reason.

The speaker starts out with some statement of fact and an implicit news value of rarity but this repertoire runs out of steam and the trajectory moves to the subjects of the story being the driving force.

In the following extract the manufactured object repertoires is brought into play but this account contains a good deal of 'repairing' (Wooffitt, 1992). Here is an extract from a longer discussion about the coverage of the Maddie story.

> Int: But do you think it was a good story though? I mean apart from the hysteria and accusing everyone in the resort (laughing)
>
> ML: Hm…(sigh)…this is difficult. Let's compare it to other stories which happened when I was at Sky….in a very quiet August, there's really nothing going on in the news…and I remember saying to John Riley – listen John, it's so bloody quiet why don't we send JT with one of my producers…up to Soham and see if we can do something, make something out of this story, these missing kids, you know….And he said – yeah, good idea, let's do that. So JT and Ed Frazer when up and…sort of got the story by the scruff of the neck and threw it around a bit…and um…there we are.
>
> [further exchange then:]
>
> ML: I think the point I was trying to make, Sally, was that if…that had been….November or January or April, any other month but August the news agenda would have been slightly busier or could well have been a lot busier, if parliament (indistinct), there was a big industrial story going on or there was a war going on…if the agenda has been slightly more packed….I don't think that conversation between me and Riley would ever have taken place. I don't think I would have said to Riley – come on Riley, this is so boring, let's, let's get on this story and worry it. Because we wouldn't have had time. So I wonder why these stories become big and have a life of their own - partly because its people like us who say…. – can't we do this a bit differently, I'm getting a bit bored of this, and you know, let's, let's work this up, let's work this up….It becomes less a judgement about what is news, more of a judgement about what can we make into news. And that starts to stray into a dangerous grey area.

In the above account we can see the news as manufactured object being used to justify story selection. In the first part there is an account of the journalist's involvement in causing a story's development. This account contains a good deal of detail, including 'active voicing' (Wooffitt, 1992) of the scene, all to support the veracity of what the speaker is relating. In the second part this is 'repaired' as the speaker shifts the driving force for the creation of the story away from himself and onto the external forces at work. Instead of the speaker making the story it was the time of year, the lack of other stories. However, in the final part there is explicit reflection on the journalists role in 'creating' stories and how this is a 'dangerous grey area'.

In the above extracts it is possible to see how both interpretive repertoires are not easy to maintain in accounts of tabloid stories. Tabloid news stories are discursively problematic and

work needs to be done by the participants to create a distance from tabloid activity. Therefore rhetorical methods are found to distance the speaker from overt involvement in the selection of tabloid subjects and style. Four methods for shifting the focus away from the subject onto the object bear further examination. These methods were 1) minimising involvement in coverage, 2) 'tabloid laundering', 3) shifting the responsibility of decision making onto another groups or individuals, and 4) separating oneself from the herd. Within these four methods of distancing, news values were brought into play in a much more overt way than in 'hard' news accounts. Below I will look at the four distancing tools and the use of news values in more detail.

Four ways of distancing tabloid activity

The first way distancing was achieved was through participants minimising their involvement in the stories. So, for example, one respondent in talking about the sort of work he does, says 'a Michael Jackson trial, which is like a five week gig, I don't do that sort of stuff.' This was particularly prevalent when asked if they had any involvement in the Madeleine McCann coverage. Participants responded by glossing over their part in the story. Each interviewee was asked if they had been involved in covering the story and what they thought about the story. The following extracts illustrate the distancing being done.

> LF: I guess – some. I think that was a story that we went… I don't think that's a
>   story that we really got quite, what's the word for, quite when you are
>   microscopic about, I mean, you seemed to have covered that at a certain
>   level…

This foreign editor was involved but only 'a couple' of times as it was a 'home' story.

> BP: A couple of times I…I…er, packaged in London… it was seen as a
>   home news story.

In the next extract there is again an emphasis at the beginning of how little the participant was involved and only in a 'technical' way.

> DB: I was at the time… I mean my involvement was only once for a piece, but it
>   was more a sort of technical involvement because I was doing Direct[16], so it
>   was… we were providing live stuff of the parents being flown from Portugal
>   back over here, so we had four different camera positions.

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[16] Direct is a service provided by one news agency which supplies live pictures to clients.

Here a producer seems to forget about their involvement. When asked if they had covered the initial response was 'no' before repairing 'oh yeah, I did'.

NM: no… Oh yeah I did… Initially… I went on the first, the first time it broke…

Having established how little they were involved there is often vagueness about what that involvement entailed. This extract follows that pattern:

SR: Very peripherally. There was a reason why, I think I was away, I suspect, I think I was in Pakistan at the time.

Int: Right.

SR: And there was much talk of me going, but I think it was one of those ones that once the teams had got involved, and they'd got to know the families, they kept them.

Int: So you didn't do any?

SR: I did, definitely did some stories but I didn't do enough to say, I was a McCann person though.

Int: When you say that you did some stories, do you remember what you did?

SR: It must have been sort of after the storm… you know, after everyone started coming home, there must have been a coming home element to it; there must have been a 'latest development' or sighting, but a really peripheral involvement.

Here the speaker distances himself in a number of ways. He stresses his involvement was 'peripheral' at the beginning and end of this exchange. He infers he was away on a 'hard' news story in Pakistan. He was important enough to be considered for the job but logistics meant he did not become a 'McCann person'. Also, when he is involved the account is very short on detail. His agency is grammatically removed. In response to the interviewer asking 'what he did?' he replies 'it must have been' and 'there must have been'.
Secondly, the minimizing of involvement was followed by a shifting of the nature of the story to something less tabloid and therefore more acceptable behaviour. This mode of distancing is a kind of discursive 'tabloid laundering' where stories not normally touched by 'good' journalism are brought into the fold by reporting on how tabloids are reporting them (Sharkey 1997). In this case the tabloid story is 'laundered' by bringing a discourse of context, as the following extract shows:

DS: I did. I did a, a little bit on it when the story turned. Um… so…ah… it was very, very, very sympathetic towards them at first and then when the Portuguese police started briefing… heavily against them… and there started appearing to be evidence that…er… might incriminate them, then I was asked

to do a couple of analysis pieces looking at, well, what, you know, how exactly could there be DNA traces in the car, how does DNA work, a sort of analytical second piece, you know, how can dogs smell where there's been a dead body and things like that. So it was kind of saying, you'd, there'd be a big, there'd be a main piece coming from Portugal and then my responsibility would be to sort of try and broaden it out a bit. And I think that was the only time.

Having minimised his involvement from the initial story, the speaker then justifies his later involvement by trying to 'broaden it out a bit'. The use of words like 'analysis' and 'analytical' and scientific terms like 'DNA' help to distance his piece from sensationalist reporting. At the end he reinforces that this was his only involvement.

Explaining how a 'tabloid' story finds its way into a particular news organisation's news was often to change the story, as in the example above, to give it 'context' therefore making it eligible for broadcast.

TM: I thought the story was justified once we went… I wouldn't say used it, I don't mean used her and the tragedy of it, but used this awful event to demonstrate the huge problem there is with missing children and people that go missing. Once you broadened it out and it wasn't just about her, I was more comfortable with it.

Again the story is 'broadened' and cleaned up making it acceptable to the speaker.

Thirdly, the participants shifted the responsibility of story selection onto others, which included the news management, the audience, and the actors in the story. Here it is the management who ultimately take the decision over what makes news:

NM: The Spitzer story[17] because… It was weird, because we were kind of like is it, you know, maybe worth a, you know maybe worth a mention in the, in the, yeah, maybe worth a mention. We didn't think they'd want it as a package. And they loved it in, in, in, they loved it in the office but London, because it was… They are quite into American stories, they quite like them…

There is a lot of prevarication and uncertainty at the start of this extract before an emphatic approval by the editorial management who 'loved' the story. This moves the story to a safe distance and keeps the speaker's integrity intact.

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[17] The Spitzer story concerns the US congressman Eliot Spitzer, who in 2008, resigned following the revelations he had been a regular client of a prostitution ring.

The other group of people invoked as the driving force is the audience. It is the audience who 'wants' the story. This is one place where some news values were explicitly brought to bear on the discussion. That is, the audience 'wants' the story as they can relate to it and were interested in it. The news values of meaningfulness and personification, originally identified by Galtung and Ruge (1970) and expanded on in many other definitions of news values, are brought to the fore and endorsed, whilst other news values such as 'elite people' are acknowledged but dismissed.

> BMD: It's the most compelling human story I can ever imagine. I never understood the debate about that and why we needed to cover it so [indistinct word] it's absolutely compelling.
>
> Int: So what made it compelling?
>
> BMD: I would say it's a middle class thing [indistinct word] I think it's the horror of waking up and finding your kids gone.

Here a universality is evoked - 'the most compelling human story' which an imagined audience of parents is created. However, that audience is specifically middle class Western parents who holiday in nice European resorts. It is 'particularised' (Billig, 1985, p173) and I will return to this particularising of the audience in Chapter 6. Here the point to be made is that the audience becomes the driving force in news practice because the story is meaningful to them and it is what they demand to see. In the following extract this universal appeal of the story is again invoked.

> CK: Why did it take off like that…? Um… I… think…(long pause) I think you had this situation where, a lot of people could identify with around the world. They go, you know, parents go on holiday, child goes missing.

In the following, again the universal nature of the experience is raised. There is also reference to some other news values – that of the appearance of the missing girl – framed as white and pretty. However, in spite of being acknowledged as a fact it is dismissed as unimportant in the story's newsworthiness.

> SR: I think it made the story, you know, they're on holiday in a place that millions of Brits have been. She does what's particularly photogenic, but it's the fact that it's 'did we make the right decision; could we have done the same thing; did they let their family down', all of these moral things. Most people go… the people cry at funerals for children not because they're upset for the kid, they're upset for themselves in case it happens to them, and I think that's very much the same as this. This was the horror story that everyone doesn't want to happen.

Again in the next two extracts the appearance and background of the girl are raised as possible candidates as news values but are again dismissed as unlikely factors in the story's selection.

> TM: All those factors come into play, and then there is the darker side which you can't prove, we only cared about her because she's white and… I'm not convinced by that argument, I think there might be something in it, but… Think of the narrative; left in the room on her own, lots of parents do it, on holiday, they're all out doing what we all do, sitting around a table on holiday having a couple of drinks. There's an awful lot of buttons to push there. And again, we report to an audience that watches and reads us.

> KA: No, it was a story because if you think about… I mean from a domestic point of view for the British audience, yes, it was a story because it's every parent's nightmare. And, you know, I can be really cynical about it. If the McCanns lived on a council estate and the mother had a tattoo on her shoulder, you know, and they were slightly chavvy, it would not have had the coverage that it did. But they were a middle-class family, they're nicely spoken, it's the sort of thing that can happen to absolutely anyone and I think there was huge empathy that went with it.

This acknowledgement of the 'darker' side works to rhetorically 'inoculate' the speaker from criticism by anticipating it and deflecting it beforehand. The appearance of the missing girl and the status of her family are repeatedly brought up but these factors are then dismissed from playing any real role in the coverage of the story. The news value of meaningfulness is the 'real' deciding factor rather than superficial appearances. Also, the middle-class is again constructed as the norm.

Alongside the management and the audience were a third group of people cited as a driving force in coverage. These were the subjects of the story. These subjects were constructed as being active in drawing media attention. In the case of Maddie, the parents were repeatedly cited as 'making' the story.

> LF: No, I don't… I think it was, it was, um, right, you know, more power to them, rightly so – parents who knew how to get their story into the media, however, you know, and how to, to get a country fascinated in order for the means to try to find the girl.

> JI: But I think the reason it became so big was possibly because the McCanns themselves were so kind of proactive, if you like, and courting the media to try to… for whatever reason, whether it was to try to get help in the search, that was inevitably I guess the reason.

The parents are in control of the story in these versions of events. Below, there is even explicit discussion of visual news values being in the hands of the story subjects.

> EW: Yeah, it's interesting because we didn't touch it for about the first two weeks, and I think it was a combination of… I think a lot of it was driven by, I've forgotten her name now, the mother.
>
> Int: Mrs McCann, the mother.
>
> EW: Yes, Mrs McCann. She… the images that struck me and I think were the kind of iconic images that really made it a TV story were her clutching this little teddy bear, and making these really emotional appeals to anyone who would listen about what happened.

Here again the producers of the news are grammatically written out of the process of production. The agency for the creation of the images is in Kate McCann's hands – literally – rather than the journalists framing and filming the story in certain ways. Whilst it is not surprising to find that the management exert some editorial control over stories, or even that the audience is in some ways implicated in coverage decisions, it is perhaps surprising that the story subjects have control of the news agenda. But this is a useful rhetorical tool for distancing responsibility for decisions.

The fourth method of discursive distancing from tabloid stories was carried out by separating the speaker from the majority view, inoculating the speaker from criticism of editorial practice. This explicitly constructs news values and practice as a contested space with the individual configured as a reflective journalist. This separation from the herd instincts covered a spectrum from outright hostility to so-called tabloid stories to a milder cogitation on news practice. Firstly, below is an example of explicit disapproval.

> AM: The times where I get sort of a bit…. like a picture in a paper of some strange event somewhere and you've got to trace the picture, and a lot of the time I just think it's nonsense, you know. You know, the pregnant man?
>
> Int: Oh yeah, yeah.
>
> AM: Well, basically it got put with the headline and then it got pitched at a meeting by somebody, what about this pregnant man? And as soon as somebody said it, nobody could get away from it was a pregnant man, and no matter how many times I said, 'no, it's a woman, it's a woman who's had hormone treatment and developed facial hair' and I think she had her breasts replaced.
>
> Int: She had her breasts removed, yeah.
>
> AM: Removed or whatever but maintained her reproductive organs and all that so this is a woman who's pregnant. And that is, as far as I'm concerned that's

that. It doesn't matter how many other people go with it, how many other people do it, as far as I'm concerned it's a woman who's pregnant and that's that, it's not a pregnant man. And it just kept going round and round and round in circles, and I had, I wouldn't say arguments but I had discussions. Eventually when it got to the point where… I mean to an extent chased it but not as much as I would do if it was something that I thought was worth it. And then I think it came in sort of through agencies in some sort of form, and then eventually I said, well, look, do what you like. It's there, there's the pictures, run it. And one of the American affiliates had been out and filmed in the town, the street where they lived, so again - it's there. Do what you want with it, but it's not… it doesn't matter what you say, it's not a pregnant man, even if legally he's a man, it's still not a man who's pregnant and that's how you're trying to sell the story. So that kind of thing, and there are other things that I think… you know, there was a surfing rat this weekend, you know, which I think is fun, fine, you know, bring it in and people will look at it and think it's funny, you know, but sometimes it's just… it's particularly when people are looking for… and haven't finally kind of… you know?

Here there is no explicit explanation of why this is a story. There is an implicit idea that a pregnant man would be a story. However, because the interviewee takes issue with the central figure in the story not being a man this means it is a story about a pregnant woman and therefore not a story. In this account in spite of his vociferous complaints about the quality of the story, he does produce enough materials for it to run (thereby showing his professionalism). However, throughout the account he repeatedly distances himself from the enterprise. For example, he 'chased it' but 'not as much as I would if it was something I thought worth it'. When he gets the pictures he divorces himself from responsibility by shifting the editorial decision making to others in the newsroom – ie the programme producers – 'do want you want with it but it's not…it doesn't matter what you say…'. Again this illustrates a distancing from the quality of the news.

At other times this separating of oneself took the form of reflection on received wisdom.

> TM: There is this something very odd in the media that I've never fully understood myself, and that is that if a Brit falls of a cliff in Tenerife and dies, it appears to be a story, albeit a not very big one. But if they fall off a cliff near Huddersfield it's not a story. I've never quite got to grips with that.

> LF: I think what's peculiar about that…um… for international news agency is that, that was a story that so consumed the, um, British press and I don't know how much that consumed the rest of the world.

> CK: Well, it was, it is, I am quite surprised by that story because I did think that only the British clients and American clients would be interested in it.

Doubt is expressed about the newsworthiness of certain types of stories or specific stories which are tainted with tabloid-ness. The speaker separates themselves from being a pack animal to being a thinking reflective practitioner. This contrasts to an empiricist discourse of following procedures and the facts of the stories speaking for themselves. Here, it is not the story which is externalised in the form of a found object. Instead news values are externalised, 'out-there' but subjectively judged. The speakers above 'wonder' about things from a distance. While all around are blindly carrying on covering stories according to news practice, the speakers question these practices.

In short then, as shown above, the discourse around tabloid stories can be summarised as: I wasn't involved. OK, I was involved a little bit. I was involved but I only did context stories not overtly tabloid stories. If I did do tabloid stories I didn't approve. My manager made me. Journalism made me. The audience made me. All this rhetorically removes the journalist from the centre of the activity of tabloid journalism to a safe distance.

There is also present in some of the discussion a discourse of grudging approval in the accounts of the Maddie story. In the face of total consensus by the news industry to deem Maddie a story by continued coverage (in spite of debate about the ethics and morals of the coverage in the press and the public) some reason must be found to justify the collective action. This was achieved through the journalists becoming the audience. In the discussion above regarding audience desires, in the case of Maddie, the audience is constructed as middle-class and the norm. In discussions the journalists often spoke of the audience views and of their own views interchangeably. This glossing together of the audience and the speaker's views allows the speaker to explain the story. However, this reading is based on only one story. To see if this is a pattern of explanation would require a wider sample of tabloid stories which consumed the news agenda.

In these accounts of tabloid stories, more explanation is needed to manage the individual's justifications for news selection. The repertoires of 'found object' and 'manufactured object' are employed but are not wholly successful in accounting for tabloid stories. Therefore instead of distancing the story as object, the speakers distance news values – or at least some types of news values.

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have attempted to show how news stories are constructed through news values in different ways depending on the content of the story. Whilst both the interpretive repertoires identified in Chapter 4 – that of news as 'found object' and news as 'manufactured object', made up the discourse of hard news and were employed to construct hard news as a common sense set of values, tabloid news is on shakier ground.

Hard news values are oblique in the talk of the journalists to whom I spoke. This kind of news needs little recourse to explicit news values as these stories and values are discursively constructed as self-evident. It could be argued that of course hard news is self-evident. Few, if anyone, would argue that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 or the bombing of London in 2005 or British general elections should not be covered. However, in the interviews the stories cited do not reflect an agreed agenda of hard news. Sometimes within the discourse of an individual a war is a story by dint of being a war. At other times being a 'war' is not sufficient in itself to merit coverage. There is no consistent application of values evident apart from vague recourse to 'good pictures' or by being 'a great story'. Values are referenced such as the needs of the audience or the visuals but are left unexplored in the accounts. This writing out of the process of evaluation makes it hard to identify the process of production both from outside and perhaps, more importantly, from within the newsroom. An absence of any reflective discourse on news values or news practice embeds existing practice. There is little space for discursive reflection on why hard news is newsworthy. If all that can be said is that Hillary Clinton is an 'important' figure yet have no language for saying why that should be so, this makes reflection or change very hard to achieve at day-to-day newsroom level.

