

UK Data Archive

Study Number 6126

Shifting Securities: Television News Cultures Before and After the
Iraq War, 2003-2005

USER GUIDE

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

**Shifting Securities:
News Cultures Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003**

1. Background

This project used the Iraq War 2003 as a prism to analyse how 'new' security challenges are constituted in the intersecting relationships between political and military actors, news producers, and increasingly diverse and fragmented news audiences. If security policy decisions are to be legitimated, politicians and policymakers need to be responsive to the changing dynamics of these relationships. The project brings together researchers in Sociology, Anthropology, Media Studies and International Relations to develop an innovative, interdisciplinary research framework. It builds on our previous research which analysed news coverage of the attacks of 11th September 2001, and its reception among transnational audiences in the UK, in the three months following these events (OFCOM, 2002; JEMS, 2006). This snapshot study was extended in this project to track 'shifting securities' over 30 months (April 2004 -December 2006).

2. Objectives

- (1) To analyse the impact of the Iraq War 2003 on UK civil society in the context of the increasing diversity of national and transnational news sources and audiences, and to assess its consequences for social cohesion and multicultural citizenship.

Objective fully met. Strand A's audience research findings will appear in a special issue of *European Journal of Cultural Studies* (2007). The findings are synthesized in an article published in *International Relations* (see below, outputs 1 & 2)

- (2) To examine the content of television and internet news, and the means of generating news materials, and to analyse the framing of conflicts and post-Cold War discourses of national, social and environmental security.

Objective fully met. Strand B's research findings will appear as a co-authored monograph *Television and Terror* (2007). A further book and series of journal articles based on this research have been, or will be, published (outputs 3 - 7)

- (3) To assess the role of security and media professionals involved in the orchestration, execution media management and reporting of security policy, and to examine their influence, actual or perceived, on the content of news programmes and on the legitimation of security policy.

Objective fully met. Strand C's research findings from empirical research among practitioners will be published in two co-authored books in 2007 and 2008: *War, Image, Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict* and *Watching War Crimes*. In addition, a book and number of journal articles relating to this work have been, or will be published (outputs 8-10)

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

(4) To pioneer an integrated empirical study of news production, texts and reception with reference to security issues, to develop this integration theoretically, and to contribute to academic, policy and public debates.

Theoretical and empirical integration is well advanced, drafting of a jointly authored volume has begun (publication is planned for 2008), a draft article has been completed (outputs 11-12) and for contributions to policy debate see ‘activities’ and ‘impacts’.

3. Methods

Three strands of research were staggered, overlapping in ways that fostered their mutual shaping and direction. Strand A conducted extensive audience research, tracking judgements on the salience, credibility and legitimacy of security related events. Strand B analysed news images and stories, changing ‘news templates’ and temporalities. Strand C carried out empirical research among media practitioners and security policymakers and this, in turn, triggered further research in strands A and B.

Strand A: Collaborative Audience Ethnography

Strand A developed and tested an innovative methodology designed by the PI, ‘collaborative audience ethnography’ (see output 2). A mix of interviews and participant observation enabled us to examine, in some depth and detail, the *cultures* of news consumption and reception. . We were also able to track differences between what people say and what they do, and to analyse the ways in which news audiences are addressed as citizens and consumers and constituted as publics (local, national and diasporic), via national and transnational news media practices.

Between September 2004 and December 2006, semi-structured (individual and group) interviews, lasting up to two hours, were carried out with over 225 people in cities across the UK and the Republic of Ireland (see Annexe A for social profile of interviewees). This enabled us to gather comparative data across *time* (many people were interviewed several times), and across different *social spaces and places* (which helped to gauge how perceptions of security threats vary, not only according to generational and gender relations within domestic spaces, but also according to place and social background).

Each interview was recorded and transcribed (see Annexe B for more details). An interview report and preliminary analysis was submitted to the project website (output 13). Using a qualitative data analysis software programme (NVivo 2), all the interview data was coded and categorised making it possible to search the data systematically. The NVivo database was made available to all researchers on the project, as well as to several other researchers on the Programme and elsewhere. Ethnographers accessed it regularly to compare and contrast the findings of their domestic and local studies against wider patterns and trends emerging across the study. An e-discussion group enabled ongoing discussion of emergent findings, as did

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

our numerous project meetings. This kind of ‘collaborative audience ethnography’ remains methodologically unique.

Strand B: News Media Texts and Discourses of Security

In contrast to conventional content analyses, our approach to the analysis of the construction and mediation of key ‘security events’ mapped the ‘interaction order’ between different actors, elucidating the structures of meaning they deployed by identifying the grammatical, iconographic, lexical and other properties of television news discourse. We then related these analyses to both producers’ and audiences’ perceptions. Our close, multimodal treatment of data, informed by the ongoing findings from Strands A and C, allowed us to analyze complex relations between news production practices, programme content, and the generation of meanings among audiences.

The core of our data corpus consists of the opening eight hours of several international television news channels’ coverage of events identified as of greatest ‘security salience’ by Strand A. These were the opening strikes of the 2003 Iraq war, Hurricane Katrina, and the 7/7 London bombings. Internet coverage of these events was also incorporated into the analysis (using the websites of the BBC, Sky News and CNN). Press coverage was not systematically examined. The events corpus was later extended, in response to findings in Strands A and C, to include the Israel-Hizbollah war in Lebanon, US military operations at Fallujah, images from Abu Ghraib prison, and the enduring media template of 9/11.

TV news footage was digitised, transcribed and coded using Transana software which, uniquely, enabled multimodal coding of sound and visual tracks (see nominated output 2). Coding categories were based on key project themes and duplicated codings in Strand A (e.g. security, legitimacy, fear, terror, citizenship, identity) as well as strand-specific themes (e.g. ‘televisuality’ [the on-screen integration of images, sounds and verbal representations], sanitisation, technical innovation, temporal/spatial structures and representation). This enabled us to identify ‘media templates’ and show how they function as the key linking and shaping mechanisms of news images and narrative discourses (see results).

Strand C: Government, Media Institutions and the Production of News

We conducted 19 focus groups and 21 semi-structured interviews with security, policy-making and media practitioners (output 13). The research benefited from extensive support at the Royal College for Defence Studies, the Joint Services Command and Staff College and the BBC.

The focus groups involved journalists, military, officials, transitional justice practitioners and security specialists – initially in mixed, exploratory groups, then in discrete groups. A report was written on the findings from each focus group, and posted on the secured section of the project website. In each case, we investigated respondents’ views of their own work and that of other practitioner groups (for example, what military personnel think about what journalists do in relation to security issues, and, vice versa). We also explored specific issues arising from across the project strands and, in turn, informed research in Strands A

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

and B, in light of findings in Strand C.

The interviews were conducted with strict anonymity, with different 'ground rules' being negotiated with different groups. General calls for volunteers were sent out, calibrated for specific circumstances. In some cases, there were concerns about possible identification of voices if a recording were to exist, even under commitments of complete confidentiality and anonymity. Recording discussions and observations depended on comprehensive note taking. This did not impair the quality of the data, and, in some regards, possibly enhanced it, given the sharpened attention in the absence of a 'fall-back' and the freedom participants felt to express themselves. In other cases, recordings were made.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with specific individuals, selected primarily because they were in a position to provide specific information based on their professional experience of aspects of the media-security nexus.

Integration of Research

We urge reader-rapporteurs to visit the website and to access secure documents sites as this will afford much greater insight into the integration of research strands (output 13). Tools enabling articulation between strands included: the project website as a forum for communication and exchange of ideas, data and other research resources and materials; an e-mail distribution list (Socsci-Mediating-Security-Project-List@open.ac.uk); project meetings, some with the attendance and contribution of the Advisory Panel, and a workshop that presented preliminary findings (see Annexe C). A major project Symposium was held in June 2007. There, we presented aspects of our findings, and so did researchers from other relevant projects funded by the New Security Challenges Programme, with additional contributions from practitioners and academic experts in relevant fields (Annexe D).

One example may serve to illustrate how the integrated research approach worked in practice. The presentation of a news story which included images of a US marine shooting dead an Iraqi civilian in a mosque in Fallujah (filmed by an NBC journalist, Kevin Sites), provoked considerable concern among policymakers in a Strand C interview. They were worried that no context was given in such news reports as to the type of operation or the rules of engagement and that this would add to the mounting negative reporting of military operations in Iraq.

Six, variously 'sanitised', television news presentations of the footage were then analysed by Strand B researchers. They found that, though there was little contextualization of the kind military respondents sought, there was much more variation in the way this film footage was presented than had been presumed by the military. The images of the shooting were not simply or uniformly represented as murder.

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

Six clips of the footage were then shown to diverse groups of interviewees by Strand A researchers. Several respondents expressed surprise that they had not registered this particular incident at the time of its occurrence but agreed that this was probably because it fitted a dominant narrative news pattern of US abuse and atrocity ('we have heard so much of what goes on in Iraq of this nature'). But some interviewees found the footage highly shocking and, even, far 'too graphic'. Interviewees were divided over whether it had been really necessary to show the shooting but, after discussion, most judged that it was 'in the public interest' to show the whole sequence.

Interviewees also recognised that various 'sanitizing devices' had been used in presenting the footage, such as black screens and cutting the sound track at the moment of death. However, rather than sanitize the event, these devices were seen to dramatize consciousness of it. This perception correlated with respondents' more general views on the use of other kinds of sanitising devices, employed routinely by television news, such as editing out the moment of execution from terrorist beheading videos. These, too, were considered to exacerbate rather than assuage feelings of repulsion and disgust. Interviewees reported that their imagining of the scenes of explicit violence and death underlying the blanked out screens and silences led them to imagine the horror of the censored footage.

Some interviewees automatically judged the incident to be an act of 'murder', based on how it was anchored, what they saw, and what they thought that meant. Others problematised any easy equation between seeing with knowing, and showed a high awareness that there might be contextual information which had been omitted from the report. Some suggested that the marine's action might have been justifiable because 'the (Iraqi) guy was just about to explode a grenade'. Fictionalised dramatisations of such 'set ups' enter into the interpretative frame to fill in the gaps between seeing and knowing.

Both the representation and interpretation of military events can be more varied and more critical than military respondents supposed, and audiences are more reflective than military or media professionals often assume. The value of integrated research is shown here by the way in which an iterative and reflexive approach can produce a more rounded analysis.

4. Results

Summary of Key Findings

Most people still get their main news from the mainstream news channels, especially the BBC. However, transnational and diasporic media provide a range of alternative viewpoints that challenge national perspectives on security policy. Increased antagonism between newsmakers and policy makers damages informed debate about security. The ritualised interactions of policymakers, journalists and citizen audiences constitute the 'media-security nexus' as a 'battlespace' of mutual disrespect and suspicion. This contributes to the marginalisation of British Muslims. These developments suggest that policy makers face a range of new challenges: legitimising security policy to hostile and sceptical national and diasporic media that question key policy assumptions.

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

1. The Resilience of Mainstream News Media

Globalisation theories suggest intensified transnational connectivity. Despite the greater availability of diverse news sources, the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual audiences interviewed rely, to a surprising extent, on mainstream national TV and radio channels, especially the BBC, for their staple news diet. National news channels are expected to provide a vital access to resources for citizenship. Yet they consistently disappoint increasingly distrustful and sceptical news consumers because of the limited range of voices and views represented, and the overly conventionalised, nationally focussed and politically managed ways of reporting security events. This leads many people to seek out alternative sources, especially at times of major security events, and to manage the insecurities generated by news by modulating their modes of engagement and disengagement over time.

Mainstream media, such as the BBC or Sky, rather than being displaced, are being transformed and extended by 'new media', such as blogs and user-generated content (UGC). The additional footage available from amateur mobile media and the accumulating material from bloggers offers a pool of content for mainstream news producers to draw upon. Non-mainstream news sources may trigger and contribute to news, but rarely do they dominate or frame the political and/or media agenda.

24/7 news coverage has resulted in an exponential growth in speculative discourse (from journalists, 'experts', academics, pressure groups and others), on the nature of existing and potential security threats. This was evident in our analysis of the opening of the 2003 Iraq war, Hurricane Katrina, and the 7/7 London bombings (see output 3). Publics are made vividly aware of the uncertainties surrounding the assessment of risks and threats by different actors. The securitisation of ever more disparate kinds of events and the prioritisation of some threats over others (international and national security over social and/or ontological security), is contributing to the declining trust and credibility afforded to media and political actors.

Credibility remains a key value. BBC news is widely regarded as among the most credible and trusted of all news channels. Al Jazeera is seen as more credible in its reporting on the Middle East among diasporic Arabs and Muslims, though by no means unproblematic. Islamic channels are also very popular, especially among some of adult Muslim women interviewees. BBC World Service (radio and internet) was found to be widely trusted and respected as an objective news source, particularly among refugee and migrant groups (Afghans, Somalis, Iranians and Sudanese). Multilingual viewers tend to be 'sceptical zappers', having very varied media diets. They compare and contrast different news sources and show flexible modes of interpreting news. Most interviewees have a highly varied but routinised news media diet except at times of crisis or 'breaking news' (like 7/7). Our audience research also highlights the very special role that anchors or reporters play in sustaining credibility and brand loyalty.

Mainstream news producers and journalists interviewed, reveal deep concerns over the difficulties of maintaining credibility in an increasingly competitive news

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

production environment. They emphasise the importance of showing restraint, and of following established journalistic ethical codes for fear of ‘losing the whole thing’. But professional ethics and standards were seen to prevent the journalist from becoming ‘just another blogger’. In this context, credibility can only be assured by the continual cultivation of an ethic of journalistic responsibility within an institutional framework, which is why the BBC journalism manages to maintain an ‘aura of objectivity’, even after Hutton.

