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PhD thesis

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**‘LESSONS WILL BE LEARNED’?: AN INVESTIGATION
INTO THE REPRESENTATION OF ‘ASYLUM
SEEKERS’/REFUGEES IN BRITISH AND
SCOTTISH TELEVISION AND IMPACTS ON BELIEFS
AND BEHAVIOURS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES.**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This thesis examines media representations and audience reception processes through a detailed study of media reporting and public understandings of asylum and refugee issues. It is based on sixty interviews in which refugees seeking asylum, professionals working with them and members of the general public were invited to comment on their own memories and beliefs using pictures from the TV coverage. The pictures used are included in a detailed thematic content analysis of national and regional broadcast news. Public understandings are systematically compared to the content of media reporting. In particular it explores people's memories and beliefs of national and regional broadcast news. The content analysis revealed that the national news represents asylum in unsubstantiated and problematic ways whilst the regional news has a more balanced approach to representation of the issue. The thesis explores the diversity of audience reactions and the different ways in which people may accept or reject the media representations. However it also draws attention to the themes which recurred in all of the interviews and argues that there is strong evidence of media effects. The thesis highlights factors in media coverage which are particularly influential. It demonstrates how language, structures, and images may influence audience responses and examines how media representations may structure patterns of misinformation. The audience were poorly informed on asylum and refugee issues.

In addition attention is drawn to viewers' everyday relations and experiences. Some interviewees use specific knowledge to reject news reports. The research provides comprehensive and fruitful insights of cultural differentiation linked to 'race'/ethnicity, gender, class and geographical location. The thesis concludes by arguing for a media studies schema which connects questions about audience reception with questions about media production and content as well as the construction of broader relations within society enabling researchers to contribute to current debates about power, control and social conditions.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or at any other institution.

Signature

Printed name Pauline Donald

Chapter One: Introduction: Why research UK television news coverage of ‘asylum seekers’, refugees and migrants?

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned principally with the audience reception processes around the issue of asylum (how are audiences influenced, how this links to audience understandings of this specific issue). Although audience reception has always been important to studies of the media, audience reception of the issue of asylum on television and its impact on people seeking asylum are still relatively understudied. Most sociological studies have focused on ‘race’ or migration rather than asylum. The thesis is positioned within critical media studies and Glasgow Media Group work which is concerned with the ‘definitional power’ of the media and perception and belief, research which has been categorised as ‘public knowledge’ research.

This thesis focuses on regional and national broadcast news coverage of asylum issues. I wanted to examine the potential for television coverage to confront and influence public perceptions of ‘asylum seekers’ and further issues of asylum by way of audience reception.

The main question I was exploring is how do audiences respond to television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge? For example are the television messages generally accepted or rejected and what are the processes involved within this? Secondly, I was interested to know about the impact or effect of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge on the subject audience. Thirdly, I was concerned with the impact of television coverage on special interest audiences who are expected to be more informed on the substantive topic than the general public.

This study compliments earlier research carried out into the nature and influence of television. The research model which examines audience reception has been used by the Glasgow Media Group to explore a wide variety of social, health or political issues (Philo, 1990; Kitzinger, 1999; Henderson, 2002).

Underpinning these investigations is Greg Philo’s central theoretical point regarding ‘the powerful impact of the media, both in limiting what audiences can see and in providing key elements of political consciousness and belief’ (Philo, 1990: 205). Subsequently he argued the media researcher should not make suppositions about media influence or indeed the processes of audience reception founded merely on analysis of media content.

Over the past 20 years global geopolitical and geoeconomic changes have led to an escalation of the international refugee crisis. Most refugees are fleeing war and conflict, the main countries of origin of people seeking asylum in Europe, including the UK, during this period were (former)Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka. During this period asylum applications increased from just under 30,000 in 1996 (Refugee Council, 2003) to between 71,000 and 85,000 applications per year from 1999-2002 (Home Office, 2003). The UK government declared asylum applications would be reduced by 50% from October 2002 to October 2003. Recent statistics on asylum, 33,960 asylum applications in 2004, 25,710 asylum applications in 2005 and 23,430 applications were received in 2007 (Home Office, 2008) show the target was more than met.

During this period asylum laws have undergone substantial changes. There have been thirteen major pieces of legislation in relation to asylum and immigration in the last 100 years and five of those have been in the past five years. This legislation was intended to further regulate the number coming to the UK to claim asylum and the applications of people seeking asylum in the UK, as well as their entitlements in the UK (Hauser, 2000).

From the 1997 General Election asylum has become a prominent election issue. In the 2005 General election the government party, the Labour Party, included the issue in its manifesto promising more Government action. They produced a pocket sized manifesto pledge card for public distribution during the General Election campaign which included this pledge on asylum, 'Your country's borders protected: I.D. cards and strict controls that work to combat asylum abuse and illegal immigration'. The contentious nature of the policy issue of asylum is therefore an issue of public interest and as such the media has a central role to play in informing the public policy debate. This thesis examines this role by investigating how informed the public are and the role that broadcast media plays within their knowledge and beliefs.

The problematic nature of media coverage of asylum issues was recognised by the House of Lords and House Of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights investigation into *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers*, in April 2007 when they gathered evidence on the media:

The treatment of asylum seekers by the media raises questions about whether the state is fulfilling its positive obligations to protect asylum

seekers from unjustified interference with their right to respect for their dignity, private life, and physical integrity, and to ensure their enjoyment of Convention rights without discrimination, consistently with their right to freedom of expression. (House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights (2007) *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers Tenth Report of Session 2006-2007 volume 1.*)

The UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) gave evidence to the committee stating ‘attempts to dehumanise asylum seekers continue, despite a lessening in frequency since the well-documented most vitriolic reporting in 2003.’ (ibid, 98) The UNHCR also raised the issue of abuse of asylum seekers not meriting news coverage. This research project addressed these issues directly by way of a content analysis investigation of what is actually broadcast on the regional and national news.

Oxfam, in their evidence referred to research and monitoring of the media showing negative portrayals and misrepresentations which impact negatively on communities with regards to harassment and racial abuse. They also made the point that under Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) all individuals including refugees and asylum seekers have a right to both access to information and freedom of expression, they argue that this in turn “implies that a full range of refugee voices and information about refugees and asylum seekers should be reflected in the UK media.” (ibid, 99) The thesis examines these issues raised by Oxfam in both the content analysis and the audience reception which included interviews with refugees seeking asylum. I identified negative portrayals and misrepresentations in the descriptions, discussions and images of criminality within immigrant groups, including people seeking asylum, as well as in the descriptions, discussions, and images of the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’, which also included people seeking asylum, as two of the main areas of coverage within the national news reports. Another key theme examined was that of images, descriptions, and discussion of the difficulties and inefficiencies in the process of claiming asylum.

In their evidence the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) were concerned with the implications of UK press coverage of asylum issues for race relations. They regarded it as “potentially shaping the way in which sections of the public viewed asylum seekers, refugees, new migrants and even ethnic minorities more broadly.” They were also concerned with research findings with regards to the language the media used when reporting issues of asylum, for example, “flood”, “wave”, “bogus and “fraudulent”. They

also suggested that biased reporting “influenced perceptions and engendered feelings of cynicism in immigration caseworkers which in turn affected their decision making on individual cases concerning entry and asylum.” (ibid, 99) The thesis explores all of these concerns raised by the CRE.

The issue of hostile media coverage potentially influencing immigration caseworkers’ decisions was also addressed by the Race Monitor, who has a statutory duty to report to Parliament, in the *UK Independent Race Monitor’s Report* in 2005 where it was stated:

I am concerned about the effect of hostile, inaccurate and derogatory press comment and comments on a few politicians. I do not doubt that this negative atmosphere can affect decision-making on individual cases, as it makes caution and suspicion more likely. The Government has an important role to play in helping to set the tone and encouraging balanced and well-informed discussions on immigration. Repeated reference to abuse and reducing the numbers of asylum applicants tend to reinforce popular misconceptions that abuse is enormous in scale when in fact it is a small proportion of people who enter the UK. (Coussey, 2005: 100)

The thesis engaged with the issue of so called abuse of the asylum system in both the content analysis and the audience reception work. The afore mentioned evidence and more resulted in the House of Lords and House Of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights stating :

We are concerned about the negative impact of hostile reporting and in particular the effects it can have on individual asylum seekers and the potential it has to influence the decision making of officials and Government policy. We are also concerned about the possibility of a link between hostile reporting by the media and physical attacks on asylum seekers. (ibid., 101)

The audience reception included interviews with refugees seeking asylum which enabled the research to examine the effects of news reporting on them personally. Academics also recognised the important role of the media and specifically television and called for further research into its potential to influence public opinion:

Widening the scope of the research to cover both radio and television would also be useful. Given the importance of television it is important in the future to consider whether television has been a significant influence on public opinion, in setting the agenda or in framing the content of the debate by its use of news and commentary programmes. (Kaye, 1998: 179)

Nissa Finney in her 2003 thesis: *Asylum Seeker Dispersal: Public Attitudes and Press Portrayals around the UK*, was surprised that so little research has focused on the local media, given its recognised significance for community relations:

It is crucial then that media effects research should not ignore the local. Although on a national scale hostile media coverage and public attitudes appear ingrained in British culture, the local scale provides a promising avenue for generating a more informed, balanced and humane discussion. There is a potential to change the debate from the 'bottom-up'. (Finney, 2003: 276-277)

ICAR, The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugee Issues, based at Kings College London, in their 2004 study, *Media Images and Community Impact a Study*, highlighted the need for research to focus on:

The impact of television and broadcast media images of asylum seekers and refugees as well as the impact of political images on television and the impact of hostile media coverage on asylum seekers and refugees themselves. (ICAR, 2004)

In line with those views expressed by Ron Kaye they also state that the role of television's potential to influence public opinion on asylum issues needs to be further explored

My research is responding to these indicators from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, UK politicians and academics which are also echoed by the afore mentioned NGOs and others such as the Refugee Council and the Red Cross of the necessity for more research into television coverage of asylum issues. Specifically in terms of the impact on the subject audience of refugees seeking asylum, regional television coverage and the potential to influence the public all of which are areas my research engaged with.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS STRUCTURE

The objective of chapter one, as an introduction and background to the research project has been to locate UK and regional television news coverage of ‘asylum seekers’, refugees and migrants within the current socio-political context and explain in detail why the coverage merits of critical study, especially at this point in time.

Chapter two reviews the relevant academic literature and highlights the relative lack of attention to UK and regional news coverage of issues in relation to ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees and also the impact of this coverage on the subject audience of refugees seeking asylum, as well as the impact and potential influence of the coverage on the public. The methods of investigation are briefly delineated on the basis that academic examination of the afore mentioned areas has been mainly focused on the content of the print media, with very little focus on both the content and the audience reception of television news coverage. The chapter addresses literature which relates to ‘race’, migration, asylum and refuge as well as audience reception. It argues that the literature surrounding audience reception of ‘race’/race and migration is well developed in comparison with academic attention to refugees and asylum and despite some attention to refugees and asylum, there has been no significant attempt to explore audience reception of both general audiences and the audience which is seeking asylum, the subject audience. The chapter concludes by positioning the research alongside a body of literature which examines how the mass media represent refugees seeking asylum.