Research on news values and story selection from examinations of output show there are recurrent themes and stories which make it on to air suggesting a complex set of news values and practices are being employed by news workers (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of this). However, these are not up for discussion in the newsroom. As Warren Breed wrote in the fifties, 'Newsmen do talk about ethics, objectivity, and the relative worth of various papers, but not when there is news to get. News comes first and there is always news to get' (Breed 1955, p82). There is plenty of debate continuing both within the industry and the academic world as well as in the wider public about what ought to be news. Yet, when it comes to the getting of news there seems little to be said other than descriptive accounts. This unstated and unexamined set of values is a powerful factor in maintaining practices and values. In Gravengaard and Rimestad's examination of newsroom editorial meetings where

they identify the rhetorical way in which stories are 'eliminated' they show how newcomers are socialised into the discourse of what makes a good story. In this time of increasing uncertainty about job security it may mean 'we can assume that journalists in general and novices in particular will be rather open to this socialisation' (Gravengaard and Rimestad 2012 p475).

Whilst the discourse of hard news employs the interpretive repertoires of news as 'found object' and news as 'manufactured object' to construct a common-sense account of news the discourse of tabloid news cannot un-problematically draw on either of the repertoires. Therefore a third way is found of making sense of the news decisions. Rather than externalising news as a discrete object waiting to be found – it externalises news values themselves, moving the stories to a safe distance. Tabloid values are forced upon the journalist by age-old values of drama, sex, death, etc. and by management and the audience. The values are more explicit but removed from the speaker.

Ironically perhaps there is a greater discursive space for reflection on tabloid stories than hard news. Much hand-wringing takes place around tabloid story coverage. A discourse of dispute and difference is present in tension with an externalising discourse. Resistance is voiced reflecting notions of news' higher purpose. Hard news is taken at face value – 'obvious' and 'no brainer' whilst the discourse of tabloid news is troubled. The discussion of tabloid stories also reflects that of wider society perhaps making space for engagement with the audience.

In this chapter I have looked at some of the different ways hard news and soft news are constructed through the two interpretive repertoires identified in Chapter 4. I have also identified the ways news values disappear and reappear throughout the different discourses. Although hard to pin down, a small number of driving forces in news selection including some news values such as visuals and meaningfulness are evident. The one driving force for the inclusion of a story which dwarfs all others is the audience, and therefore merits closer examination. This I will do in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Analysis 3. The Audience: Who do you think they are?

Introduction:

In the previous chapter I discussed the various ways journalists account for the newsworthiness of events. In this chapter I examine the discussion of the audience - one of the driving forces of news selection, according to the journalists interviewed. In this chapter I identify twin discourses concerning the audience and how they reflects two repertoires of journalism's aims and pressures – one of public service and the other of commercial enterprise.

Many volumes of work both in scholarly and journalistic circles have been filled with definitions of what journalism ought to be. These definitions have coalesced around a number of normative ideas. In summary, the two overarching roles of journalism are that of scrutiniser of the powerful and of disseminator of information important to public interest. These norms have often been configured in opposition to the perceived state of journalism. Journalism *ought* to be actively challenging the powerful in a 'watch dog' role where the activities of the elites are publically scrutinised (Randall 2007). Instead journalism is often seen as a propaganda machine for the powerful elite maintaining the hegemonic *status quo* (Herman and Chomsky 1988). Journalism *ought* to be informing the public about matters of importance thereby strengthening the democratic ideal though the creation of an informed electorate. Through this provision of information about current affairs, journalism can play its part in engendering a politically engaged populace and healthy public sphere (Habermas 1989, Dahlgren 2009). As Gans states: 'the democratic process can only be truly meaningful if these citizens are informed. Journalism's job is to inform them' (Gans, 2003, p1). Instead journalism is often criticised for pandering to the lowest common denominator due to the hyper-commercialization of the media (Franklin 1997).

This chapter looks at the position of the audience within the discourse of news practice and values. The audience is configured as both a demanding entity wanting certain stories over others, and, to a lesser extent, as a more passive entity being 'served' by a body of professionals who select and produce news for them. Whilst scholars and journalists have long debated the purpose of journalism, and how it should be conducted, in the discussions with the journalists for this research the main driving force of journalism is to serve the audience either way, by giving it what it wanted or giving it what they ought to have.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section examines some ideas regarding the purpose and ethos of journalism. In particular this will focus on notions around the audience's role and needs. The second section looks at what the interviewees have to say on the matters of the audience and story selection and is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the discursive construction of the audience and examines how the audience is 'particularised' (Billig 1985), that is constructed in the image of the journalist. Secondly it looks at how knowledge of the audience is differently invoked and when certain types of knowledge about the audience are privileged over others.

The chapter also considers what consequences a particular set of interpretive repertoires or practical ideologies may have on the practice of news work. I will argue that the discursive construction of the audience works as a practical ideology (Wetherell *et al* 1987). Wetherell *et al* describe this notion as the: 'contradictory and fragmentary complexes of notions, norms and models which guide conduct and allow for its justifications and rationalization' (Wetherell *et al,* 1987, p60) where ideological repertoires are employed as common sense 'knowledge' and used to justify existing practice (Wetherell et all, 1987, Gill, 1993). Here, the audience sits at the centre of the discourse of the commercial and public service dichotomy of news production and values. It is utilised both within the commercial discourse taken on by the interviewees. Yet, parallel to this the audience is configured as part of a public service journalistic ethos, and used to resist the external commercial pressures and reassert the journalistic ethics of independence.

Audience research

Audience as citizen or commodity

According to David Randall, in his promotion of the idea of a 'universal journalist' a newspaper role is to: 'find out fresh information on matters of public interest and relay it as quickly and accurately as possible to readers in an honest and balanced way' (Randall, 2007, p20). The emphasis here is on the communicative role of journalism to convey that which is socially important to the audience in a trustworthy manner.

What is of 'public interest' has been stretched by certain parts of the British tabloid press. However, for British broadcasters that concept is more narrowly defined. The difference has been characterised as between a libertarian approach and a socially responsible approach. This second approach 'expects the broadcaster to respect moral and cultural mores and values, be mindful of public levels of tolerance and make a contribution to the education of

the viewer' (Harrison 2006, p120). Television news in Britain is regulated in terms of fairness and balance in content and presentation. The idea of social responsibility is written into the fabric of British broadcasting policy through the BBC Charter and all the licensing agreements for commercial terrestrial channels. British terrestrial broadcasters are subject to government regulation requiring specified amounts of news and current affairs programming and to present them with impartiality and accuracy. They are also required to do more than merely report, they are required to engage the public. The Channel 4 licence includes a clause that states it must 'secure that people are well informed and motivated to participate in society in a variety of ways'. It goes on to say the channel must 'support and stimulate well-informed debate on a wide range of issues, including providing access to information and views from around the world and by challenging established views' (Channel 4). Under the terms of these licences it is therefore not sufficient to merely pass on information, broadcasters must actively seek to engage and challenge the public through the provision of wide-ranging views and programming.

In this model of television news the role of journalists and journalism is pivotal in the creation of an informed engaged audience. Some have also seen the rise of transnational news channels as creating a more global outlook for the audience, moving beyond a national political arena to a cosmopolitan world view. Alexa Robertson writes that 'television journalists are among the most powerful of societal sense-makers, and that the stories they tell about the world could help people relate to distant others or lead them to question whether those others *are* so distant after all.' (Robertson 2010 pxi, original italics).

Yet the relationship between journalism and its audience is a fraught one. On the one hand one of journalism's key functions is to communicate information and stories to an audience. However, many television news organisations, either British broadcasters or international news agencies operate under a commercial imperative. Even the BBC, although publically funded, operates within a commercial setting, competing for viewers in part to justify the continuing public finance. This commercial landscape requires the producers to attract viewers for their advertisers and sponsors, or in the case of agencies, for broadcasters to renew their subscriptions. Therefore, it is argued, commercial organisations are more prone to giving the audience a 'softer' diet of news told in more sensationalist ways in order to entice the viewer (Cushion & Lewis, 2009).

Yet for broadcast journalism, letting the audience drive content leads to dangerous territory – that of popul
arism and partiality. As well as being independent of influence of the powerful, journalism must also avoid pandering to the uglier side of public opinion or opting for 'soft' news over socially important news. Tunstall sums up the ambivalence of this position when

he writes about "the conflict between the democratic ideal of an informed electorate and the output which many millions of people are willing to consume day after day…" and that an "obvious source of public ambivalence lies in the difference between what people think or say they want to read, hear or view and what they nevertheless do read, buy, switch on and view." (Tunstall, 1971, p10).

These two configurations can be summarised as the audience as a benefactor (and sometimes contributor to) a public service, or as a commodity being sold to and sold on to advertisers. Throughout this chapter these two conceptualisations of the audience are drawn upon during the construction of what merits coverage and the role of the journalist.

<u>Journalist interaction with the audience</u>

The position and function of a journalist is one of communicator to a public either supplying the consumer or informing the public, but how does the journalist know what information should be communicated or what the audience wants or needs? This knowledge of the public is a source of contention within the culture of journalism. In Philip Schlesinger's 1970s study of the BBC newsroom he notes that 'the broad picture from production studies is one in which the mass communicator enjoys little 'feedback' from his audience' (Schlesinger, 1987, p108). Schlesinger terms this the 'missing link'. He proposes that in order to make up for this lack of information about what the audience thinks about the issues and the coverage, the journalists must fall back on 'professionalism'. I will return to this notion of professionalism in Chapter 7. Here I want to concentrate on the issue of knowledge of the audience.

In the 1970s and 1980s, in a world that pre-dated the internet and social networking the television journalist's access to the audience was either face-to-face or through letters and calls to the station. This means of communication still figures highly in the interviews, and will be discussed below. However, knowledge of, and interaction with the audience did not seem a priority. In Schlesinger's BBC 'You do not find people wandering around in a state of existential *angst* wondering whether they are 'communicating'' (Schlesinger 1987, p107). As Williams *et al* point out 'sociological research has…shown that this news work has often been characterised by indifference, and sometimes hostility to the audience (Williams *et al,* 2011, p86). Repeatedly, researchers have found that journalists have little interest in finding out what the audience wants, even if the media organisation itself has always encouraged feedback and audience research.

The picture in the 21st century there does seem to be more angst about communicating as well as an increase in feedback and interaction possibilities with the audience. Audience research in the past, has reached out to look at the public, and still does, inviting them to become one of a representative sample group recording their viewing habits at home or to take part in focus groups or surveys (BARB, 2013). Now the public can reach in to the broadcaster – not only to comment on content but also to contribute content. In academic and professional forums the role of the audience in the production of news through User Generated Content, citizen journalism, blogging and social networking is seen as in the process of upheaval. The division between the journalist and the public is becoming more blurred (Bruns, 2005). Research shows that there is a rapid rise in traditional media's forums for public participation (Hermida & Thurman, 2008) with media organisations such as the BBC receiving thousands of comments, eye witness accounts, pictures and videos. (Williams *et al,* 2011).

Coupled with the material technological possibilities there has developed a more compelling discourse of public engagement. The audience is now repeatedly reframed as being 'active' rather than passive. Rather than merely sitting back and being fed the news, the audience can now become a participant in the creation of content albeit a tiny section of mainstream news content. The actual UGC content of traditional media output has been shown to be carefully moderated and is thus far limited in changing core news values – at least as far as research at the BBC has shown (Harrison 2010, Williams *et al* 2012, Hermida 2009). However, the discourse of participation is embedded in communications with the audience, by traditional media. The public is constantly exhorted to send in content or comment about issues in the form of onscreen contact details or online. Amongst the media management this rhetoric is repeatedly used in public forums. In her 2012 MacTaggart lecture, Elizabeth Murdoch spends a good deal of time discussing the audience saying:

> …another paradox which threatens to limit our ability to respond to this world of deep engagement with the audience: we too often mistake the possibility for collaboration with the threat of competition'. (Murdoch, 2012, p9)

The rise in audience 'feedback' coupled with the rhetoric of audience engagement would suggest that the journalist's view of the audience is now more informed and more nuanced than ever before. Also, it might be presumed that the journalist's view of the audience may have shifted towards a more dialogical and participatory model. The ways traditional news organisations are taking on more audience centred practices such as the use of UGC and of attempting to create a more dialogical relationship with the public is subject to a growing body of research. In spite of a burgeoning of possible ways the audience can let their views

on news be known, journalists are often shown as resistant (Hermida and Thurman 2012). Much of the research in this area points to the difficulties in bringing about changes in practice. A study by Domingo *et al* (2008) on the output of websites shows how little scope there existed for the audience to actually participate apart from commenting on material already decided on by the journalists. This led the research team to conclude there is a 'general reluctance to open up most of the news production process to the active involvement of citizens' and that 'core journalistic culture had remained largely unchanged' and that this was largely consistent across their sample of European online newspaper websites (Domingo *et al*, 2008 p339).

In interviews carried out by Loke to interrogate journalists' attitudes to new online public spaces provided by their employer the interviewees repeatedly state that the website belongs to the journalists and their organisation and the audience is an invited guest who can be uninvited (Loke 2011). Also, the journalists involved in the new media forums then attempt to 'reassert control' over content. This reflects other studies which found that when newsrooms are faced with an increasing involvement of the audience journalists 'normalise' new working practices and revert to traditional values and practices. For example, in Singer's analysis of political journalists bloggers (j-bloggers) she found that although the technology was there to allow audience contribution, amongst the j-bloggers who worked for traditional media organisations either print or broadcast, 'journalists remained steadfastly at the gate, offering blogs containing no evidence of user input.' (Singer, 2005 p186). New media is 'normalised' where traditional media content is repeated creating a kind of 'online echo chamber of mass-mediated political views' (Singer, 2005, p192). Thus the internet becomes 'a new place to do old things' (Singer, 2005, p175). Hermida shows how blogging at the BBC has moved from the periphery to the core of how BBC news communicates 'analysis to its audience' (p268) yet the journalists have taken this new type of journalism and integrated it into existing practices and values (Hermida, 2009). The study undertaken by Williams *et al* of UGC uptake at the BBC discusses how *collaborative* content has not penetrated the core news activities, with most taking place 'either outside, or on the margins of, the BBC news operation.' (Williams *et al*, 2011, p96). Instead news discourse and practice has perpetuated a framing of the audience contribution as a news gathering resource. Deuze reasons this resistance to new ways of doing journalism comes about because journalism is:

> a rather operationally closed, self-organising, and self-defensive social system, communicating social and technological affordances in terms of the various ways in which they might 'fit' existing (informal) hierarchies, and traditions of doing newswork. (Deuze, 2008, p21.)

The 'self-defensive' system can limit opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaborative work as shown in the studies discussed above but could also be one part of how journalism resists the call to consumerism. In the next section I look at how journalists speak about the two ideas of audience - as citizen or consumer – and how these ideas are utilised in the discourse of both editorial decisions and interaction with the audience.

The Audience: The view from the newsroom

During the interviews the question of the purpose and aims of journalism was not directly asked. Rather, it was obliquely raised in questions centred on certain generic news practices and in discussions on newsworthiness. It was also raised during the questions about the journalists' personal work practices and work experiences. The overwhelming and recurrent theme of story selection centred round two versions of the audience. Firstly, journalism is required to satisfy perceived viewers' demands and secondly, as a moral obligation to inform the public about matters of social importance. The first corresponds to a commercial imperative to give the viewers what they want and was widespread throughout the interviews when talking about the audience generally. The second corresponds to a more public service notion of journalism and was much more seldom alluded to, only appearing at very specific moments which I will return to below. However, when talking about knowledge of the audience the emphasis was reversed. Instead commercial imperatives were shunned and public service notions were highlighted.

As in previous chapters it is pertinent to emphasis the consistency of the discourse across the interviews. There was slightly more reference to the audience as a customer (and therefore a reminder of the commercial nature of the agency business) by agency workers. Agency workers often have direct contact with the paying clients (the journalists from other news organisations). Many are known to them personally having met in the flesh working in the field or through frequent telephone contact. However, while some agency workers made reference to the 'clients' others did not and the constructions of the audience was not significantly different to that of the broadcasters. Also, although the broadcast employees worked for news organisations with quite different audience demographics the speakers from all the outlets drew on the same repertoires of explanation about the their viewers. As will be seen from the examples below, participants utilised the same constructions of the audience whether broadcast or agency, or editor, producer or reporter.

In the following section I will first look at the construction of the audience as an entity. As well as the general discussion I will be drawing on the discussion in the interviews around a

generic television news practice of live coverage. The use of the audience as justification for coverage was not confined to live coverage. However, the discussion of 'liveness' is useful to examine because the practice is specific to television news and it was something discussed by all the interviewees.

<u>The 'demanding' audience</u>

The discourse of story selection and journalism practice was constructed around an imagined audience which is either being provided with what it wants or to a lesser degree what it ought to have. So the audience is in places demanding certain types of news or, to a much lesser extent, should be informed about certain events or issues. First I will look at the 'demanding' audience.

Below are two comments, one from Channel 4 and one from Sky, one a reporter, one an editor, on the audience in relation to live coverage. Both choose the same example to cite.

> TM: We are in the business of storytelling here, and storytelling live, people will watch, they will watch, and the figures say they'll watch. Obama lands, Air Force One lands, the twat doesn't get off for about 20 minutes, it always happens, doesn't it? Get off the plane! And you're stuck on this shot of this bloody plane and the door, waiting, and you're going blah-blah-blah, people will keep watching. It's live, they want to see stuff live.

> EW: So people will stay tuned to that programme if they have a live shot of the outside of the White House, and say, in minutes the first black President will be live on the air to see his new house, kind of thing, people will stay and watch for that iconic image of Obama walking into the White House for the first time.

The speakers are very certain about what people 'will' watch. The accounts brook little opposition. The broadcasters and agencies give the audience what they want to watch. The speakers display a surety about their knowledge of the audience. Also this audience is a totality. In the accounts below, the construction of the audience is reinforced by 'active voicing' (Wooffitt 1992). In both cases the audience is 'speaking' giving credibility to the explanation.

> DS: If, if there's…an earthquake that's just happened or a fire still going or something…er… reporters feel that…the viewers…we believe feel that, you know, if you've got a reporter that's there and its actually happening then you sort of feel that yes that they're kind of giving me up to date information, they're not kind of sitting in an edit suite at Television Centre, that they're kind of there and…

> LF: I think that when things are live and people are watching them live it does make kind of a smaller world in that 'that's going on on the same planet that I'm on and that's going on right now and I'm watching right now'

Again there is a totality of audience and a universality to 'people'. However, this category of 'people' quickly breaks down when more detailed explanation of news practice is required. Instead, the 'people' category becomes differentiated or 'particularised' (Billig 1996, p173). Billig has argued that humans use both categorisation and particularisation when arguing for or against certain positions. Categorisation can be taken to be when an object or idea is placed in a general category and stripped of its particulars. Particularisation is when an object or idea is separated from the general category and made into a special case (Billig 1996). Within any argument Billig stresses that both these processes occur. In one example, Billig cites the use of exact terms by US president Ronald Reagan to describe the US troop deployment to Grenada. Reagan insisted on the term 'rescue mission' rather than 'invasion' in an attempt to separate or particularise American action and prevent it being put into the same category as, for example, Soviet action in Afghanistan. As Billig writes: 'Reagan's argument depended upon claiming to discover 'special features' of a particular in order to argue against a damaging, but *prima facie* reasonable, categorisation' (Billig, 1996 p173).