2. Newsmakers, Policymakers and Publics – ‘Ships in the Night’

Structural conflicts in the cultures and goals of news professionals and security practitioners leads, not only to misunderstandings but also, according to some of the military respondents, to military failure and even death. The release of images of abuse that emerged from the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad illustrates this finding. Linking and developing insights from Strands A, B and C, we found that military practitioners abhorred the abuse but suggested that there was strong evidence (available to them but not in the public domain) that the deaths of some colleagues in Iraq were directly attributable to the publication of the images. These respondents criticised the media and held them responsible for colleagues’ deaths. They argued, unequivocally, that the images should have been censored. In stark contrast, journalists argued that if just one image from Abu Ghraib had been available when the story first emerged in January 2004 (when it was overlooked by almost all news media, primarily because no images were made public), the whole case would have been treated differently than it was when images emerged eventually via CBS News in April 2004.

While success in foreign policy and international peace and security depends on good strategic media management, practitioners display very sceptical attitudes to news makers and, in turn news makers show very limited understanding of policymakers. Our findings here complement recent research which found that strategic media management of information tends to produce news that privileges government perspectives in times of war (Robinson et al, 2006). Our findings go further, however, indicating that this privileging makes no *predictable* difference in terms of impact, given complex patterns of diffusion and reception.

Military and security practitioners have fundamentally different goals to journalists and security correspondents, although much of the time they are able to cooperate and work together. They recognise their mutual dependency, but their differing professional cultures and goals mean that they are often working to conflicting agendas: balancing selling news and informing publics versus ensuring public support for military intervention and achieving military success. Understanding these cultural and political frictions is important for managing the ways in which security policy and television news interact and modulate security threats in ways which may either limit or enhance the possibilities of public knowledge and understanding.

The conflicting cultures and goals of newsmakers, on the one hand, and political and military (and transitional justice) practitioners on the other needs to be more clearly recognized and understood in order to avoid the adversarial tendency that currently characterises their relationship. This tendency is amplified as news

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

producers claim to seek to report the facts in a balanced and objective way, but they are also increasingly called upon to be commentators on unfolding events, at times assuming the role of experts. This can compromise their role and add to friction with policy makers and the military.

Multi-ethnic audiences want credible, impartial news and they select from a varied media menu. Nevertheless, they complain that they are caught up in the crossfire of media and political ‘wars’. Transnational and diasporic media enable audiences to compare and contrast alternative versions of events and to develop multilingual news practices and literacies. This relativises national perspectives, creates skeptical critical news users, and throws into sharp relief the ambiguities of security policy, with consequences for its legitimacy.

In an age of multi-channel 24/7 news, the goals of television news as a commercial product and as public good, dedicated to informing and educating citizens, were seen by citizens to be at odds. Given that the internet makes it impossible for a democratic polity to censor images of killings, beheadings, massacres and violence, media literacy becomes ever more essential to informed citizenship in a multicultural polity.

3. Security, Legitimacy, Democracy

The project has made progress in refining/re-defining concepts of security and legitimacy and their relation within the contemporary state-media-public interaction order. In the research period, the ‘securitisation’ of everyday life was an increasing trend. Across our findings, a constant racialising of different forms of security threat is apparent. Racialised minorities (those who experience discrimination based on their skin colour) in general, not just Muslims, express greater fear about racism, loss of civil liberties and increasing state authoritarianism than they do about terrorism. British Muslims self-censor in public and express a sense of exclusion from the public sphere. They feel that their legal and cultural status as British citizens is under continuous scrutiny and threat. A majority of interviewees suggested terrorism was a secondary security concern to them; for some, local crime and fears about paedophilia took precedence over other security threats. Indeed, the research has demonstrated the ‘push and pull’ factors that shape the security concerns of publics and audiences and, consequently, their perceptions of political and media discourses around terror and other insecurities. Hence, we have been able to theorise the relation between security and legitimacy in the contemporary interaction order.

Television news amplifies (and conflates) different threats and insecurities (economic, human, environmental) in a number of intersecting ways. It does this through promoting immediacy, intimacy, and visibility as core criteria for determining news agendas. This increased sense of connectivity coupled with the textual and graphic enhancements of ‘televisuality’ is the most effective global delivery system for terror events and discourses, and for counter-discourses (though the latter have received much less attention in mainstream news). In this way, it is not an exaggeration to state that media have become ‘weaponised’ – media are an instrument of warfare.

Fears about security are shaped by shifting senses of proximity and distance to perceived threats. Transnational media and global reporting strengthen ‘distant proximities’, bringing distant people, places and events into close but unpredictable

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

relations. The intimacy and immediacy of some television news reporting, especially ‘the journalism of attachment’ that permits the expression of human voices, victims and suffering, bolsters strong emotional identifications. Interviewees, regardless of background, felt a great deal of empathy with Iraqi civilian casualties of the war. And while television news modulates audience engagement, balancing the task of bringing the world’s wars and catastrophes onto the West’s horizon of responsibility whilst simultaneously sanitising and acting as a ‘buffer’, audiences also manage their relationship to news, oscillating between involvement and detachment.

Community cohesion and public/political connection within Western liberal democratic states are at the heart of contemporary security issues. These connections are the target of both Islamist terrorist policy and practice and security policy responses. Anti-terrorist policies can be understood, in part, as a response to the representation of the problem of terrorism, as well as to the problem (of Islamist terrorism) itself. Television news is the ‘oxygen’ or rather the pivotal ‘actor’ in the connectivity that is required by both terrorists in disseminating terror, and by those who proclaim to be engaged in fighting terror to respond (either through assuaging or exacerbating threats depending upon political and military objectives).

Media are now key weapons of contemporary conflict. The nature of warfare has changed from the application of massive kinetic force to destroy an opponent, to the achievement of particular strategic effects by force but, more significantly, by the use of ‘cultural weapons’, notably images. Practitioners are increasingly aware that the opponent’s defeat can be engendered by the strategic use of narratives powered by potent images. Against this backdrop, the gaps between seeing and knowing, hearing and believing, require political and media literacy to be deciphered. In a global media environment in which images and narratives can be produced, disseminated, viewed and debated near-instantly and across any political borders, whose interpretation receives media attention and gets noticed by audiences becomes of paramount importance.

5. Activities

a) Three key project events (see project website):

- 07/2006 **‘Terrorism, Media and War: *From New York to London, From Iraq to Iran*’**
King’s College, London, 15-16 July
Presented report on interim research findings to project partners and Users www.mediatingsecurity.com
- 03/2006 **‘Shifting Securities: News Cultures Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003’**
King’s College, London, Friday 10 March 2006.
The workshop presented preliminary findings of our research to users
- 02/2004 **‘Spinning Hutton: In Search of the Big Picture’**
European Research Institute, University of Birmingham 20th February 2004.

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

Timed to coincide with the launch conference of ESRC's New Security Challenges programme

b) Conferences

Project members gave over 40 papers or presentations at seminars, conferences and symposia (see Annexe D for details).

Project panels at conferences included:

2005

Shifting Securities panel at the British Sociological Association Annual Conference, 21-23 March

Shifting Securities panel at Culture and Social Change: Disciplinary Exchanges Inaugural Conference, ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC), University of Manchester, 11-13 July.

Centre for Public Communication Research Bournemouth, hosted by Regents College, London, 14 January

British International Studies Association Conference, University of St. Andrews, 19-21 December

2006

'Moving Images and Modern War', Association for the Study of Nationalities Conference, Columbia University, New York, 23-25 March.

6. Outputs

1. Gillespie, M.(Guest editor) 'Media, Security and Multicultural Citizenship' Special Issue, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, forthcoming Vol.10 No.3, August 2007
2. Gillespie, M. (2006) 'Security, Media, Legitimacy: Multi-ethnic Media Publics and the Iraq War 2003' in *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, Special Issue: Representing Security, pp 467-486.
3. Hoskins, A. (2006) 'Temporality, Proximity, and Security: Terror in a Media Drenched Age', *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 453-466
4. Hoskins, A. and O'Loughlin, B. (forthcoming, 2007) *Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse*, Palgrave
5. Hoskins, A. (forthcoming, 2007) 'Ghosts in the Machine: Television and War Memory' in Maltby, S., Keeble, R., and Webster, F. (eds.) *Communicating War: Memory, Media and Military*, Cambridge Scholars Press

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

6. Hoskins, A. and O'Loughlin, B. (forthcoming, 2008) *Mediating War: Conflict in a Media Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
7. Hoskins, A. (2006) 'Temporality, Proximity, and Security: Terror in a Media Drenched Age', *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 453-466
8. Gow, J., (2005) *Defending the West*, Cambridge, Polity
9. Gow, J. (with Michalsi, M.) (forthcoming, 2007) *War, Image, Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict*, London: Routledge.
10. Gow, J., 'Hearts, Minds and Retinas: Legitimizing Contemporary War', Counterinsurgency Conference, Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, 1-2 September 2005.
11. Gillespie, M., Gow, J., Hoskins, A., *Shifting Securities - Terrorism, Media and War: From New York to London, From Iraq to Iran*. Book proposal and draft chapters in preparation to send to Palgrave May, 2007.
12. Gillespie, M., Gow, J., Hoskins, A., O'Loughlin, B., and Zverzhanovski, I., 'Shifting Securities: News Cultures, Multicultural Society and Legitimacy' Draft Article to be submitted to *Ethnopolitics* – June 2007
13. www.mediatingsecurity.com (Secure documents: user name: medteam; password: bluesky6)

7. Impacts

A briefing was held at the FCO (3 February 2006) to present our findings to various constituencies including research analysts, the Islam Research Team, the Public Diplomacy group, the Home Office and the Cabinet Office. Follow up meetings with personnel suggest that the FCO might commission similar in depth ethnographic style research in order to deliver better quality qualitative research.

The findings of our research on uses of BBC World Service among diasporic and refugee groups were disseminated among the Public diplomacy group at the FCO. The findings were used to support a new initiative at BBC World Service to reach out to three linguistic diasporic groups in UK and elsewhere (in Urdu, Somali and Bengali), who have difficulty gaining access to reliable news sources

Project results have also been disseminated to Julia Purcell, Programme Director at Wilton Park, an academically independent and non-profit-making Executive Agency of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Our research findings are feeding into a conference on 'Transnational Communities' planned to take place later this year.

Ben Bolland, DSTL, has begun discussion with Gow on collaborative work on 'Images as Weapons'.

REFERENCE No. RES-223-25-0063

Ofcom research analysts consulted us about a major new research initiative on news cultures and invited us to outline major developments in the field. We also participated in Ofcom's media literacy consultation.

Dr Minelle Mahtani, University of British Columbia, alongside fellow Canadian researchers, is developing a project on comparative multiculturalism replicating our methodological design.

Gillespie and O'Loughlin presented a joint paper at an international symposium 'Superdiversity, Media and Diasporas' (March, 19-20th 2007), part of an ongoing series of exchanges between CRESC and the Australian Research Council's Cultural Research Network. This international research network develops comparative research on multiculturalism.

8. Future Research Priorities

1. The impact of event-driven, 24-hour news channels, and various digital sources (including citizen journalism), on the content and quality of mainstream news bulletins.
2. Further comparative, cross-cultural analyses of the representation, translation (in both narrow linguistic and broader cultural senses of the term), reception and regulation of representations of war, violence, death and destruction, and their impact on the legitimising or otherwise of military action and terrorism.
3. The conceptualisation of 'images as weapons' require further investigation,

References

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies Guest Editor of Special Issue: After September 11: Television News and Transnational Audiences. (Vol. 32 No 6 August 2006 pp.903-923)

OFCOM (2002) <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/bsc/pdfs/research/911.pdf>

Robinson, P. et al (2006) *Media Wars: news Media Performance and Media Managements During the Iraq War 2003*, ESRC award Number RES-000-23-0551 <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/>

**Shifting Securities:
News Cultures Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003**

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Introduction

This research project uses the Iraq War 2003 as a prism to investigate how new security challenges are represented and interpreted in the intersections between government and military actors, news producers and content, and increasingly fragmented news audiences. Developing informed policy options requires being responsive to the changing dynamics of these relationships. The research contributes directly to both security and cultural/media policy. It examines and challenges certain standard assumptions about the making and shaping of news, its power and effects on audiences, and the consequences of new media for democratic debate, informed citizenship, and security policy. It maps ‘old’ and ‘new’ media approaches to political communication and propaganda through the interplay of three mutually shaping methodological strands:

Three Research Strands:

- (A) an ethnography of *multiethnic news audiences* across the UK
- (B) an analysis of TV *news content*, narratives and iconographies of war and conflict
- (C) a qualitative study of *news producers and security policy makers*, including the use of experts and their attitudes and beliefs regarding the media-security nexus.

The research involves a reflexive use of the data under analysis. Each of the data sets helps to direct and focus the other in a spiralling, iterative manner. This enables a flexible but rigorous framework for addressing policy, propaganda and public diplomacy issues adequate to understanding our intensively and extensively networked information society. The research hopes to contribute reliable and relevant knowledge that can contribute to tackling the challenges and opportunities of social integration and cultural cohesion in multicultural states like the UK.

STRAND A:
AUDIENCES, PUBLICS AND CITIZENSHIP¹

Marie Gillespie

The decision to go to war in Iraq 2003 has caused deep rifts in public opinion around the world, according to much mainstream news media coverage, as well as numerous public opinion polls² But neither news media nor public opinions polls, useful as they may be in representing protest or tracking trends, are able to analyse processes of democratic deliberation: how public perceptions and judgements are arrived at, and the modes of reasoning and affective engagements which people bring to their appraisal of security policy, in large part via their uses of news media. Audience ethnography can assist us in this task. It is a research method than can deliver culturally sensitive data. It is based on in-depth interviews, participant and non-participant observation, and a close engagement with the lives of research subjects.

The ethnographic data upon which this document is based was gathered between September 2004 and April 2006. Interviews, lasting up to two hours, were carried out by a team of researchers with 173 people across the UK: in Edinburgh, Belfast, Dublin, Swansea, Bradford, Keighley, Oldham, the East End of London, and Surrey. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview data was then input into a qualitative data analysis software programme (NVivo 2). The data was coded and categorised making it possible to question and search the data systematically and facilitate analysis. The age of interviewees ranged from 11 to 82 with the bulk in the 20—35 year age range. 81 were women and 92 men. Our interviewees were drawn from different faith communities. 90 described themselves as Muslim, 20 as Hindu, 13 as Catholic, and 6 as Protestant. Others described themselves atheist, agnostic, secular or “of no faith”. The majority of our interviewees spoke English as a second language and one or more of the following languages: Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Kurdish, Punjabi, Sylheti, Swaheli and Urdu. The findings presented below do not claim to be statistically representative nor can they be generalised to the British population as whole. Rather qualitative data analysis offers rich insights into the connections between small scale processes of deliberative democracy and wider issues of national and international security: into the logics, patterns and forms of reasoning and the emotions expressed by multiethnic audiences in their responses to security news stories and political rhetoric.