Chapter three outlines the methods used and justification for the research model. The methods used to gather the empirical data are discussed in relation to the field of study, UK and regional television news coverage of ‘asylum seekers’, refugees (content of UK and regional news coverage; audience reception of UK and regional news coverage). The background to interviews with the three groups, refugees seeking asylum, the general public and workers in the field, is discussed in relation to participant observation undertaken in an asylum support centre and a secondary high school, access and conduct of the interviews. The chapter also addresses the purpose of the adapted script writing exercise and the ethical factors which guided the study.

Chapter four presents the detailed content analysis of both UK and regional news coverage of issues related to asylum and refuge. The chapter highlights the differing approaches in both framework and presentational structure of regional news programming from that of the national news programmes’ in the sample.

Chapter five is the first of three audience reception chapters. This chapter details and analyses the responses from the in-depth interviews and the adapted script writing exercise by fifteen workers in the asylum and refuge field. This chapter explores their sources of information, the nature of their belief systems and processes of accepting or rejecting television messages within this sample section. It was important to include their perspective, in order, to further examine the possible impact of television coverage on audiences who are expected to be more informed on the substantive topic than the general public.

This section's opinion of the media is of particular importance as they have professional experience of and direct contact with refugees seeking asylum which makes them an informed audience. It is then significant that this section with such wide experience of the issues related to asylum and refuge reject the television coverage. They are precisely the group who need to be included in the national coverage as they are in the regional coverage (see chapter four) as their experience of the issues and knowledge of the day to day reality of seeking asylum is a valuable media resource.

Chapter six is the second of the three audience reception chapters. This chapter details and analyses the responses from the in-depth interviews and the adapted script writing exercise by 30 members of the general public. As with the previous chapter this chapter explores their sources of information, the nature of belief systems and processes of accepting or rejecting television messages within this sample section.

The memories and beliefs of this group with regards to television coverage of issues of refuge and asylum are of value as representatives of the general public and as average viewers of television with no vested interest in the particular issue. It is of considerable importance that they are a relatively uninformed audience on this specific issue. They represent precisely the group who need to be informed by the national coverage.

Chapter seven is the third of the three audience reception chapters. This chapter details and analyses the responses from the in-depth interviews and the adapted script writing exercise by fifteen refugees seeking asylum. As with the previous chapter this chapter explores their sources of information, the nature of belief systems and processes of accepting or rejecting television messages within this group, as well as presenting an exploration of the impact of the substantive topic on the subject audience. The aim was to design a study which would include the perspective and personal experience of the subject

audience, ‘asylum seekers’. This was to allow their voice to be heard in audience reception studies as very few audience reception studies have included this perspective (see chapter two), and to ascertain if their personal experience results in differences in perspectives on television representations. There has been no significant attempt to examine the impact or effect of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge on this particular audience.

Their opinion of the media is of particular importance as they are the subject audience. It is then significant that this section with such wide experience of the issues related to asylum and refuge reject the television coverage. They need to be included in the national coverage as they are in the regional coverage (see chapter four) as their personal experience of the issue is a valuable media resource. This chapter also details the overall conclusions from the three sample sections of interviewees.

Chapter eight discusses the research findings and how they relate to existing literature and current debates in the field of media, cultural studies and migration studies. The chapter addresses the implications of this research for other groups such as policy makers, NGOs, campaigners and programme makers. Finally, the chapter concludes by identifying some possible future areas of research, such as news production and regional news.

Chapter Two: Audience reception and race / 'race', migration and refugee / asylum literature

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses how audience reception has been discussed and positions this thesis study in relation to the existing academic literature. This thesis is concerned principally with the audience reception processes around the issue of asylum (how are audiences influenced, how this links to audience understandings of this specific issue). Although audience reception has always been important to studies of the media, audience reception of the issue of asylum on television and its impact on people seeking asylum are still relatively understudied. Most sociological studies have focused on 'race' or migration rather than asylum. The studies of 'race' and migration provide a valuable point of comparison for analysis of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge.

This chapter therefore begins by briefly identifying some key areas of investigation within the sociology of audience reception before exploring the literature which relates to 'race', migration, asylum and refuge. The first section of the chapter identifies theories and studies of audience reception. The second part identifies studies of 'race', migration, asylum and refuge. Finally, the thesis is positioned within critical media studies and Glasgow Media Group work which is concerned with the 'definitional power' of the media and perception and belief, research which has been categorised as 'public knowledge' research.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION/THEORY

Audience reception/theory, which dates back to the earliest developments of media studies, is of great importance to the sociological study of the media as a whole. It is a rich source of argument and debate for sociologists and it is an important tool for media researchers. As a site of conflict and tensions it encourages researchers to engage in new thinking and development in order for researchers to direct their primary scientific attentions to the sociology of these contradictions (Williams, 2003: 126). Audience reception research enables researchers to investigate public attitudes, beliefs and behaviours whilst looking at how audiences develop ways of understanding and how these existing ways of understanding can be changed. In examining the conceptualisation of the audience within

audience reception theory we can witness a historical trajectory of contestation which is still evident today within contemporary audience reception theory and studies.

Active audience: theory and research

In the 1940s, Merton, Katz and Lazarsfeld examined the role of personal influence. They emphasised the mediating role of social networks with regards to public responses to media messages. Lazarsfeld et al. with their study *The People's Choice* (1944) highlighted the social context of viewing the media. They posit a two step flow model of media effects. Key individuals, 'opinion leaders' were responsible for transmitting ideas from the media source to social groups whereby the 'opinion leaders' in an active fashion pass on ideas from the media through discussion. The audience are no longer passive victims of external stimulus as they consume the media within a social context, viewing with others and capable of rejecting ideas. This investigation of American voting patterns suggested that media election campaigning made little difference to the voting behavior of the vast majority. However, there is in this approach no reference made to ruling elites within society.

This idea of a critical consciousness was extended by Blumler and Katz in 1974 when their 'uses and gratifications' approach switched focus from how the media influences the audience to that of how the audience uses the media. They identified five key elements in this model 1. Active audience members. 2. The audience members have power to exercise choice over consumption. 3. The media is competing for need-fulfillment. 4. The audience can identify in a reflective process media consumption goals. 5. The researcher must suspend value judgments of these audience goals. Thus the audience has multi-dimensional needs which results in a wide plurality of media products which encourages free choice on the part of the audience. This individualistic approach ignored the social context of individuals' media usage. Therefore, although Blumler and Katz's approach revealed a mediated and complex relationship between the audience and the media, it was limited in terms of relating content and meaning to beliefs and social values as they were focusing on a single message. Philo explains 'Messages are situated within political and cultural assumptions about what is normal and acceptable within the society.' (Philo, 1990: 5)

In a more recent investigation, Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt examined this 'critical consciousness' by way of focusing on the 'critical viewer'. In their research *Talk on*

Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate, they investigated the processes of audience reception of audience discussion programmes. They examined the process of the construction of discourses to achieve effect. They conducted twelve focus groups with a total of 69 participants; each group viewed a recorded episode of *Kilroy*. They also conducted fourteen in-depth interviews with participants in audience discussion programmes, however, only two in-depth interviews were conducted with viewers. They argued that ‘ordinary private discourse’ can be transformed as a result of ‘the construction of social identities’ (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:5). They assert that ‘social relations’ may be framed by ‘talk about television’, ‘we negotiate our identities through talking about programme content and may reject people who make different interpretations’, (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:6). This is an area of great interest to my own research as the project is concerned with the question of if and how television constructs the identity of ‘asylum seekers’. The project investigates the impact of television representation and reproduction of asylum issues on ‘social relations’.

These authors, then believe that the ‘diverse and unpredictable social conditions’ under which audience reception occurs are influential in circulating meaning. They are concerned with the issue of whether the audience is ‘critical or passive, analytic or superficial, informed or ignorant of the textual forms and production conventions’ (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:71). It is their assertion that critical (a distanced, informed or analytic approach not merely a negative or rejecting one) responses reveal the relationship between ‘interpretive resources’, ‘media meanings’ and ‘social knowledge’ (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:71).

They explain that audience reception, ‘listening to the audience’, reveals people’s awareness of programmes as constructed entities as they comment on biases within the production processes, format constraints, scheduling and the effects and uses of programmes. Viewers are also able to comment upon ‘coherence of arguments’, ‘adequacy of data presented’, ‘motivations behind media appearances’ and ‘what could have been said but was omitted’ as well as ‘referring to alternative frameworks’ (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:71). They are, therefore, ‘active, selective and informed viewers’ (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:72). In this vein their approach to this area concentrated on political, critical and evaluative contributions from focus group members in order to ‘reconsider the idea of the critical’ (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:72).

They reveal the audience to be unstable in their evaluative and critical responses (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994: 87). They are able to either occupy or challenge their inscribed subject position by connecting to their own experiences or by rejecting media assumptions. They conclude that being critical is a 'social response' whereby 'people's critical judgments draw on social knowledge' which is dependent on 'shared discourse of production/genre knowledge', 'shared representation of expertise and ordinariness', 'shared values about public sphere and public interest, the place of commercial interests and private experiences' (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:90). The viewer uses resources such as prejudices and stereotypes, social norms and morality (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:90). They further conclude that the 'products of critical response are social' as these responses generate 'social identities for themselves and others'. Thus 'critical response positions viewers as public citizens rather than private consumers, and so may result in a critical public opinion with consequences for the involvement of ordinary people in public argument and public policy making.' (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:91) Therefore the occurrence of politics is within a diversive, shared and discursive context and the centrality of common sense assumptions, public opinion and shared knowledge (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:91).

There is a noticeable absence of any link made to the work of the Glasgow Media Group. Many of these findings mirror those of Greg Philo of the Glasgow Media Group. Four years previously in *Seeing and Believing*, Philo revealed the audience to be influenced by many of the factors regarded as significant to Livingstone and Lunt, particularly the influence of diversity and 'social conditions' within the circulation of meanings and the impact of 'social relations'. Yet there is no mention made of any Glasgow Media Group research. Their attempt to 'reconsider the idea of the critical' (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:72) appears to have omitted seminal research in this very area.

Active audiences: theory and research

The then Marxist theorist, Stuart Hall, as director of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies from 1969 placed politics and ideology firmly back on the media research agenda. The audience was capable of individual understandings which could resist, reject and 'read' texts in 'subversive' ways. In his 1973 paper *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, Hall's account offers a communicative framework that incorporates the different moments involved in sending and receiving television messages. Hall argued that texts are 'polysemic', meaning there are multiple readings

possible, although they are not merely individual readings. He argued that the message decoded by the audience may not match the encoded message of the programme or film maker.

Hall argued that a 'preferred reading' inscribes the dominant ideology in the media text however audiences may not adopt this reading. He identified three positions of decoding for audiences, 1. The dominant: decodes within the terms of the reference of the code. 2. The negotiated: negotiating and applying the dominant framework to 'local conditions'. 3. The oppositional: challenges the hegemonic framing. Hall retains the terms 'dominant ideology' and 'dominant order' whilst also acknowledging that a reader decodes a message in opposition to or in negotiation with the dominant ideology. Hall's model of a diverse and active audience took into account the role of social and cultural factors in the audiences' process of decoding and emphasised the importance of social and political context (for critique see Morley, 1992; Stevenson, 1995; Philo, 2008).