In the interviews it is the audience that becomes particularised to justify certain news practices and choices. All the participants from across the broadcasters asserted their audience was made up of ABC1's and 'people interested in news', or a 'core news audience'. Other people did watch – 'old people', 'young people' 'housewives' 'students' 'soldiers' 'people abroad' but each time they were all framed as 'interested' in news in the first place. When asked about what made certain news interesting participants would start to qualify the assertion by particularizing this so-called core audience in contrast to the 'general public' or 'Mr and Mrs at home'. For example these producers from the BBC and Channel 4 explain the appeal of live coverage in terms of a differentiated audience divided between the informed/interested and the uninformed/uninterested:

> JI: Well, I think that actually live television has definitely brought obviously an instancy to news coverage, and it takes the viewers to somewhere very quickly. So I think certainly when you're at live events, it definitely adds something to news gathering. I mean inevitably we go to dozens of news conferences and we bring them in live and I'm kind of thinking well, you're either a news junkie and you're interested in watching all these news things come in, or you're not. I think for a general audience, they don't necessarily… live events aren't necessarily that interesting apart from like really good events.

> AM: A lot of people I think don't… think oh Mr and Mrs whatever at home, they don't see the difference between whether they see the picture live or in a

report. I think it's different if they see somebody live when things are going on around them, then they do notice the difference between that and somebody's voice on something's that written in, it gives that feeling that you're actually covering the story, you know.

From complete certainty that 'people will watch that', the category of audience is modified from a totality – all the viewers want it – to a particularised audience. This particularisation occurs in the above when the speakers have to be specific about what it is that live coverage gives the audience. Speakers admit that perhaps not everyone wants it.

The audience fractures into the 'core' who are interested and the rest who are not. By identifying the audience as a particular groups already interested in the coverage then this discursively sidesteps the rest of the audience to focus on the 'real' audience. For example, in the two extracts below, the individual's audience is particularised as smart and interested:

> BP: you know, you've got to, you really want to know about politics if you're going to watch a 4 1/2 min piece on whatever…so you really have to be in to that subject or care or (indistinct) yourself, you know. I think that's the audience.

> JI: I think you know that the people who are watching are… Well, they do know a reasonable amount. I mean they are more educated. If you think of the social spectrum, if you like, we know we're broadcasting to more ABCs[18] than being…

Here is one agency (and former broadcast) producer talking about the audience at which he is aiming:

> AS: You would hope that they might be reasonably intelligent <laughs>. I suppose you're looking for an audience that… I mean if you're interested in the story, then you would hope that there will be other people out there who are too.

Rather than attempting the impossible – that is, to reach out to an entirety– the audience instead reaches in to the broadcaster, self-selecting themselves as interested viewers. The audience becomes refashioned in the image of the journalist, who, by definition, must be 'interested' in news. The audience becomes a reflection of the practitioner. There is a discursive jump from the audience out-there to the internal audience of the journalist, or the journalist as the audience. The qualities and knowledge of the audience are made to correspond with the journalist. This can then gloss the inherent tension between making editorial decisions for oneself, using professional values, and making decisions based on audience demand. Both can be satisfied as the audience is the journalist. Similarly, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 5, the audience for the Madeleine McCann story is

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[18] ABCs in this context refers to the categories of socio-economic groups devised by the National Readership Survey, which have now become a benchmark for market research, ABC's being the highest groups broadly consisting of the managerial, skilled professional and white collar workers of the middle classes.

simultaneously 'everyone' and 'middle-class'. The eliding of the two categories as the 'norm' is a reflection of the journalist. By positioning the audience and journalist as being of the same mind it helps bridge the gap between the producer and the receiver. This discursively removes any conflict as the journalist is providing what the audience wants *and* upholding their professional values. Speakers move back and forth between the general and the particular when framing the audience depending on the need to bridge this gap.

The commercial model of the audience is more closely invoked than citizen, yet the audience is portrayed as 'intelligent', 'a news hound', 'educated' rather than the yawning masses more closely associated with mass media consumption. In the next section this intelligent audience is subject to the ethical purposes of the journalist.

<u>The audience should know this</u>

There is a second repertoire of the audience, although much less used. This constructs the as a site for journalists to fulfil their moral and professional role of informing the public about what is important. This idea of the audience as needing to be told about certain issues and events did arise in the interviews, however, this happened only rarely and only at a specific juncture. This invocation of the audience came when participants were discussing stories they had personally taken a big role in covering. So for example, the war in Georgia was 'important' for the audience if the individual had been heavily involved with reporting events, but 'boring' for the audience if they had not. These references to the audience are obliquely made. The stories are cited as stories which the audience would not otherwise have known about and by inference ought to know about. Also, they arrive as part of longer accounts of the journalist's endeavours. Below are two story accounts which are part of much longer descriptions of how difficult the stories were to cover.

> JI: And I don't know, it just was… for me it was really interesting because it was a story that was completely… it was off the general story which might not have otherwise got any attention at all. [text missing] And the chance to see a community that you'd never seen on telly before, that made it unique I think. So I was quite proud of that story, quite pleased with that.

> KA: The proudest one, I sound like a stuck record, the proudest one has to be probably the Kenyan post-election violence and the militias, just because it created such a stink, that actually was doing something helpful. But it was incredibly rewarding because to be able to illustrate the story, we spoke to people who had suffered exactly the same fate on the opposite side of the ethnic divide. So that was very powerful, and it was powerful because it's moved people, and it's moved the sort of agenda.

Here the participant is asking why the war in Georgia was a story for his audience and comes after a very long account of the dangerous situations that the participant had gone through in order to file the story.

> SR: Yeah, do you know, that's a good point and I've thought about it often. I mean do people care about this? I don't know if they do but if we don't go and do it, they definitely won't. And so you do these things because… it's a bit of a hackneyed expression, but it is bearing witness, and if somebody doesn't go, then nobody covers it and anything can happen. And Darfur is a classic case, I mean Darfur the world hasn't done much about it, but they'd have done nothing if journalists hadn't gone there. I spent weeks and weeks there, and every story was a belter.

Again, the next account comes after a description of the difficulty and dangerous nature of covering this particular story – Zimbabwe.

> JM: …so appalling what's happened and what's going on that it's our job to make you listen. If you were saying that my reporting made it boring, that's another thing but that's more a challenge for me. I will not accept that this is not interesting because it is.

The extracts above illustrate the drawing upon of a journalistic tenet of bearing witness and covering stories not because the audience demands it but in order to make the audience aware of issues and events they would not otherwise know about. The last sentence of the second extract reiterates the duty of the journalist to tell the stories that are of public interest even if the audience does not know it and puts the onus firmly onto the journalist to strive towards that goal. This repertoire is brought up surprisingly rarely and only as part of longer accounts of the individual or organisational achievement in getting the story. Accounts of routine coverage or stories are not used as examples of what the audience ought to know about. It is only in extraordinary circumstances or by extraordinary efforts by the participant or their organisation that the audience is invoked as 'needing to know'. The difficulty of obtaining coverage is discursively equated with importance.

This framing of the audience as needing to know becomes a justification for certain activities of journalism. Dangerous and tiring work becomes the signifier of 'important' work. This is perhaps as it should be – journalism should be striving to cover certain stories however difficult the access. However, more 'boring' work on the minutia of government or policy is in danger of being overshadowed by the glamorous end of journalism – that of the reporter in remote and dangerous territory. As one account ends "And in terms of a military story it sort of ended, and in terms of conflict it ended, and that was pretty much the end of my involvement after that, it became a political story, presentation led. So I'd finished my role and came back."

The above extracts all contain a number of assertions about what the audience will watch, what it wants, what it needs and who it is, and are typical of the construction of the audience. However, the frequent mention of audience preferences and requirements are not necessarily accompanied by a detailed knowledge of the audience.

Who do you think they are? The construction of knowledge about the audience

Participants repeatly asserted what the audience wanted. However, when asked how they *knew* what the audience wanted, the responses divided into two contrasting forms. In one, participants said they know their audience because of personal contact with audience members, a finding prevalent in previous observations of journalists (cf. Harrison, 2000, Schlesinger, 1987). In the other, knowledge of the audience in the form of ratings and viewing figures were constructed in a disparaging way where either participants 'didn't know' about them, or framed them as a management tool and not the concern of journalists. In places even knowing figures was portrayed as detrimental to the practice of journalism. In the section below I will look at these two aspects of the construction of the audience.

The first way of endorsing editorial decisions and journalistic practice was to invoke knowledge of the audience. As discussed above, the imagined audience is always slightly upmarket, this being stated across the board. The participants from the broadcasters all construct their audience as smarter than average, and interested in news. For the agency workers this was also true. They also brought in their own audience – that of the broadcast clients. The clients were by definition interested and above averagely informed about news. However, the same constructions of the audience were still made across all the five organisations' employees.

When asked how they knew what their audience was made of, participants cited personal contact with audience members. Here is a Sky News editor talking about coverage of hurricanes:

> KM: And it's also Joe Bloggs on the street will be talking about it – 'oh did you see that picture of that, you know, that boat a mile up the street'. you know. It's things like that, it's what makes, it's the interest factor as well. Um, some people, a lot of people wanted to know. 'Well I'm going there on holidays – is my hotel still going to be there?' Um, that kind of interest aswell. People out there, you know. I spoke to somebody who said that they had been watching Sky to know if they were going to be hit or not.

As discussed earlier KA employs some 'active voicing' (Wooffitt, 1992) of the audience to add some veracity to her account of why the audience is interested then ends with a story about an actual encounter with an audience member, again adding weight to her version of events. This kind of personal contact works to corroborate the account. It brings in a witness in the form of an audience member to show how that the audience is interested in this type of coverage.

Here is a BBC correspondent talking about audience feedback:

> DS: In terms of um, pitching it to the real audience it's about um… we have the advantage of connecting with people a lot cos you know, we're the interface with the public and it's about talking as much with them when you are, inevitably, trying to talk to somebody when you're filming about one story, about some other stories and try and get a feeling about what they're interested in.

Knowing one's audience personally is portrayed as a positive quality, enabling the journalist to engage with the audience and to better serve the audience. This one-to-one personal contact is constructed as making for better journalism. However, other sources of knowledge about the audience are not deemed a positive influence on journalism. Emails sent in to the generic post box are not worthy of regard and neither is familiarity with viewing figures or audience demographics. The extract below takes in both responses – that personal contact with the audience is good but statistics are not good.

> KA: Generally… well, there's always statistical feedback, so now the BBC have started publishing internally figures for how many hits have been on the website, for example, and audience figures. So that's the sort of feedback you get but it's very much a numeric faceless type of feedback. I mean I do, I have had some extraordinary letters from people, from members of the public, from people wanting to donate, wanting to help, absolutely extraordinary examples. And so you do get that but not very often.

Accounts of feedback in the form of audience figures or demographics often contain quite detailed explanation of the information yet also contain a great deal of vagueness about this knowledge. Below are some of the typical responses to being asked about how the interviewees obtained feedback from the audience.

> AM: You can find out the audience figures, I'm not sure how it is, there's some… there is a way of doing it.
>
> Int: you don't ever get shown on any viewing figures or anything?

BP: I mean, I'm sure they're there. I've never looked at them. I know, well I know that our viewing figures are near 900,000, which is quite good, but not amazing. It goes up if there is a big event……. And in

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Int: So do you have your kind of feedback from what clients are saying, do you get that?

CR: It's not direct to me as a Producer, it's direct to the Help Desk I'd say.

Int: But do you ever get reports or figures for people?

CR: Well, it's not me who gets this, it's other people, people like [name] whose job now is to deal with clients an awful lot, sort out contracts and everything, and he'll get a lot of feedback with what they're interested in and what they'd like to have changed, or whatever.

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Int: How much feedback do you get about the audience to know who they are? Do you get viewing figures? I mean you can't get the viewing figures at Reuters, but do you have… do you have any kind of formal knowledge of what's going to…?

AS: No, no. I mean I don't know, I mean we do this water-marking thing so that our sales people can check on how much has been used. But I mean that's largely… I just find it nonsensical in so many ways because the times I've looked, you'll see that NBC used three seconds of a story. Now they don't use just one, two, they use [indistinct word]

Int: But do you… so you get those figures for water-marking?

AS: Some of them, yes.

Int: Right, and presumably you read them and think of what?

AS: No, no. I think the only feedback you can get is sometimes by watching the news yourself.

Int: Right.

AS: So I mean I'll flip through Russia Today, Euro News, all these, and then you'll see that some of those stories are coming up time and time again.

Int: Do you have emails sent to you at Reuters?

AS: Yes.

SR: Do you read them?

AS: I don't read them, no.

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DB: No, it doesn't trickle down to the desk <laughs>, I'm sure again people in senior positions do and I'm sure… I know that it is a way for some broadcasters to keep talking about a story long after, well, you lose interest in it but because they have ratings and that's why they're pounding on the story. So it's much more at that level, the higher level, when they decide, 'okay, today this is the top story.'

In all of the above it is inferred that information about the audience exists within the organisation but it is not the remit of these journalists to make themselves aware of it. Instead again in the above extract of AS the journalist becomes the audience again when one's own viewing of the news is all the feedback a journalist needs. Often assertions were made about the type of audience but when asked how respondents knew this the direction of the discourse changed from certainty to vagueness.

Int: How do you know?

RB: Don't, no evidence at all. I know what… I know the template was the Daily Mail, anybody that worked at Sky knew the template was the Daily Mail.

Int: And how did you know that?

RB: Because after the morning meetings, they were the stories they wanted to cover.

In the above extract the certainty about the audience suddenly shifts to talking about the management news values. Independence from audience whims is shown by one's own experience and judgement. Feedback consists of the journalist watching television news, in order to see if editorial decisions correspond to other journalists (AS) or by knowing the template of another organisation's news values (RB). The audience again becomes the journalist (or their peer group).

In the extracts below, knowledge of the audience shifts from 'I don't know' to a quite detailed description of how audience information is gathered and the speaker's familiarity with some information, but moving back to ignorance at the end because 'it doesn't hugely matter'.

Int: How do you know they're AB1s?

JM: I don't. Well, I do actually, that's not fair. The Channel does audience research. We've got a PR woman in-house who does that stuff. We do know a certain amount about our audience

Int: I just wondered if they tell you that stuff? Are you seeing the actual information?

JM: There are occasional surveys which usually throw up weird surprises, like for example, the correlation between Channel 4 News readers and Daily Mail

readers which is bizarre but true. And usually what I try to get [mumble] I can't pretend that I can cite something about what our audience is because it doesn't actually matter hugely matter to me.

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Int: And do you get audience figures?

TM: Yes.

Int: Do you? And are they daily or is that… So you have…

TM: Oh, it's getting worse. We can now measure…

Int: It's getting worse. <laughs>

TM: Well, it's nice to think that there's ten million people watching all the time, but the breaking it down we can now figure out… it's a sample obviously, that okay, at 10:13 it's suddenly dropped by 15% percent, and you go back, what was on at 10:13? And that's a bit worrying, because if it's me that's on at 10:13 and it happens on a frequent basis, the bosses go oh yes, nobody wants to hear what that bloke's got to say. <laughter>

Int: Actually, that is quite scary. So do you have access to them?

TM: I probably do, but I don't even bother because it's not my job. I'm not… I can't tailor what you're going to say. I don't think it's healthy for an on-air person to get wrapped up in figures, research like that. I think it's for senior management to do their strategic decisions. If I start thinking oh, the last two times I talked about Gaza, there was a drop off in figures, I'd either better say something outrageous or not say anything at all. Now it's not healthy, you've got to just get on with it and report and the chips fall where they land.

Here is part of a longer discussion about audience feedback where again details of audience research is given but at the end too much information is dangerous. At the beginning of the extract the speaker is talking about a lack of feedback

LF: ..now, see, that's the black hole. I don't know. I mean, the only feedback we get is the, you know, I forget what the reports' called, but a daily report of say like 20% of our clients – how many used a certain story. And then you get a rating. But that's, that's only 20% to begin with. So there's no….

The interviewer later returns to this feedback asking if LF reads it.

LF: …I…er…. …Actually I do. I don't, I don't use it as a bible in any way, whatsoever. I use it as a…mostly as - those stories that I might not think are stories, um, if I see them up high I just tick that as a reminder of – oh, you know, sometimes you have to make room for it, you know [laughs] or, or its –

> you're not always right. Because it's not a right or wrong but it's a…you know…ah, ok, you know.

The audience is invoked as wanting the story yet there is a need to shy away from being too influenced by it as that challenges the tenets of journalism – that of impartiality and independence. As discussed in the previous chapters, worries over the deterioration in news quality, brought about by the commercialisation of news, has become one of the abiding concerns for academics and practitioners alike. This commercialisation means that news organisations have been drawn into chasing ratings and therefore threatens the independence and quality of journalism. Also, if the role of the journalist is merely to do what he or she is told by the audience this diminishes the journalist. These wider debates are drawn on by the participants to construct their own practice as independent.

The need to think about the audience and the need for independence is reconciled through the 'obvious' or 'top' stories filling both criteria as shown below.

> CK: Um… and yes we do……we do then respond and I guess to a certain extent we tailor it for that specific client. But that doesn't mean that we're still not doing the top stories of the day.
>
> DB: You do need to be aware of it, but I don't think you need to be confined by it and imprisoned by it. Because I think in a sense, first of all, how can you possibly forecast what the viewer is going to be interested in, and I think there are a lot of assumptions that we shouldn't necessarily make. And at the same time, again I think a compelling story is a compelling story regardless.

This ambivalence towards the audience, on the one hand being a primary driving force for news and on the other hand being a dangerous interference, reflects a 'practical ideology' (Wetherell *et al*, 1987) of the audience. These two repertoires of journalism, of giving the audience what they want and journalism as independent and impartial sit in tension with each other throughout the discourse yet are reconciled through the individual's knowledge of the audience. The personal and anecdotal knowledge is privileged over the corporate or systematic knowledge. In this way the journalist can be configured as 'in touch' with the viewers, yet untouched by corporate ratings. This privileging of the personal over the impersonal reflects other research. Although of a very different methodological approach, work on journalists' attitudes to change by O'Sullivan and Heinonen (2008) show the highest rated journalistic tools were those that involved personal contact either face-to-face or on the telephone or personal emails rather than impersonal emails or information. This kind of contact is constructed as giving a much 'truer' picture of the audience's needs and desires.

Conclusion:

Throughout the interviews the audience is repeatedly invoked as a driving force in news coverage. Discursively, this 'drive' either comes from the audience itself, demanding certain types of news, or from journalism, in that certain types of news should be delivered to the audience. However, this imagined audience is a fragmented, changeable entity, altering according to shifts in the subjective position of the journalists.