¹ The findings below have been collated by Marie Gillespie from collaborative research done (2004-06) by: Ammar Al Ghabban, Habiba Noor, Awa Hassan Ahmed, Atif Imtiaz, Akil Awan, Nouredine Miladi, Karen Qureshi, Zahbia Yousuf, David Herbert, Sadaf Rivzi, Somnath Batabyal, Awa Al Hassan and Marie Gillespie. Further details can be found at www.mediatingsecurity.com

² Opinion poll data showing declining support for the Iraq war since 2003: <http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/2003/guardian-bombingiraq18-april-2003.htm> and <http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/vote-intention-reports/bombing-iraq.asp>.

STRAND A:
AUDIENCES, PUBLICS AND CITIZENSHIP
Preliminary findings

1. Threat Perception, Security and Citizenship

- In making sense of security news stories, interviewees of all backgrounds make connections between different dimensions of security: national and international, local and global, environmental and financial, social and “ontological security”. Interviewees’ believe that the government exaggerates and the media magnify the terrorist threat. Terrorism is not perceived as a high priority threat for most of our interviewees. *Government and academics need to develop more “joined up” thinking about the inter-relationship between these different dimensions of security if the gap between public and policy-makers perceptions’ is to be bridged.*

- Interviewees make highly rational, calculated assessments of the relative and probable risks of different types of threats to security. These are invariably calculated and calibrated according to threats deemed to pose a more or less direct risk to their own personal and local lives, those of their families, or those of people with whom they identify or empathise in their social networks or via news stories. *Rational and emotional considerations work together to shape perceptions of threats to security.*

- Most of our informants claim that they do not feel an increased threat of terrorism at a personal or local level. Even after the 7/7 London bombings, fears about further terrorist threats slowly dissipated after a few weeks as people returned to their normal routines. Londoners, in particular, expressed a defiant attitude towards the new hyper-security conscious environment, most refusing to allow it to impact on their lives or freedom of movement. Londoners recall how they learned to live with the IRA threat and exhibited highly pragmatic responses to the threat of terrorism. *Many argue that, by its very nature, terrorism is uncontrollable, unpredictable and a relatively low risk as compared with global environmental change, which is seen as a more urgent priority.* Those convinced by the resolve of the terrorists, display more fearful and fatalistic responses to the terrorist threat. Still others see “security” either as a commodity that governments have to deliver to maintain power and or as an excuse to legitimate and authorise the use of greater state power.

- Perceptions of security threats vary significantly according to identity and personal

experience: ethnic, national, religious, class, local, gender and generation. Racialised minorities (those who experience prejudice and discrimination based on their appearance and or skin colour) in general, not just Muslims, express greater fear about the “racist backlash”, “being regarded with suspicion in the street”, loss of civil liberties, increasing state authoritarianism, American domination, military violence, civilian casualties, and “this war [that] will never end” than they do about terrorism per se. Many see the war in Iraq and security policy as increasing the risk of terrorism.

- British Muslim women, especially those wearing *hijab* and living in metropolitan centres, express greater levels of fear of a racist backlash than other groups. They also report how personal and local incidents of physical and verbal abuse have made them feel much more insecure about going out alone and have forced them to question their legal and cultural citizenship status in Britain. Razia, a mother in her 20s, living in an Oxford suburb reports that in the aftermath of the London bombings: “People have spat at me, called me names and tried to remove my hijab and I have changed the way I walk to school with my kids because I was actually scared”. Women are not alone in expressing these sentiments.
- Masood, an elderly British Pakistani man living in Edinburgh put it like this: “There was a time I would have been prepared to die for this country – this is a country that has given me everything. But the way – there have been a few incidents have happened. This year when we came back from Pakistan”. His experiences of being stopped and questioned at passport control and fears of animosity towards Muslims have made him feel increasingly like an outsider. He has also wanted to move to a place where his Muslim identity was not so prominent. .
- Omar, a Somali Londoner in his 40s doubts that his children will ever be fully accepted due to the colour of their skin. “During the latest football world cup my eldest daughter Najah was very interested in following the football competition. She was very supportive of the British football team. Every morning when she used to come back from school she used to ask me has the British team won? My daughter [...] thinks that she must support the British football team [...] she thinks she is part of them, if they win she will be jumping with joy and if they lose she gets upset. But the question is when she walks in the street what English white people think about her. Do they feel she is part of them? She as a young girl does not know what they think about her. What she understands is that she was born here and brought up here therefore she must be British. These kind of responses were common.

- Despite repeated government statements that security policy is aimed at terrorists and not at isolating or alienating British Muslims, *the majority of our British Muslim informants continue to experience a sense of exclusion from the public sphere and feel that their legal and cultural status as British citizens is under direct threat as a result of the “war.*

2. Transnational Media, “Distant Proximities” and Everyday News Rituals

- Our interviewees’ fears about security are shaped by shifting senses of *proximity and distance* to perceived threats. Proximity and distance are not necessarily literal. They are matters of perception and presentation and the news media play a vital role in drawing audiences. But audiences also distance themselves from news stories at will. *Audiences’ engagements with news is characterised by oscillations between involvement and detachment.*
- There are strong connections between *local insecurities* (for some local crime and fears of paedophilia took precedence over other security threats) and consumption of *local* media. Global risks are interpreted through a local prism. Proximity and distance are defined in both geographic and cultural/affective terms. News media enable high *degrees of cultural and emotional identification* with actors in security stories, especially with perceived victims of war, terrorist acts and eco disasters.
- Transnational media and global communications strengthen “*distant proximities*” bringing distant people and places, cultures and geographies, into close but unpredictable relations. The intimacy and immediacy of some television news reporting, especially “the journalism of attachment” that permits the expression of human voices, victims and suffering, bolsters strong emotional identifications. This makes it more difficult to stereotype and demonise putative enemies. Interviewees, regardless of background, felt a great deal of empathy with Iraqi civilian casualties of the war. British Muslim interviewees felt mainstream coverage failed to quantify and afford moral equivalence to the death of Iraqis compared with US and UK casualties. As Bardrul, a ScottishPakistani man in his 40s put it: “Some lives seem to be worth more than others”.
- Transnational communities of affect, even if transient, can now be more easily created and sustained at huge geographic distances via news media. But the reverse is also true. “*Proximate distance*” (or living geographically close but culturally and socially far apart) characterises the lives of some of our British interviewees living in bounded, racialised

inner city zones, particularly in cities in the north of England. (This seems to be less the case in places characterised by hyper cultural and ethnic diversity and longer histories of migration where, as Sonya, a 15 year old living in the East End of London put it: “We’ve got used to living together”). The local press sometimes contribute to heightening local fears and exacerbating communal tensions. Compassion is also hard to sustain over time and some audiences lose interest, turn off and distance themselves from the suffering of others.

- News consumption is ritualistic and embedded in everyday routines. It involves multiple sources of media and may be more or less a social and interactive activity. For example, one Hindi/Urdu speaking interviewee wakes up to Radio 1, eats breakfast watching Sky news, receives a news feed on her mobile on the way to the office, checks the headlines on the *The Hindu* at the office, e-mails her brother in India about a news item, reads the *Evening Standard* on the way home, catches Zee TV news headlines at a friends house where she discusses a news item among other things, and falls asleep to the news headlines and music radio. Such patterns of multi media mixing are very common.
- News ritual styles fall along a spectrum: from highly involved, sustained and critical on the one hand, to more detached, transient and disaffected modes of consumption on the other. These styles of news rituals map onto levels of media and political literacy and political participation. Choice fatigue, time scarcity and a sense of the “same old same old” quality of news, deters some from engaging with news as indeed do low levels of comprehension of news. Some interviewees tend to avoid news because it makes them feel insecure and others seek out news as a comforting ritual. Most do some of both. *On the whole we found high levels of engagement with news about the politics of security accompanied by high levels of alienation from mainstream politicians and the political process.*
- *Most of our interviewees rely mainly on mainstream British television news bulletins as their main source of news* (consistent with OFCOM research) supplemented by radio and newspapers. Few of our multilingual interviewees regularly use news sources in languages other than English as their preferred option – *suggesting a keen involvement in the British public sphere of political debate.* This is an important finding given that British Muslim and racialised minorities are often seen to lead “parallel lives” and to be disengaged from politics and or from mainstream British culture. It is also perhaps surprising given the high levels of dissatisfaction with mainstream news and the

widespread feeling that Muslims are under constant media surveillance and scrutiny.

- When critical security stories break, our multilingual interviewees draw heavily on the internet and transnational satellite television news stations, such as *Al Jazeera* and *Al Arabia*. Although these channels are not watched by large numbers of our younger, British born interviewees, they clearly have a disproportionate influence on audiences. Their news content and issues are disseminated and debated in local and familial diaspora communication networks in which opinion shapers and leaders, usually elders, play an important role in responding to security events. Several of our younger interviewees reported watching the channel even though they did not understand Arabic just to see the images and differences with western channels. The insertion of *Al Jazeera* and other Arabic language footage in mainstream bulletins tends to reinforce the notion among audiences (mainly of dominant white, English ethnicity) that such channels adopt an Arab and Muslim perspective. Some believe that they provide a mouthpiece for terrorist voices and views. This contrasts with Arabic speaking Muslim interviewees who regard *Al Jazeera* as a news channel founded on principles of balance and impartiality.
- British Arabic speakers state that the main difference in watching news in Arabic, from the Middle East or Islamic countries, is that an alternative perspective is offered which puts the Palestine/Israeli conflict and Muslim victimhood and suffering into context and perspective. *The impact of such channels is to evoke empathy with suffering Muslims and enhance of sense of global connectedness or of Muslim “ummah”.*
- Diaspora news cultures are marked by clear generational and gender distinctions. News consumption, for many elderly men especially, is strongly motivated and fiercely debated. It is also often characterised by feelings of guilt for having left home and for not being there to help family or contribute to reconstruction after political conflicts or disasters. *Keeping up with news becomes a moral and political responsibility: a way of both integrating into British society, learning about the duties and responsibilities of citizenship (accruing “national cultural capital”), and keeping in touch with “back home”.*
- Younger generations are enculturated into the political cultures of their parents and grandparents via news - especially news about past traumas and conflicts and their repercussions on present day conflicts. *Commemorations and media memorials of what some interviewees refer to as “our ground zeros” (for example, the partition of India*

which resulted in the largest mass migration in history) form the bedrock of politico-news cultures of migrants and the benchmarks against which other security threats are measured and assessed. Bi-lingual children often serve as translators of news and cultural mediators and, in so doing, earn semi- adult status: reading news is a “rite of passage” to adult status signalled by an ability to discuss the state of the world and its future.

- Involved, critical news consumers, not surprisingly, tend to possess greater levels of educational and intellectual capital. Interviewees who have knowledge about the historical origins of present day conflicts and use multiple and multi lingual sources of news offer important insights into the present day conflicts and solutions. *They may be described as “sceptical zappers” or “competent cosmopolitans” who construct their own news narratives from the culturally and politically diverse resources available to them often in accordance with prior political views..*
- When critical security news stories break, rituals of news consumption are disrupted for everybody. The most involved and critical viewers are much more likely to seek alternative, multilingual sources of news and to cross check different versions of “breaking news” because they do not trust television news journalists to do so systematically. The demands of getting news out first and fast is seen to militate against checking and corroborating sources and evidence and many comment upon the increasingly speculative nature of journalistic reporting and the need to turn to political debate programmes or print news for deeper analysis. Many of our interviewees see the increasingly speculative nature of news journalism as a problem and are increasingly asking questions about the nature and substance of evidence upon which claims are based. Many display high levels of media literacy.
- For most of our critical multilingual news consumers, it is only by watching news in different languages, from different political perspectives, that they feel they get sufficient in depth knowledge of counter and oppositional arguments to those put forward by governments. However, many interviewees trust news media from their countries of origin (i.e. Pakistan and Iran especially) far less than they do British media. Interviewees deem it vital to have alternative and competing perspectives for open and informed debate.
- “Sceptical zappers” display open, flexible forms of thinking and can handle complexity and contradiction. Among those with low levels of educational and cultural capital (and

of media and political literacy), rumour, gossip and conspiracy theories assume greater importance than news and are used to interpret and reject mainstream accounts of events. While conspiracy theories are considered to hold important grains of truth by many interviewees, more tend to believe that incompetence is a more likely cause of policy failure. Nevertheless, attachment to conspiracy theories does tend to support and affirm dogmatic, rigid, absolutist and closed forms of thinking among interviewees who find it hard to deal with ambiguities and complexities. They flourish on the internet where news sources are not always verifiable or deemed legitimate.

- *Information and knowledge acquired from news media is interpreted through pre-existing political beliefs and values that are difficult to dislodge. News consumers tend to seek out news sources that confirm rather than challenge their deeper political orientations, assumptions and beliefs.* This does not mean that news does not have influence or effects. Rather, news content is mediated, often in very unpredictable ways by a series of intervening variables, making it hard for governments to get their messages across. There is no simple equation between the intended message and its reception.
- Regular, involved, critical viewers of news express greater fears about the impact of recent shifts in security policy. In particular, many of our interviewees express doubts about what they see as the shifting bases for taking the country to war. They allude to and critique new UK/USA security policy doctrines of “humanitarian interventionism”. Though they do not use this terms the related connotations are clear. Some of our more critical interviewees, like John, a 58 year old working class Swansea man, saw the Iraq war as nothing new: “just a continuation of the military power America has always used to be top dog”. Similarly Priya and her husband Jay, living in London, see the war as following squarely in the tradition of American militaristic imperialism but now with global ambitions. Many claim that America has not learned from history.