Hall's model prompted ethnographic research into television. This opening up of the cultural, political and social contexts laid the foundations for empirical research with audiences in Britain. However, Morley (1992) points out several flaws with the encoding/decoding model. He highlights difficulties with the concept of 'preferred reading' arguing that the concept cannot be transposed to the realm of fiction as it 'always runs the risk of reducing the fictional text to the mere vehicle of a banal substantive proposition which can then be labelled as "ideological"', (Morley, 1992: 123). He further argues that the formulation of 'preferred reading' neglects the level 'at which polysemy is already structured and limited by the syntagmatic relations established between the separate signs as they are organized in the text' (Morley, 1992: 124). Greg Philo of the Glasgow Media Group highlighted what he regards as a 'fundamental error' in the encoding/decoding model with regards to audiences rejection of messages. He asserts that the Glasgow Media Group's:

Work on television news showed that audiences within a culture do not typically create a new meaning with each "reading" or encounter with an encoded message. Rather, they are likely to criticise the content of the message in relation to another perspective, which they hold to be correct. They are therefore aware of the encoded meaning and the manner in which it has been constructed, they just do not agree with it (Philo, 2008: 537).

He also points out that processes of logic within audience activity have not been taken into account with Hall's approach as well as the limitations of the focus on class. He argues:

The main problem which I have with the encoding/decoding model is the impact which it had on the subsequent development of media and cultural studies. The view which many took from it was that audiences could resist messages, safe in the conceptual boxes of their class and culture, and renegotiating an endlessly pliable language. This led eventually to the serious neglect of issues of media power. (Philo, 2008: 541)

Interestingly, in his paper, Hall also comments on the processes of production and its role in constructing messages. He locates production 'within the wider socio-cultural and political structure'. Hall asserts that there is a 'discursive' aspect:

Within the production process as it is framed throughout by meanings and ideas: knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, historically defined technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audience (Hall, 1973).

The encoding/decoding model's potential was tested and applied, at the empirical level, by David Morley in his work *The Nationwide Audience* (1980). Morley analysed audience responses to the BBC *Nationwide* news and current affairs programme. The sample consisted of 26 groups of mainly between five and ten people, which totalled two hundred and three people. The groups viewed two episodes of *Nationwide* broadcast in 1976 and 1977 and their responses to these programmes provided the data for the research. This study confirmed Hall's theory of dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings of the text. However, Morley's findings also show the possibility for discontinuity of meaning or of the message being ignored by the audience, which means it will not be decoded at all. For example, he refers to a group of black students who 'make hardly any connection to the discourse of *Nationwide*. The concerns of *Nationwide* are not the concerns of their world. They do not so much produce oppositional reading as refuse to read it at all.', (Morley, 1980: 134). He also shows that there are different audience responses within the same class i.e. between working class trade union activists and those who are not activists. His research project indicated 'some of the ways in which social position and (sub) cultural frameworks may be related to individual readings.' (Morley, 1980: 163)

It must be noted that the criticisms levelled at Hall's encoding/decoding model by Philo (2008) may also be applicable to this research. The limitations of the model are evident in the lack of engagement with processes of logic and also within what Morley refers to as 'the critique of silence' offered by the black groups. Writing in *The 'Nationwide Audience'* postscript Morley recognises that 'Race is invoked as an explanatory factor on a rather *ad hoc* basis...but not explored as a structuring factor.' (Morley, 1992:123) Morley informs us that the apprentice groups interviewed, which consist of 7 groups, 6 of whom are all white and 1 of which is mainly white and total sixty nine people which is over one third of the entire sample, 'to some extent identify with the National Front.', (Morley, 1980: 138). However there is no reference made to this at all in the actual data analysis. We are also told that despite these groups being cynical and alienated from the programme they decoded most of the main items within established 'preferred readings' or the 'dominant framework' (Morley, 1980:138).

In light of the findings with regards to 'the critique of silence' within the black groups it seems that the identification with an extreme right wing racist organisation could have been of further interest to this investigation. It raises many socio-cultural and socio-political questions such as to what extent did these groups identify with the National Front and how did these views manifest themselves? What role, if any, did the media play in forming these extreme right wing racist views? If we can presume, as Morley argues, that the views formed by the group who stereotyped 'the "greedy car worker/mindless union militants"' presumably derived, at least in part from the media.' Does this mean we can also presume that the 7 apprentice groups 'derived' their extreme racist views 'in part from the media' (Morley, 1980: 127)? Did the black viewers believe *Nationwide* to be a racist or an anti-black programme? The black groups also rejected *Nationwide* as a part of a whole range of, largely, BBC broadcasting-including the news (Morley, 1980: 89). In light of Greg Dyke's criticism, in an interview on BBC Radio Scotland in 2001 when he was Director General, that the BBC's management structure is 98% white and his reference to the BBC as being 'hideously white' it seems that Morley's data may offer a valuable perspective on audience reception. Why is the BBC being rejected by the black groups? Morley notes that the black groups resented the 'exclusive attention to Britain' and 'the total absence of foreign or third world news' (Morley, 1980: 73). What is the significance of this finding when linked to 'race'? Is there a direct connection between the groups who identify with the National Front generally accepting 'preferred readings' and the 'dominant framework' and the black groups' *refusal* to read the messages? What is the role of 'race'

in these differences? This seems to be a clear example of what Philo refers to as a weakness in the model:

It misses important dimensions of audience activity but also underestimates the power of the media in shaping “taken for granted beliefs”. The conceptual arrangements appropriate to a class position are seen in the model as the key variable in evaluating a new message from the media. But this neglects the issue that the conceptual structures include “knowledges” about what typically occurs and assumptions about the rationality and legitimacy of action which may already have been subject to prior exposure to media messages. There is little room in the encoding/decoding model to investigate such a possibility (Philo, 2008: 542).

Morley himself acknowledges the limitations of and on his research when he states:

The relation of an audience to the ideological operations of television remains in principle an empirical question: the challenge is the attempt to develop appropriate methods of empirical investigation of that relation. (Morley, 1980: 162).

Significantly Morley’s inclusion of black audiences and his findings that black viewers were critical highlights the necessity for audience reception work to examine ‘race’ as an influence on audience readings.

A different approach to active audiences’ theory was utilised, with the focus on women as spectators, by theorist Ien Ang. It is this engagement by women that Ang studies in her work *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, (1985). Ang concentrates her study on the pleasure women take from watching soap opera. Ang advertised in a women’s magazine requesting people to write to her about their likes and dislikes with regards to the programme. The research focuses was thus on the reader of the message and not the message itself. Ang positions women’s engagement with soap in the realms of ‘melodramatic imagination’, ‘emotional realism’, and ‘the tragic structure of feeling’ (Ang, 1991: 478). She argues that these positions offer women entry into the pleasure zone of soap opera. Ang also states that ‘leaving out or cutting out questions which are seen as important in the social reality is functional for the soap opera as genre.’,

(Ang, 1991: 479) It is important to consider how a soap opera story line reflecting an issue such as child sexual abuse functions with regards to 'the social reality' they represent.

Ang argues that the meaning ascribed by formal and ideological structures of soap opera is dependent on the viewers' 'cultural orientations'. Thus meaning as a site of dominant ideology is reduced. Again we see elements of individuation connected to this argument. It is Ang's belief that the soap opera genre is distinctive from other genres in its concentration on 'emotional uncertainties or psychological conflicts relating to individual, personal existence' (Ang, 1991: 484). Yet these individuals function within a soap community. It is usually within these communities and with community support that individual conflicts are resolved.

Ang's negation of the 'social reality' spills over into advancing the argument that women viewing soap can take pleasure from 'imaginary identifications with the positions of 'cynical fatalism' or 'false hope' (Ang, 1985: 133). These positions are cited as positive for women on the grounds that 'at the level of fantasy we can occupy those positions without having to experience their actual consequences' (Ang, 1985: 134). What then of the viewers who do have to 'experience their actual consequences'? A percentage of the viewers of the UK melodramatic soap *Eastenders* child sexual abuse storyline have experienced child sexual abuse. This opens up the area of women then being actively encouraged to fantasise about being a victim of child sexual abuse. Is this a positive space for women to occupy?

Ang qualifies her argument with the statement 'Fantasy is therefore a fictional area which is relatively cut off and independent' (Ang, 1985: 135). There is perhaps too much emphasis on 'cutting off' in Ang's work (Miller and Philo, 1999: pp. 24-25). The audience become isolated individuals; there is no sense of the connectedness of an audience. bell hooks takes a very different stance on the subject of fantasy (hooks, 1990). Far from being isolationist, fantasy in hooks opinion can operate as a connective political force:

All too often our political desire for change is seen as separate from longings and passions that consume lots of time and energy in daily life. Particularly the realm of fantasy is often seen as completely separate from politics. Yet I think of all the time black folks (especially the underclass) spend just fantasizing about what our lives would be like

if there were no racism, no white supremacy. Surely our desire for radical social change is intimately linked with the desire to experience pleasure, erotic fulfilment, and a host of other passions (hooks, 1990: 12-13).

Many soap operas take pride in being situated in 'the real'. It therefore seems ironic that Ang's theories connote women's readings in the ethereal. It is this exclusion of 'the real' which neglects issues such as class, which Hall and others put on the agenda. It is of particular importance to the soap opera genre as much of it, such as *Eastenders*, specifically reflects working class culture. In doing so, they attract large working class audiences. Ang's study however, is of the American soap *Dallas*, which concerns the life of a wealthy oil rich Texan family. It is a far-removed world from the East End of London that the Albert Square of *Eastenders* represents. However, both soap operas occupy the genre of melodrama and in so doing portray serious and dramatic issues for example the character Sue-Ellen in *Dallas* is portrayed as an alcoholic.

The Glasgow University Media Group is critical of post-modernist approaches to media research and argues that within these approaches lies the danger of becoming disconnected from wider society and therefore unable to critically engage with it (Philo, 1999: xvi). They re-articulate the theoretical politics of media research in order to address issues of power, influence and effect of the media:

We have not in our work underestimated the capacity of audiences to engage actively with texts. But nonetheless, there is a powerful body of evidence which shows the influence of media messages on the construction of public knowledge as well as the manner in which evaluations are made about social action and what is seen as necessary, possible and desirable in our world. For us, media power is still very much on the research agenda. (Philo, 2008: 542)

This emphasis on critical engagement with 'media power' is evident in the group's research in areas such as war and conflict (Miller, 1994; Philo and McLaughlin, 1995; Philo and Berry, 2004) industrial disputes (Eldridge, 1968; Philo, 1990), AIDS (Kitzinger, 1993), child sexual abuse (Kitzinger and Skidmore, 1995; Henderson, 1996), race and migration (Philo and Beattie, 1999) and refugees (McLaughlin, 1999; Philo et al., 1998). They emphasise the need for social science researchers to take an empirical approach to media research and the necessity of investigating relationships between production, content

and reception, 'the circuit of communication'. This approach was adopted by Greg Philo in his research on industrial disputes, Jenny Kitzinger in her research on issues of child sexual abuse and Lesley Henderson in her research into social issue story lines in UK soap operas.