Firstly, the audience as driving force is cited for all sorts of stories from hard news to soft and tabloid news. In places the audience is constructed as a whole discrete entity, 'It's what they want', 'it's what they will watch' or 'it's what they are interested in'. Yet the universal audience quickly breaks down into discursively useful groups when the speaker runs into difficulty in justifying coverage. At that point the audience is 'particularised' (Billig, 1985) as already being interested and that the journalist is providing news to that select group. This makes the account of news selection more convincing. This smaller core audience is then the 'real' target of the journalist. Examples of this include the discussion of live coverage and tabloid stories. In these cases participants begin by constructing the audience in the image of the journalist. Whether general or particular the journalist is satisfying audience demand. This repertoire of the audience matches the rhetoric of commercial considerations and is the dominant explanation for story selection and coverage. The second interpretive repertoire – that of public service, giving the viewers what they '*ought'* to know is only invoked when journalists are talking about their own achievements. These achievements are measured in danger and effort rather than content or news values.

These twin themes continue in the configuration of knowledge about the audience but with public service being dominant over commercial considerations. The discursive construction of the audience privileges certain types of knowledge of the audience over others. Personal one-to-one contact is powerfully constructed as being a 'real' indicator of audience preferences. Yet, knowledge obtained by the organisation of ratings or demographics is constructed as compromising the news judgement of the practitioners. This again reflects the commercial and public service strands of the notions of news work. The personal knowledge, gained independently of management or corporate pressures, is held up as giving a more informed picture of the audience, and of granting the journalist autonomy and independence – highly prized tenets of the journalism ethics. The audience knowledge of ratings gathered by corporate and commercial means are shunned as they stray perilously close to forcing the journalist to pander to popularism and thus threaten journalistic autonomy.

The tension between being driven by audience demand and journalistic autonomy present in the discourse examined here has proved tenacious. Suspicion towards audience research has been remarked on by many observers. Lord Reith and other BBC executives in the thirties were worried that 'data about the tastes and preferences of audiences, in the form of crude ratings, might become the corporation's master, rather than its servant' (Gillespie *et al,* 2011, p1). In the 1970s BBC Schlesinger noted, with regard to the audience, 'a tension is set up between the professionalism of the communicator with its implied autonomy, and the meeting of apparent audience demands and desires, with their implications for limiting autonomy' (Schlesinger, 1987, p111). The discourse of ignorance, first mentioned by Schlesinger, is noted elsewhere. Peter Lewis' observations of BBC radio remarks in 1991 that 'the intensity of the desire to know 'who are these listeners?' expressed in meetings is not matched by any apparent knowledge among the rank and file of the data already available' (Lewis, 1991, p24). Harrison notes than when asked about the audience, journalists never cited statistics of audience share, instead forming a more 'organic and emotional' idea of their audience (Harrison 2000, p116). The audience is also made in the image of the journalist. One journalist interviewed by Harrison says 'I always think of someone a bit like me, been to university, and doesn't want to be patronised, wants a bit more information' (correspondent quoted in Harrison 2000, p116).

In the 21st century digital multi-platform newsroom there are many possible forums for knowledge exchange. The BBC alone receives tens of thousands of comments from the public each day on a variety of subjects (Williams *et al,* 2011) yet, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, news values and practice can remain remarkably unchanged by this interaction, with the audience still positioned as a news source rather than collaborator. A still strong 'them' and 'us' discourse where journalists know best what their audience wants and needs is prevalent in both research on news technology and within the conversations with the journalists examined here.

The twin repertoires of audience as consumer and audience as citizen are both deployed in the interviews. In the case of the audience as an entity a commercial model is emphasised while public service is only sparely drawn on. However, in terms of audience knowledge the commercial is eschewed in favour of a discourse of autonomy and independence. This constitutes a 'practical ideology' (Wetherell *et al.*, 1987) where the dual repertoires of the audience serve a practical purpose to discursively normalise and maintain certain practices and opinions and resist others. The use of these two notions of the audience can shed light on how certain macro pressures on the newsroom are played out in the discourse of

journalism. It can show how commercial pressures are sometime absorbed and sometimes resisted. While certain commercial discourse has been taken on and deployed throughout the interviews it is in tension with the public service notion.

The continued strength of the discourse of autonomy from audience ratings and by default management pressure to supply the audience what they like, is perhaps cause for some celebration. There is considerable debate in academic and journalism circles that news is 'dumbing down' forced by commercialisation with tabloid stories becoming more prominent and the style of coverage veering towards the sensationalist in order to lure in the viewers. There is evidence that public service news providers put out more 'serious' news (Cushion and Lewis, 2009). However, longitudinal studies of content in the UK major bulletins showed a surprisingly resilient 'hard news' agenda over the last decade (Barnett *et al,* 2012). Some commentators have viewed the 'we know best' attitude of journalists as a 'deeply conservative' one leading to a propagation of the status quo (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990). However, the discourse of resistance to commercial imperatives may well be part cause of the continued resilience of hard news in the UK and in agency coverage.

In this chapter I have concentrated on the discursive construction of the audience and how it is used to justify editorial decisions and news values. In the next chapter I look at a further repertoire of justification and rationalisation of new practice – that of the expertise and professionalism of journalists themselves.

Chapter 7

Analysis 4. Nature and Nurture: The making of a 'natural expert' journalist

Introduction:

This chapter will look at how journalists construct their eligibility to pass judgement on news work and values. This will draw heavily on the notion of category entitlement (Sacks 1992, Potter 1996) which refers to the ways speakers work up justification for making decisions or expressing opinions on matters by being part of a group socially deemed knowledgeable. Part of a journalist's role is to assess information and decide its value or newsworthiness and during the interviews for this research the journalists were repeatedly asked to judge the news value of an event or issue, and the values of journalism itself. Understanding how journalists construct identity around notions of what it means to be a journalist give insight into how journalist's discursively construct their practice and values.

In this chapter I will examine the ways the participants have constructed their category entitlement to 'journalist' and what this may convey about the job. The chapter is divided into three parts. Firstly, I will look at how the identity of journalists has been theorised in the past. Secondly, there will be an explanation of what I mean by category entitlement and a look at some of the work in this area. Thirdly, I will look at the way category entitlement is constructed in the interviews to create the identity of journalists through twin cultural traditions of journalism. Broadly these two repertoires of journalism are based on 'nature' and 'nurture'. 'Nature' is invoked in the form of the innate journalist who is born not made, with an instinctive 'nose for news'. 'Nurture' is summoned into being by a discourse of nurture by the profession, creating a professional of long experience and honed 'news judgement' (Schudson 1995 p13). Although seemingly at odds both are worked up by the speakers throughout the interviews to construct the 'natural expert' and to support entitlement to the category of journalist.

The role of the journalist

The role of the journalist is under challenge both within traditional media organisations and in the virtual online world. Who journalists are and what they should be is under intense scrutiny not only in the corridors of academia but also in the public sphere through forums such as the Leveson Inquiry which put the spot light on the activities of journalism. Many

have been quick to point out that there are many different types of journalist and journalism. After all, the Leveson Inquiry in to the 'culture, practices and ethics of the media' (The Leveson Inquiry, 2012) is in part a response to investigative journalism from the Guardian newspaper that pursued the phone hacking scandal over many months and years (cf. Davies 2009) and to a lesser extent BBC television (BBC Panorama 2011). Yet it is clear that developments in structures of ownership, new technology and changes in news practice have all brought new pressures to bear on the journalist in the newsroom. If we are to understand these developments it is necessary to examine not only the macro structures of the industry and the social context, but also to look at the micro level journalists inhabit and how these issues are played out.

So what is a journalist exactly and what do you do when you are one? The definition of the role and work of the 'journalist' has historically been up for grabs. It has been seen variously as apprentice-based trade where workers are wage-earners engaged in white-collar work – the 'hack'; or as a creative activity autonomously carried out – the 'Hemingway'; or as a highly professionalised high-status occupation carried out by graduates - the 'correspondent'. In his overview of the job, Michael Bromley explains how journalism sits across a number of definitions: 'While, strictly speaking, neither a profession nor a craft, it has displayed many of the characteristics of both' (Bromley, 1997, p330).

The characteristic of a profession have been in part due to the occupation increasingly being occupied by graduates from a certain social-economic background. Journalists in the UK are increasingly likely to hold not only undergraduate degrees but also postgraduate masters degrees (Journalism Training Forum, 2002) and research shows how journalists are drawn overwhelmingly from professional and high-level middle-class families (Hanna and Saunders, 2007, Journalism Training Forum, 2002). Television journalism is particularly prone to middle-class domination. Courses specialising in television production at undergraduate level are rare, more commonly found at MA level. This educationally expensive route into the profession is compounded by the need for aspiring reporters to undertake some poorly paid or unpaid work experience – a route again open to those with sufficient financial support (Cushion 2012).

Success in journalism can bring with it many of the trappings of status and wealth afforded the other professions especially for high-profile, television news readers and presenters who can earn in the millions. BBC's Jeremy Paxman signed a deal in 2011 to earn £3.2 million over the next four years after agreeing to a 20% pay *cut,* (Sabbagh, 2012) while Channel 5 paid presenter Natasha Kaplinsky over £1million a year in 2007 (Sweney, 2011), Yet journalism is not like other 'professions'. Although various training bodies exist in the UK and

many journalists have undergone vocational and academic training, there are no entry qualifications or professional bodies that *must* be joined. Although many educational institutions offer courses in media or journalism these range from the vocational to the academic, with some attempting to blend practice and theory, there is no agreed agenda for what should be taught in these courses (Cushion, 2007) either in the educational institutes or by employers or training bodies (Thornham and O'Sullivan, 2004).

There are no industry agreed standards to be reached for individuals in order to progress up the next rung on the ladder. There are no 'editors' or 'foreign correspondence' exams to be taken. There are no checks on one's work if one continues to satisfy one's editor (and one stays within the law). Employers have said they 'do not care a fig' about skill and training, preferring to select people with the right 'personal qualities' (de Burgh, 2003, p109). Experience and one's ability to 'fit in' to a particular newsroom culture are often more important factors for promotion. Here journalism seems more like a trade with little time for formal qualifications. Lewis points out: 'unlike other professions, journalism requires comparatively little training and certainly no depth of understanding, often resorting to crude notions such as 'instinct' or having an 'eye for a good story'' (Lewis, 2006, p309). As such journalism has been more accurately characterised as a 'semi-profession' (Tunstall 1971, Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005) where practitioners are expected to conduct themselves according to certain practices and ethics, even though the details of these practices and ethics are seldom agreed across the industry. As Örnebring points out, whilst some journalists may bear some 'antipathy' towards the idea of journalism as a profession 'most journalists would probably consider themselves professionals, or at the very least aspire to a certain level of *professionalism'* (Örnebring, 2013, p37, original italics). Yet relative to other professions, few journalists, for example in the US, join professional bodies (Weaver and Wilhoit 1986, 127-128). In the UK journalists have preferred to join a trade union than a professional body. The National Union of Journalists has 38,000 members and is the largest journalist trade union in the world, according to its website (National Union of Journalist, 2012). The older professional organisation of the Chartered Institute of Journalists 'does not give out information' on membership but admit it is 'in the region of a couple of thousand'[19].

Also career progression is often unpredictable with people moving up, sometimes very rapidly and some people, perhaps the same ones, moving down at the same speed. Newspaper editors have a long history of instant expendability. Having spent decades reaching the pinnacle of the trade many have been instantly dismissed on the whim of an owner. The former editor of *The Independent*, Andrew Marr describes becoming editor in

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[19] This is taken from a conversation over the phone between the researcher and the CIJ, 28th March 2013.

spite of his editing experience consisting of commissioning some pieces for his school magazine, and of being fired by fax a short time later. (Marr, 2004)[20]. Added to this is the wider changes in employment patterns across the industry such as increased casualisation of the workforce, and older experienced permanent staff being replaced by younger people on 'non-permanent', individual contracts (International Federation of Journalists, 2006).

This job insecurity is coupled with uncertainty about what you are supposed to be doing when you are out on the job both practically and ethically. There remains a lack of any agreed core skills or activities in journalism (Tunstall, 1971, McQuail, 2005). In its place are a number of notions about what characteristics a journalist should possess. Manuals on how to be a journalist written by journalists list skills in writing and the ability to learn the process of production as 'basic'. These are combined with more nebulous qualities such as 'intelligence, curiosity and 'creativity' or the 'essential sparks: vitality, vivacity, energy, drive, enthusiasm' (Boyd *et al,* 2008 p5). 'Something extra' is needed to get you through the door and that has little to do with what you have learnt at college according to these manuals. This construction of the natural journalist is highly prevalent in the interviews discussed below.

Ethically, the tenets of journalism are also somewhat vague. Lewis notes that 'journalism as a profession is strangely elusive about its purpose' (Lewis, 2006, p308) or, to put it another way: 'To an outsider one of the most striking characteristics of British journalism is its ignorance of itself' (Tunstall, 1971 p3). Although many of the journalists working in the UK today will have been through some kind of training, the lack of an industry and academic consensus on what should be taught means goals and ethics of journalism are unevenly disseminated. As Breed and others have noted (Breed, 1955) a journalist's ethics and knowledge are garnered from colleagues and managers. Rules and morals are not explicitly spelt out but absorbed through socialisation. As I have shown in previous chapters, the discourse of the purpose of news and its values and aims is often vague and sometimes self-serving. Notions about watch dogs and fourth estate are absent from discussions about the day-to-day business of 'doing' news. The linguistic tools for explanation of the purposes of journalism are poorly maintained and ambiguous.

To combat this lack of clear definitions research has shown how journalists engage in boundary work to separate themselves from other types of journalism and to construct their own field as the legitimate voice of journalism practice (cf. Meltzer, 2009). Practically,

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[20] At a slightly less elevated level, television people with whom I have worked have been a leading correspondent one day only to be reduced to a jobbing general reporter the next due to some perceived, real or otherwise, misdemeanour. The phrase 'you are only as good as your last story' is a mantra endlessly repeated across television newsrooms.

journalists jealously guard the parameters of what they define as their duties refusing to do certain things, seeing them as threats to their status. In response to being asked to find a guest for a two-way one correspondent with whom I worked informed me 'I'm not a fucking producer' meaning I had to wake up the producer from very little sleep to go to the scene when the correspondent was already there. Some producers I interviewed for this research 'refuse to edit' seeing this as undermining their particular expertise. However, working in television news invariably means one's duties as a journalist are many and various. Booking cabs and arranging satellite feeds are as much a part of the job as writing scripts and editing pictures for most employees.

Journalists attempt to differentiate themselves from other individuals or parts of the media and are quick to accuse other individuals and whole media of not being a 'proper' journalist or doing proper journalism. Zelizer talks about the perennial practice of dividing high and low practice in journalism concluding: 'There is always some member of the journalistic neighbourhood to look down upon, and even the most recent denigrations of online journalism bear the familiar ring of an argument heard many times over.' Importantly, she goes on to say 'the need to identify a lowlife in journalism in all of its forms, underscores a very basic fact about journalism itself. It tells us that journalism is and always has been adverse to change' (Zelizer, 2000, p*ix*), a point I will return to later.

This ambiguity about what constitutes a 'journalist' is played out in the wider cultural perceptions of journalist – what McNair calls 'cultural schizophrenia' about the nature of the role and those that do it (McNair, 2010, p13). Journalists have been portrayed in print, film and television throughout the decades sometimes as hero, searching out the truth, sometimes as villain (McNair 2010, Ehrich 2004). On occasions they are fighters for the little man against the powerful, on other occasions colluding with the powerful to exploit and mislead the public. Even when not entirely morally upright the journalist can be the lovable rogue - charming, glamorous, sexy (McNair, 2010). The public can variously hate or admire the job as McNair explains: 'The journalist is a cultural icon surrounded by both love and loathing, resentment and respect, admiration and anger – a figure perceived as both hero and villain, treated like a rock star at one moment, and a reptile the next' (McNair, 2010, p13).

Most journalists can only dream of being treated like a rock star or even a reptile for that matter, as most journalists carry out very mundane duties hidden from view from the audience. Yet people working in journalism are not immune to these portrayals and have as Bromley says 'tended to emphasis (and often exaggerate) their closeness to and familiarity

with power, celebrity and the exotic, and to gloss over the day-to-day (relative) powerlessness of employment in the newsroom' (Bromley, 1997, p321).

In short, journalism as an occupation is full of ambiguity and uncertainty both in practice and in theory. There is uncertainty about whether journalism is a profession, even though it is increasingly carried out by graduates, or a trade learnt on the job and the status that confers. There is uncertainty of job security and career path. Most importantly there is uncertainty over the job definition on a practical level – that is, what activities you will be required to carry out. Also the rather more elusive ethical duties of the job are hard to define - that is, what moral choices you are expected to make. This is part of an industry wide resistance to agreed professional standardised training and binding regulation. (The Leveson Inquiry and its aftermath is a case in point.) Added to this, are the many different types of journalist depending on the medium, the genre and the job role that an individual works within, and there an array of roles available to aspire to or avoid. It was in the past possible to argue you were a journalist if you are employed as one (Singer, 2006), yet now with the rise of new media and alternative media many more people are calling themselves journalists albeit often prefaced by 'citizen'. These people are not paid or part of any large media organisation but who lay claim to the title of journalist (cf. Gillmor, 2004). Perhaps, ultimately, 'being' a journalist comes down to the statement – 'I am a journalist because I say I am' – to paraphrase a journalist quoted by Delano (2000, p264).

This uncertainty perhaps partly explains how the participants in this research needed to work hard, rhetorically, to work up entitlement to being a television 'journalist'. Before I go on to examine how this 'working-up' was achieved I will first look at work on category entitlement and what is meant by the term and Goffman's idea of role distance.

Category entitlement and role distance

Category entitlement is the means by which individuals justify their opinions and attitudes by recourse to being part of a specific social grouping which contains knowledge of specific issues. First introduced as an idea by Harvey Sacks, Potter explains category entitlement is 'the idea that certain categories of people, in certain contexts, are treated as knowledgeable' (Potter, 1996, p133). The establishment of entitlement through category membership is a key part of an individual's ability to rhetorically maintain authority in an exchange. Amy Shuman in her study of how entitlement is used in conversations between US school children 'insists' that 'while people challenge one another on the accuracy of their reports, the issue at stake is not accuracy but the appropriation of authority' (Shuman, 1992, p135).

This authority is helped by showing ones inclusion in a category of people who are accepted as knowing about certain things. However, this membership of a category as well as the category itself can be challenged or undermined, therefore maintenance of the boundaries and qualities of categories and your membership of it need to be skilfully defended. Potter argues that 'category entitlement is not a fact of nature. It is not simply the case that some people are members of categories with knowledge entitlements, and some are not. Instead, such entitlements are worked up, and they also may need to be insulated against lines of rebuttal.' (Potter 1996 p137). The boundaries and qualities of categories can be shifted and altered in lots of different ways and so too can entitlements to belong to a category. The categories are not simply a feature or description of the 'real' world. Rather they are worked upon and worked up by speakers as they strive to give credence to their accounts of the world. For example, Potter has shown how psychologists use categorisation to warrant sets of beliefs and practices and that these categories are fluid and contingent (Potter 1988).

A number of ways of building up entitlement to a specific category membership have been proposed. Firstly entitlement is constructed by being a member of a category of people who are meant to know things. For example, by being put into the category 'community leader' it is socially understood that one possesses certain knowledge and expertise with which to make credible judgements about 'community' matters, although, again, as Potter and Reicher show, categories can be flexible and contingent (Potter and Reicher, 1987).