3. The “War on Terror”, the War in Iraq and Shifts in Security Policy

- Interviewees discuss, often at great length, the changing legal and political framework for taking a country to war and express some bafflement at the logic of the relationship between the “war on terror” and the war in Iraq (“what did Iraq ever do to us?”). There is a widespread belief that war should be an act of defence after an external attack and should not be a pre-emptive attempt to export democracy. It is not simply that interviewees are upset that legal and procedural norms were apparently breached. It is that *government tried to present a logic – pre-emption – that defied what were seen as*

established legal and political norms. That is, the government's understanding of security threats had shifted whereas interviewees' understandings remained wedded to existing norms. They had not shifted. Moreover, they had not *been* shifted – i.e. the government has still failed to make its case in a persuasive manner. *When this gap in perceptions between government and citizens opens up, we find citizens then making accusatory remarks about government policy and challenging 'governmental authority'.*

- The war in Iraq is widely seen as a diversion from the “war on terrorism” and the gap in the logic is regarded as startling. Most of our interviewees believe that the USA assertion of dominance and power in the Middle East is related to their desire to secure resources, including oil, rather than to promote liberal democracy. Religious beliefs are also seen to have played a part in the decision. A recurring discursive trope in these debates is ‘hypocrisy’, e.g. the US preaches one thing then does another
- Democracy is a highly contested concept that has different valency for different people. It is seen as a westernised concept and its deployment is greeted with suspicion by some of our British Muslim informants who see it as a way of installing pro-western governments. It exemplifies for some the hypocrisy and double standards of western security policy. Fears of an increasingly authoritarian government at home, a loss of civil liberties and serious challenges humans rights - are accompanied by a policy aimed at spreading democracy abroad. This opens up another gap in logic which causes a loss of credibility of and trust in government and ultimately leading to a weakening of political legitimacy.
- Many of our informants query what would constitute success or victory in the “war on terror” or ”war in Iraq. They find it hard to answer such a question. The threat of terrorism is seen to have risen since the war. Many interviewees consider that we are in a no win situation - any victory will be shallow considering the loss of lives and the potential for future conflicts. Many see the war on terror as having a self reproducing and uncontrollable logic to it that is being conducted not to promote peace and security, but in geopolitical battle for power and resources.
- PM Tony Blair is widely disliked by nearly all our informants because he is seen to be a “lap dog” to President Bush and to have been deluded by his own religious beliefs and political ambitions which he has put before the national interest. Tony Blair’s presidential style of politics is seen by some to be testing the limits of prime ministerial power. There is a widespread distrust of PM Tony Blair and his security policy among the majority of

our interviewees regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, generation and class. Those that did express support for him and his goals now express a sense of disappointment or betrayal. His decisions and actions are seen to lack of credibility, to conceal ulterior motives, and to have increased insecurity rather than assuaged it. *Such perceptions contribute to a growing weakening of legitimacy in the British political system.*

4. British Muslims and News Media

- Most of our British Muslim interviewees believe that “western” news media follows the logic and agenda of USA/UK security policy and fail to present oppositional and alternative arguments in context. Television news is regarded as more balanced and neutral than the press, but governments are seen to be able to control, to a very large extent, what we get to know about security events, issues and policies. *For British Muslim news consumers who use multiple and multilingual news sources, mainstream western news is seen to be marred by ethnocentrism, to operate from within a western ideological realm and to reproduce the discursive logic of the government because journalist’s access to information is seen to be dictated to a large extent by government.*
- British Muslim interviewees express considerable unease about the portrayal of Muslims in mainstream media. Even attempts at inclusive or positive portrayals are seen to fail because they exist within a wider “racialised regime of representation”. One major problem is that spokespeople for the “Muslim community” are selected from a very narrow pool and usually represent either minority or extreme Muslim views (whether of the fundamentalist Abu Hamza or of the liberal, middle class Yasmin Alibhai Brown).
- Our interviewees complain that the media rarely focus on Muslims as ordinary British people going about their lives and that the images of terrorists overwhelm those of peaceful protestors and blur the boundaries between different Muslim constituencies. Differences within Islam and between Muslims (the often huge variations in national and regional, cultural and religious values and practices in Islam) are masked by the prevalence of limited and limiting portrayals of Islam and Muslims. (Islamists like Usama Bin Laden actually want to promote media portrayals of an overarching homogeneity). There are notable exceptions to this pattern which are remarked upon: the 7/7 bombers and men recently arrested in Forest Gate were all depicted as ‘ordinary’ by the media. It is their very ordinariness that is compelling and possibly frightening to our interviewees. ‘Home grown terrorism’ is much harder to comprehend. Ironically then, Muslims are only depicted as ‘ordinary’ in ways that makes all Muslims look suspicious.

- British Muslim interviewees are very suspicious of research that purports to get inside “the Muslim mind” and tell government “what Muslims think” and are anxious about the ways that views and research based on their views can get distorted.
- There is a sense of deep insult and injury that Islam is so often represented as a religion perpetuating violence and terrorism. Our British Muslim interviewees are saddened that they feel they have to defend themselves on a continual basis against the accusation of terrorism and to ward off “the evil eye”. There is an acute consciousness of and sensitivity to how Muslims are looked at and perceived by fellow British people.
- Self censorship among British Muslims in public spaces is extremely common. However in intimate, safe spaces of communication among trusted friends and family there is lively and fierce political debate. The ideas and alternative discourses on security policy expounded on transnational satellite news channels such as *Al Jazeera*, *Al Arabiya* among other sources, are widely debated in these trusted and safe zones of debate that western media, academics and researchers – including some on this research project - usually fail to access.
- Fear of speaking up (whether in the form of political correctness or self censorship) and the increased mutual hostility and suspicion between Muslim and other British citizens is extremely damaging to social cohesion. Interviewees fear that if they criticise security policy this will be interpreted as support for terrorism. *One of the most important areas of concern must therefore be to open up a variety of fora of debate, discussion and action.* Focus group research has often proved surprisingly effective in helping people think through and transcend habitual and or dogmatic modes of reasoning and patterns of thinking.
- Interviewees fear that if they criticise security policy this will be interpreted as support for terrorism. *One of the most important areas of concern must therefore be to open up a variety of fora of debate, discussion and action.* Focus group research has often proved surprisingly effective in helping people think through and transcend habitual and or dogmatic modes of reasoning and patterns of thinking.
- Interviewees living in areas of low migration with little direct exposure to Muslim neighbours, workmates or friends tend regard Muslims as “alien” in their customs, values and appearance. One man in his 50s in Surrey put it like this: “The guests have taken over the house. Its time they started playing by our rules”. Others feared that Islamic laws and practices would become integrated into British law and society and that the fabric of

British culture was slowly being eroded. Some of our interviewees displayed significant levels of ignorance about Islam and Muslims, highlighting the need for public education about British Muslims in mainstream media. Some younger Muslim respondents suggested it was Muslims' responsibility to perform this 'educating' role, e.g. by getting jobs in mainstream journalism.

- British Muslim interviewees describe an emotional chain reaction whenever a terrorist attack or similar security event breaks in the news - a sense of feeling accused and blamed, and then feeling guilty, followed by feelings of anger and defensiveness. *The relationship of many British Muslims to the British media is trapped in this emotional chain reaction leading to a sense of powerlessness and alienation and a search for alternative or safe spheres of communication and identification.*
- Feelings of powerlessness are particularly evident among young working class Bengalis and feed into religious discourses of fate and predestination. A strong sense of "forces beyond our control", both ecological and political, confirms a view that faith, prayer and worship are the only way of avoiding being 'wiped out'. Thus Islamic terrorism and the war on Islam are seen as twin inevitabilities which feed off each other and spiral. Many youth articulate apocalyptic visions of a "world out of control". Whether this is a generational specific response or more widespread remains to be seen.
- The majority of Muslim interviewees are at pains to condemn acts of terrorism but at that same time many claim that they can fully understand how and why historical and contemporary attacks on Muslims around the world lead oppressed or victimised Muslims to engage in acts of suicide bombing. Some of our British interviewees expressed deep empathy with the civilian casualties, claiming that watching the steady bombardment of Muslims during the war in and on Iraq 2003 filled them with disgust and made suicide bombing a perfectly reasonable form of retaliation – an extreme measure for extreme circumstances. This violence for some is deemed to be an extreme reaction than the current "politics of exception" in which apparently extraordinary powers and measures adopted by the USA and UK governments.

5. Media, Intelligence, Anti terrorism

- Most of our informants realise the need for intelligence and ways of tracking down potential terrorists but believe that intelligence is so often faulty because sources are not to be trusted. Some argue that the police and intelligence services need to work more

closely together (this is an even more relevant finding after the Forest Gate raids) to ensure reliable sources. But tracking down terrorists through mosques run by non-English speaking mullahs is a fruitless waste of time and exacerbates community tensions. This raises a wider point. *A lot of interviewees are aware that the government is in a difficult situation.* They accept that it is hard to find a new security-liberty balance. They admit there are new problems, and when questioned, many of them don't have answers either. *But any sympathy, willingness to withhold judgement, or give the benefit of the doubt to government has been reduced or destroyed by feelings that government has made people in Britain and around the world less secure, and that they have lied to the public.*

- Drama series like *Spooks* have a disproportionate effect on viewers' perceptions of how the intelligence services operate. Such series also circulate and reproduce discourses on Islamic terrorism. More well scripted, but less stereotypical drama serials may assist security policy makers in explaining and communicating the dilemmas they face. This can be more effective than a thousand earnest documentaries. More research is needed into how fictional narrative drama shapes perceptions of security and intelligence services but preliminary findings suggest this might be very illuminating
- There is a strong correlation between groups of dominant white British ethnicity reading *The Express* and *The Mail*, and fears and anxieties about the presence of subversive politico-religious tendencies among asylum seekers, refugee and diaspora groups in the aftermath of the Iraq War 2003. "Securitization" and racialisation work hand in hand.
- The linkages in media discourse (tabloids and red tops especially) between terrorism, migration and asylum issues obscure the realities and current challenges to security facing government. These linkages are made even stronger in a real-time news environment in which particular headlines and images are reinforced and re-mediated - appearing across different media. The brevity, immediacy and competitiveness of contemporary news cultures are seen to promote instant reporting and superficial analyses.
- Greater and more immediate connectivity between and across different electronic media intensify critical moments of insecurity for audiences. Modern 'media events' (like 7/7) are increasingly self-reflexive in that the space and time devoted to continuous ('rolling') coverage 'draws in' audiences and, for many, work to conflate and link terrorism, migration and asylum issues within a mono-rubric of 'insecurity'.

Finally, to end, an exchange between a group of three of 11 year girls remind us that children too have political views and that their views will help shape the future and that perhaps our best weapon is intelligent diplomacy,

Interviewer: So, what does the future hold, girls? Do you think terrorism is a threat in your lives?

Anna: To be honest, I'm more worried about global warming and things like that

Rosa: Yeah me too, but I think wars are really horrible things and they don't solve anything, it's just two countries trying to be bigger than each other. But why can't the world just live in harmony?

Margie: Tony Blair and George Bush are putting all those people in danger by going to war and that. They're supposed to be ruling, or whatever they're doing to protect the country, and making good decisions, but going to war against countries who then fight back and kill people from our country is not right. So why can't they just, like, sort it out by having a nice little chat?

Dr Marie Gillespie

The Open University

m.gillespie@open.ac.uk

2006-06-12

**Shifting Securities:
News Publics Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003**

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

**Strand B –
NEWS DISCOURSES OF CONFLICT, CATASTROPHE AND (IN)SECURITY
Dr Andrew Hoskins and Dr Ben O’Loughlin**

Introduction

The findings below emerge from an 18-month study of television coverage of security-salient events, including the outbreak and aftermath of the 2003 Iraq War, the devastation of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and the July 2005 London bombings. We set out to examine the framing of conflicts, shifts in the grammar of news reporting of terrorist events, and how attempts at forging a new post-Cold War consensus about human, economic, and environmental security are represented. However, the period of our investigation has been marked by an unprecedented proliferation in the scale, scope and nature of armed conflicts and natural catastrophes. This has led to a persistent preoccupation with ‘security’ issues and events in media and political debate. Or, at least this media inflation of security salient news *appears* to be the obvious result of a succession of human, political and ‘natural’ disasters. But is it? Are we living in an era unprecedented risk and insecurity or does the omnipresence of ‘security’ news ensure that we are continuously ‘plugged-in’ and hyper-sensitised to both distant and proximate catastrophes?

After building an online digital archive of recent breaking news events, we carried out a very close analysis. Rejecting often crude ‘content analysis’ approaches to media analysis, we examined the multi-sensorial mix of visual, aural and verbal properties of television news that contribute to the representation of security events. We explored the extent to which this composition of news was the outcome of the intersection of professional journalistic norms, editorial values, technology and the availability of footage and images, and political pressures. This allowed our research to connect to questions raised in Strand A and Strand C, for instance pertaining to the role of news in increasing audience awareness or anxiety about security events, or the role of news in legitimating security policy.

- News makers increasingly use former police, military, and intelligence personnel, as semi-official and semi-autonomous sources (which we refer to as the ‘business of security’). This blurs the institutional motives of, and affords a dubious legitimacy to, particular actions by the security services (e.g. the anti-terrorism raids in Forest Gate, London). Furthermore, the use of this *shadow expertise* raises questions as to the impartiality and voracity of news reports reliant upon it and news agendas shaped by it. Although United States television news (Fox and CNN domestic especially) overtly ‘embedded’ former military personnel into their news teams (as their news personnel were ‘embedded’ into the military) in the 2003 Iraq War, the uses of shadow expertise in the UK securitized environment are more subtle and incremental.
- Journalists’ proximity *to* events, people and places is enhanced by highly portable audiovisual recording and transmission equipment. They regard this close proximity as legitimising their reporting *on* those events. This trend is also remarked upon in recent debates over the inherent dangers of reporting from within zones of conflict and catastrophe.
- News correspondents are increasingly inserted into the news frame of stories to-be-seen as witnesses, and they offer personal and intimate connections between events and the overhearing/viewing audiences. High profile correspondents, whether they embrace it or not, increasingly *brand* genres and styles of news reporting, as they mix their jobs as formal reporters with more personal commentaries (e.g. *Simpson’s World*). Audiences are reassured by the presence of familiar and respected presenters between unfolding disasters and the camera lens. For instance, the BBC received complaints because of an *absence* of familiar big-hitter journalists in their immediate reporting of the Boxing Day 2004 Tsunami and its aftermath.
- Journalists also extend their influence and branding through and beyond the traditional mass media, into blogs, diaries, and autobiographies. This constitutes a larger and more complex public-professional sphere of news discourse. *This directly feeds a growing self-critical reflection and debate in news narratives over the actions, safety, and responsibilities of journalists and other news makers.* For instance, the recent disagreement over the veracity of BBC despatches from Baghdad between Rageh Omaar

(who left the BBC for the new Al Jazeera English TV Channel) and John Simpson, was aired through an array of different media and via both 'opinion' and 'formal' news reports.