Key studies by the Glasgow Media Research Group

Greg Philo in his study *Seeing and Believing: The Influence of Television*, (1990) examined the processes of acceptance and rejection of media messages. The research provides comprehensive and fruitful insights into cultural differentiation linked to race/ethnicity, gender, class and geographical location. In an attempt to examine viewers' understanding of the media and how this relates to their 'existing system of beliefs' Philo introduced a new method of research, the script-writing exercise, which enables researchers to collect a wealth of data.

Focus groups were given a set of still images taken from television news coverage of the 1984/5 miners strike and asked to produce a script related to them. These scripts then formed the basis for discussion in focus groups. The use of still images enabled a more effective analysis of language and recollection of media messages without supplying information to which they might otherwise not have been exposed. This is a research method I have utilised and developed in my own research project. Importantly this method was enhanced by an additional series of questions to be answered individually and these written answers were then clarified in follow up interviews. Philo conducted the research with sixteen groups categorised as groups with special knowledge or experience, occupational groups, special interest groups and residential groups. Follow up individual interviews were conducted with 169 people. This method was designed in order to establish the groups' ability to reproduce key themes of television news in their written accounts and significantly to examine the conditions under which they believed or rejected what they had understood.

Philo's findings result in a substantial contribution to the field of audience reception theory and method. One year after the strike had ended the groups were able to reproduce both language and themes from the news coverage. Due to the rigorous method applied to data collection Philo also established a link between direct experience and viewers' interpretation of television news. In doing so this method moves away from a mere memory exercise of recording and detailing what viewers remember and opens audience reception study to concepts of perception and belief. This focus on underlying concepts

and further studying why viewers believe what they believe to some degree acts as the missing link with regards to validating the concept of media influence. Despite the fact that most of the picketing during the strike was peaceful Philo's research determined that the media's 'relentless focus' (Philo, 1990: 148) on incidents which were violent 'establishes for many of the audience the belief that violence was a persistent feature of most picketing' (Philo, 1990:148). A total of 54% of the general sample of the study 'believed that picketing was mostly violent' and the overwhelming source given for these beliefs were 'television and the press, with the emphasis on TV' therefore 'some key elements of belief were being provided by the media' (Philo,1990:148). Philo takes audience reception research a step further by examining the additional factors influencing belief and introduces researchers to a myriad of complexities associated with the concept of belief. By conducting research with trade unionists and viewers sympathetic to the striking miners Philo recognised 'political cultures do not always insulate those within them from the preferred media view.' (Philo, 1990: 6) Some of these people did in fact accept the news account of picketing as mainly violent.

The concept of belief is revealed to be entirely fluid and open to a variety of influences including information transmitted by the media. Other factors noted for their ability to influence perception, belief, understanding and memory are processes of logic, personal experience, personal history, class experience, 'race' and gender. These factors may produce contradictory elements within our beliefs.

Where Morley (1980) failed to investigate fully racialised factors within audience activity Philo's racial awareness reveals its significance. The issue was addressed by studying two groups of London Transport Workers, one wholly white and one wholly black. There was a stark contrast attitudinally towards the police. The group with black participants strongly associated the violence with the police. They cited the experience of the inner-city riots of 1985 as an influence on their negative perception of the police thus 'the connotations that the police had for them could act as an additional powerful influence in their interpretation of the news' (Philo, 1990: 78). Interestingly another group of white middle class participants displayed a high degree of racial awareness with regards to relations between the police and black communities. Some participants believed the police were 'anti-black or anti-coloured' and 'more physical with coloureds' (Philo, 1990: 129). These criticisms were related to actual incidences of racist police violence. It is evident here that 'peoples' experience as well as cultural dimensions can produce wide variations of memory and belief' (Philo, 1990: 131).

Another critical finding from the research is the use made of logic. Philo uncovered the considerable role of logical processes in interpretation, belief or rejection of media content. Notably 9% of the participants (including people who were not sympathetic to the miners) logically deduced the fact that in general people are not inclined to violence and the huge numbers picketing could not equate with widespread violence (Philo, 1990: 151). The application of logic therefore made it more 'possible to produce a rational critique of media content whose validity can be argued beyond the preferences of a given subculture' (Philo, 1990: 205).

Another point of interest specific to my research are the study's findings with regards to regional differences. Philo discovered that perception was conditioned by regional differences with many participants citing the regional press in the North as an alternative source of information (Philo, 1990: 179). This finding was echoed by Nissa Finney (2003: 220) in relation to issues of asylum and the press. This crucial area of alternative information is currently an area at great risk both in television and the press. The recent OFCOM (Office of Communications) ruling on regional broadcasting claimed that ITV's UK-wide network of local news programming was unsustainable. With regards to the Scottish service it states:

We have decided to reduce stvs obligations in some genres, including news and other programmes produced in Scotland. To maintain the future of regional news in southern Scotland, Border and Tyne Tees areas will be served by a single regional main weekday bulletin. (*OFCOM News Release*, Jan 2009)

This has led directly to reductions in regional news services. One of the Scottish services I have been monitoring, STV (Scottish Television), have reduced their service and the public have lost their morning bulletin completely and seen their lunchtime news service reduced from a 30 minute show to a three minute bolt-on bulletin at the end of the national news. The impact of the loss of regional provision of news services is an area that requires further investigation.

Philo's study 'does point to the powerful impact of the media, both in limiting what audiences can see and in providing key elements of political consciousness and belief.', (Philo, 1990: 205). His study cements the interconnection of psychological, social and political dimensions and it is creative pioneering research which yields significant insight

into the underlying common principles of audience reception. These principles are further investigated by Jenny Kitzinger of the Glasgow Media Group.

In her important interventionist work *Audience Understandings of Media Messages about Child Sexual Abuse: An exploration of audience reception and media influence* (Kitzinger, 1999), Jenny Kitzinger noted :

It is necessary to reassert that the media can have, a powerful influence.

The more important goal of research should be to identify how this influence is mediated by factors both within the media representation and within the broader reception context. It is this which will allow us to refine textual analysis, develop alternative media, and to expand our understandings of the social and political context which allows for resistance and transformation' (Kitzinger, 1999: 46).

Kitzinger draws on the work of the Glasgow Media Group to call for 'new effects' research. This research is firmly rooted in the ethnographic tradition in terms of 'new' audience reception work. The research is informed by Hall's sociology of mass communication whilst developing new theories and methods. One method utilised by Kitzinger is that of 'media templates' (Philo, 1990) which she argues enables the exploration of structures that can influence the representation of an issue, in this case the issue of child sexual abuse. These structures allow for the possibility of the programme influencing viewers in terms of the subject matter raised, therefore demonstrating the socio-cultural impact these formal modes can have on story, issue and audience. Kitzinger argues: 'Theorising and analysing media templates is thus crucial to developing understandings of media power' (Kitzinger, 1999: 101).

Another research method used by Kitzinger is the script-writing exercise; this data collection technique was developed at the Glasgow Media Research Unit (Philo, 1990) and adapted by Kitzinger. This is a method utilised in my own research. The case study used in the focus groups scriptwriting exercise was that of 'the Orkney case' where in March 1991 four different families from the Orkney Islands in Scotland had nine children removed from them and taken into care in a series of 'dawn raids'. All of the children were returned to their family homes five weeks later and the actions of the social workers were heavily criticised.

The script-writing exercise established that a wide range of groups both recalled and commonly understood ‘the media reporting of Orkney as a place and a community’ (Kitzinger, 1999: 198). Scripts were reconstructed which closely echoed the actual news reports, some of which were ‘startlingly accurate’ (Kitzinger, 1999:199). Kitzinger’s research demonstrated many factors that were influential in terms of the media defining public issues, framing understandings, shaping beliefs, identities and actions. These factors included dramatic personal account, story branding, rhetorical location and the inclusion and exclusion of particular facts and explanations. She also identified the important role of class, sexuality, gender, national and ethnic identity in audience reception.

Lesley Henderson of the Glasgow Media Group, produced a thesis *Social Issue Story Lines In British Soap Opera* (2002) which also locates soap opera in a ‘public knowledge project’. This is a site more usually associated with news and current affairs. She is concerned with the ‘definitional power of the media’. Henderson also utilises the Glasgow Media Group’s data collection method, the scriptwriting exercise, to examine audiences beliefs and memories of media output. Like Kitzinger she used photographs to enable the participants to express their own agendas with their own language, unaffected by viewing whole scenes on video with original language, an approach I utilised in my research.

Henderson’s research, like Kitzinger’s, established that participants could reproduce dialogue almost word for word as well as being able to recall imagery several months after a programme was first broadcast. The reception study also showed that the viewers deployed patterns of meaning not infinite meanings; whilst their responses might differ, their patterns of meaning did not. Her investigation of production matters present it as a ‘site of struggle’ (Henderson, 2002: 217), by looking at factors influencing the development of story lines and identified these as the hierarchy within broadcasting, commercial necessities and the socio-cultural positioning of the topic. This research demonstrated the importance of soap operas with regards to both raising public awareness and propagating misconceptions.

The Glasgow Media Group focused media research into areas of audience beliefs within audience reception and in so doing they showed that the media is a main source of information for audiences. They also presented empirical evidence as to how popular beliefs can be derived from media portrayals and how media accounts can influence public hostility. This emphasises the need for current media research to challenge critically media misinformation. This is an area of importance to my research project which examines

empirically audience beliefs and the influence on them of media portrayals and accounts. They also assert the importance of the media developing critical and alternative accounts. This technique of examining the processes through which audiences accept, believe or reject messages demonstrated personal experience, logic and cultural affinities alongside value systems as three significant factors (Philo, 1999: 282-284).

This is not an exhaustive investigation of audience reception theory rather it is a critical summary of audience theory developments. My own research into audience reception of television coverage of asylum issues draws heavily on the insights of the Glasgow Media Group audience theories hence the focus on them. The active audience of Merton, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1944) are no longer influenced directly by the media but have become mediators of the flow of information. The ‘uses and gratifications’ approach of Blumler and Katz (1974) whilst researching the psychological and social needs of the audience failed to investigate the social context in which the audience used the media.

Hall’s (1973) encoding and decoding model transforms the audience into diverse and active audiences who are influenced by cultural, political and social factors. However Morley’s (1980) application of this model revealed its limitations with regards to investigating fully these factors. Ang’s diverse and active audiences seem to be invisible in the empirical sense of audience reception research; they have been reduced to text in the form of the products of letter writers. The Glasgow Media Group makes the audiences visible again with their focus on empirical research of audience memories and beliefs. In focusing on beliefs they engage with cultural, political and social factors influencing and formulating these beliefs. At the same time they accord the audiences the autonomy of a perceptible and discernible voice through empirical methods such as interviews and focus groups. However, it must be noted that as with all sociological research that voice is mediated by the researchers. The next section focuses on research of media representations of race/‘race’, migration, refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ with in-depth concentration on audience reception studies. The subject matter is given context by inclusion of related theoretical issues.