The category 'journalist' is, to use a Harvey Sacks expression, 'inference-rich' where 'a great deal of the knowledge that members of a society have about a society is stored in terms of these categories' (Sacks, 1992, Vol.I, p40). The term 'journalist' sums up a great deal of inference. However as highlighted in the previous section the category 'journalists' has rarely been fixed even by those who do the job and the range of inferences is vast and contested. Specifically, Potter says 'being a journalist does not *in itself* carry a ready-made and mechanical set of entitlements. Such entitlements can be built up or undermined in various ways' (Potter, 1996, p133).

Obviously, in the wider context, the participants of this research can be said to be members of the category of journalist as they were all employed in recognised journalistic roles in producing television journalism. That these people are paid to be 'journalists' is a factor existing in the 'real' world, outside of the discursive. Yet, as shown above the discursive construction of the journalist is fraught with uncertainty and ambiguity and needs to be attended to rhetorically. Studies into identity have shown how membership entitlement requires more than merely stating you are a member. Widdicombe and Wooffitt's study (1995) of youth subcultures show how young goths, punks and metal heads needed to

exhibit authenticity in order to gain entitlement to the subculture. They also needed to contrast their decisions and choices to the wider 'outsider' discourse which portrayed membership as a childish activity based on following the crowd. Therefore they had to not only say they were into heavy metal but make that choice seem rational and considered. The youths also discursively identified 'genuine' and 'shallow' members of the subculture again working up entitlement through subtle shifts in the definition of the category 'goth' etc. (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). Category membership entitlement therefore is not only about 'being' a member but being a certain type of member.

A second way of working up entitlement is as a witness or as someone who has direct experience. Sacks points out that as a 'witness' to an event or set of events you build up the 'entitlement to experience' (Sacks 1992 Vol II p242). Sacks uses the example of a horrific car accident. If you had witnessed it and then told your friend you would not expect them to be as upset as you. Your friend is not entitled to feel upset as they did not witness the event. As Sack's says, the entitlement to experiences is 'carefully regulated' (Sacks, 1992, Vol. II, p248). The 'wrong' type of experience, such as over-reacting to something leaves the speaker open to ridicule or suspicion, and to having their accounts undermined.

> In part I'm saying that it's a fact that entitlement to experiences are differentially available. The idea being that encountering an event like a possible news story, and encountering it as a witness or someone who in part suffered by it, one is entitled to an experience: whereas the sheer fact of seeing things in the world, like getting the story from another is quite a different thing. (Sacks, 1992, Vol. II, p243)

This is particularly pertinent to the interviews of journalists. Traditionally, part of the role of a journalist is to bear witness. Many reporters do witness events or at least, the aftermath of events, at closer quarters than most people and from this experience the report is partly formed. This witnessing gives the reporter authenticity and the authority to report. On a wider level the format and structure of news through such devices as live coverage has increasingly reinforced the discourse of witnessing events and authenticity (Feuer, 1983, Marriot, 2007). The interviews to be discussed below centred on asking the participants to recall stories with which they had been directly involved. The interviews are implicitly and explicitly accounts of witnessing, from which speakers build up entitlement to pass judgement on stories.

However, not being present at an event does not exclude one's entitlement to talk about an event with authority, nor does being present automatically make one an authority. '"Firsthand experience" is a negotiated category of reported experience rather than observable "fact"' writes Amy Shuman (1992, p150). An event may be witnessed by many but the 'facts' of the matter may well be disputed. However, accounts can be worked up rhetorically constructed

as the most plausible and authentic by use of detail, active voicing, and grammatical distancing as discussed in Chapter 4.

I now want to turn briefly to one other notion which I will draw on below when examining category entitlement – that of Erving Goffman's role distance. In his seminal book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* he posits a dramaturgical model of social interaction where people play out 'roles' to an 'audience' (Goffman, 1959). At certain times the role the person is called upon to play is problematic and therefore work needs to be done to distance oneself from that role – this Goffman calls 'role distance'. In his observations on a group of teenage girls who were on their first horse ride, he details the various ways they distanced themselves from the role of horse-rider through displays of nonchalance, joking, or taking on other contrasting roles. Goffman argues that 'by manifesting role distance the girls give themselves some elbow room in which to maneuver… Should they make a bad showing, they are in a position to dodge the reflection it could cast on them.' (Goffman, 1961, p105).

Whilst Goffman's work dealt with displays of role distance in actions as well as words here I want to concentrate of the idea of role distance in a rhetorical sense. Role distance is worked up by the participants in the interviews in order to achieve some complex rhetorical manoeuvring. It is important to emphasise that I am not arguing that there is a 'real' out-there role but rather the role is flexible and fluid – brought into being by the speaker to give greater purchase on the right to an opinion. Also, there are many different roles which can be drawn upon selectively.

The 'natural expert'

In the following discussion of the interviews I will look at the various ways journalists work up entitlement through the construction of the category 'journalist', through being a 'witness' and the use of role distance. As discussed above, the entitlement to give ones opinion on journalism, news and social affairs is not ensured by having the title 'journalist'. Therefore, one needs to define oneself as more than just having the title but that you *are* a journalist, that you embody the job. Below I will show how the interviewees discursively create that embodiment of the journalists through the use of two explanatory frameworks for journalism based on 'nature' and 'nurture'. 'Nature' revolves around a discourse of luck over effort where a journalist is born rather than made. 'Nurture' in contrast is how a journalist is 'brought up' by the previous generation of the profession and who then becomes the elder journalist. Both work together to create the 'natural expert' journalist.

<u>Nature: 'A sexually transmitted job'</u>

One of the striking themes within the interviews is the persistence that getting into journalism is about luck rather than effort. Gaining entry to journalism is repeatedly framed as a quirk of fate or some happy accident. The fate may be from knowing somebody who knew somebody or for being in the right place at the right time. This is vividly evoked by one participant's description of his first job in journalism as a 'sexually transmitted job' whereby he was sleeping with someone who knew someone who worked at a news agency. A discourse of accidentalism is almost universally invoked in accounts of people's careers. 'It was an accident', 'I stumbled into it', 'I just fell into it', 'I very much fell into it' are typical of descriptions of starting out in journalism. Sometimes journalism is a 'second choice', sometimes it is a last resort in the absence of anything better to do. Sometimes it is financial expediency or a matter of location. But with all the explanations there is little mention of any real effort to pursue the profession.

Here is the 'sexually transmitted job' interviewee talking about how he got his first job:

> JL: I, it was a sexually transmitted job, I knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody… [text missing]. I mean I had a good degree, I stood up straight, I could talk, you know…um… that's all they needed really [laughing] I mean, it's, it's, it's ludicrous. I had no proper training, never in journalism. I knew somebody, so that was it, I was in. [text missing] Happened, yeah… It was better than lugging scenery, loads of scenery around, you know…I thought I can't do this for long, you know, I was 28 or something… …. So I got lucky – found a job where I didn't have to…

The interviewee's account follows a pattern found in many of the accounts of starting out. They had a contact, either a parent or friend who got them their first introduction. They did not start out intending to be a journalist. They wanted to be something else or they did not have any idea what they really wanted to be. Getting a job in journalism is therefore a last resort or a welcome alternative to 'lugging scenery'. And employees are happy to take people who are 'lazy' or could merely 'stand up straight'.

Below are two examples of how journalism is described as a second choice or an easier choice than an original ambition.

> AnM: I did a communications degree in Sydney. I actually started, decide to become a film maker in Australia. Then once I'd finished university and I kind of went out into the film world in Sydney and I realised it was actually impossible to get a job I ended up having a huge fight with my mother and she told me if I didn't find a job I was going to be thrown out of home and I sat down on the floor of my parents living room and got out the telephone book and rang up five television stations in Sydney and I asked them for work

experience and one of them, Channel 9 said 'yes, come in and do some work experience' so I ended up at Channel 9 which is probably, it's the most commercial station in Australia, but at that time it was the leading news station.

KM: Um. When I was younger I always wanted to be a writer. Although I reckoned I wouldn't be able to live off that so I though what else can I do that involves something to do with writing or what I like and I was just because I had a passion for video as well, sort of for pictures and things, you know, so um. I'm really into photography as well so it was because of that, um, I kind of was attracted to journalism. Um. It made me think oh that might be an option. That would actually pay the bills (lots of laughter).

The above end up in journalism because their first choice was too difficult to pursue or earn a living from. In the extracts below, the participant could not think of anything else to do.

FE: Well, I was a lazy student in high school, but I realised journalism was a nice thing to do, I was working for a couple of hours on the school newspaper but I thought they were too political so I went away and went back to being really lazy. After school I was in fact, still quite lazy, I studied economics and realised one day that it wasn't what I wanted to do. I couldn't sleep for a couple of nights dreaming about sitting behind a desk, crunching numbers, trying to make the most money I could and decided it was not the right thing for me. Um, this was in Spain, I was studying for one year in Spain. I came back to Rome and decided well, I'm going to finish university and meanwhile try to find some stuff to do and I did an internship in journalism and translation course at an international affairs magazine called 'Internationale' which is like (indistinct) It was really interesting. And before that I had a friend who had been doing an internship at AP. So, when I finished my translation, my journalistic translation, however you call it, course I applied for an internship at AP. They had no one, I guess, because they got me (laughing).

RB: Well sadly I'd like to think um… going into journalism was an original thought. It wasn't. My father was a journalist and his father had a column on the Irish Times before him so it's kind of like I just looked at him and he seemed to be having a lot of fun and I couldn't think of anything else and so um, when I did my A levels I wrote to the local paper and asked for an apprenticeship (right) and they gave me a three year apprenticeship as it was in those days and at the end of it I went to work for an agency still with not much thought in mind of any kind of career plan.

The above all account for journalism as a soft option, something casually embarked on. All describe getting into the trade as requiring little effort. The above say they made one or two phone calls or knew somebody and they had a job. FE describes how AP must have 'had no one else' so he got the job. In RB's account he only wrote to the local paper and they gave him a job.

On the rare occasions some reference to effort is mentioned this is quickly glossed over and luck is brought to the fore. One participant says she wrote 'hundreds of letters of application' but still then refers to her arrival in the profession as a 'fluke'. The effort is skated over and the chance nature of a career is emphasised. Also, some of the participants said they had undertaken undergraduate and post graduate studies in journalism or communications yet still claimed to have 'fallen into' the industry. Having a degree is mentioned as participants talked through their careers. Yet, again, this is glossed and never cited as a main route to employment. In the sexually transmitted job extract above, the possession of a degree is mentioned but in the same breath as the abilities to stand up straight and talk. AM discusses going to college to study communications in connection with becoming a film maker, not a journalist. JG studied media and English and became a 'production' manager' not a journalist.

In some of the accounts there is description of a lot of planning and work towards a goal yet this is not rhetorically framed as effort – and is played very casually. Here, for example, is one editor talking about her university degrees who then goes on to outline a quite drastic course of action to achieve her goal yet the account is glossed as a series of events lightly undertaken.

LF: Bachelor of Arts, three bachelor of arts. And, um, so I didn't know what I wanted to do after university, I just knew I wanted a job so that I could travel. Um…so I first, I got an internship with a local station in Portland, Oregon on a, a Sunday evening political talk show, with a live audience. So I did that and then I moved myself over, I did that for like three months then I moved myself over to Paris. And I er…

Int: Independently?

LF: Yeah, yeah, cos I knew, you know, I wanted to be overseas, overseas and travelling, so, so get yourself overseas and then see what happens (laughing) And so, moved over to Paris and then just walked into the CNN office, bureau and basically said Atlanta said I should stop by (laughs) – which I had called Atlanta, I had called Atlanta and they had said you should stop by (laughing) and I did.

The actions are all portrayed as casual events and the account is very off-hand. LF 'just walked in' and Atlanta said 'I should stop by'. There is a lot of laughter in this account which again highlights the amused bemusement at the situation – a situation that required a good deal of effort to bring about. An internship was undertaken, calls to CNN in Atlanta to get an introduction were made as well as the small matter of moving continents. But this is not what the account concentrates on. Instead it is rhetorically constructed as easy and effortless through the laughter and the use of idiom such as 'just stop by'. That sort of expression is

what you say to friends or family rather than the bureau chief of an international news organisation you had never met. Also she went 'just to see what happens' creates the impression of a fairly fatalistic approach to moving to another country with no job. The story is also told very simply which again emphasis the easiness rather than the effort. All these narratives place the arrival in journalism as an event that was stumbled upon rather than worked towards.

On occasions some participants did report that they had some journalistic aspirations but that it was too difficult to achieve. Therefore they did something else then, by chance, ended up in journalism.

> SR: It just seemed like a really good idea. It's what I'd actually wanted to do but lots of people had said, 'you'll never be able to do it', I think, even to the point they said, 'you'll never do A 'level English' which I then got an A at, you know, it's sort of daft the things to tell people.

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> Int: So even though you wanted to be a journalist…

> TM: Yes, but nobody wants to be a journalist, they all mostly wanted to be refrigeration engineers or work in a wood factory at school, so it's not on. But you just don't think in those terms, and if your horizons are here, you don't… you might think oh, it's nice, but you don't bother to go to it.

In these accounts journalism is framed as something difficult to do yet later on both these participants say they got into journalism via a friend in the case of TM or by his mum in the case of SR. Even here there is a gap between wanting to be in journalism and being in journalism. This is the 'effort gap' where arrival is again an accident and little effort was put in to achieve the previously stated goal of being a journalist.

Here is another example of the above with a combination of journalism as too hard, and not really being interested in journalism, yet going to college to learn about it.

> JG: I hate these questions actually, I really, really find it very difficult to explain so I'm going to try and get it down to a nutshell. I did study English and media studies, I had thought about a career in written journalism because I am inherently a very lazy person, not particularly ambitious and I don't know whether this is, you know, like having an all girls academic grammar school whether, you know, there's a whole confidence thing going on. It wasn't really likely to push myself, you know. It seemed very competitive going into journalism and I assigned it as - it would be nice but too hard… So then, but I did go and study English and Media Studies way back when Media Studies was almost an unknown subject but was considered very [indistinct] and I would say that my degree was interesting and I enjoyed it. It was not

necessarily as in depth as it could have been. And then I went, I started working in documentaries mainly, in production, feature films, in current affairs series and I was a production manager.

In the above extract, again, journalism is consigned to the 'too hard' category as well as the the speaker being 'lazy'. Yet journalism was studied, if not very satisfactorily. Then a career is started with no mention of the difficulties previously referred to.

This discourse of chance and effortlessness seems to be in contrast to a wider discourse about journalism – that it is a difficult profession to gain entry to. For example, 'How-to be a Journalist' books are filled with warnings to would-be journalists about how tough you have to be, how dedicated, how single-minded and how immersed in news you must be to stand any kind of chance of obtaining a foothold in the industry. Even at entry level 'perseverance' is the key (Ray, 2003 p180). 'It's not the easy option' says one newly qualified journalist quoted in one manual (Ray, 2003 p177). You need to be absolutely committed from the off. If you want to be a journalist you need 'persistence, determination and commitment' (Yorke, 2000, p10).

All these qualities required to get into journalism are everywhere in the instruction manuals, and time and again it is stressed how difficult it is to get one's foot in the door. This kind of discourse does appear as in the extracts above yet this only acts as a rhetorical emphasis to the accounts of chance. Instead of a crusading journalist in the mode of Bernstein and Woodward[21] we are offered the image of someone stumbling into the profession through lack of ambition rather than because of it, an image already being parodied by Evelyn Waugh in the 1930s (Waugh, 1938)

This discourse of luck over effort seems to fly in the face of the previous discussion of category entitlement. Here the journalist is disavowing the public and professional discourse of journalism where journalists fight hard to make it into the industry and only the very best succeed. Instead the participants underplay any effort, and stress the haphazard nature of their careers.

This is reinforced through the next part of the narrative – what the participants did once they had arrived. Although the journalists entered the profession by chance, or laziness once they were inside the newsroom they 'knew' they were in the right place. When asked if he had wanted to be a journalist this correspondent gave this account:

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[21] Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodwood were instrumental in uncovering the Watergate scandal while investigative reporters at the *Washington Post* in the early 1970s.

SR: I liked the idea, but I mean I was a drummer in a band, I quite fancied being a drummer in a band actually, to be quite honest, but the idea of journalism was always an interest…

Int: Right.

SR: … but I never really thought too long and hard about it, but I don't know if I thought too long and hard about anything.

Int: Right.

SR: Went to school, finished school and went straight to university, played drums, got kicked out, and basically my mum found me a job. It was her friend's daughter who was a friend but, you know, 'get him something to do,' you know.

Int: Right.

SR: But as soon as… I mean it was the first job I ever did of any importance, and as soon as I started, there was absolutely no question that's what I wanted to do. So it's not like I stayed on. I just never actually made a decision, but when that decision was made, it was absolutely clear. So you could say, 'did you always want to do it?' well, yes, because I'd never actually wanted to do anything, you know.

Their 'natural' untutored inclination to be interested in foreign affairs now stands them in good stead for their 'accidental' jobs. Here again from an accidental beginning a natural inclination emerges from this BBC correspondent and an agency managing editor:

DS: Er…almost by accident. I…was…er…doing a science degree and it became apparent to me that that wasn't really where my interests lay so I spend a lot of time at university in the theatre. When I was looking for a job I spotted an advert which happened to be a job at ITN working on their computer graphics… department…um…got the job and got interested in news…well discovered that I had a greater interest in news than most people which I hadn't really appreciated before that. Um and realised that was my thing and went sideways within ITN.

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Int: Did you always want to be a journalist or…?

CK: No. I don't know. I think I stumbled into it to be honest. I always thought I wanted to be a lawyer (laughs) and then. Well my father was in law at one point in his life and he really discouraged me. So I went to university not very sure of what I wanted to do. Um… and I was… just attracted by journalism… but I can't say, you know, I was, it struck me from the age of thirteen that this was the one and only think I ever wanted to do. And it's funny cos I when I think of what my entire career has been like… (laughs). I feel very comfortable in what I am doing and I feel very fortunate that I ended up in

exactly the right job for me. But it is not by…intention… intentional at all. I don't know, it just kind of happened.

Category entitlement is worked up here in parallel to luck.

Also arriving by luck (and how this is utilised as a reinforcement of category entitlement) once inside the profession a pre-existing but until then unexplored predilection for news is revealed to support one's continuing status as a journalist. A 'natural' interest in foreign affairs or politics leads to knowing one has arrived in the natural place to be.

This construction of the 'natural' course of things giving agency not to the journalist but to fate reinforces a certain category entitlement of journalist – that of the natural journalist. In the same way as news is constructed as 'out-there', floating free and fully-formed to be gathered in, journalists too as a category are ready-made waiting for fate to reel them into the trade. This discourse of innate talent constructs the speakers as embodying the role of journalist. Rather than learning to be a journalist you *are* a journalist – a stronger claim to entitlement. This innate ability is reinforced by framing journalism as an activity which they carry out instinctively rather than having learnt it as the follow extracts illustrate.

> LF: But I would say that's also more of an instinct than a learning thing too. You're not there to enjoy this stuff, you don't enjoy this stuff, you know. Just enjoy the show – go home now because you'll never [laughing] You know what I mean?