- Television news discourse is increasingly 'casualised' and conversationalised through the blurring of opinion, speculation, and verified information. This process is enhanced through changes in the presentational style of anchors, reporters, and the studio environment, which is in part a response to intensive competition between news providers.
- News content is packaged for an increasing number of platforms (mobile phones) formats (podcasts) and in public spaces (railway stations) – so-called 'ambient news'. However, the establishment of 'rolling' 24-hour television news channels, particularly at times of breaking news, has increased speculative commentary about what might or may be happening leading to increased imprecision and vagueness in the identification of news sources. Information flows simply do not fill continuous live television and repetition and speculation dominate rolling news formats. This imprecision is reinforced by the propensity of television news coverage to use probabilistic terms such as 'almost a certainty', 'high risk', 'very unlikely', and to anchor news around unverified numbers. For instance, Fox News' coverage of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 is dominated by a numerical discourse describing the number of homes flooded, human casualties, animal casualties, lootings committed, and gunshots fired – numbers that proved later inaccurate or false. *The cumulative effect of this speculative ambient news contributes to a persistent low-level discourse of threat and anxiety.*
- The routine use of multiple 'windows', captions and graphics, in television news programmes, connects people in different locations and time zones 'compressing' and projecting a powerful image of a world of multiple insecurities on our daily TV screen. The massively increased availability of on-location, live feeds and news reports enables journalist to report events with increased intimacy and immediacy. The dramatising of the Iraqi suffering of casualties, for example, has made it more difficult to report a Manichean division of good versus evil – so in this sense conventional news scripts are disrupted.

- The time-space compression of television news is compounded when the medium offers a platform to politicians who also routinely make these connections, e.g. between terrorism, economic insecurity, global warming, pandemics and so on – for instance, President Bush telling the American people after Hurricane Katrina that preparedness for natural disasters is part of the war on terror. So, television news’ visual and oral representations of a compressed, interconnected world of insecurities, exacerbates (and even encourages) the manner in which some politicians seek to make connections between the issues of terrorism, immigration, asylum, and multiculturalism which are damaging for social cohesion.
- The time-space compression of continuous coverage of breaking news events also produces haphazard attempts to fit stories into established and stock news narratives. For example, Fox News describing victims of Hurricane Katrina as ‘refugees’. Attempts by journalists and politicians to define a security event are often highly contradictory as split screen live footage fills the screen with images contradicting verbal narrativisation. Such contradictory trends add to the complexity of media meanings and make scholars’ attempts to model media-policy relations very difficult. This also has implications for policymakers attempting to manage the ‘effects’ of news, and for campaigning journalists hoping their reports might ‘effect’ policy.
- Time-space compression speeds up the rate at which jargon, highly speculative assertions, and stock phrases enter into journalistic, ‘expert’, and political and public discourses, feeding a discourse of securitization, e.g. ‘Muslim backlash’ and ‘the new normal’. These can play an important role in shaping a security story and its reception.
- Rolling news follows *real-time* and effects a *decompression* of the news day by providing ‘empty time’ that must be filled. Breaking news stories divert audiences’ attention through continuous coverage (even during part of scheduled terrestrial news bulletins) but in the frequent absence of incoming fresh information, speculation and debate, become the dominant ‘filler’. For example, following the anti-terrorist security raid in Forest Gate, London, the lack of information opened up a space for speculation and political debate. This can enable democratic debate and contestation to take place. By way of a historical comparison, in our analysis of CNN’s coverage of the 2003 Iraq War and the 1999 War over Kosovo we found audiences of the latter war were presented with

extensive live coverage of journalists waiting for more news. This vacuum was filled by political speculation and debate in the case of Kosovo. However all debate, and the very idea of debate, is put aside in CNN's Iraq War 2003 coverage. This finding has implications for policymakers attempting to control the media 'message' of a story. It also has implications for citizens who pay attention to these "spaces of debate" and become aware of attempts at closing debate around a breaking news event.

- Despite the apparent saturation of media and news images, media events and news agendas are still driven and anchored by a limited number of images provided by a small number of international news image providers. The routine use of digitalised information storage and retrieval systems helps to frame breaking news stories in ways that appeal to established emotions, histories and associated narratives via **media templates**. For example, perceived failures of the U.S. military campaign in Vietnam is the dominant template used to frame the U.S. post-war difficulties in Iraq. In catastrophic news, instantly recognisable 'stock' images, video, phrases, people, places, and events, are deployed as part of a comparison with past news stories. These stock images and templates anchor and shape whole news narratives around unfolding events. For example, the World War II extended bombing of London (and other major UK cities) was used extensively as a template through which to report responses to the July 2005 London Bombings as invoking a 'Blitz spirit', the capacity to carry on with daily life in the face of daily bombing attacks. Templates are also a key device in the news media's management of the narratives of rupture and continuity. In this way they can also be constructed as part of a reassuring news frame and ensure audience recognition.
- Debates about the post-hoc meanings of catastrophic events are bound up with debates about how the media commemorates these events. How media chose to represent events 'one year on' or 'fifty years on' has a powerful fixing effect on how the events are remembered. With terrorist attacks, the extent to which commemoration is *sanitised* may reduce or reinforce the impact of those attacks. For instance, on the first anniversary of the March 2004 Madrid Train Bombing (Spain's so-called '3-11'), the Spanish Prime Minister, under pressure from families of the victims, persuaded media outlets not to broadcast grisly footage and photos of the train bombings. This was seen as a demonstration of the country's resilience through its move to 'normality' in the aftermath

of the bombing. Hence, as with many significant national and international events, the images of the bombing and experiences of the event become inseparable.

- The proliferation of remote and mobile audiovisual recording devices and the mass availability of amateur or 'bystander' photographs and video add to a growing 'surveillance culture' which shapes news narratives in new, often unpredictable and random ways. For instance, the amateur footage of the police capture of the suspects of the attempted July 21st London bombings on a West London balcony, and the mobile video of the police raid in Forest Gate (both scooped by ITV News) were used to shape the news narratives of 'reasonable' and 'excessive' force deployed by the police, respectively.
- Mobile phone photographs and video recorded by members of the public are now routinely requested by news organisations at times of the breaking of catastrophic news stories and other events. Despite the presentation of these as a 'democratisation' of the mass media (i.e. 'citizen journalism') these function as a significant new legitimisation device for the construction of particular (and still highly selective) news narratives. Although usually placed within highly conventionalised news frames and templates, they do give insights into immediate and very personal experiences of terror and trauma.

Andrew Hoskins (Swansea University) and Ben O'Loughlin (King's College, London)

June 2006

www.mediatingsecurity.com

**Shifting Securities:
News Cultures Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003**

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Strand C –Television News and War: Policy Makers, News Producers and Security

Professor James Gow and Dr Ivan Zverzhanoski

The present findings are based on the qualitative research within Strand C. This is an investigation of the knowledge, understanding and beliefs of those contributing to news output regarding their working practices and influence on programme content and public perception of it. The study looks at television news practitioners, including presenters, correspondents, producers, editors and researchers; policy practitioners, civil servants and military practitioners, academic and other experts who act as both informants of news and policy production and a bridge between the two other groups.

The research examines the views of policy makers, military personnel, ‘experts’ (academic and other) and news professionals on security issues at both levels of analysis and on the evolving international security scene. The main part of the research is based on focus group and semi-structured interviews with news and policy practitioners and experts aims to explore the understanding and perceptions of these groups in terms of their own and others’ impact on news production, security and security policy making.

The findings presented here are provisional and interim, as Strand C is the final strand to being work and the programme of research is not yet complete.

- Perceived strategic importance, local interest or connection, and the availability of image-capture means largely determines newsroom decision-making.
- The availability of images dominates newsroom/production decision making.
- Television news stories are predominantly driven by human interest, experience and feeling.

- Legitimacy is the key to success in the Global War on Terror/contemporary warfare (although the term ‘war’ has a questioned or contested application in this context) by military participants
- Military practitioners believe that the news media generalise from particular events and give a false sense of proximity when covering conflicts, both of which distort situations and, it is believed, understanding
- Television news demands confrontation, controversy and adversaries, rather than clarity and explanation – the greater the ‘thrill factor’ the more the ‘perceived demand’ of the audience is deemed to be met. Its easier to capture dramatic scenarios but its harder to sustain audience interest in the more difficult and complex aspects of a security story
- The public education and information roles of broadcast news media are significantly compromised by the formulaic nature of newsroom production/news cultures – although there are small differences between television stations, these formulae apply to all aspects of actuality coverage, whether package reports, live reports and discussion, current affairs or documentaries and leave gaps
- The compressed time frames of news means that there is little opportunity to provide context, especially context that avoids cliché and gives appropriate detail
- Broadcast news practitioners may generally overestimate their own influence on both policy makers and publics, at least in the shorter-term (and the same might be said of academic commentators on media-public relations) .
- The changing character of television news means a greater emphasis on the use of contemporary technical means but ever smaller crews, sometimes even one-person crews doing reporting, camera, sound and production, which can either mean more personal reporting, or more likely a greater role for programme editors
- .
- Both news practitioners and military-policy practitioners work with imagined audiences/publics in mind, sometimes using research or maintaining direct communication with actual members of the audience/public – but, often, these imagined audiences are assumed rather than ‘known’

- It is impossible for military and policy makers to establish control of multifarious media in order to communicate policy preferences, or as part of a co-ordinated strategy involving information operations, where ideally the military or the government would be able to control information.
- Different audiences and broadcasters have different ‘starting points’,– the assumptions they make and their worldviews- and broadcaster perceptions of, or research on, their audiences tend to lead to censorship of pictures, but not facts
- Issues of bias and selective focus are assumed to be inevitable on all sides
- There may be a trend to increased ‘in-house’ expertise and less reliance on external expertise in both television news and policy spheres, but there are exceptions to this, but the implications of this shift remain unclear for now
- The sphere of current affairs has been in a state of flux in recent years, with more attention being paid to what the audience wants – whereas in the past not enough consideration was given to whether programmes were relevant to the general audience. The downside of this change is a ‘risk of playing to the gallery.’ At the same time it is true that in the past, some programmes have not been relevant and have taken audiences for granted.
- The future of documentary and current affairs lies in the opportunities presented by the educational market. The potential to create documentaries that could be available to schools around the world is seen as a salvation for those involved in production – however, the news cultures of production and the nature of the medium compromise this educational/public educational mission.
- Current affairs programming has moved increasingly into the domain of news with a reactive character. Programmes are being produced in very short periods of time and in response to stories that have made headlines in recent past. This has significant implications for the quality of the more in-depth and reflective coverage of security issues, which is likely to be adversely affected, thereby affecting the overall quality of public discussion. It also has implications for the perceived role in public education as a lifeline for this type of work: the more it is short-term focused and reactive, the less

likely it is to retain shelf-life value and, therefore, be of particular use in the educational sector.

- Despite changes, the genre of serious, top end documentaries will always have a large enough audience in the UK to justify the continued making of such films
- War crimes issues provide a particularly clear and salient example of the issues of salience, selection and impact. News production rooms, primarily news editors will make value judgements on what is salient – what are the stories to cover on a particular day. They will make selections based on issues such as availability of images, ‘sexiness’, proximity etc, as discussed above. And the impact of coverage where it comes will be partial and limited or diversionary, quite likely.
- Atrocities, abuse and war crimes, especially where images are available, will be ‘sexy’ and capture attention. These reports, especially where image based, might result in a response from the policy sector. But this will depend on the specifics of a case.
- The purpose of international prosecution of war crimes is to foster peace and security through judicial action, but, the topic is perceived by practitioners as being hard to deliver. It is difficult to sustain audience interest in the details of the trial and punishment, except in the most high profile cases. Even then, the nature of television news, as the principal instrument of information dissemination, is such that only particular, usually negative or problematic highlights will gain coverage, which will distort the overall impact, or perception of success, of these bodies, which can only serve to undermine the peace and security missions of transitional justice. Given current news cultures, it seems unlikely that anything general can be done to alter this situation, although prosecutorial and judiciary staff could make greater efforts to shape media attention at crucial moments and in major cases, so as to foster the peace and security agenda.
- Pressures to make good journalism dramatic on-screen are present, but do not necessarily mean ‘dumbing down’ so long as a ‘good story does not get in the way of the truth’

- Whether news, current affairs or feature, coverage of counter-terrorism, counterinsurgency and intelligence operations, while fascinating, requires practitioners to keep their feet on the ground, not be blinded by all the detail (which is important), keep focused on the story and question and double check stories; this needs to be factored into the final product and is difficult to address. The issues of evidence in this context are vital, with that supplied to certain news practitioners of very high quality, but with issues of certainty, reliability and responsibility always at stake.
- Confidential and sensitive relationships are essential to maintaining viable and useful relations between journalists and the security policy and intelligence worlds – this means that news practitioners may well keep information to themselves, both in the interest of security, but even more in the interest of maintaining useful relationships.
- Issues of confidentiality and sensitivity dominate both research of this kind, perhaps even more among news practitioners than policy makers and the military, and in the work of each group

Annexe A: Interviews and Interviewees

Interviews

- Interviews were mainly conducted in English but, sometimes, in two or even three languages (Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Sylheti, Bengali, French) when required as, for example, with a group of Urdu speaking women who felt more comfortable talking about news and security issues in their mother tongue with the interviewer (for examples, see project website).
- The interview data was supplemented with co-viewing and observational data (which appear in reports and preliminary analyses).
- At several points in the course of the research images (still and moving) were used to prompt responses and to test hypotheses about the relative significance of images over verbal or written narratives of events in shaping responses (see examples of interview schedules in Annexe B).
- During the main data gathering period April 2004 - December 2006, interviews extended into the primary subjects' wider social networks, in snowball fashion', in order to situate talk about news in interviewees' wider social and communication networks that are constitutive of their news cultures.
- Repeat interviews were conducted when and where possible with the same groups to track shifts in responses over time.
- Subsequent interviews were designed to fill in gaps, to follow up lines of enquiry in response to new news events or previous interviews.