RACE/‘RACE’, MIGRATION, REFUGEES and ‘ASYLUM SEEKERS’ IN THE MEDIA

In line with the conception of sociology as the study of problems within society, this research project is positioned within a long history, going back to Kendall and Wolf’s

research into white American men's reaction to anti-racist cartoons in 1949 (cited in Curran, 2002:163), within media studies researching media coverage and audience reception of race/'race' and migration which has developed more recently to include refugees and 'asylum seekers' (Ames, 1938; Kendall and Wolf, 1949; Castles and Kosack, 1973; Hartman and Husband, 1974; Hall *et al.*, 1978; Said, 1978; Van Dijk, 1991; Philo and Beattie, 1999; Philo *et al.*, 1999; Cohen, 2002; Buchanan, et al., 2003; Finney, 2003; Welch and Schuster, 2005). Simon Cottle reminds us that 'The media occupy a key site and perform a crucial role in the public representation of unequal social relations and the play of cultural power.', (Cottle, 2000: 2).

Race relations research

Castles and Kosack (1973) in *Immigrant Workers and Class Structures in Western Europe*, found a number of similarities between immigrants in the four countries studied. These were a subordinate position on the labour market, concentration in run-down areas, poor housing, lack of educational opportunities, widespread prejudice, and discrimination from the subordinate populations and authorities. Castles and Kosack argue that the capitalist system creates problems for which it then uses immigrant workers as scapegoats. They have become a convenient explanation for problems such as low wages, housing shortages and unemployment. They argue that in reality 'immigration brings considerable gains for capitalists' (Castles and Kosack, 1973: 478) and that it is capitalism's deficiencies which create inadequate living conditions through mechanisms such as deflated wages and unemployment. In the tradition of Castles and Kosack, Rex and Tomlinson's 1979 study of immigrants in Handsworth utilised a 'race relations' model. The research positioned immigrants as an underclass facing discrimination in employment, housing and education.

The 'race relations' framework is now one of the problematics of 'race'. The idea of 'race' has shifted significantly from the biological determinism of its earlier conception to that of investigating it as a social construct (Said, 1978; McKlintock, 1995; Pieterse, 1995). John Solomos states:

- (a) that 'race' cannot be the object of analysis in itself, since it is a social construction that requires explanation; (b) that the object of analysis should be the process of 'racialization' or 'racial categorization', which takes place within the context of specific economic, political and ideological relations (Solomos, 1986: 99).

However, it is also argued that race and racism are phenomenologically real ‘and the superficial nature of early and recent race theory has not stopped race from influencing human interaction’ (Niro, 2003: 8). Niro asserts that placing class over race limits the voice and the ability of racially marked individuals to speak for themselves as they have done so when mobilised in the battles against imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and racism, ‘denying the existence of race also raises the political barrier.’, (Niro, 2003: 8).

The American Sociological Association issued a statement in 2003 entitled *The Importance of Collecting Data and Doing Social Scientific Research on Race*. They reminded us that the scientific agenda of sociology is focused on researching consequences and causes of social inequalities and that ‘racial statuses, although not representing biological differences are of sociological interest in their form, their changes, and their consequences.’ There is then a need for balance between traditional ethnicity and post-modern identities, I would argue we have come to a point where what we should be investigating is the concept of race within ‘race’, race/‘race’. This is apparent within my own research project where I utilised the process of self-identification. The process revealed that whilst I as a researcher had adopted the language of ‘race’ and racialisation the vast majority of the interviewees self-identified in terms of the traditional ethnicity race model of black and white (see chapters 4, 5 and 6). As a social science researcher I am aware of the need to utilise both constructs and not to be limited by either. C Wright Mills tells us as researchers:

If the individuals very nature cannot be understood without close reference to social reality, then we must analyze it in such reference. Such analysis includes not only the locating of the individual, as a biographical entity, within various inter-personal milieux-but the locating of these milieux within the social structures which they form. (Mills, 2000:160-161)

This stands in stark contrast to Robert Miles’ assertion ‘If social scientists retain the idea of ‘race’ as an analytical concept to refer to the social reproduction and consequences, it necessarily implicitly carries the meaning of its use in the everyday world’ (Miles, 1993: 3). A range of writers have developed sophisticated frameworks for discussing the social reality of ‘race’ such as Paul Gilroy, Omi and Winant. If race is phenomenologically real and a social reality which is a causal factor of social inequalities then it is imperative for sociologists to examine this phenomenon. There is a real danger of researchers shying away from this area of research as they are being made nervous and apprehensive by

statements such as Miles, which imply that researchers engaged in examining race as opposed to 'race' are somehow propagating racism. This accusatory language makes it difficult for researchers to engage with the debate as a whole and in turn can limit the research undertaken as it can act as a barrier to people entering the field at all. There is then a danger of research and social scientists being disabled rather than enabled in this field of enquiry, resulting in the baby being thrown out with the bathwater. Niro reminds us:

all the inverted commas in the world will not amend the fact that the word race is alive and well. Nor will the theoretical discussion of race transcend the "material consequences and correlates" that insist that race is marked on and under the skin, instantly recognizable by those who pass us on the street (Niro, 2003: 2).

Hall also reminded us in the context of his wish to see the word 'mugging' abolished: 'Unfortunately you cannot resolve a social contradiction by abolishing the label that has been attached to it' (Hall, 1978: vi11). These are important debates within the field of media and cultural studies and which will be returned to later and discussed in light of my research study. These debates must be taken into account when engaging with the following audience reception work. It is, therefore, imperative that the complexities of investigating race/'race' do not act as a deterrent for researchers to engage in this field of research within the broader framework of the study of racism in the social sciences and particularly audience reception studies.

Audience reception studies

Audience reception studies have highlighted the role of the mass media in contributing to the formation of people's beliefs and opinions with regards to race/'race', migration, refugees and 'asylum seekers' in the media. Research shows the representation in the main has been consistently framed in the negative as a source of 'moral panic', 'conflict', 'crisis' and 'threat'. The media preference is to 'scapegoat', 'stereotype' and 'criminalise' sometimes in a 'xenophobic' manner (Ames, 1938; Kendall and Wolf, 1949; Castles and Kosack, 1973; Hartman and Husband, 1974; Hall et al., 1978; Said, 1978; Van Dijk, 1991; Philo and Beattie, 1999; Philo et al., 1999; Cohen, 2002; Buchanan et al., 2003; Finney, 2003; Welch and Schuster, 2005). It is therefore imperative that research continues into this area as the problems identified have been consistent for over 70 years.

This then points to the necessity for a major intervention in order to impact upon it. Knowledge of the history of the field and of contemporary studies can only strengthen the ability of social science research to contribute to the necessary intervention.

Hartman and Husband in 1974 in *Racism and the Mass Media* studied the role of 'situational based knowledge' and 'media relayed knowledge' in conceptions of race. They revealed that 'the media are a more important source of knowledge and ideas than are personal contacts in areas where immigrant populations are small'. The study focused on attitudes and beliefs of adolescents but also included an adult sample, of some of the parents of the adolescents. They utilised semi-structured interviews with 563 adolescents and 317 parents and the adolescents also filled in a questionnaire. Their examination of 'situational based knowledge' took into account the functions of personal experience and they concluded that 'the dynamics of intergroup relations cannot be reduced to the laws of individual psychology' (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 205). Despite attitudinal and situational differences 'individuals appear to be deriving essentially similar pictures of the world from the media.' (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 208)

The media performed a valuable function in making people aware of the racial hostility and discrimination immigrants suffered with the inclusion of anti-racist and egalitarian values. However, people's perception from the media of immigrants as a problem and a threat was more conducive to developing hostility than acceptance. The mass media reinforced 'the prevailing negative definition of the significance of race in Britain' (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 208). The media perspective can encourage discrimination by making it appear reasonable to individuals who lack hostility and permitting hostile racists to perceive themselves as a 'virtual moderate' (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 209).

They recommended that journalists needed to increase 'self-awareness' by adopting a more positive attitude with regards to improving race relations. This could be done by challenging racial stereotypes and exposing injustices. Racist interpretations by the audience should be actively discouraged by 'searching journalism', a move away from the 'conflict framework' of 'racial news'. An example of this would be in debating the background to conflict rather than confining itself to monitoring symptoms. Therefore structural reasons for housing shortages and unemployment would both cut across 'scapegoating' and make visible the 'actual social inequalities' within the society in which the media operates, a society where 'scapegoating is a necessity for disguising the real conflicts within the social system' (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 209-214). Problematic's

of ‘race’ are evident from some of the language and theoretical conceptions of this study i.e. the reductionism of biology with the assertion that ‘race [...] is a biological fact’ (Hartman and Husband, 1974: 205; parenthesis added). Therefore Hartman and Husband’s study should be read within the context of contemporary historical limitations.

Many of the issues concerning immigration in the period studied by Hartman and Husband are now the same issues concerning asylum and refuge, in particular the perception of refugees seeking asylum as a problem and the strategy of scapegoating. Remarkably the issues around scapegoating in terms of immigration are identical to those within asylum and refuge, for example, unemployment and housing. This may indicate a shift in the treatment of refugee issues as a fundamental issue of human rights to a racialised problem along the same lines as immigration.

Teun Van Dijk in *Racism and the Press: Critical Studies in Racism and Migration* (1991) followed up earlier studies he had carried out about how white group members talk about ethnic minorities and in so doing verified in part Hartman and Husband’s findings. These studies alerted him to the vital role the media play in ‘the acquisition and uses of opinions about minority groups’ (Van Dijk, 1991: 7) though there is no very clear link made between the speech and the media. He asserts that with regards to the interpretation of ethnic events, the mass media provide an ideological framework. Thus the focus of the study is the ‘reproduction of racism, in white western society’ (Van Dijk, 1991: 19).

The methods of research employed by the study are qualitative discourse analysis combined with quantitative content analysis, these ‘are integrated within a more complex, interdisciplinary framework of socio-political and ideological theory formation and analysis’ (Van Dijk, 1991: 10). The empirical investigation consisted of samples of articles about ‘ethnic affairs’ from 1 August 1985 through to the 31 January 1986 from *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*. The analysis was updated with a brief examination of the same newspapers as well as *The Independent*, for the first six months of 1989. A comparative perspective is provided by analysis of the Dutch national press for the second half of 1985. In-depth interviews were carried out with 150 newspaper readers in Holland. The study also attempted to provide insight into production conditions of the news discourse by utilising materials such as empirical studies, letters to the author from various editors and ‘journalistic accounts of ethnic-opinions of news-makers and generally about reporting on race relations’ (Van Dijk, 1991: 10). The study also took into account the findings about employment of minority

journalists in the press in Europe and the USA. These findings however, are in part based on an 'informal survey' carried out by the author and his research team.

The study concludes from a review of earlier studies that there is prevalence towards defining minorities as a 'problem' and a 'threat', particularly in the popular press thus verifying the findings of Hartman and Husband (1974). There is also prevalence towards stereotyping. The 'informal survey' of employment practices revealed discrimination in hiring, news story assignments and promotion. The empirical study of readers suggests that the press is effective in reproducing racism as it constrains attitudes and opinions whilst manufacturing an 'ethnic consensus'. The discourse and content analysis showed that minorities are associated with stereotypical topics which are restricted in number such as violence, crime and immigration problems. Anti-racists and minorities are commonly associated with intolerance, crime, unreliability, conflict and reverse racism whilst white organisations and authorities' negative actions are minimised or ignored. The daily experience of racism is absent even in the 'liberal press' where racism is associated with the far right rather than with society itself. The study asserts this has led to a denial of the prevalence of racism.