> CK: I like news editing. And um…I do it quite instinctive. Which probably means I don't always get it right [laughs]. Um…I'm not very calculating in it. I kind of… … just have a feeling about something and then…do it. I don't know if other news editors work like that or not [laughs]. I don't know, um…I guess your feelings get better the more you do it.

Experience is obliquely referred to in that 'the more you do' the better your 'feelings' are. What is not even obliquely referred is any recourse to study.

Why is it that the discourse is constructed to downplay effort and emphasis the fatalistic? There are a number of reasons I would propose. Firstly, there is what Billig would describe as a 'general cultural norm' against certain types of behaviour which can be extremely powerful in the construction of discourse. Billig takes, for example, the case of being prejudiced. Such is the 'general cultural norm against prejudice' that even fascists say they are not prejudiced (Billig 1991 p125). I would argue there at there is general cultural norm against' being pushy or trying too hard. The anti-professional norm is widespread in British society which prides itself on reticence and restraint or what Tunstall calls the 'English amateur tradition' (Tunstall, 1971, p56). While this can be said to permeate society at large

this quality is especially pertinent to journalists who are often characterised as being excessively pushy, intrusively sticking cameras and microphones into peoples' faces.

Another explanation could be connected with Goffman's notion of role distance (Goffman 1961). Instead of taking on one possible expected role of journalist – that of dedicated, hard-working hack, the participants distance themselves from that image and take on a rather bewildered, 'how on earth did I get here' stance. One reason for this is that the possible role, that of hard worker, fighting for freedom, born to investigate is not secure. In the light of recent scandal and nefarious activities of journalists a rather different role has become associated with journalists – that of venal, corrupt snooper. Instead, it is perhaps more safe to work up an innateness to their abilities. Even though they did not try hard they are still successful journalists because they were simply born that way. On the one hand this role distance gives the journalist wiggle room to disassociate themselves from any awkward questions. On the other hand it also serves paradoxically to reinforce one's category entitlement to the role of journalist. It does this by implying that the abilities of an individual are innate. That one is born to be the role.

The participants work up and seem to distance themselves from one common 'role' – that is hard to get into and you must be born wanting to do it, while simultaneously working up another – casualness, which implies innate talent, a more powerful embodiment of the journalist. This therefore builds category entitlement more effectively. Here is a version of Goffman's role distance, yet with a twist. By distancing themselves from one version or role journalism they build up a second more powerful one in contrast – one to which they do belong.

As well as working up category entitlement by establishing a natural talent for journalism, a second repertoire of journalist is constructed – that of the experienced old hand. This journalist is nurtured into the ways of the trade through contact with the previous generation of journalists. This I will examine in the next section.

Nurture: 'Old School' experience

A second repertoire of journalism is called up once the journalist has arrived in the profession – that of the long-in-the-tooth, experienced and serious professional who has been nurtured and schooled by the previous generation of 'old school' journalists. This historical route to category entitlement was prevalent in the discourse of the participants and was constructed through past experiences and being present or witness to that history. By being part of journalism history the speaker invokes entitlement. This 'history' revolves around the notion of 'old' school journalism and 'golden ageism' being contrasted with the

negative effects of change and the deterioration of news practice these changes bring about. This old school is brought into being through accounts of early years in journalism (usually mentioning alcohol) and old school journalists teaching the participants the ropes. For example here is one description of early career 'old school':

> TM: Well, I picked up various strings and radio in New Zealand and radio in Australia and writing for Broadcast magazine, I picked up a few strings and actually again, I came back with about thirty grand in the bank. If you work hard you get paid. It's not all about money but it's a factor. And then Sky launched and they said… because about 30 people went from IRN LBC to Sky when it launched, people like Tom Roach, you might remember, Vince McGarry and a whole… literally criminals like that, real old school. Vince once threw a typewriter at me in the newsroom, I dodged and it actually took a big chunk out of the wall. That was at IRN. But that's normal behaviour in those days, as was getting completely pissed at lunchtime.

This account of starting out begins with the apparently effortless picking up of various work and making a lot of money, it then moves to being the speaker becoming brought into the fold. TM, the junior, experiences the old school which is signified through mentions of alcohol and outrageous behaviour. This witnessing and experiencing of events works up the authenticity of the account. It is also corroborated by the speaker as he is aware that the interviewer knows the people he is talking about.

When asked about how he learnt the trade one agency worker has this account.

> JL: Well, from my senior, from my senior, um, journalists when I started. Ah, people like Ralph Nicholson, Donovan, to a lesser extent. Er…people that you may remember like, I don't know, Martin Bishop, somebody like that
>
> Int: He's still at it isn't he?
>
> JL: Allegedly. I haven't seen him. Um you know, very straightforward old journalists, with a lot of experience.

Again, the speaker mentions people he knows the interviewer will know which corroborates his experience and strengthens his ties to these 'straightforward old journalists'.

This learning process is again evident in the following which describes the passing on of wisdom down to the novice:

> KA: A Radio 4 journalist, again very old school, had a bottle of wine under the desk, and he said, 'if you really want to get international news, you're going to have to leave the BBC and join and come back, or go freelance and come back in.' So I left in 1996, went down to London, freelanced for the BBC, I used to do what was called, 'the bomb watch shift' which was when the IRA was still around.

Having established the 'real' journalist as old school speakers then could construct themselves as part of that breed of 'old school' journalism. The same correspondent as the extract above goes on to describe herself as old school, although this old school is minus the alcohol:

> KA: I'm definitely old-school idealist journalist, you know, not interested in fame or anything like that, I just wanted to tell stories.

Here another correspondent looks to the past for inspiration:

> JM: I like to think I'm sort of… there are certain things. I mean we all have our strengths. I think, for example, Lindsey Hilsum is a great analyst. I'm much more of a human touch I think and my best story is when I can meet people and respond to people and talk to people who went through stuff, and I have an ability to draw stuff out of people and to tell their stories. And there are certain other journalists whose style I love and I look to as sort of past masters in my art, not that I seek to emulate them because we should all be ourselves and different. So Alan Little is a storyteller and a very knowledgeable and skilful journalist and he too can elicit stories from people, real stories, and that's the sort of journalism I like doing most, humanitarian.

The speaker mentions both 'past masters' and a number of established elite journalists with whom to contrast himself. He also emphasises the quality of being able to draw stories out of people through an innate understanding of people. This account brings in the innate journalist and the learning from and becoming one of those innate journalists.

The historical perspective and the witnessing of that history are put into negative contrast with present or future situations. Here is part of a much longer discussion on the decline of journalism:

> DS: It was a much more pure journalism 20 years ago that you kind of called the police and they said sure come out and film with us and you did your story and now there's all these kind of calculating whether it's a good idea or a bad idea for you to come and film with them. And there's a lot more kind of PR stuff going on. But I think…it, sort of gut instinct…news editing…is…lacking where I am now in a way that it wasn't 15 years ago, 20 years ago. Um, I don't look at the sort of people making news decisions around me and think you're a genius. I just think you're not as good as the guys that I used to know 15 years ago. I think, I think that applies to reporters as well. But I just, there are, there are, it's very difficult to see who the next great reporters are going to be in terms of, I'm not talking about the best, obviously there's some great reporters in our generation, but they're just not as amazing as the guys who used to turn up in a foreign country with a cameraman and just cover the story by themselves.

This kind of golden ageism, when things were better in the past, worst in the present and likely to be terrible in the future, is present throughout the interviews. The 'Golden Age' of journalism runs on 'gut instinct' and ingenuity. The present is framed as overly cerebral and compromised by PR and management. This 'Golden Age' of television news in the UK according to some actually did exist and occurred between the 1960s to the late 1980s until Thatcherism wiped it or at least severely damaged it (Barnett 2011 p85). However, this kind of account of journalism may be more of a 'retrospective wishful thinking' (Schudson cited in Seaton, 2005, p*xviii*). Instead of reflecting nostalgia for an actual period in time invocation of any Golden Age is, according to Gans, more about a feeling of loss : 'The Golden Age communicates mainly the journalists' feeling that their profession is currently in decline and suffering from collective downward mobility. […] Feelings of downward mobility are always painful, whether justified or not, but they also inhibit people from thinking clearly about their condition and reacting constructively' (Gans, 2004, p*xvi*). For the participants of this research, the Golden Age always seems to be that time when one is just starting out in the job so that one is taught the trade by the paragons of the industry and by association become one, while lamenting they don't make 'em like that anymore.

Having been nurtured by experienced old-timers speakers can then construct themselves as experienced. New journalists join this 'band of brothers' and become one of the old-timers. This is achieved rhetorically by calling up markers of status and autonomy in the work. One abiding image of journalism is of the maverick, lone operator. In fictional portrayals the journalist seems to spend little time in the office and it more often found lounging in bars or flying in choppers to far flung places. The daily grind of writing or editing does not lend itself easily to being shown as exciting or dramatic. Most of this activity happens 'off screen' or in the background whilst the hero journalist fights with authority, either government or their employer. This fight usually ends in a win for the journalist who against the odds gets his scoop out to the world. This 'myth of editorial autonomy' as Jackie Harrison terms it (Harrison 2000, p129) is far from the mundane reality of news production. Reporters, producers and editors are bounded by any number of structural and cultural factors which limit autonomous action. In the accounts below the participants' discourse works to highlight the first image of autonomous journalists and bury the second of mundane cog in the corporate wheel image.

Participants highlighted their autonomy and power to control their fate using a number of markers of status and skill in the job. One way to do this was to define what an individual would or would not do in the course of their working lives. Therefore, participants 'don't do courts' or 'don't do weekends' and do 'do' breaking news or foreign news or big stories.

In the following extracts these reporters and producers from various organisations outline their roles.

> TM: Well, it's a posh title to make me sound more knowledgeable than I am. Actually, I mustn't be too flippant because in a bold quote that looks like fact and there's only some truth in it. That title means I don't do day-to-day reporting, I don't get sent down to the High Court this, that and the other, I only do foreign news, although I also do intelligence matters in this country, because then [indistinct]. I choose my own hours more or less unless there's something obvious, Kennedy's been shot, although I didn't think I'd come in till three this afternoon and [indistinct], but I do my own hours which tends to be seven till six. I don't know why I do that but I do. And I tend to I think get a lot of big passes for big interviews, like if Netanyahu was in town, it would usually mean me and Bolton would battle about it and I usually win those.

This extract contains a very clear list of what the participant will or will not do and emphasises his control over the work event making up his own hours. The next extract also highlights his status with reference to a number of markers of importance:

> DS: No. It's just me. I tend not to work weekends. Um… it has to be quite big to cross the threshold that I'll be asked to work the weekends. But broadly if it's a story which is going to be…of interest to the 6 o'clock and 10 o'clock news…then broadly, I'm going to be asked to do it. There are other home affairs correspondents who also have a TV bent. Um, they tend to do… it's not set in stone but they tend to do more stuff for the BBC News Channel or the Breakfast News or One o'clock news...um…outlets. But broadly if its going to be 6 o'clock, 10 o'clock – certainly if it's going to be sort of first half of those then it's going to probably come my way. It doesn't always happen but it's, it's, we don't take it in turns.

Some of these markers may be esoteric to the industry outsider but they display subtle tell-tale signs that he is high status with mention of the 6 and 10 as 'his' programmes whilst others have to make do with other less high status channels or programmes. The status of these programmes is partly based on viewing numbers but also the type of viewer. Flagship bulletins attract an audience of those in power both internally and externally and make these evening programmes top of the heap.

He also stresses he only does 'big' stories or stories that will be in the 'first half' of the programme. Only big stories can draw him into work during the weekend. It is common practice across the industry that only the lower order or new reporters work shifts. These references all reinforce his status as correspondent. It also connotes a certain amount of freedom. He is not tied to rigid shift patterns. Instead he is only asked to do important work.

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Freedom of movement is also a signifier of status as a journalist as expressed above by the editor who chooses his own hours. Participants often referred to being able to pick and choose their assignments. For example here, one senior foreign producer talks about how he can go where he likes because he has experience.

> BP: Yeah. So they'll say yes. [indistinct] I have been to a couple of countries where I actually want to go to see what it was like. So I went to Central African Republic two years ago just because, you know, I'd never been there (laughing). So I've always wondered what was going on. There was a reason to go – they were disarming child soldiers.

Here again is a world affairs editor taking about a recent trip to the Middle East:

> Int: So did you pitch those stories?
>
> TM: No. I don't like that way of doing journalism. I'm going to tell you what the story is and then if you like it, I'm going to go and deliver it. I don't like that. I had a vague idea…
>
> Int: So how did it work then?
>
> TM: Well, I just told the editor I was going to Gaza for a few days. I mean again, that's one of the joys of being an editor, he could've said no, you're not, stay in Jerusalem, but why would he? Stay in Jerusalem and be ignored or go to Gaza and pick up the stories.

The ability to be 'relaxed' about results is also brought up to connote the status of the individual, in that one has the trust of the higher authority to make one's own decisions and to work in one's own way.

> SR: No, I mean I think of the good reporters, probably most actually, and I think of myself as a good reporter, work very much the same which is try to remain calm. I don't have fights with crews and stuff like that, I don't have disagreements with them, you know, don't raise my voice, and try to make it as fun as possible, and that's how I like to be. But you see people prancing about and being really sort of uppity and 'I have to have this', the live shot doesn't work, walk away, so what? The piece didn't make it, it didn't make it, everyone tried to make it. But I mean if some twat didn't try, then yeah, but if everyone's tried then what's the point, it is ultimately just TV.
>
> AM: Whether I operate differently, I would say that I'm quite relaxed about things. It's not the end of the world if it doesn't work.

The casual, confident demeanour worked up by the two extracts above illustrate the speaker's autonomy and power over their working experience. This discourse is slightly more prevalent among senior reporters, producers and editors but even quite junior staff

(one of whom is quoted above) also draws on these notions. All of the above work to build up entitlement to the category and to the experience of a journalist firstly through a historical perspective and secondly by then becoming part of that on-going tradition. Here the journalist is introduced and nurtured in the old school way of doing news.

This discourse of freedom is evident when talking about generic news or when discussing a story or quality which reflects well on the speaker. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, when the content of a story is something that does not reflects well on the speaker the 'freedom' tends to disappear. Focus shifts from the subject to the object – news. The journalist has to do certain stories because of the demands of the audience, the management and the exigencies of news production.

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have looked at the ways the participants of the research work up entitlement to the category or role of 'journalist'. This category entitlement is necessary in order to build up authority for one's knowledge and opinions. The category's boundaries are always in flux as different versions of what constitutes a journalist are drawn upon and negotiated.

Two repertories for 'journalist' have been identified from the interviews. Firstly, participants use the repertoire of 'nature'. This consists of luck, amateurism and instinct set against effort, professionalism and schooling to construct the embodied journalist, a journalist who is born not made. This journalist is 'self-made' (Aldridge, 1998, p113), possessing innate talents and is one whom fate will inevitably lead to journalism. This 'natural' journalist succeeds in spite of lack of ambition or effort. This working up of the idea of an embodied journalist creates a strong category entitlement.

Secondly, the interviewees worked up entitlement through 'nurture' using a repertoire of witnessing and experiencing history and being brought up by previous generations of journalists to take their place in their ranks. This arrival as elder journalist is constructed through a number of markers of status and autonomy. Here the journalist makes their own choices because they are trusted to make the right ones. Again this confers entitlement to opinion on the individual.

These two seemingly contradictory repertoires of journalism – that of the innate journalist and that of the experienced, learned journalist – exist side by side in the accounts. They are bridged by the discursive eliding of the two – where 'feelings' are 'honed'. Innate talent is nurtured to create the 'natural expert'. Both repertoires rely on first hand witnessing to build

authenticity. This experiential discourse makes both constructions into a powerful case for category entitlement and the authority to make claims about news judgements. A part of this power comes from the resonance they contain with some of the public perceptions of journalists.

There are two wider points to be made about these discursive constructions. First, it is important to examine the choice of these two repertoires or roles over other possible characterisations of journalists. It is obvious that the type of journalist associated with phone hacking, police corruption, invasion of privacy and prurient interest with photographs of young female celebrities is not the image that one would want to be associated with. It is no surprise that the participants would distance themselves from this role.

More interestingly is the distancing from any formal training either before entering the profession or any on-going formal learning or reflection whilst in it. Both repertoires are discrete, contained by journalism, either in the individual or in the fraternity of one's peers. Outside help is not required. To have learned one's profession in a classroom is avoided at all turns during the interviews as this threatens the coherence of the discourse of the embodied journalist.

This also reflects a resistance in the journalism community to any regulation or professional standardisation of the activities of journalism. This 'natural' and enclosed state of being absolves journalists from any responsibility to understand and carry out a set of objectives which define journalism.

As has been noted in earlier chapters, many notions and issues certainly taught on media courses such as news values are largely absent from the discourse of these practitioners. Media studies courses have grown dramatically in the UK in recent years. In the academic year 1996-97 37 institutions offered media studies courses. In 2009-10 that number had risen to 111, an increase of 200%. The figures for journalism were even more dramatic, increasing from 16 to 68 institutions in the same period – a 325% rise (Ramsden, 2012). A growing number of British journalists are journalism graduates (Journalism Training Forum, 2002) although globally the increase in journalism tertiary education seems to minimal over the last decade and a half (Willnat *et al,* 2013).Yet how much of that learning is taken into the profession? The participants in this research were nearly all graduates but only a handful of the interviewees said they had undertaken undergraduate and postgraduate studies in media, communications or journalism studies. Also most would have finished their education by the mid to late 1990s and therefore it is dangerous to over extrapolate on whether the discourse identified here is prevalent among the new intake of young journalists. However, two factors may affect this. Firstly, the new intake is being trained on the job by the old

hands, who at least initially have the power to influence a new employee's practice and prospects. Also, as stated elsewhere, the economic pressures on job security may make newcomers more amenable to socialisation of certain values and practices in order to further their careers (Gravengaard and Rimstad, 2012).

Secondly, changes in discourse and practice in the newsroom may be affected by changes in journalism education. Some of the discourse expresses by the participants is not necessarily repeated in quantitative survey data. In the survey carried out by the Journalism Training Forum many respondents said they had qualifications in journalism (56% in the case of television) (Journalism Training Forum, 2002). Also, a vast majority said they had found the training very relevant to their job. This may be an indication of a growing relevance of journalism education.

However, some responses to surveys of trainee journalists seem to be reproducing the discourse discussed above. Journalism students surveyed at British universities say they are motivated to become journalists because they see the work as being about originality and creativity, autonomy and exciting places and people, but very little about public service (Hanna and Saunders, 2007). This repertoire of journalism is reflected in the discourse of the interviews where over half the participants said they had undertaken some sort of apprenticeship or vocational work experience. The eschewal of formal training in the discourse of practitioners and the integration of media education into the theory and practice of journalism will be returned to in Chapter 8.

The second issue to emerge from the discourse of journalistic identity concerns the framing of the new against the old. The past is golden-coloured and full of character but also adhering to tenets of 'real' journalism. New ways of news gathering or the upcoming generation of journalists are contrasted negatively with the old school. The adversity to change discussed above by Zelizer (2000) is patent in these discursive constructions. As others have shown, the construction of journalistic authority has been remarkably resilient to change drawing on tradition and the 'old' ways of doing things (Örnebring, 2013, Shultz, 2007). In previous chapters I have discussed how poor or non-existent the discursive resources are for discussing news practice, news values and purpose of news. This absence makes it difficult to examine current practice, narrowing discussion to a few truisms. In this chapter the limited definition of who is a 'proper' journalist is resistant, even hostile to new possibilities. Here, the issue of change is framed as deleterious to journalism, ironic in a profession which prides itself on 'every day being different'.