Interviewees

Tables of interviewees' social background and other details are provided here. Table 1 offers a very general summary, and Table 2 offers more detail; nevertheless this still represents only a very broad sociological sketch – no more. The categories must be read with some caution.

We will be analysing the quantitative alongside the qualitative data in due course under the rubric “narratives and numbers” specific research foci at CRESC (www.cresc.ac.uk). Our presentation of the research for the purposes of this report, however, is primarily as a qualitative empirical study. Our understanding of the dynamics of identities and identifications is based on qualitative data.

The tables to follow should be read with the following points in mind:

- Our research is premised on the assumption that all social beings have multiple, overlapping axes of identifications. Particular forms of identifications may be accentuated in some contexts but recede in others. Identifications are shifting but not infinitely fluid. They are strategically mobilised in different connects and in response to different events. Therefore, no one social category is defining of a person's social identity.
- The identification of religion as a cultural category in the context of a project on security could be highly problematic if used in a culturally determinist way. Here, it is intended to give no more than a very broad classification and it should not be read as either determining or dominating.
- Some of our interviewees of white English ethnicity describe themselves as having a Christian education or background but not as 'Christian' per se. In the same way, some describe themselves as Muslim but seek to qualify that

categorisation in a whole host of ways. Some describe themselves as ‘secular’ or ‘non-practising’ and would insist that this is more of a cultural and social identification than a religious one. Others made the point, quite strongly, that their first identification is not that they are Muslim but, rather, that they are, and would want to be known, as Bangladeshi or Somali or English or British.

- An exclusive focus on 'Muslim' identity misrepresents our interviewees quite strongly and is a source of consternation or even potential distress (and relates to distress at media representations of ‘Muslims’ as if this identity subsumed all others. Thus the label 'Muslim' must be read alongside other forms of identification such as, age, gender, place of birth, residence, as well as in the context of huge variations in beliefs and practices.
- Class, too, is an especially problematic category. The interplay of economic, social and cultural capital is a dynamic one. We have included in Table 2 the professional and class self-identifications of respondents, but we are reluctant at this stage to impose categories in order to reach aggregate statistics where respondents have categorised themselves in diverse ways.
- Table 2 also documents interviewees’ main news sources. Often these are clusters of sources with interviewees naming no outstanding trusted source. Nevertheless we are surprised by the frequency with which BBC, Sky and Channel 4 recur despite the availability of multilingual and transnational news sources.

Table 1. Summary of demographic information:

Total: 239 respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	100	41.8
Female	139	58.2

Age	Frequency	Percentage
0-17	44	18.4
18-24	44	18.4
25-34	58	24.3
35-44	38	15.9
45-54	27	11.3
55-64	18	7.5
65+	10	2.4

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christian	36	15.1
Muslim	166	69.5
Hindu	17	7.1
Jewish	2	0.8
No religion	11	4.6
Unknown	7	2.9

Place of birth if not UK	Frequency	Percentage
South Asia	57	23.8
East Asia	2	0.8
Middle East ¹	17	7.1
North Africa	11	4.6
Other Africa	9	3.8
Europe	6	2.5
Caribbean	1	0.4
North America	6	2.5
Northern Ireland	10	2.4
Republic of Ireland	9	3.8

Table 2. Detailed demographics of ethnographic interviewees

See data list.

¹ Includes Afghanistan and Turkey

Annexe B:

(1) Strand A: Examples of Researcher Briefing

Researchers received a research brief every six weeks that outlined open ended interview questions that they were encouraged to use in a flexible manner. Here are a couple of examples from early on in the project (which are more detailed than later ones) to give an idea of how we worked together, the research ethos and evolving nature of the research framework.

Researcher briefing email of 14/09/04

Dear All

I hope this e-mail finds you all well and now ready for action on the project.

On the admin side - all contracts have now been set up and your first payment will be on September 20th. Payments are made retrospectively for work done in the previous month.

On the technical side I have now obtained and installed Nvivo 2.0 - a software computer package - that will help us analyse our data (more about that later) but that's why you will see that I have asked for 2 or the three interviews that you conduct with each of your 5 groups to be taped and transcribed (more about that later too).

How are we to proceed?

As you all know, by way of a gentle introduction to the project, I asked you to do some reading and thinking. I hope you have now had time to look at the research reports from the www.afterseptember11.tv website and to get hold of the books. Hopefully this has given you some time to consider some of the key issues in contemporary qualitative/ethnographic audience research (in which some of you are already well versed and could teach us all a thing or two) and to think about how you wish to approach doing your research. I'd be very interested to hear any comments you may have resulting from this reading especially as it bears on our present collaborative project - including what you think worked and didn't work or was novel or dull, or whatever in the Sept 11 research and what kind of theoretical framing you/we might be interested in developing.

But more immediately and with the aim of starting first round of interviews in early October -

TASK 1 - deadline 20/09/04 to be sent to socsci-mediating-security-project-list@open.ac.uk so that all can see, comment and give feedback if they wish.

Please write a DRAFT project description which outlines details of WHO (sociologically) are the subjects or participants of your research, WHAT you would like to do and HOW. This is part of the collaborative research planning of this project so your input is very valuable and important. Below are the rough guidelines to which we are all working. If you have an idea for something that departs from this schema (i.e. action or participatory research of some kind) just let us know who, what and how?)

A) WHO are the subjects of your research (please say what are your criteria for selecting participants, give any demographic details that you might have of your chosen groups/families/households or any places where media are discussed naturally as part of everyday life such as cafes, community centres, clubs), try to ensure a good gender, age and class mix, multi-lingualism an advantage (but not a necessity for all groups/households), multi-channel households with Internet useful to explore cultural practices around TV (translating, zapping, TV news talk and commentary, family disputes on judgements etc) - any indication of news and political culture/background would be useful

B) WHAT

Draw up a draft list of the kind of questions that you would like to ask your subjects in Interview 1, Interview 2 and Interview 3. Some will be closed questions and mainly factual, others will be semi-structured and others open-ended. At this stage please just brainstorm a wish list of questions (after having absorbed the aims set out in the research proposal). Don't worry if you're not sure in which interview the question should go.

(Interview 1) The first will be an introductory interview that is mainly empathy building. (It is an old saying that the most important things about the first interview is getting a second one! So its important that they like talking to you and want to talk more) We also want to find out some factual data about patterns of news media use in household/group (including how this has changed over time). We should also touch on how subjects understand security issues and ask them to identify which news stories and images are most security salient to them. A questionnaire that we could all use would be helpful to get some of this data so I will devise this by sorting, collating and adding to your questions, First interview won't be taped but ask if it's OK to tape it **next time**.

(Interview 2) will focus in on security salient images and stories and hopefully can be taped and transcribed by you. A report on the interview and contextual factors will also be written up. Are you familiar with digital audio taping? If not maybe a good idea to buy one and claim money back from project (Please e-mail me with cost and type before buying to check its within our budget) Please practise using it a lot before doing the interviews as its heartbreaking when the technology doesn't work and you have a great interview.

(Interview 3) will follow up leads and plug gaps set up in 1 and 2 and maybe ask for responses to specific news images and stories that rsonate across the interviews

C) HOW (see ethical guidelines attached)

How are you going to go about interviewing socially and technically?

Do you have any methodological issues or concerns that you want raise npw?

IN using Nvivo its helpful to have interviews transcribed - it may not be necessary to transcribe everything in interview but more info on that later

Apart from the ethnographic style interview (that depends on repeat visits or interviews for deep/rich data) - we also use participant and non participant observations of watching TV with families or subejcts and making fieldnotes; we also hope to use specific images that are security salient.

Hope this is clear if not then just get back to me.

Any suggestions or comments on any above welcome at this stage

Best wishes

Marie

*Dr Marie Gillespie
Senior Lecturer in Sociology
The Open University*

Researcher Briefing document for October 2004

27/09/04

Dear.....

Please find below details of our brief for October 2004. It's a bit longer than you'll get in the future because it aims to summarise some of our discussions and highlight some important points about the research approach.

We've done some exploratory reading and had some discussions. Now it's time now to get started in earnest. You could say we already started the project from the moment we first began thinking about it because we each bring to the project certain ideas.

It's really worthwhile keeping a diary in which we can all note our initial hunches and hypotheses, and any political beliefs and views, assumptions and theoretical orientations that we may have right from the start of the project. This will help us to be self reflexive later on. Although our subjective views cannot be erased, we still have to guard against our own views interfering too much in the research process. This is a concern with a project that directly addresses political and other views and beliefs.

The ethnographic approach

You'll notice that I'm asking you to keep records of your own and others news consumption, as well as field notes. Keeping a record is really important. This is all part of the kind of holistic, ongoing and contextualised approach to a) observing b) participating c) listening and talking to your research subjects. Hopefully you have had time to read and digest some of the chapters/books on audiences. I wouldn't want anyone to get hung up on whether it's truly ethnographic or not but it aspires to be in its approach as far as the terms of the project allows us to be. I'll be sending you a chapter soon but you might like to look at Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson's book called *Ethnography* if you want to know more now.

Co viewing news with your interlocutors is a great way to do research but please do take notes during or very soon after. If you can obtain a copy of the programme, we can put it onto our database. The point here is that, as far as possible, we should aim to articulate or draw together our analyses of a) discourses of news *reception* with b) our analyses of discourses in news media *texts*. The ethnography drives the discourse analysis of media texts so we need to be able to suggest and indicate which texts are salient for which groups. This is a primary aim of the research so the more information you can obtain about particular programmes (even if only the date, time and channels of transmission -the better for us.

The time is now right then to plunge and to get some kind of regular rhythm of data gathering and reporting back established. You will all need to find a way of setting aside the 5 hours per week (or making up the 20 hours per month as best suits your routines in a flexible way), to gather, document and begin to analyse the data - regularly and systematically. But I think it's a good idea to try to establish some kind of research routine and steady pattern of data gathering.

We will develop and refine our thoughts/theory and methods IN RESPONSE to what we learn from those we interview and following what we learn from the pilot. This will enable our subjects/interviewees to shape the project as much as our collaboration will - hopefully. The aim is to work towards a collaborative ethnography, (a seeming contradiction in terms?). This is an ambitious project but one, (based on our prior Sep 11 project experience), that has real possibilities for audience research to intervene in academic debates/research, and political and policy processes - but we can discuss these more high minded issues at our project group meetings PGM).

The first PGM will take place on

EITHER

- a) **Saturday 4th December 10-5pm**
OR
b) **Tuesday 7th December 2004 10-5pm**

Please e-mail me and let me know which is best for you. It is crucial that we all attend these meetings so I've put a weekday and weekend as I know some of you have teaching commitments.

Brief for October 04 - deadline 3rd November 04

To conduct and transcribe at least **ONE** pilot interview of 60-90 minutes.

You can either start with a conversational interview on a) a specific news stories or b) on more general issues of news consumption

Please use the following in a flexible way s you see fit and leave things as loose and open ended as you wish:

a) News stories

Two current news/political events are of high salience to us. It will be interesting to see if they are for our interviewees. Here are some of the issues we are interested in and which may help to guide your informal conversations and interviewees and co-viewing:

The hostage-taking of Ken Bigley raises important questions: what kind of news story is it? how is it being represented? what kind of images are being used and how? how are websites being used? (some say as "tools for terror")? Some interviewees have commented on the **global** attention given to the suffering of this one family compared with the coverage of the suffering of anonymous families in Iraq – do yours? Given that there is a big suspense factor at the moment about whether he's alive or dead, whether he will remain on captivity or be released, how does this suspense affect interest and how in the unfolding narrative? What does it tell us about what makes news and how such stories elicit a range of emotions and thoughts?

This news story is likely to be on people's minds as we conduct our pilot interview in the course of the next 10 days or so (it may not for some?). This news story is a good one to launch our collective data gathering. The taking of hostages brings security issues close to home, especially to the **local** level. Witness the responses in Liverpool of locals. At a **national** level, consider how British Muslim representatives have been sent to Iraq to intercede. This news story is interesting for the way it articulates relationships between global and local, national, diasporic and transnational media and publics.

Hostage taking, and more generally of the political/ military/terrorist violence wrought by different actors in the Iraq drama, is the central issue of the story. One way to approach news stories is as dramas in which actors play major and minor roles. Our central task is to understand how our subjects narrativise (put into story form) security salient themes. I wouldn't expect you to ask interviewees the above questions as such but your analyses are likely be able to reflect on (at least some of) them.

We very much want to explore not only national and global TV/media but also local news papers and radio as they often 'bring home' the effects of government and military policy for local people and may be (?) more powerful as a result than other kinds of news stories. The case study of Bigley offers one route for exploring these issues. It may be a useful catalyst, opening up questions of security. However it may not be of salience to your interviewees. If not then follow what your interviewees find salient.

The American Elections are looming. Whether we like it or not, they are probably one of the most important set of political events in coming years. The outcome will contribute to shaping security issues and policies for the foreseeable future. It will be crucial to take the pulse on how people are feeling about the American elections and future prospects for security if Bush gets re-elected. How are they reacting to news coverage of the elections? What views do they have on the consequences of their outcome? Where do they think future flashpoints of military/terrorist conflict might emerge (views on nuclearisation of Iran for

example, impact on their own local communities). What do they think should be done about security issues at **personal and local, national and international** level?