Another problem highlighted by the study is that of ethnic minority institutions and group leaders not being considered to be credible sources. The study also argues that there is a correlation between the press and politicians' definitions of refugees as positive or negative and the attitudes they are confronted with by the general public.

This study is of interest to my research as it details the press and the general public's attitudes towards refugees, a specific area of my research. However, the complexities of the mixed methods approach of the study make it problematic to confirm the conclusions reached by the study. Van Dijk acknowledges himself the limitations placed upon his research.

He asserts the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to studying ethnic minority representations consisting of (1) Socio-political analysis. (2) Analysis based on recent structures and functions of news discourse. (3) Presupposition of a cognitive psychological account of readers' understanding and memories of news discourse. (4) The formation and change of ethnic beliefs, attitudes, or ideologies to be studied in the framework of new developments of the study of communication and social cognition. (5) These various lines

of enquiry are to be embedded within the broader framework of the study of racism in the social sciences.

However, Van Dijk then goes on to tell us that due to 'space limitations' whilst this study does focus on the analysis of news structures and content it 'only occasionally relates these with their cognitive, societal, political, or cultural contexts' (Van Dijk, 1991: 4-5). The reductive decision, to focus primarily on the content and structure, leads to the neglect of issues of audience reception as evident in the audience reception element of the study.

What, on the surface, as a researcher of audience reception of issues of asylum, appears to be a valuable resource of one hundred and fifty interviews on the subject of 'race' in the media on reading is reduced to a brief summary of 'some results' of the empirical study of white readers' responses. He then goes on to tell us that his audience reception research is based on the premise of additional research which 'shows that people remember very little of the news they see on television or read in the paper' (Van Dijk, 1991: 228). The Glasgow Media Group research has in fact shown that people have an incredible capacity for remembering what they have viewed or read and can even recall some of this word for word years after the original broadcast or publication (see Philo, 1990).

Therefore despite Van Dijk's claim that 'direct effects of news reporting can seldom be observed' (Van Dijk, 1991: 228) in actual fact the direct effect of recall and retention of media content and messages is easily observable in the audience reception work of the Glasgow Media Group. It was also observable in Van Dijk's study as 128 of the 148 readers interviewed were able to remember two years after their publication 'much of the details of the news stories' (Van Dijk 1991: 234) of the arrival of Tamil refugees.

However, Van Dijk problematically relates this finding to 'the well-known fact that most information people read in the papers is soon forgotten' (Van Dijk, 1991: 236) and uses this 'well-known fact' to conclude that 'ethnic events' are rather prominently represented in memory' (Van Dijk 1991: 236). If the 'well-known fact' is in fact highly questionable, as his empirical evidence and that of the Glasgow Media Group shows, then it follows that the conclusion is also questionable. As a researcher it is hard for me to deduce much at all from the interviews as they are practically nowhere to be seen and only 3 examples of the one hundred and forty eight interviewees' responses are included.

Glasgow Media Group research of asylum/refugee issues

The Glasgow Media Group's research on refugee issues has a different approach to textual analysis; their method of thematic analysis is designed to look at the linkage of language and wider social processes. In this way they are not only looking at descriptions but factors such as competing histories.

Greg Philo and Liza Beattie of the Glasgow Media Group in their work *Race, Migration and Media* (1999) examine the processes of the emergence of key themes in television news reports and how these themes are used to both structure and develop stories. It is also concerned with revealing how specific ways of understanding and viewpoints are preferred. The research employed the method of thematic analysis of TV news bulletins on BBC, Ch4, and ITV during a period of ten days, (11-20 February 1995) and textual and visual images in press reports. Thematic analysis breaks the news down into constituent parts such as key visual moments, reported statements, headlines and interview questions.

The findings show that the migration process was presented by news coverage 'in a mostly negative way'. The political views of the then Conservative Trade Minister Charles Wardle were prioritised and thus the news story focused on the 'threat' of illegal migration, which became a theme of news reports, based on Wardle's account of the scale of illegal migration. The contestation of this view, by any alternative sources of information, occurred only in the form of 'one-off references' and 'fragments' and despite the controversial nature of his views they were not challenged by any journalist. This focus on threat echoes the findings of Hartman and Husband (1974) and Van Dijk, (1991). So, notably this research is revealing similar findings for television, specific to refugees and people seeking asylum, as previous studies of the press with regards to race and migration.

The terminology used in reports was that of a 'natural disaster' such as: 'Flood of illegal immigrants', 'Unchecked flow of vast numbers of people', 'A tidal wave of refugees', this terminology 'creates fears and concern'. There was also a focus on numbers within the terminology: 'Thousands of illegal immigrants', 'Vast numbers', 'Mass immigration', 'Scale of the immigration problem', 'Half a million illegal immigrants', 'Hundreds of thousand of them' and 'Significant numbers of people'.

Figures on illegal migration were not qualified with sources or with reference to the fact that there are no definite figures available and that estimates vary wildly. Another problem

the research noted was that alternative accounts of the dominant themes were not explored and could become overwhelmed by the flow of coverage. Although the story was dismissed by some MPs and experts as an ‘artificial scare story’, the framework of the story gave no space to qualifying alternative views. A significant finding was the conflation of issues of asylum with illegal immigration with 124 negative references to migrants/illegal immigrants and the need for controls. There were 115 additional statements on the threat posed by Europe to Britain’s border controls. Against these, there were only 34 references to the pressure on ethnic minorities, to the plight of refugees, or criticising the flood theory (Philo and Beattie, 1999:192-193).

The research concludes that the structure of coverage had three important effects on news content and its relation to the public debate. Firstly the migration process itself is presented within a ‘narrowly defined understanding’. Secondly migration is seen as a ‘black/third world phenomenon’. The third element is regarded as ‘crucial’ by the research which states that the media context of migrants as a threat ‘provides a rationale for changes in asylum law’. The media played a role in creating a climate whereby this was made more possible. The research reveals ‘a news which was sometimes xenophobic in tone, which reinforced *our* identity and *their* exclusion and, perhaps more importantly, provided a rationale for the apparent need for exclusion’ (Philo and Beattie 1999: 196).

The Glasgow Media Group also looked at how television frameworks can change with regards to refugees and immigrants with Greg McLaughlin’s work *Refugees, Migrants and the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (1999). This research analysed how British television’s main news bulletins defined East German migrants before and after the opening up of the Berlin wall by employing the Glasgow Media Group method of thematic analysis. East German migration was reported in an ideological framework of ‘Cold War oppositions’, within this framework East German migrants were given the status of political refugees. This status was removed when the Berlin wall was opened and the Cold War framework collapsed. East German migrants were now posited within a ‘disaster/crisis’ framework. The terminology of ‘natural disaster’ echoed that of Philo and Beattie’s (1999) research, with ‘flood’, ‘pour’ and ‘stream’ being the most common descriptors. The military metaphor ‘invasion’ was also a descriptor in use. Official and estimated statistics were misreported which influenced the construction of the story. Philo and Beattie (1999) highlighted the same problem with regards to immigration figures in Britain.

The issue of Rwandan refugees was also examined by the Glasgow Media Group in their work *The Media and the Rwandan Crisis: Effects on Audiences and Public Policy* (Philo et al. 1999) which examined news coverage of the Rwanda refugee crisis of 1994. At the core of this crisis was the Hutu government's direction in April 1994 of the systematic genocide of Tutsi people and Hutu opposition. There then followed the victory of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), the Tutsi dominated army. Subsequently approximately one million Hutu refugees fled. Alongside a thematic analysis of news programmes on BBC1, BBC2, ITV and Channel 4 for the period of 15-21 July 1994, this research also focused on production factors by interviewing 27 press officers, journalists and NGO staff who were directly involved with the Rwanda crisis. As well as examining the quality of information available to television viewers another key issue looked at was that of the effect of television coverage on government responses and non-governmental organisations.

They identified six key themes relating to descriptions and causes of the crisis and prescriptions for resolving it. The first key theme identified was explanations of the refugee exodus. The second key theme identified was references to the RPF winning the war and setting up a government. The third key theme was the nature of the refugees and the problem that the Hutus are armed. The fourth key issue was the aid effort. The fifth key issue was prescriptions for what should be done. The sixth key issue was unexplained references to disaster/catastrophe/tragedy.

The research highlights what is missing from the coverage, in the main it was only BBC2 and Channel 4, both minority channels, which contextualised the issue and offered political explanations and background. Explanations, when present, were confused and fragmented but problematically most references offered no explanation at all. When the crisis was contextualised it was 'in the form of statements from high-status British government members' (Philo et al. 1999: 219). This led to the exclusion of both the colonial context and the role of contemporary Western powers such as France. The primary focus of French involvement was that of their humanitarian role whilst their implication in supporting the Hutu government before the genocide and their provision of arms to them received little or no attention. The study also shows how NGOs are in the business of attracting media attention in order to justify funding by being seen to be doing something, this resulted in attention to issues which received the most media exposure (such as orphans) at the expense of the crucial need for digging latrines to control cholera.

The study was firm in concluding ‘The issue is not of individual journalists and the quality of their stories’ (Philo et al. 1999: 226) but rather one of the refugee crisis receiving a massive weight of coverage which the genocide did not. They lay blame at the media’s door for a ‘distortion’ which ‘unwittingly helped western governments hide their lack of policy on genocide behind a mask of humanitarian zeal’ (Philo et al., 1999: 226) by not pressurising governments for action during the genocide. The study asserts the need for journalists within media organisations and journalism schools to be trained in social sciences in order to avoid wide generalisations such as ‘tribalism’ when reporting on the developing world.

The Glasgow Media Group research has significance within my own research project as they are amongst some of the few research studies which look specifically at television coverage of asylum and refugee issues. It is my intention with my research project to add to the Glasgow Media Group’s body of work on this subject by including audience reception work on the issue. This audience reception work will also include a focus on the audiences of refugees seeking asylum, the subject audience, an audience whose perspective is in the main missing from audience reception studies.

Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies research

One study which did include a refugee perspective is the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies research for Article 19 entitled *What’s the Story: Sangatte; a Case Study of Media Coverage of Asylum and Refugee Issues*, (2003). For this research Sara Buchanan, Bethan Grillo and Professor Terry Threadgold, academics at the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies monitored asylum/refugee coverage in both the print and broadcast media over a twelve week period from October to December 2002.

They interviewed journalists working on all the samples and some others, as well as press officers from NGO’s working in support of ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees. A central feature of the project was the direct involvement of ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees as researchers and interviewees; 10 ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees, four of whom were journalists, carried out 45 interviews with ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees.

During the period of this study the Sangatte story broke. The Red Cross Centre at Sangatte was a humanitarian shelter for refugees seeking asylum, who had been sleeping rough in

the district of Calais. In the summer of 2001 refugees seeking asylum were filmed trying to jump aboard Eurotunnel trains and from this point media interest became relentless. It culminated in the UK government doing a deal with the French government four weeks later to close the Sangatte Centre, which forced people to sleep rough again.