In the next, and final chapter, I will discuss the theoretical and methodological possibilities of this type of analysis for future study, and examine what the implications may be of the

various repertoires identified in this and the previous chapters for journalism education and the practice of journalism itself.

Chapter 8

Conclusions and discussion

Introduction

This piece of research is concerned with how television journalists discursively construct what they do and how they see themselves. It does this by looking at the rhetorical tools and repertoires of meaning employed in the talk of journalists. It argues for a more discursive approach in the study of news production and illustrates the strengths of this methodology in analysing the talk of television journalists working for London-based organisations, and how discourse reflects, endorses and at times buries certain practices.

Discourse analysis has been applied to the output of television news yet this methodological approach has generally been under-utilised in production studies. Studies of how news is created and moulded have all included conversations with journalists either while at work or away from the newsroom. However, the conversation of and with journalists has been largely treated by scholars as the transparent neutral information about production practices rather than a discursive practice. This research aims to address this gap by drawing on the work of discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell 1987, Potter 1996, Billig 1996) to examine the rhetorical discourse of television journalists. The approach takes language and discourse as functional, that it can be put to work by the speaker. It also sees discourse as constitutive whereby it allows certain meanings to thrive and can silence alternatives.

In this chapter I will summarise the main arguments and findings of this research and discuss the implications of some of the findings on the future of news production studies and on the practice of journalism and journalism education.

The study: Summary of findings

I begin in Chapter 2 by looking at previous work in the areas of news values and production studies. News values have been identified as the elements contained within an event or issue. These elements, along with production factors, make up a range of considerations when journalists are deciding on an event's newsworthiness. An ever expanding and constantly shifting array of news values have been proposed by various scholars reaching back to Galtung and Ruge's classic study of foreign news coverage in Norwegian newspapers (Galtung and Ruge 1970) up to more recent re-examinations of output (Harcup

and O'Neil, 2001, Brighton and Foy, 2007). What these accounts show is that news values are patterned but are not always constant. News values evolve across time and from medium to medium. News values are born of both external forces such as commercial considerations as well as the internal logic of newsroom processes and cultures. Therefore to understand how these news values are developed and operationalized it is necessary to look at the production of news and the people who produce it.

Many of the early newsroom studies formed seminal works on the routines and processes of news work (Tuchman 1978, Gans 1979, Schlesinger 1987) and did much to reveal the order behind the myth of the chaos of news. These studies have detailed many aspects of production from the deployment of resources, the choice of beats, the use of sources, and the employment of news values, journalistic professional ethics and ideology. However, the emphasis on overarching routines has perhaps led to neglect in examining the journalists involved in the process and their agency. Also, they do not fully explain how it is that practices and values are propagated and circulated through the news production process over time. To investigate this several scholars have been calling for a more linguistic approach to news production studies to unravel how news is 'talked into being' (Catenaccio et al 2011). However, many of these studies still treat the spoken words of the journalists as a neutral, realist account of news production rather than treating language itself as the subject of investigation.

I argue than in order to fully investigate the processes of news production and values a discourse analysis approach is needed. Many past 'routine' explanations of news production have written out the role of the journalist. Instead the workers become a cog in an all-powerful machine with little agency or part to play. In this study using a discursive approach the journalist is written back in. This is not to say that the journalists become the sole driving force of news but that they do have a role to play in production. This is not to argue that we should believe everything that journalists tell us but instead to propose that we should be looking at what they say with a more critical eye. A discourse analysis approach to news production is a fruitful way into the study of how news values and practices are articulated within the production process with an emphasis on discourse rather than just routines. Routines are extremely complex and are continually under pressure to change, and news products themselves evolve over time. But how are these changes resisted or embraced? I argue that patterns and shifts in the discursive construction of news values and practice are inextricably interwoven with practice. Practice is constituted in and through discourse and practice is reflected in discourse.

In Chapter 3 I outline an approach to the talk of journalists which puts their discourse centre stage, where their talk is the focus of the study rather than as an adjunct to a production study. Drawing on the work of discursive social psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Wetherell and Potter 1992, Potter 1996, Wetherell and Edley 2007) interviews with practicing television journalists are analysed with the view that language is functional and is being used to do things by the speaker, rather than language being merely a description of the actual world. I also take the view that discourse is constitutive. Following Foucault's idea of 'regimes of truth', different societies have 'types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true' (Foucault 1980, p130). These repertoires of 'truth' are utilised by the speakers to construct their accounts.

The tools of analysis in discursive social psychology centre on identifying 'interpretive repertoires' of meaning and explanation in accounts and how these are discursively constructed (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1982, 1984, Potter and Wetherell 1987). It also looks for insistencies in explanations which then highlight the context specific and functional nature of the repertoires. Potter and Wetherell use a second notion of 'practical ideologies' whereby repertoires are constructed and utilised to justify certain practices or views (Potter and Wetherell 1987).

In chapters 4-7, I apply this discursive approach to the analysis of the participants' talk. Each of these chapters takes up different themes prevalent in the conversations; news practice, news values, the audience and the journalistic identity. The first two areas are prompted by the researcher via the questions asked in the interviews concerning what kind of event or issue is newsworthy and why. The second areas emerged during the interviews. The talk about the audience and the construction of the journalist figured very strongly and consistently throughout and say something interesting about the configuration of both.

Chapter 4, then, looks at the discourse around definitions of news and news practice. Two interpretive repertoires are identified as the interviewees sought to construct their accounts as factual, describing a world 'out-there'. These two repertoires I have termed 'news as a found object' and 'news as a manufactured object'. The 'found object' is most prevalent in the conversation where news is configured as a number of discrete pre-existing objects which the journalist merely gathers in. The focus is shifted away from the subject and onto the object, where the object – news – has agency. This objectification is worked up by the use of a number of rhetorical tools which include empiricist discourse, consensus and corroboration, and use of varying levels of detail in accounts (Gilbert and Mulkay 1982, 1984, Potter 1996). By standing at a distance the subject remains unsullied by awkward questions about the ethics and values of editorial decision making. News as an object is

constructed as a natural and factual account. This repertoire taps into a long standing avowed quality of journalism – that of objectivity. The journalist is written out of the process and news is constructed as an objective reality.

The second repertoire of 'manufactured object' is constructed through some of the same rhetorical tropes such as the use of detail and corroboration. However, they are used to different effects and construct a subjective journalist, one who creates and crafts stories and is intrinsic to the production of news rather than a bystander. This draws on a different repertoire of journalism – that of professional experience, creativity and innovation.

There is a tension surrounding both repertoires. The 'found object' repertoire side-lines the journalist, giving him, or her, little to do other than 'manage' the news objects. Although this 'managing' in practice means journalists are operationalizing news values, the discourse buries this agency. However, if *news* holds the agency then who needs 'expert' journalists? Anybody could be a journalist. The 'manufactured object' enables the journalist to step back into the process and show off professional experience and knowledge. However, being 'too' creative with news risks breaching the divide between making news and making *up* news.

Therefore the speakers draw on the two repertoires, both of which can be accessed and utilised to account for editorial decisions and news values, moving agency back and forth between the subject and the object. The 'found object' is the default discourse allowing journalists to maintain subjective distance. However, the second repertoire helps out when professional expertise and creativity is needed to be highlighted, or when the objective news explanation is challenged.

In both repertoires news values are implicit yet largely unacknowledged. This is especially true of the 'found object' repertoire where editorial judgement is being applied to the many possible news stories out there. Yet this judgement is glossed over grammatically, and in the details of the accounts. In Chapter 5 the issue of news values is explored in relation to the two repertoires of news. It is found that the repertoires are employed differently according to the content of the news story. Of the approximately 300 discrete stories brought up by participants 'hard' news made up the vast majority. By 'hard' news, I mean news concerning national and international politics, war and conflict, natural disasters and social issues. Hard news stories were predominately discussed using the 'found' object repertoire. News values such as visuals were invoked but only in terms of being 'obvious' and a statement of fact. So a story was 'good pictures' without any elucidation of what 'good' means in this context. Editors, reporters and producers are repeatedly making decisions about stories based on sets of news values as well as other production factors yet the use of news values is buried in the discourse except as vague generalities. This lack of detail helps speakers avoid

difficult questions about what makes news. It also leaves the journalist with little discursive space for reflection.

The 'manufactured object' was brought into play with hard news as another way to gloss the reasons for news selection. Instead of describing the story 'out-there', speakers describe their involvement in the story. In the 'found object' the elements of the story would be listed, in the 'manufactured object' the speaker's processes would be. This again reveals little in respect to news values or why a story was chosen. But it does serve to reveal the journalist as a professional, thus, by association, strengthening the correctness of story selection.

The construction of the much smaller group of tabloid stories is a more complex operation than that of the 'hard' news stories. Neither of the repertoires identified in Chapter 4 can be accessed un-problematically by the speakers. To frame a tabloid story as an object 'out there' flies in the face of public discourse around tabloid reporting. It would mean the speaker endorses tabloid stories as an object and therefore worthy item of news. The 'manufactured object' is equally troubling as being associated with creating tabloid stories is not seen as a positive attribute for journalists, for this participating group at least. While some academics have argued for the legitimacy of tabloid style and content in news coverage public debate has been perhaps less nuanced especially in the light of recent tabloid newspaper activities. Although television news is held in greater trust and esteem in the UK compared to print journalists (Ofcom 2012, Gunter, 2005, Cushion, 2009) there is a fear of being tainted by tabloid-ism. The interviewees work hard to distance themselves from these types of stories using several ways of to minimise or alter their involvement in tabloid coverage. In this case it is not the news 'object' which is out-there and distanced but news values. News values are constructed as self-evident but nevertheless contested and challenged by the speaker. Speakers are required to work harder to justify decisions because of the lack of a coherent repertoire or repertoires to draw on but this also leads to a more diverse and reflective discussion of tabloid news stories. The discourse being used is more explicit and challenges news values to a greater degree than 'hard' stories.

With both types of stories news values are implied rather than detailed. Explicit news values are largely absent. 'Hard' news is constructed as self-evident through the repetition of the 'facts' of the story and through vague generalisations about a story being 'good telly' or 'an important story'. There is little detail or explanation of why specific events are news. If there are passing references to what scholars would note as news values, these are not consistently applied to stories but used in flexible, contingent ways in accounts.

If news values are vague or even missing in the accounts, this gap in the explanation for news is filled up with the audience. In Chapter 6 I look at the construction of this audience as a driving force for editorial decisions and news production. The discourse centring round the audience divides into two strands. Firstly, news is driven by the audience. In other words, it is what the people want to see. Secondly, and much less prevalent the journalist is there to give the audience what they *ought* to have. These twin repertoires tap into the tug of war between commercial considerations and more public service notions of television news. Most commonly, the speakers reference the un-explicated commercial account, that of giving the audience what they want. However, at certain specific junctures the journalist invokes the audience as needing to hear what the journalist has to say. This happens when the journalists talked about stories in which they had been involved with and done something different and often unique. The audience serves to endorse the speaker's professionalism and faithfulness to the ethics of journalism.

In all the accounts of the audience, the audience is not static but constructed differently or 'particularised' (Billig 1985, p173) according to the needs of the speaker's accounts of editorial considerations. The audience is flexibly and contextually constructed, at times as a homogenous whole and at others fashioned in the image of the speaker. Thus the audience becomes a practical ideology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) for justifying news practice and news values. Specific stories, such as the Madeleine McCann story, become justified through an audience's desire for it. However, the audience is simultaneously everyone and a particularised middle class audience, mirroring the journalists. Ideologically, the worthy audience is configured in the journalist's image.

There are two repertoires running through both the discussions of the audience and debate about the journalists' knowledge of the audience. In general discussion about the audience driving news, this audience is the demander of news which journalists must satisfy by giving it what it wants closely aligning with commercial models of the media. The second notion of audience centres round journalists' professional and ethical duty to inform the audience even if they have not asked for it, closely aligning with the public service model. The second repertoire is much less drawn on in the interviews than the commercial, with journalism positioned as supplying consumers rather than informing citizens.

However, in discussions about *knowledge* of the audience the emphasis is reversed. In these discussions again, there are two repertoires of explanation – one which more closely follows market led journalism through audience ratings and market research, and one which follows a journalism of independence and autonomy where journalists have direct personal contact with the audience. Certain types of knowledge about the audiences are privileged

over others. Personal one-to-one contact and anecdotal information is constructed as more useful in knowing what the audience wants than market research, and is positively constructed as making for better journalism. Although the commercial model of giving the audience what they want is frequently invoked in general discussions about news work, the commercial methods of gathering information about what audience wants are discursively eschewed. Too much knowledge is a dangerous thing when that knowledge is quantitatively gathered by management. Knowing about the audience in this context threatens journalistic objectivity and independence. Here the focus is switched, with the non-commercial repertoire drawn on as the preferred position and the commercial marketing of the audience being shunned.

Throughout the interviews the participants are working hard to give credibility to their accounts of editorial decisions and news practices. They are attempting to make their subjective experiences and opinions into objective descriptions of reality. One key prop to making accounts 'real' is to establish the credibility of the speaker. This aspect is discussed in Chapter 7 when I look at the construction of the journalist and how speakers work up category entitlement to the role 'journalist' (Sacks 1992, Potter 1988, Potter 1996). The entitlement to the category of 'journalist' and the attendant expertise and sound judgement that goes with that category are worked up in two ways. Firstly, the journalist is a 'natural' being born to work in this role. This is achieved through the narrative of one's career and the casual manner in which one enters the field. No one tries, everyone 'falls into it' or arrives 'by accident'. This lack of effort reinforces the repertoire of the 'natural' journalist who in spite of not initially wanting to be a journalist becomes one regardless. There is an element of fate woven into accounts. Once the speaker has stumbled in through the door they realise they have come to the right place for them to be. Having arrived, a second repertoire takes over whereby the 'natural' journalist is 'nurtured' into the ways of the craft by the old hands, eventually becoming one him or herself. The 'golden age' of journalism is exemplified by the 'old hands' and the 'new' is constructed as dangerous for the future of good journalism as it threatens certain cherished journalistic values and practices such as independence and objectivity. The elevation to the ranks of success is signalled by reference to various markers of status such as job title and autonomy in the work place.

Both repertoires reference powerful images of journalists in the wider public domain and are potent constructions of the category 'journalist' that have long standing roots in popular culture and journalism's mythology. Belonging to the category 'journalist' may not automatically instill authority on the speaker to pass judgement on news values and practice but membership of a certain *type* of journalist may do so.

Also both repertoires are contained within journalism. Any reference to formal training prior to entering the profession is missing, as is any on-going professional training. Admitting to being trained beforehand undermines the notion of the 'natural'. The only people one needs to learn from are other 'naturals'. Although, definitions of a profession involve some formal training, journalism, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 7, has always struggled with the term. On the one hand journalism is increasingly exhibiting many of the characteristics of a profession such as the growth of graduate journalists. However, here the speakers profess to learn on the job, a characteristic of a 'trade'. While journalists frame themselves as 'acting' professionally (Örnebring, 2013), here discourse shies away from professional training in favour of the image of the 'natural', self-made journalist. The 'natural' carries more resonance in the mythology of the 'journalist' than the trained journalist. Anyone can be trained but only a few are born to the job.

Fluid, 'natural' and poorly resourced: Three threads in the discourse of news

There are a number of threads running through these various aspects of the discourse identified in Chapters 4 to 7. Firstly, news values, practices, and purposes of journalism are contingent and fluid according to the rhetorical needs of the speakers. As discussed above, news values are oblique and inconsistently applied to stories. The audience shifts and fragments according to the context of the account. The category journalist is constructed in different ways contingent on what kind of role the speaker wants to adopt. The speakers call up various interpretive repertoires to make their case often using seemingly inconsistent descriptions of events or decisions. These various strands are glossed together to construct an account which rings true, a description of the 'real' world. These repertoires are useful in shifting the subject's position to a safe distance or bringing them close to the object.

Secondly, these discursive constructions draw on a number of interpretive repertoires of news work and news workers circulating in the wider public domain. These repertoires work together to propagate an image of news and journalism as natural and journalists as 'natural experts' in the field of journalism. There is a distancing from formal or evidence based learning, such as journalism education or research on the audience. The 'correct' type of knowledge is absorbed through personal contact and instinct, informal yet 'real'. This knowledge about journalism and news is discretely contained within the field of journalism, whereas knowledge formally or empirically gathered either from journalism education or through market research is distanced.

Thirdly, the resources used for these repertoires are poor. News values and practices have been extensively studied, yet none of this learning makes it into the discourse of the speakers. For example, news values are buried, or vaguely articulated. Whilst this vagueness or lack of detail (Potter 1996) is efficient at inoculating against difficult questions it is significant that the plethora of possible plausible reasons for news selection is left out of discussions. It suggests a lack of discursive resources to sustain certain ways of constructing news. This lack of reflective language could have consequences at editorial decision making levels.

This study argues for a more discursive approach to the study of news production as a means of examining how the practice and values of news are circulated and maintained. The application of the methodology of discourse analysis to the conversation of journalists reveals a number of repertoires of meaning utilised in the accounts of news work. In the following two sections I will discuss the implications for the analysis detailed above, in particular the three threads running through the conversations, on the *theory* of news production and secondly the *practice* of news production.

The Theory: Implications for journalism studies

The study of news production has been instrumental in de-mystifying some of the processes and practices in newsrooms and out in the field. Seminal works written from extensive time spent in news rooms, out in the field and in conversation with journalists have revealed some of the complexity of news production and how they impact on the media products the public gets to see. (See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion). These studies are fundamental in our understanding of media messages because they can explain rather than merely describe the output. These explanations cannot be arrived at solely from the examination of overarching media structure and ownership or by examining content. Production studies are pivotal in shedding light on both the above.

However, production studies are undeveloped as an area (Cottle 2003). There are pragmatic reasons for this area to remain under researched. Firstly, there is a problem with gaining sufficient access to newsgathering sites and newsroom personnel to be able to draw meaningful data. Secondly, there exists the inherent problem of changing news practice towards multi-locational news production and to the growth of non-verbal communications making life difficult for even the most observant researcher. Even asking journalists to talk about work is often met with suspicion (cf. Born 2004). Also studies tend to be located in one

news organisation leading to a lack of representation in the sample. In this study a cross section of the industry including representation of all the main British news broadcasters[22] and both television news agencies has been included to give a broad picture of common discursive threads.

Aside from these practical obstacles to the study of news production there is some theoretical resistance to its role. In some quarters this has been due to a tendency to discount the newsroom process or the people in it as a site of agency in production. Instead greater forces, as expounded by political economists, are the primary drivers in producing the products we see on screen (cf. Herman and Chomsky 1988). In this model journalists are merely cogs in the machine, making it possible to ignore what the journalists say and rely on analysis of output or on the meta-structure of media organisations to explain production. I argue that both these positions need to be augmented by the study of production, and that the practices and values of news are propagated, and circulated through the discourse of those working in news. News is both a product of the structure surrounding the production but also it is talked into being at newsroom level. While the discourse discussed here is heavily influenced by top down structures, such as commercial imperative, other repertoires of news, such as public service are also present. Therefore, it is important to be sensitive to the 'mediating agency' of the producer (Cottle, 2003, p13).