In exploring the news cultures which people inhabit, how do **dramatic and fictionalised accounts of terrorism or security threats figure?** Our TV screens abound with fictional dramas, based on current affairs information supposedly, about threats to security and accounts of terrorist cells in our midst – conjuring rhetoric of “enemies within. From the drama ‘Grids’ and the drama about the Sept 11 suicide pilots a few weeks ago, to BBC1’s drama last night about the lead up to, and after effects, of a terrorist attack on London (supply titles). Do such programmes fill in the imaginative gaps left by news accounts? The close association of representations of Muslims and threats to terrorism in such dramas may do as much as news to exacerbate tensions and fear – what do your interviewees think of such dramas if they watch them at all? If not what kinds of fictional representations do they find “security salient”? This hypothesis – about the relationship between dramatic and news portrayals is something we might explore whenever we can, if not in the first then in later interviews.

We need to examine fundamental question about levels the level of scepticism or credibility of the “new security agenda“

b) News Cultures

Establish general patterns of news consumption of war and security (or insecurity-) news **defined as salient by your informants:**

- a) patterns of viewing during the Iraq war and at particular moments of crisis/ critical events –identifying which moments they are for your interviewees
- b) everyday routine patterns of usage and who they discuss news with on regular basis, how and where (it may be important to do a follow up interview in a club or pub or public place of discussion and compare private and public news talk
- c) identify multiple news sources in different languages, zapping and other media related practices – websites, phone ins, letters
- d) explore translation of news in multilingual families and who does it for whom and /or
- e) assess social and power dynamics related to **class, gender, age and other significant social or cultural factors** – who has or takes power to ‘interpret’ or put a spin on news events for who? Who believes who? (Class is a really important factor in news interpretations so please ensure you get a good mix of educational and socio-economic backgrounds. In our last project, our subjects were very middle class. There’s a danger that we only got to the most articulate among informants). Gender and age are also crucial but I notice that some of you have built in other interesting comparative dimensions in your draft proposal – Indian families who’ve been in the UK long term and more recent migrants
- f) identity/affective issues - feelings of belonging to a social group or category OR to a news viewing public – general engagement with news and differences between what people SAY and what they DO (best understood from participation and observation)

A Few Tips

1. It’s often said that the most important thing about first interview is to get a second one so it has to be a non threatening and pleasant experience for the interviewees even if the subject matter is serious
2. Ask one simple question not several – take care not to use academic jargon - ask open ended questions to get the data you need to arrive at the answers and general patterns of response to the bigger questions set out. (You can’t just ask interviewees for answers they have to be gleaned from data).
3. The data gathered is mainly ‘talk’ - it is not a direct reflection of inner thoughts and feelings but a discourse created the intervention of you the researcher. You have an impact on the situation so try to be self-reflexive about it rather than ignore conflicts or confusions. Ultimately you will be analysing their discourse on questions of security and news.
4. Technicalities – don’t let the tape let you down - ask if they mind being taped - people do get used to it - otherwise you’ll have to write down as speedily as you can but taping interview would be preferable if possible
5. Even if you have identified security salient news events – let your subjects identify what these are for themselves – don’t lead or load questions too much.

Don't hesitate to get in touch for a chat by phone or you can use the email discussion group for general queries and issues

Good Luck

Marie

Annexe B

(2) Letter of information/consent form for interviewees STRAND A

Dear.....

Research Project: 'Shifting Securities: News Cultures Before and Beyond the Iraq War 2003'

Would you be willing to take part in a research project about news – what you watch, read and listen to and what you think about it?

This is a project based at the Open University. I am working with other researchers, who live in various parts of the United Kingdom, on this research project which funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

I would be grateful if you would read the information contained here and consider whether you would be prepared to participate in this research.

About the research:

This research is concerned the Iraq war and its consequences, what security means to you, and how you understand security policy. This research looks at the relationship between politicians, news makers and audiences.

The larger research project will incorporate the findings from yours and other interviews in

What is involved in participating in this research?

If you decide to participate in this research project it would involve me visiting you/meeting with you when we would discuss your interest in news and your thoughts and views on news stories and reporting about what you think are issues of security. It may also involve watching some news programmes or footage or looking at images together. Some of this discussion may take the form of an informal interview where I would ask you specific questions. Should you decide to take part in this study you will be free not to answer any question/s you do not wish to answer and/or to withdraw from the research at any point. To enable me to concentrate on our discussions and not have to take notes I would like to audio-tape them. These recordings will be transcribed and placed on a public database.

What will happen to the findings from this research?

As noted above, the findings from this part of the project will feed into the study of news footage and will be incorporated in an over-all analysis. The analysis will be written up in the form of academic journal articles and a book/s and published. It may also be published in other forms, such as on academic web pages. We will check with you that our analyses are correct and give you the right to reply. I will be happy to visit you/or talk to you again after the research and analysis is complete to discuss the findings with you.

Confidentiality and anonymity:

In all writings and publications relating to the research the real names of participants will be changed in order to guard their anonymity. I undertake to make every effort to protect the confidentiality and disguise the identity of anyone who contributes to my part of the research project.

I hope that you feel that you would like to participate in this research. If you have any further questions or would like more information before you make a decision you can contact me on the following:

Email:

Phone:

Yours faithfully,

Iconsent to take part in the interviews and understand the terms on which this is based

Signed

Date

Annexe B:

(3) CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUSED RESEARCH SEMINARS – KCL/DEFENCE ACADEMY

The Scope of Research

KCL, in conjunction with the Defence Academy, is seeking volunteers to assist with a research project, for the Economic and Social Research Council’s New Security Challenges Programme. The research is part of a wider project examining media and security questions involving audiences, content and news producers. This part of the research is led by Professor James Gow. The research team will be investigating the knowledge, understanding and beliefs of policy makers and military personnel on security issues and the media, including how their work is affected by news media, how news media present security salient issues, their relationships, working practices and influence on news media, and their perceptions of news media impact regarding security issues, as well as specific cases or issues. We believe that this will contribute significantly to policy making and to the empirical, practical and theoretical understanding of strategy and decisions on the use of force, given the crucial importance of the media as an aspect of contemporary warfare, as well as adding broadly to the understanding of the news media and security relationship.

What will the research entail?

- A series of lunchtime focused research seminars, each lasting approximately 75 minutes, at the RCDS, with a sandwich lunch provided.
- 6-12 participants in each seminar – no preparation required.
- The research findings will be treated with absolute confidentiality and all participants will remain anonymous
- Seminars will be facilitated by Professor Gow, with one or more members of the research team observing and taking notes
- It is intended to hold the first research seminar on CONFIRM DATE
- Colonel Richardson will coordinate the focused research seminars
- For further information, contact Professor Gow.

22.1

As an important source of public funds for social science research and as a body charged with encouraging, supporting, undertaking and advising on such research, the ESRC recognises that it has a special obligation towards the general public and academic community to try to ensure that the research which it funds will not give rise to distress or annoyance to individuals. It therefore attaches considerable importance to the maintenance of high ethical standards in the research it supports.

22.2

Where ethical considerations arise in the design or conduct of the proposed research, applicants are asked to address these explicitly in their proposal. These considerations are taken to include, at a minimum:

honesty to research staff and subjects about the purpose, methods and intended and possible uses of the research, and any risks involved;

confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and anonymity of respondents;

independence and impartiality of researchers to the subject of the research.

22.3

Applicants should demonstrate that full consideration has been given to the ethical implications of their research, and justify their means of resolving the ethical issues arising. If applicants are proposing to refer to a professional code of ethics governing research in their area, this should be specified and the appropriate part of the code appended to their application.

22.4

The ESRC reserves the right to impose special conditions on any awards involving particular ethical issues. The ESRC Boards and Council may refer applications for funding and research in progress for advice on ethical issues to the Ethics Advisory Panel of the ESRC.

22.5

The requirements of paragraphs 21.1 to 21.3 extend to those submitting tenders for ESRC consultancies and commissioned work, as appropriate.

Individuals who are implicated in ESRC-funded research, and who wish to raise a case of grievance about ethical issues in the research, should write to the Secretary of the Ethics Advisory Panel citing the circumstances involved. A response will normally be made within 20 working days.



- Home
- Project Details
- Media Literacy
- Events
- Publications
- Secured Documents
- Links
- Contact us

Shifting Securities examines changing relationships between government, media and multicultural publics in the UK. The Iraq War 2003 and subsequent events raise important questions about the impact of security policy on civil liberties and human rights, democratic participation and citizenship, and racialisation and securitisation. Our findings address the extent to which there has been a breakdown in trust between politicians, journalists and audiences/publics; what kind of revitalisation of democratic processes or media practices might help restore trust and credibility; and how audiences use and interpret the diverse, multilingual news menu available to them at a time of media transformation.

[ESRC Society Today - Final Shifting Securities documents available](#)

VIEW DRAFT RESEARCH FINDINGS

<p>CLOSING PROJECT EVENT:</p> <p><i>Shifting Securities Symposium</i></p> <p>Terrorism, Media and War: From New York to London, From Iraq to Iran 15-16 June 2006 at King's College, London.</p> <p>Speakers included Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt (US CENTCOM), Sir David Omand (former Head of Security and Intelligence, Cabinet Office) Prof. Philip Seib, Prof. Philip Taylor, and Prof. Sir Lawrence Freedman.</p> <p>VIEW PROGRAMME</p> <p>Other events</p>	<p>LATEST PROJECT NEWS:</p> <p><i>Project awarded 'outstanding' grade by all five anonymous reviewers in final ESRC assessment! Well done everyone.</i></p> <p><i>Forthcoming symposium in November 2008, London, to launch European Journal of Cultural Studies special issue, new books by Gow, Hoskins and O'Loughlin, and new AHRC and ESRC research awards. Details soon.</i></p> <p>Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse (Hoskins and O'Loughlin)</p> <p>New journal from 2008: Media, War & Conflict - includes Call for Papers and details of pre-launch conference in April 2007</p> <p>Other publications</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

[Home](#) | [Project Details](#) | [Media Literacy](#) | [Events](#) | [Publications](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact us](#)

©2007 Shifting Securities





- Home
- Project Details
- Media Literacy
- Events
- Publications
- Secured Documents
- Video Archive
- Links
- Contact us

Draft Project Findings

Strand A: AUDIENCES, PUBLICS AND CITIZENSHIP

(See also Strand A: Demographic data: [Overview](#) or [Detailed](#))

Strand B: NEWS DISCOURSES OF CONFLICT, CATASTROPHE & (IN) SECURITY

(See also Stand B: [Forthcoming journal](#))

Strand C: POLICYMAKERS, NEWS PRODUCERS, AND 'EXPERTS'



Project Details

This research uses the Iraq War 2003 as a trigger to investigate how new security challenges are represented and interpreted in the intersections between government and military actors, news producers, and increasingly fragmented news audiences-publics. Developing informed policy options requires being responsive to the changing dynamics of these relationships. The research will contribute directly to both security and cultural/media policy. It will examine, test and challenge certain standard assumptions about the Information Economy and Network Society, the making and shaping of news, the ideological content of news, the effects of news content on audiences, and the consequences of new media for democratic debate, informed citizenship, and decision-making regarding military conflicts, terrorism and security issues. It will map 'old' and 'new' media strategies of political communication and propaganda through the interplay of three mutually shaping methodological strands: (A) an ethnography of news consumption in multi-lingual news publics, (B) an analysis of (TV and internet) news narratives and iconographies of war and conflict, (C) a qualitative study of policy makers, news producers and 'experts' attitudes, beliefs and value regarding the media-security nexus. Crucially, this involves a reflexive use of the data under analysis. Each of the data sets will help direct and focus the other in a spiralling, iterative manner. This will enable a flexible but rigorous framework for addressing policy, propaganda and public diplomacy issues adequate to understanding our intensively and extensively networked information society. The project would provide rich and robust data and analyses, reliable and relevant knowledge that would contribute much to tackling the challenges and opportunities of social integration and cultural cohesion in multicultural states like the UK.

Project Directors

[Dr. Marie Gillespie \(Open University\)](#)
[Professor James Gow \(King's College London\)](#)
[Dr. Andrew Hosking \(University of Warwick\)](#)

Project Assistants

[Dr. Ben O'Loughlin \(Royal Holloway, University of London\)](#)
[Ivan Zverzhanovski \(King's College London\)](#)

[Home](#) | [Project Details](#) | [Media Literacy](#) | [Events](#) | [Publications](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact us](#)

©2004 Shifting Securities

Shifting Securities

News cultures before and beyond the Iraq War 2003



Home

Project Details

Media Literacy

Events

Publications

Secured Documents

Video Archive

Links

Contact us



Media Literacy

Response to Ofcom proposed strategy and priorities for the promotion of media literacy

Dr. Marie Gillespie, Open University
 Prof. James Gow, Kings College , London
 Dr. Andrew Hoskins, Swansea University

Q. 1 – Ofcom's definition of media literacy

An understanding of the nature and power of visual media has long been under-rated in research into audiences' short and long-term perception, although over the past decade, there has been an increase in work on distinctly visual research and visual methodologies. The term 'audiovisual' tends to obscure the particular problems posed by 'reading' visual images for audiences and researchers. Specifically, in relation to news images, relatively little is understood in relation to how these shape perceptions of events and the means by which particular images come to dominate news agendas.

Moreover, there is an implicit present in much of the consultation document, whereas a greater emphasis is needed on the importance of media literacy to a critical understanding of particularly television's shaping of longer-term readings of events. Most potently this involves the use of visual images in framing and anchoring collective or social memories of events. There has been very little research into how individuals and audiences actually come to remember events and renarrativize the past through their media consumption (and memory of that consumption). Much more collaboration is needed between cognitive and social psychologists and those researching the media, in order to begin to identify a media literacy that is adequate to our intensely visual culture and to implicate fully the historical dimensions of the influence of the media.

For instance, what are the challenges for media literacy when the repetition and thus familiarity with a particular news images or set of images, can be said to diminish critical reading of those images? Particularly this is the case when those images once considered as shocking or disturbing have less impact because of their familiarity or similarity to other images (see Hoskins, 2004). In this respect, more needs to be explicitly included in why media literacy is important in terms of an ethics of viewing.