The research found reporting of the issue of asylum characterised by 'inaccurate and pejorative language' with consistent failures to distinguish between economic migrants, 'asylum seekers' and refugees. In the overall sample fifty one different labels were employed by journalists to refer to refugees seeking asylum, such as; parasites, scroungers, would-be asylum seekers, would be immigrants, asylum cheats and illegals. The media also employed military references and metaphors such as; 'legions of young men', 'ranks of migrants', 'massing at Calais' and 'looking like a rag tag army of conscripts'. The language (Buchanan, et al. 2003: 50) is inaccurate, threatening and pejorative. It also has the effect of dehumanising the subjects of the reports.

The predominant image used was that of unidentified male refugees. They are pictured in gangs or in confrontation with the police. Some of the images were of men with their faces covered by scarves or coats. There were no images of women or children; the imagery is dominated by the stereotype of threatening young males. This stereotyping focus on threat echoes the findings of Hartman and Husband (1974) and Van Dijk, (1991) with regards to race and migration and Philo and Beattie, (1999) and McLaughlin, (1999) specifically relating to refugees and people seeking asylum.

'Asylum seekers'/refugees were reluctant to be publicly identified. They had a fear of being identified by their persecutors in their home countries and putting their friends and families in their home countries in danger. This was a factor in the images being produced of 'asylum seekers'/refugees hiding their faces. Some people were also reluctant to identify themselves as 'asylum seekers' for fear of being stigmatised or harassed, reference was made by interviewees to the murder in Glasgow in 2001 of Firsat Dag, a young Kurdish man seeking asylum (Buchanan et al., 2003: 27-28).

Primarily the media were relying on official sources such as government and police chiefs, little space was given to the refugee voice even via non-governmental organisations or other agencies such as refugee support groups, and the voice of women seeking asylum was the scarcest. There was an overwhelming focus on the number of people entering the country to claim asylum, statistics were inadequately explained or exaggerated and frequently quoted without reference to a source. With regards to official statistics there is

no contextual analysis of their meaning and relevance. In the absence of official statistics, speculation and exaggeration of immigrants and so called illegal immigrants had become routine in some sections of the media. The terms flood, deluge, mass exodus and mass influx were used in conjunction with 'alarmist statistics'. For example, the numbers of people in Sangatte were reported as, 1589, 1800 and 5000. None of these figures are sourced (Buchanan et al. 2003: 52).

The language findings echo the findings of the Glasgow Media Group with regards to the 'threat' of illegal immigration with the terminology of a 'natural disaster' such as 'flood' and 'deluge' and military references once again evident. The focus on numbers within the terminology with terms such as 'mass' has also been replicated as with the focus on incorrectly sourced statistics (Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999). It is notable that three years after the Glasgow Media Group research exposed the problematic issues of language, numbers and sources they are still very much in use within the media. It is also significant that they have now been completely transposed onto the issue of asylum. The Glasgow Media Group also pointed to the danger of media context enabling and providing 'a rationale for changes in asylum law' (Philo and Beattie, 1999: 196). This finding is backed up by the Cardiff School of Journalism's research:

The relentless repetition of dramatic headlines which speak of an asylum 'crisis' has undoubtedly influenced the presentation of successive government policies which have sought, above all, to reduce the number of asylum seekers entering the country (Buchanan et al., 2003: 12).

The research reveals that of the refugees and people seeking asylum the majority 'were convinced that negative media coverage contributes directly to the negative attitudes they experienced in their everyday lives' (Buchanan et al., 2003: 39). They attributed their direct experiences of aggression, abuse and prejudice to the media misinforming the public.

However the report reiterates that 'in spite of being on the receiving end of an overwhelmingly hostile press, asylum seekers and refugees are willing and in some cases very keen to speak to the media.' (Buchanan et al., 2003: 32). This is counterbalanced with people's perceived risks such as putting their families at home at risk by speaking out and not wanting to be labelled as a refugee for fear of repercussions from the general

public. There was therefore sometimes an insistence upon anonymity (Buchanan et al., 2003: 32).

Another perceived risk illuminated by the research was that of refugee organisations who feared ‘being singled out by the tabloids’ (Buchanan et al., 2003: 41). People seeking asylum’s perceived risk is also a factor in academic research. This fear and reluctance due to perceived risk is evident in my own research and is fully detailed in chapters three and seven.

The report recommended that politicians and government officials take the lead in setting the tone of the debate on asylum and immigration policy by using accurate terminology. Reporters, sub-editors and editors must also be made aware of the need for accurate terminology and distinctions. The Press Complaints Commission should in consultation with refugee organisations produce guidelines for reporting on asylum and immigration issues. The media should consider employing exiled journalists to provide insight into the issues; they should also seek out the opinions of ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees on policy issues and this can be facilitated by refugee community organisations and NGOs (Buchanan et al., 2003: 10).

This research is of great use to my own project as it has specifically focused on the issue of asylum and has also conducted audience reception work with people seeking asylum. These are two areas my own work focuses on as well as extending the audience reception work on the issue of asylum to the wider general public and professionals working with refugees seeking asylum.

Further research was carried out by Bernhard Gross, Kerry Moore and Terry Threadgold of the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies in 2007 entitled *Broadcast News Coverage of Asylum April to October 2006: Caught Between Human Rights and Public Safety*. The study was in part designed to explore broadcast news coverage in ways that would be comparable to the afore mentioned analysis of the 2003 Article 19 report (Buchanan et al., 2003). This research project utilised qualitative and quantitative methods as well as examining news coverage, it also focused on production matters. They attempted to obtain access to *Channel 4 News*, *BBC News* and *ITV News* newsrooms for ethnographic research but were denied access, however, they did interview eight individual journalists from each news organisation, as well as editorial staff from *Channel 4 News* and *ITV News*.

The thematic content analysis they undertook reveals that ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees are mentioned by journalists on a regular basis in a number of different contexts. These contexts are both wide and varied and include ‘public safety’, ‘human rights’, ‘politics’ and ‘changing society’. Within these themes are incorporated further areas such as ‘multiculturalism’, ‘social cohesion’, ‘terrorism’, ‘crime’, ‘human rights legislation’, ‘Home Office in chaos’ and ‘government in crisis’. The research asserts that these findings show ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees are affected by and subjected to the key events, dominant themes and main concepts of the coverage. Asylum is mentioned regularly in news stories focussing on other topics and thematically it is mainly covered in terms of the asylum system and deportation.

The study revealed ‘negative’ words to be less in evidence but asserts that ‘there appears to be no need any longer to use negative words because the word *asylum* now connotes negativity’ (Gross et al., 2007: 6). This word asylum is also consistently embedded within a ‘network of negative contexts’ (Gross et al., 2007: 6). The research shows multiple areas of confusion within the news broadcasts. One area of confusion is with regards to migrants’ legal status and the appropriateness of the inclusion of a migrant’s legal status within the news report. There was also confusion regarding the differences between criminal justice and human rights issues.

Another finding shows that when news reports make reference to asylum the narrative tends to be fragmented. Within this fragmented narrative there is in the main little provision for ‘history or context’ which leaves audiences in the position of relying on their own personal knowledge and personal experience which creates a perpetual cycle of misinformation as their knowledge and experience would be partial because of its reliance on the afore mentioned fragmented media narratives as a source of information and knowledge.

The media production findings show that the issues identified as problematic within the content analysis of the coverage of asylum are not as a result of failures within the normal practices of the media but are a result of normal processes and procedures within broadcast news journalism in that ‘professional journalists are carrying on with business as usual and doing what they always do’ (Gross et al., 2007: 7). The interviews covered 7 core areas: attitudes, news values, narratives, production processes, sources, language and images.

Most of the journalists interviewed believed in the binary of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ ‘asylum seekers’ and that ‘abuses’ of the asylum system were not being adequately dealt with. They suspected that many ‘asylum seekers’ were in fact economic migrants. This finding is of great concern as they provided no evidence for their beliefs and indeed there is no evidence of widespread ‘abuse’ within the asylum system. Several journalists connected asylum to legal immigration, illegal immigration as well as multiculturalism and social cohesion. Asylum was perceived within a context of immigration (Gross et al., 2007: 45-46). They regarded immigration as an ‘underreported topic’ which had been ‘underplayed’ (Gross et al., 2007: 50).

With regards to sources the Home Office is the main starting point followed closely by ‘elite sources’ such as MPs and lastly ‘interest groups’. Most journalists only considered refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ contributions for human interest stories and nobody mentioned including them as a source to comment on policy. Migration Watch UK is the interest group most used on a regular basis by the journalists even though some were ‘wary of the organisation’s political agenda’ and conscious of the fact that as a lobby group they are also ‘much attacked’ and ‘considered by some persona non grata’ (Gross et al., 2007: 51-53).

On the issue of language the journalists had no hard and fast rules or guidelines as to why they would make mention of someone’s immigration status and associate asylum with crime and terrorism other than if they personally believed it ‘relevant to the story’. Connecting asylum to ‘crisis’ was justified by some of the journalists, however, most of them made the distinction between ‘asylum’ not being in crisis whilst the ‘system’ was in crisis. Some also warned that ‘crisis’ may in fact be ‘media exaggeration’ as the term can be used ‘loosely and perhaps too quickly’ (Gross et al., 2007: 53-55).

In relation to the images used the journalists acknowledged their reliance on library archival footage which they accepted may be ‘problematic’. Some journalists believed money is a factor in terms of the footage selected in that if it is not a main story it will not be allocated funding to shoot fresh footage. This was also cited as a reason for not following up the deportation of ‘failed asylum seekers’; as well as the cost of this they also cited it would be dangerous. This begs the question: if the country in question is so dangerous that journalists do not feel safe going there, then why are refugees seeking asylum being deported there? (Gross et al., 2007: 55-56).

The journalists portrayed the production process as complex. It involves many people making decisions as to what will be included or excluded; it is not the work of a single journalist. Press releases are sometimes the basis of a story (Gross et al., 2007: 56-57).

In conclusion, the research found that even though refugee and asylum issues are not as 'hot' a political issue for news broadcasters as they have been in past years this does not mean the coverage is of less concern. There are still 'troubling issues' in the construction of the coverage. Asylum and the asylum system continue to be represented as a 'problem' and negative ideas about asylum are now indirectly and implicitly constructed and reproduced within news narratives. Asylum, when it did appear, 'did so as if it might be assumed that it carried significant negative connotations.' This is in part due to the stigmatising manner in which asylum has historically been discussed (Gross et al., 2007: 115-121).

This research is of benefit to my own research project as it has specifically focused on the issue of asylum and incorporates within the wider time frame of the content analysis some of the time periods of my own content analysis. It also highlights the need for audience reception work with the general public. My own work extends the audience reception work on the issue of asylum to the subject audience of people seeking asylum and professionals working with refugees seeking asylum. In addition the production aspect of the research is of great value to my research project as it gives an insight necessary to a clearer understanding of broadcast news.

Moral panic: theory and research

The moral panic paradigm is an instrumental model in social science research and 'is regularly used as shorthand to dismiss fears about links between the media and violence.', (Philo, 1999: 28). It has become commonly referred to in research on 'race', immigration and now in turn, asylum (See Cohen, 2002; Finney, 2003 and Welch and Schuster, 2005). The media and audience reception of its messages are central to the concept of moral panic. The theory was developed by Stanley Cohen who argues that moral panic occurs when;

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests: its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media' (Cohen,

1972: 9).