Recent work in production studies is revealing how individuals can alter the shape and discourse of news items, notable in the case of Dan Perrin's study, for the better in terms of fulfilling a public broadcasters remit (Perrin, 2011). These types of studies are in the infancy and may prove overly optimistic about the agency of the agency of the individual. However, it is possible to investigate through talk how outside commercial and structural pressures are understood and articulated at production level thereby bridging the divide between the macro and the micro analysis of news. Therefore, the study of production and the role of the journalist within it are a vital component to understanding the complex social, political and cultural factors at play in producing the final product. If it is assumed that journalists are not just cogs in the machine and that they have some agency or role in the processes then talking to them may give insight to how changes develop and circulate.

So, listening to journalists is important, but how to analyse what they say? Whilst I would not advocate ignoring what journalists say, equally I would not advocate believing what they say as an objective 'truth'. As Oscar Wilde wrote, 'The truth is rarely pure and never simple'

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[22] Channel 4 is part of the ITN news gathering group and able to access ITN's pictures. Sky News supplies Channel 5 with its news content. Along with the BBC this represents all the UK news broadcasters.

(Wilde 1895, p438). What we say is but one version of events. Therefore a more analytical, systematic approach is needed for the examination of the talk of journalists. Discourse analysis has been applied to great effect on the output of journalism, illustrating the dissemination and configuration of certain emphases and ideologies within media products (Fairclough 1995, Van Dijk 1991, Fowler 1991, Bell 1991). However, it has rarely been fully exploited in production studies (Cotter 2003).

Whilst there are a number of approaches to discourse analysis, the methodology I have applied here - that of discursive social psychology - seems a good fit. This kind of analysis is concerned with people's accounts of events, opinions and justifications and has been applied extensively to the talk of a variety of social groups and social issues (Gill 1993, Moir 1993, Potter and Wetherell 1992, Wetherell et all 1987, Wetherell and Edley 2007). Television production is all about verbal and textual communications. A lot of this talk revolves around opinion and judgement about stories as well as logistics and story structure. News workers spend a good deal of time talking about what they are doing. During the interviews I was explicitly asking journalists about what they do on a day-to-day basis, which meant, again, they were required to give accounts of themselves and their actions. Therefore is it is appropriate to apply discursive social psychology which brings a systematic analysis to the data rather than a selective use of journalists' talk. This method seeks to reveal the variance and reflexivity of the discourse and shows how subjects and categories can be very flexible in relation to context and subject matter. It illustrates how we must be wary of treating these accounts as descriptive of an objective reality. Instead these inconsistencies reveal the different repertoires of explanation and emphases placed on certain practices or production factors at the expense of others.

For example, it can be argued that news values are not a consistent coherent set of rules to be applied. Instead they are used selectively to bolster certain arguments. The elusive and shifting discourse of news values within the interviews illustrate the difficulties in taking the accounts of journalists at face value not only for this particular subject but for all descriptions of work practices. News values are evidently being applied by journalists as illustrated in various analyses of content. However, if we want to understand how they are operationalized or shifted it is necessary to look inside production. The inconsistencies in the discussions of news values, if there at all, show the value of this kind of analysis. To take an isolated reference to a story by a speaker and extrapolate news values from this is dangerous. Instead it is necessary to look at the entirety of the conversation or conversations to see how they are applied in different discursive contexts and what is being

achieved. And if, as is often the case here, there is an absence or obfuscation of news values, to ask why this should be so and what are the consequences.

The construction of the audience and journalists as 'them' and 'us' is embedded in the accounts. This practical ideology of the audience can be seen to maintain existing practice. Much research on changing news practices has remarked on how hard change is to bring about. These studies have looked at routines, structures, technology and management, and also talked to journalists and have tracked how new practices have failed to take hold, or have been 'normalised' by the workforce (Singer 2005). The identification of the various discursive constructions of the audience may help future researchers and news workers to map out patterns of explanation and therefore, what to work on to shift practice.

The benefit of this kind of analysis shows that attitudes and opinions are not a coherent consistent whole but a flexible resource to be used contingently. In traditional interviewing analysis where the words of the interviewee are taken as neutral information about practice and values this variation and inconsistency would cause problems. Which bit to do you take as the 'real' information? Whether the researcher is carrying out interviews, or undertaking participant observation or ethnographic studies, there is always a requirement for interaction and conversation with journalists as well as the need to analyse the conversations between journalists during production.

The second thread regarding the wider repertoires utilised by the journalists shows how this methodology reveals the ways the changing media environment is played out at ground level. It can highlight much about how the macro phenomenon of commercial pressures and changing working practices and values are assimilated or resisted at the micro level of discourse. For example, the commercial notion of giving the audience what it wants is evident as a driving force in the discourse of the purpose of news. Yet this commercialisation is resisted at other turns when talking about management organised audience research. At these points a more public service set of values comes to the fore. This kind of analysis can provide a bridge between the super structure of the media, notions of professionalism and the values and practices of journalists.

The third thread highlights the narrowness of the repertoires of meaning. News values are often absent or flimsy. Again, instead of cherry-picking the odd reference to a value which may match a theoretical value, by looking at the entirety of the conversation it is possible to see how little they are mentioned and how other factors such as the audience are far more likely to be accessed as an explanation. If discourse is constitutive then understanding what

is being resourced as an interpretive repertoire of values and what is silenced or dismissed is important in the unpacking of why certain practices may persist at the expense of others and ask what the consequences of emphasising one over another may be.

The Practice: The implications for journalism and journalism education

The unique position and potential reach of the television news media to inform and provide analysis of the social world makes it, I would argue, not just important but vital to the health of civil society in engaging with the political process. Therefore it is crucial to understand how the news is produced and why. Part of that understanding, this thesis has argued, is through an examination of the discourse of the practitioners. The perpetuation of the myths of the 'natural' journalist and the construction of journalism as inevitable and common sense and the paucity of discursive resources in explaining news decisions highlight a number of issues concerning the practice of journalism.

Firstly, these 'nature' and 'nurture' repertoires and the invocation of a 'golden age' throughout the accounts make it difficult to see how change in certain practices could be implemented. As Örnebring points out, the journalists construct a news judgement that 'resides in their guts and thus is inaccessible to critical analysis' (Örnebring, 2013, p44). The 'natural' state of affairs is a powerful rhetoric for maintaining the status quo. Also the perpetuation of myths in the discourse regarding the audience and the nature of news suits the day-to-day linguistic needs of the speakers in terms of justification. However, it can also be said to reflect certain macro needs of those who control ownership of the media. As discussed above, a discourse of commercialism is evident in the conversations especially when talking about the audience (see Chapter 6). This absorption of these structural values within the discourse serves to normalise them. Also, the lack of resources to reflect or challenge news values mean it is 'business as usual'.

News values are often missing or partial in accounts of editorial decisions. This lack of discourse to make a case for a story is worrying as it can limit reflection. If the only explanatory tools possessed are vague or incomplete then how is this discourse to be challenged? Whilst it is common sense to argue that of course the speakers would prefer to avoid certain versions of news work and concentrate on more positive portrayals, the range of explanation is still very narrow. There is a fluid and contingent nature in the construction of news values and practice, identity and professionalism yet it is within certain parameters. The paucity of explanation cannot just be put down to the speaker's attempts to blot out

inconvenient truths. Rather they lack the tools to make a better case, instead scrambling for bland repetition.

This lack of range is particularly important because news production is so much about language. It is a discursive practice as well as structurally bound. Technology may be changing some aspects of news production but it is important not to get sucked into a technological deterministic explanation. Some of the research discussed in Chapter 6 shows how new practices are 'normalised' by workers whereby new technological and editorial initiatives are undermined and brought back into existing routines (Singer 2005, Loke 2011, Hermida and Thurman 2012, Williams *et al, 2011,* Domingo et al 2008). If the discourse remains limited and limiting then technology alone will not automatically bring about specific changes any more than management edicts.

What is also striking is that the discourse described above, is used by all the groups of participants. Editors, producers and correspondents all access the same constructions of news work, the audience, and the journalist, whether they work for a broadcaster or agency, a public service broadcaster or a commercial station. These common constructions seem more powerfully built than the rhetoric of individual organisations, the discourse of journalism more deeply embedded than any specific requirements of a news outlet. Many of those taking part have worked together not only at their present employers but at previous employers, or have worked in the field together for rival organisations. Many were friends, some participants were partners, though not at the same organisation. This mixing both at work and socially enables a shared discourse. Also most of the participants were, at the time, working in fairly senior roles, having a number of years of experience (in some cases decades) working in a variety of organisations, media and roles, and having many contacts across the industry. Particular loyalty to an organisation or medium is overwhelmed by a shared mythology of news work and journalism, transferable from location to location. The movement of people from organisation to organisation and from job to job means a mingling of certain discursive practices. While each newsroom has its own set of jargon, a more prevalent common discourse of journalism is laid over this. It would be interesting to see if this discourse is television specific or spread across other media types.

This brings up a further point concerning formal learning. Journalists do not seem to possess the language to explain stories. This may be understandable for those who have not undergone any kind of journalism education, instead learning 'on the job'. I am not alone in arriving in academia after years of working in newsrooms without ever hearing of news values and I would have foundered just as much as the speakers in giving a detailed account of editorial decisions. However, for those who have undertaken masters level

courses on journalism this absence seems strange, especially when being asked by a researcher specifically about what makes an event newsworthy. This comes despite an explosion in both the study of journalism and the teaching of journalism in education institutions (Ramsden, 2012). Further, not only is there an absence in discussion of any reference to knowledge which might be said to be learnt prior to entry, there is also an eschewal of formal learning *per se*. This finding is reflected in interviews with journalists for research into citizen journalism. When asked what made them different from 'citizen' journalists, 'some respondents first emphasized the role of education but then backtracked somewhat when they recalled examples of successful journalists who had no journalism education or indeed no higher education at all' (Örnebring, 2013, p42). This distancing from formally acquired knowledge provokes questions about how journalism education, or theory, interacts with the working world or *practice*.

Increasingly, many of those employed in news work have attended courses on journalism theory and practice (Journalism Training Forum, 2002) yet the mythology of news work as non-routine, exciting work remains unchallenged and notions of public service are way down the list of motivations for a career in journalism (Hanna and Sanders,2007). Also employees say they are not that interested in employing people with 'a sense of public duty' (de Burgh 2003, p109). That the participants in this research echo these discourses is then perhaps not surprising.

However, the repertoires which seem to lack any challenge to the status quo are also accompanied by repertoires of resistance. On the one hand there is an embracing of the commercial considerations of news such as in the configuration of the audience. Although a discourse of market considerations is present in the form of giving the audience what they want, in other areas such as the gathering of quantitative market research, these practices are challenged. The management's version of news is constructed as compromising news values. There is a disavowal of management-gathered knowledge about the audience. A thread of some of the values of news, such as independence and a duty to witness and explain remain present in the discourse.

Journalism is experiencing a period of pressure brought about by a number of developments. Firstly, externally, the structure of news in the form of media ownership and convergence is leading charges of increasing commercialisation and trivialisation of news output (although the actual picture is more complex). The second comes from the changing nature of the possibilities for communication largely wrought by new technology and social practice. This is centred around the growing opportunities for audience to impinge on traditional journalism, bringing into question the nature of journalistic practice and ethics.

Traditional journalists are under fire. As mentioned in Chapter 7, there has always been a 'cultural schizophrenia' in public attitudes to journalists with the figure of the journalist surrounded by 'loving and loathing, resentment and respect, admiration and anger (McNair, 2009, p13). Perhaps the public has not such a schizophrenic attitude anymore. It has been a long standing tradition to hate journalists but levels of trust seem to be dropping even further. Journalists' standing in popularity polls is repeatedly found to be languishing near the bottom of the tables. An Ipsos Mori poll in 2006 found that journalists were the least trusted of 16 professional classes. Their ranking had slightly improved by 2011, not because the level of trust had risen, journalists being resolutely seen as liars by 72% of those polled. Rather, another profession had fallen even further with politicians generally distrusted by 82% of people (Ipsos Mori, 2011). Other research has shown that there had been a steady decline in trust in journalists over a period of years (Barnett 2008).

Yet not all journalists are the same in the public's eye. Trust in British *television* journalism remains significantly higher than for other media. Television remains by far the most favoured resource for information about news (Towler, 2003). The Andrew Gilligan affair during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was seen by the public as aberration rather than a systematic failure by the BBC (Gunter, 2005). While the Ipsos Mori poll mentioned above, rated 'journalists' as thoroughly untrustworthy, the category 'television news readers' was trusted by over two thirds of respondents (Ipsos Mori, 2011). However, in the light of more recent reporting scandals at the BBC and the commercial stations this trust cannot be taken for granted.

There is little evidence there has been a 'golden age' of reporting. It is only necessary to read Philip Knightley's comprehensive study of war reporting to know that journalism has been rife with corruption and collusion, misinformation, and laziness (Knightley, 2000). As Knightley illustrates as far back as the Crimean War, one newspaper editor ordered his reporter to 'Telegraph fully all news you can get and when there is no news send rumour' (Knightley, 2000, p23). Even notable oft-cited incidences which have passed into myth of the media as a power for good have been under-minded by more cool-headed research. The Vietnam War was not ended by negative press (Hallin, 1986), nor was the so-called CNN effect, who's purported power to change foreign policy and bring humanitarian relief to beleaguered people, shown to exist when examined more closely (Robinson, 2002, 2005). On the other hand journalism is not entirely without redemption. There have been notable cases of journalism revealing corruption and challenging the 'common sense' social norms. Pioneering investigative journalism in the US led to the exposure of the Watergate wire taping. In the UK the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence was followed by an

unprecedented discussion of racism in British society in the press, including a campaign by a right-wing tabloid to name and shame his killers (Cottle, 2004).

Despite the continual turmoil in journalism the declared essentials of journalism have survived and surprisingly intact in the UK (Harrison 2006). The values of independence, truthfulness, or at least a desire to tell, and trustworthiness as a source of information are still at the core of avowed journalistic purpose. The current model of television news in Britain may be under strain from commercial and political pressures, as are the international news agencies, yet longitudinal studies of British television news content show 'no evidence of a significant shift towards a tabloid agenda' over the last decade (Barnett *el al,* 2012, p2). However, the lack of a discourse to explain and elaborate a set of objectives for journalism may also make resistance to commercial pressures difficult to sustain. In place of a clear articulation of journalism, the discourse of journalism is embedded with vague, 'gut feeling'. This use of vague description helps in avoiding awkward questions yet it also means that when challenged by external forces of change there are few resources to call upon to defend present practice. If journalism's objectives are so poorly articulated they may be more easily over-ridden by the pragmatic concerns of the commercial environment.

Journalism is undergoing change, or at least, some aspects of journalism are changing as new media makes its impact. Pivotal in understanding these changes is examining how external and internal pressures and shifts are played out at the newsroom level and how it may be managed by the news producers. These changes in news production provoke many questions about how it could and should evolve. In other words, now more than ever is perhaps the opportunity to question the traditions of journalism from outside and within the industry and to put forward an array of alternatives. If we do want it to change, *how* do we want it to change? Some such as Lewis have argued for more 'citizen' focused way of approaching potential stories (Lewis 2006). But how do you achieve this change of focus? I would argue that you need to understand how news is talked into being rather than merely concentrating on the structure. As discussed in previous chapters, changing the structure of output does not guarantee a change of output. Often journalists have seemed to normalise practice and values discursively leading to a continuation of certain practices or a compromise of new practices.

Journalists need to have greater resources for speaking about their profession and their routine practices. Repertoires of 'natural' journalism and long standing images of the noble amateur need to be challenged as well as the detail of editorial decision making. This already happens in the world of academia but also needs to happen within the profession and not just at management level.

Summation and future work

This research project has begun work on how news values and practice are discursively constructed across television news. More is needed if we are to understand how these constructions work across time and different news media. However, what it seeks to argue and illustrate is that discourse analysis is a useful tool in the researcher's armoury for examining news values and practices within news production. The systematic examination of the talk of journalists helps an understanding of how news is talked into being and how practices are normalised or resisted. This talk is an important factor as so much of news work is enabled through discourse. The analysis helps to identify how journalists construct their accounts of work and their identity and the pool of discursive resources available to them in order to do this. It also can highlight the gaps and silences in these resources.

This kind of analysis presents a number of issues to be developed. Firstly, there is the possibility to connect more directly the wider social concerns around changes in practice and pressures of commercial and culture shifts and how they are played out in the newsroom – connecting the macro to the micro. Which changes are resisted and which incorporated into the norms? This is especially pertinent at the present time as the growth of new media and the increasing convergence across media. Do those working in the various media use the same resources to explain their work or are they creating new myths about the audience and themselves? Are the common themes of television journalism discussed above, evident in other media? Are news values more discussed or challenged or buried across different newsrooms? And what correlations might derive from the talk inside the newsroom to the news we see on the screen?

Secondly, what intervention is possible in these discourses? Increasingly journalists come to the profession with a journalism qualification of some kind. Yet, a critical voice is seemingly subsumed by the overbearing discourse of the actual newsroom. It is no surprise that the theoretical is driven out by the urgent need of the practical in the newsroom. However, it does leave educators with some questions as to how to make the issues stick in the mind of the students to encourage more critically aware journalists.

As discussed in Chapter 6, there is a lack of consensus on how journalism should be taught both by employers and the education institutions. Vocation courses seem designed to please some employers but also seem to perpetuate myths and reinforce journalism practice rather than challenge it (Hanna and Saunders, 2007). Journalism studies taught at academic institutes have been characterised as neither 'discipline' (as compared to the 'proper' subjects like English or History) nor 'training' in that the courses are not vocational. However, some employers express a desire to take on people who can 'think' and be trained

on the job rather than be vocationally trained but lack the breadth of knowledge and critical thinking which comes from academic learning (Thornham and O'Sullivan, 2004). Many colleges have sought to combine study of the practice and theory (and indeed the academic rigour and skills of research and critical thinking has much to offer journalists in carrying out their jobs). However, as shown above, discourse challenging the status quo of news room practice struggles to make itself heard once students enter the profession. Poorly resourced repertoires of news values and practice mean reflection is hampered. How to promote and preserve critical thinking as well as train students in the practicalities is an on-going debate. Harrison for example, suggests some foundational questions on the 'rationale and purpose of news journalism' need to be central to journalism education but also these questions need to be set within knowledge of the practical workings of new production (Harrison, 2007, p175.) The blending of the vocational and theoretical could be aided through reflection on the shape and content of the journalism discourse. Work, similar to that carried out in this research, could examine how the discourse of students evolves or not over the duration of their education and how it transitions into work. This could reveal what sort of issues students continue to discuss and what evaporates. This information could then be fed back into course design.

Work in these areas could give both journalism and academia food for thought. The application of discourse analysis in these areas could lead to the more nuanced, dynamic understanding of production and practice both before entering the newsroom and once inside it.

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