Q. 2 – Key roles of media literacy

To enable UK residents informed and equal access to and benefit from information from a full range of media, and to possess critical, creative, and cultural knowledge and skills in their reading of and engagement with the media, and to be empowered as citizen-consumers.

Q. 3 – Research, Connecting & Partnering/ Q. 4 – Priorities

We agree with Cary Basilget (bfi) that media literacy needs to be part of 'literacy', and one of the key difficulties in developing research, connecting, etc. is that the media is not accepted as stimulus or value in its own right (and particularly television), for example, in relation to 'memory culture' and history itself (see Shandler 1999). We support the idea that media literacy should be a more formal part of schooling and should not be isolated from the curriculum. However, an obvious partner (not listed in the document) would be the Higher Education section more broadly, and specifically those involved in the teaching of Media Studies. Newer Media Studies degree programmes do tend to have media literacy either implicitly or explicitly included in learning outcomes (e.g. BA Media Studies, Swansea University). Moreover, schemes in partnership with degree programmes would provide more tangible and ongoing measures of media literacy within this sector at least, easily comparable year on year.

Q. 5 – Types and levels of media literacy skills/new communication technologies

Technological capabilities and digital competencies are vital for access to/management of new communication technologies. A real danger is that many of those with quite advanced technological competencies in relation to new media, notably the young, are also those with partially developed media literacies and also most vulnerable to the potentially adverse effects of inappropriate content.

The reality of new technologies is that some users, primarily younger, many form inherent groups, contributing at once to a strengthening of the self-identifying group fabric, but a weakening of societal coherence generally. This should not be understood simply as 'older' and 'younger' but in terms of the possibilities of inclusion and exclusion offered by the complex of new media and their interactive use. At the worst extreme, the recent discoveries of al Qa'ida use of mixed communications media indicate the potential for a self-referencing, self-reinforcing group to operate in a narrow and exclusive way while using and benefiting from apparently opening and widening possibilities of new media.

Q. 6 – Key barriers to achieving appropriate levels of media literacy:

- Differential access to new media (internet, broadband, wider digital tv content) based upon affordability (more promotion of 'Freeview' services is needed)
- Public stigma attached to need for 'literacy' in relation to mediums seen as functioning primarily for entertainment
- Difficulty in establishing common or 'appropriate' benchmark of/for media literacy, particularly when so many different organizations are concerned

Q. 7 – Groups with particular needs

There has been relatively little research undertaken on how different social, linguistic, religious and ethnic diasporic groups use news media in Britain and especially in times of political crisis (see for example, Gillespie, 2002 and www.afterseptember11.tv). Consequently, there is limited understanding of how multi-lingual news publics and other complex audience configurations in Britain read and manage these often competing 'flows' of news materials in multi-channel households.

These matters have become more urgent in the recent period in which

terrorism and warfare have dominated cross-media news agendas at the same time as the number of news sources (particularly non-British) have proliferated. Furthermore, there has occurred an increasing cross-fertilization of news images between British news programmes and for example Arab news networks reporting globally on conflict in the Middle East .

Understanding the complex role of media and the requirement for media literacy and awareness is essential in a world where the competing discourse over security policy and security agendas, including framing the vital issues of legality and legitimacy and success and failure occurs only through the media. Whereas most people have clear reference points for domestic issues – house prices, inflation, jobs etc – security policy questions for the vast majority of the population only have reference points in the various communications media and the reporting and shaping of agendas and cultures.

These circumstances provide new challenges for the nature and levels of media literacy required including among different language communities and diasporic groups with potentially differential access to competing and conflicting news providers. Significant research is needed to ascertain the consequences of these transformations upon participation in political processes, notions of citizenship and collective identities and to assist in the promotion of media literacy adequate to a multi-lingual and multi-channel Britain (e.g. our own ongoing ESRC-funded research 'Shifting Securities: News Cultures before and beyond the Iraq War 2003' as part of the 'New Security Challenges Programme' – see <http://www.newsecurity.bham.ac.uk/projects/> and www.mediatingsecurity.com (site available from Sept 2004).

Q. 8 – Other areas for conducting research

As above and security policy (see Gow 2004).

Q. 9 – Key initiatives, projects or resources

More links and work with Media Studies in FE and HE would be very useful (see answer to Q. 3/4 above).

Establishing links with ongoing and future ESRC and AHRB research initiatives could prove to be very productive.

Q. 10 – Common labelling system for audiovisual content

The shifting of the role of 'gatekeeper' (paragraph 60) from broadcaster and regulator to consumer is a worrying but probably an inevitable consequence of the mass proliferation of media entering our homes. The consultation document tends to presume pre-recorded material as the content of most concern relating to its proposal for a 'common content (information) scheme'. However, one of the many challenges for such a scheme will come from the increasing proportion of real-time content (on the Internet as well as on TV) that is more difficult to pre-label. Some steps have already been taken by broadcasters to self-regulate, for example, some 'live' reality television programming is only 'nearly live' (i.e. transmitted minutes after being recorded) to prevent offensive or inappropriate material from being broadcast. However, some (and particularly in moments of crisis) television news tends to rely on genuinely real-time reporting. But with pre-recorded actuality footage there is a body of opinion that British broadcasters are over-cautious and are not 'testing the boundaries' (at least with respect of the former ITC operations) in their use of images of graphic scenes of war and violence. So, according to Martin Bell, for example, the censoring of images promotes violent actions as 'an acceptable way of settling differences'

and serves to some extent to glorify war.

From this perspective at least, it may be construed that a widespread classification system for the electronic media could result in more restrained editing and a greater reluctance to be at odds with a code primarily designed for fictional and documentary programming. The development of a common labelling system would need to address the long-standing issues around the differential treatment of fictional images compared with actuality footage used in news programmes.

Electronic media and Ofcom's responsibilities

The fact that Ofcom's remit does not relate to print media is a significant weakness in its strategy for promoting media literacy. The interrelationship between the electronic and print media is of critical importance in the shaping of news stories and agendas, for instance, images are increasingly 'remediated' from one medium to another. Furthermore, the relative freedom of the press compared with broadcast media in adopting proprietorial biases requires different critical readings. The statement in the consultation document that refers to 'opportunities to consider relevant cross media links in our work' tends to presume these relationships, whereas they need to be made more explicit in relation to how audiences actually consume news, for example, in today's media-saturated and inter-networked environment.

Notes

Notable exceptions are the contributions in Winograd, E. and Neisser, U. (eds.) (1992) *Affect and Accuracy in Recall: Studies of "Flashbulb" Memories*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Hoskins, A. (2004) *Televising War: From Vietnam to Iraq*, London : Continuum.

Shandler, J. (1999) *While America Watches : Televising the Holocaust*, New York : Oxford University Press.

Gillespie, M. (2002) Audience Research Study, 'After September 11: TV News and Transnational Audiences' Project.

Gow, J. (2004) *Defending the West*, Polity: Cambridge .

Martin Bell interviewed on *Channel 4 News*, Channel 4, 1998.

[Home](#) | [Project Details](#) | [Media Literacy](#) | [Events](#) | [Publications](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact us](#)

©2004 Shifting Securities



Shifting Securities

News cultures before and beyond the Iraq War 2003

Home

Project Details

Media Literacy

Events

Publications

Secured Documents

Links

Contact us

Publications

PUBLICATIONS COMPLETED WITHIN PROJECT PERIOD:

Gillespie, M. (Guest editor) 'Media, Security and Multicultural Citizenship' Special Issue, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, forthcoming Vol.10 No.3, August 2007

Gillespie, M. (2006) 'Security, Media, Legitimacy: Multi-ethnic Media Publics and the Iraq War 2003' in *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, Special Issue: Representing Security, pp 467-486.

Hoskins, A. (2006) 'Temporality, Proximity, and Security: Terror in a Media Drenched Age', *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 453-466

Hoskins, A. and O'Loughlin, B. (2007) *Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse*, Palgrave

Hoskins, A. (2007) 'Ghosts in the Machine: Television and War Memory' in Maltby, S., Keeble, R., and Webster, F. (eds.) *Communicating War: Memory, Media and Military*, Cambridge Scholars Press

Hoskins, A. (2006) 'Temporality, Proximity, and Security: Terror in a Media Drenched Age', *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 453-466

Gow, J., (2005) *Defending the West*, Cambridge, Polity

Gow, J. (with Michalsi, M.) (2007) *War, Image, Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict*, London: Routledge.

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS:

Gillespie, M., Gow, J., Hoskins, A., (in preparation) *Shifting Securities - Terrorism, Media and War: From New York to London, From Iraq to Iran*. (Book proposal and draft chapters in preparation to send to Palgrave, May 2007).

Gow, J and Zverzhanovski, I., (forthcoming, 2007) *Watching War Crimes* London: Hurst and Co.

Hoskins, A., and O'Loughlin, B., (forthcoming, 2008) *War and Media: Diffused War in the New Media Ecology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gillespie, M., *Diaspora Publics and the Politics of Security: News Cultures before and After the Iraq War 2003* (proposal to be submitted to CRESC Routledge Book Series, May 2007)

Gow, J., (in preparation) 'Cries from the Grave – Srebrenica, Beslan and Moving Image as Evidence: Leslie Woodhead and the Documentary of Atrocity'.

Zverzhanovski, I, forthcoming, 2007 'Watching War Crimes: the Srebrenica Video and Its Impact on Serbia', *Journal of South East European and Black Sea Studies*.



O'Loughlin, B., Moss, G., (in press) 'Representation, Representatives and Representative Claim-Making in the 'War on Terror''', *Political Studies*.

Gillespie, M., (forthcoming May 2007) 'Closer Apart/Farther Together: Ontological Insecurity in the Mediapolis' in *International Journal of Communications*.

Gillespie, M., Gow, J., Hoskins, A., O'Loughlin, B., and Zverzhanovski, I., (in preparation) 'Shifting Securities: News Cultures, Multicultural Society and Legitimacy' (Article to be submitted to *Ethnopolitics*, September 2007).

Gillespie, M., Huysmans, J., 'Fear, Media and the Everyday Politics of Insecurity' to be submitted to *Media Culture and Society*, July 2007

Cheesman, T., Gillespie, M., Guemar, A., and Watts, S., 'Multilingualism and Cosmopolitanism: Languages of War and Terror' (in preparation) to be submitted to the *Journal of Media, Conflict and War*

Gillespie, M., Qureshi, K., and Rivzi, S., 'Veiling, Gender and Security: Perspectives of UK British Muslim Women' (in preparation) to be submitted to *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

[Home](#) | [Project Details](#) | [Media Literacy](#) | [Events](#) | [Publications](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact us](#)

©2004 Shifting Securities



Shifting Securities

News cultures before and beyond the Iraq War 2003

Home

Project Details

Media Literacy

Events

Publications

Secured Documents

Links

Contact us

Publications

PUBLICATIONS COMPLETED WITHIN PROJECT PERIOD:

Gillespie, M. (Guest editor) 'Media, Security and Multicultural Citizenship' Special Issue, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, forthcoming Vol.10 No.3, August 2007

Gillespie, M. (2006) 'Security, Media, Legitimacy: Multi-ethnic Media Publics and the Iraq War 2003' in *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, Special Issue: Representing Security, pp 467-486.

Hoskins, A. (2006) 'Temporality, Proximity, and Security: Terror in a Media Drenched Age', *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 453-466

Hoskins, A. and O'Loughlin, B. (2007) *Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse*, Palgrave

Hoskins, A. (2007) 'Ghosts in the Machine: Television and War Memory' in Maltby, S., Keeble, R., and Webster, F. (eds.) *Communicating War: Memory, Media and Military*, Cambridge Scholars Press

Hoskins, A. (2006) 'Temporality, Proximity, and Security: Terror in a Media Drenched Age', *International Relations*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 453-466

Gow, J., (2005) *Defending the West*, Cambridge, Polity

Gow, J. (with Michalsi, M.) (2007) *War, Image, Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict*, London: Routledge.

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS:

Gillespie, M., Gow, J., Hoskins, A., (in preparation) *Shifting Securities - Terrorism, Media and War: From New York to London, From Iraq to Iran*. (Book proposal and draft chapters in preparation to send to Palgrave, May 2007).

Gow, J and Zverzhanovski, I., (forthcoming, 2007) *Watching War Crimes* London: Hurst and Co.

Hoskins, A., and O'Loughlin, B., (forthcoming, 2008) *War and Media: Diffused War in the New Media Ecology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gillespie, M., *Diaspora Publics and the Politics of Security: News Cultures before and After the Iraq War 2003* (proposal to be submitted to CRESC Routledge Book Series, May 2007)

Gow, J., (in preparation) 'Cries from the Grave – Srebrenica, Beslan and Moving Image as Evidence: Leslie Woodhead and the Documentary of Atrocity'.

Zverzhanovski, I, forthcoming, 2007 'Watching War Crimes: the Srebrenica Video and Its Impact on Serbia', *Journal of South East European and Black Sea Studies*.



O'Loughlin, B., Moss, G., (in press) 'Representation, Representatives and Representative Claim-Making in the 'War on Terror''', *Political Studies*.

Gillespie, M., (forthcoming May 2007) 'Closer Apart/Farther Together: Ontological Insecurity in the Mediapolis' in *International Journal of Communications*.

Gillespie, M., Gow, J., Hoskins, A., O'Loughlin, B., and Zverzhanovski, I., (in preparation) 'Shifting Securities: News Cultures, Multicultural Society and Legitimacy' (Article to be submitted to *Ethnopolitics*, September 2007).

Gillespie, M., Huysmans, J., 'Fear, Media and the Everyday Politics of Insecurity' to be submitted to *Media Culture and Society*, July 2007

Cheesman, T., Gillespie, M., Guemar, A., and Watts, S., 'Multilingualism and Cosmopolitanism: Languages of War and Terror' (in preparation) to be submitted to the *Journal of Media, Conflict and War*

Gillespie, M., Qureshi, K., and Rivzi, S., 'Veiling, Gender and Security: Perspectives of UK British Muslim Women' (in preparation) to be submitted to *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

[Home](#) | [Project Details](#) | [Media Literacy](#) | [Events](#) | [Publications](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact us](#)

©2004 Shifting Securities