Cohen examined the roles of the media, politicians and the public in manufacturing a discriminatory concern with British youth in the 1960s when Mods and Rockers were represented as threats to the social order. Cohen argues that these claims enabled the justification of additional police powers. Greg Philo of the Glasgow Media Group is critical of the moral panic paradigm and he highlights the complex causal links within the paradigm: (1) a unity of interest between moral campaigners and the state (2) the success of the coalition in placing the issue on the public agenda (3) exaggeration of the problem by the media (4) the public are misled and as a result reactionary social change is legitimated. He asserts that whilst this causal chain can operate, it has not done so in recent 'panics' on media violence (Philo, 1999: 26-29).

The concept was applied by Stuart Hall et al. in their work *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (Hall et al., 1978). This research conducted a content analysis of British newspapers from August 1972 to August 1973 (Hall et al., 1978: 50). The research claimed that the media focused public concern about violence by black immigrants, and in doing so disguised the real reasons for the crisis which they assert was racism and a corresponding crisis in the British economy. The media were not directly manipulated by the government as different newspapers included different stories but the range of approaches was limited with most being based on police statements and court cases. The researchers looked behind these stories and ploughed beneath the surface to argue that the police manufactured crime figures around 'mugging' in order to show an increase in black criminality to justify stronger police measures. In responding to these manufactured crime figures the media did not consciously create a moral panic, it developed as they reacted but they were responsible for 'orchestrating opinion'.

David Downes and Paul Rock (Downes and Rock 1988) identified two major weaknesses in this study. They argue that there is a major contradiction around the issue of rising black street crime as the view changes to fit the argument throughout the book. In other words there is uncertainty whether crime is rising or not as:

Young Black second-generation immigrant men are exonerated from any undue contribution to the rise in crime, but are simultaneously identified as a 'super-exploited, sub-proletariat' whose increasing contribution to crime is defined as 'inevitable' (Downes and Rock,

1988: 264).

The second weakness they point to is the fact that the numerous moral panics cannot all be explained by a corresponding crisis in the British economy and the research failed to show that the moral panic over ‘mugging’ was caused by a crisis of British capitalism: ‘the theory can be said to ‘over-predict’ social control’ (Downes and Rock, 1988: 263). Jock Young (1988) was also critical of the study claiming that it provided no evidence that the public were either panicking about ‘mugging’ or identifying the crime with black men. The criminologists Jones, MacLean and Young in their study *The Islington Crime Survey* revealed ‘people’s perceptions of crime are not based on moral panics’ (Jones, MacLean and Young, 1986: 35). Philo also points out ‘Analysis of press coverage is not a sufficient basis from which to extrapolate the actions of the ‘control culture’, public belief or decision making’ (Philo, 1999: 29).

Nissa Finney also applied the moral panic paradigm specifically on the issue of asylum in her more recent thesis *Asylum Seeker Dispersal: Public Attitudes and Press Portrayals around the UK* (Finney, 2003). Finney utilised a multi method approach of quantitative and qualitative techniques. The methods and samples consist of Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis of five local newspapers, twelve interviews with people working in local press, 500 on-street questionnaires, two focus groups, and 25 in-depth interviews with local residents.

The key findings reveal that local press portrayals of asylum seeker dispersal follow the tone and themes of national coverage, concentrating on numbers of people seeking asylum, control, cost and conflict. Flood metaphors as identified by the Glasgow Media Group research (Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999), are frequently used. Headlines are often misleading and inaccurate. Her investigation of the production factors of local press portrayals substantiated McNair’s theory that production is affected by factors external and internal to the newsroom and personal to the reporters (McNair, 1988).

Finney argues that we must also consider ‘the motivations and values of individual reporters.’, (Finney, 2003: 211). These ‘motivations and values’ were influential in the most sensitive, informative and balanced reporting which is found where there is a dedicated asylum reporter and where there are good links between the local press and local refugee sector. It is important to note that one of the interviewees, an investigative reporter who made a ‘conscious decision’ to cover issues of asylum in a ‘positive way’ had

‘established good contacts’ with the Refugee Media Working Group in Wales. Finney describes this group as ‘proactive in trying to achieve more balanced and accurate reporting of refugee and asylum issues’ (Finney, 2003: 223).

Professor Terry Threadgold, of Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University, who researched the afore mentioned *What’s the Story: Sangatte; a Case Study of Media Coverage of Asylum and Refugee Issues* (2003) is also a leading member of the Refugee Media Working Group based in Cardiff University. This group is working with editors and journalists to ensure that the media reporting of asylum is factual and balanced. The group works closely with a Refugee Link Group: a group of men and women with direct experience of asylum who are being trained and supported to work with the media, challenging negative myths and stereotypes and promoting positive and more in-depth coverage. The group produced *Let’s Talk to the Media: Practical Guide for Refugee Community Organisations and Refugee Practitioners On Working With The Media* (2002). Finney’s interview with the afore mentioned investigative journalist provides a clear example of how academic research can impact on journalistic practices as having ‘direct contact’ with people seeking asylum enabled him to include their perspective in his articles in *The South Wales Echo*. Finney refers to this local newspaper as portraying ‘asylum issues sympathetically’ (Finney, 2003: 224-226).

Finney argues that relations between the local press and local public attitudes towards asylum dispersal are significant on both an individual and community level as it ‘has the potential to influence opinion and public agendas on both’ (Finney, 2003: 259). Over three quarters of the research respondents ‘considered the local press of some import as an information source on asylum issues’ whilst 85% said they had some degree of trust in the media (Finney, 2003: 230-231). Respondents’ interpretation of local coverage of asylum issues with regards to confirming or challenging existing attitudes were affected by their own personal attitudes and their socio-economic position (Finney, 2003: 245).

On a community level Finney asserts that the local press assumes the role of a ‘community institution’ whereby there is an ‘inherent assumption of many participants that the local paper belonged to them’ and as such it affects public attitudes both as an ‘agenda setter’ (controlling information and identifying local issues of concern) and as a ‘forum for debate’ (representing public opinion via readers polls and letters pages). However there is a tension within the local press with regards to maintaining its role as a ‘community institution’ and exploiting asylum issues for ‘the high sales ability of sensational stories’

(Finney, 2003: 245-260). Thus a cycle of reinforcement of local attitudinal cultures has been suggested. A number of factors are critical in normalising and socialising attitudes including existing attitudes towards dispersal, trust of the local press, and the role of the press as an agenda setter and forum for debate on asylum issues. Finney was surprised that so little research has focused on the local press, given its recognised significance for community relations:

It is crucial then that media effects research should not ignore the local. Although on a national scale hostile media coverage and public attitudes appear ingrained in British culture, the local scale provides a promising avenue for generating a more informed, balanced and humane discussion. There is a potential to change the debate from the 'bottom-up'. (Finney, 2003: 276)

There does, however, appear to be some tension in Finney's moral panic paradigm. Whilst asserting that her 'research has shown how such prejudice and othering constitute a moral panic about asylum' (Finney 2003: 262), with regards to local press coverage of dispersal of people seeking asylum, she states 'the narrow and prescriptive boundaries of the moral panic were to some extent broken down.', (Finney, 2003: 264). This point continues with her recognition that 'local press coverage goes beyond the moral panic when discussing dispersal by constructing the policy, rather than the people (asylum seekers) as the problem' (Finney, 2003: 264). Therefore, if the moral panic model is 'broken down' and 'coverage goes beyond' it then it appears the model may only be applicable to specific elements of the research.

The focus on regional press in Finney's research enables comparative usefulness for my own research as my project is inclusive of regional media. It will be of interest to gauge her findings in relation to Scottish regional television, a significant element of my research project.

In the third edition of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (Cohen, 2002), Cohen attempts to refine the sociology of moral panic by distinguishing between 'noisy' and 'quiet' constructions. He asserts that 'quiet' constructions, 'claims makers are professionals, experts, or bureaucrats working in an organization with little or no public or media exposure' (Cohen, 2002: xxiii). One of the central factors for identifying moral panic, the media, has vanished from this oxymoronic construction of a 'quiet' panic. This is a curious

and perplexing extension of the original concept as it differs so dramatically in its construction and identifiers. Welch and Schuster point out ‘Unfortunately Cohen offers little guidance on how to resolve this dilemma other than the aforementioned quotation.’, (Welch and Schuster, 2005:400).

He also refers to the term ‘panic’ as ‘unfortunate’ because of the connotations of ‘irrationality and being out of control’ and he writes of his ‘acceptance of the ‘downgrade of ‘panic’ to a mere metaphor’ (Cohen, 2002: xxvii). In addition he refers to the link made between moral panics and folk devils as ‘the book’s weakest link’, he is critical of the original psychological model of causation he used with ‘concepts such as triggering off, contagion and suggestibility’ and now cites later ‘cognitive models as ‘far more plausible’ in the sense that ‘Rather than a stimulus (media message) and response (audience behaviour) we look for the points at which moral awareness is raised (‘defining deviance up’) or lowered (‘defining deviance down’), (Cohen, 2002: xxiv). He also addresses the issue of asylum stating; ‘the overall narrative is a single, virtually uninterrupted message of hostility and rejection’ (Cohen, 2002: xix). This claim needs to be tested because Finney’s work, for example, has shown this may not be the case when it comes to regional press coverage.

CONCLUSION

The literature surrounding audience reception of ‘race’/race and migration is well developed in comparison with academic attention on refugees and asylum. The dominant literature has centred on ‘race’/race and migration. Despite some attention to refugees and asylum there has been no significant attempt to explore audience reception among both general audiences and the audience which is seeking asylum, the subject audience.

There is a significant literature base which addresses, through differing models, theories and vocabularies, the positioning and effects of media messages on audiences. This thesis aims to build upon and develop refugee and asylum literature and contribute to the ‘public perception and belief’ project within audience reception.

First, it is important to examine audience reception, in general, with regard to the issues of asylum and refuge. Secondly, it is also important to examine audience reception of issues of asylum and refugees with the subject audience, people seeking asylum. Previous work has addressed both of these areas separately but this research will be developed by a study

of both areas together. Another exploratory area is the specific content and messages around issues of asylum and refuge and how audiences interpret these. The Glasgow Media Group's research, which has challenged 'active audience' theory, with their focus on media power in terms of shaping public attitudes and beliefs, emphasises the link between media content and public belief.

This research project has been designed to contribute to the 'public perception and belief' project, as defined by Philo (1990) by examining how audiences respond to television coverage of asylum and refugee issues. The research which forms the main body of this thesis was designed to examine how television coverage might influence public thinking about important social issues: in this case seeking asylum. I wanted to know what people recalled from television coverage and whether they accepted or rejected what they recalled. I was interested in how people negotiated this process and the influencing factors. I wanted to know how much factual information they had regarding the subject. I was particularly interested in how the subject audience, people seeking asylum and refugees, defined their own experience and negotiated identities.

I could find no comparative research which addressed these questions. Although there is a body of literature which examines how the mass media represent refugees seeking asylum, this rarely includes any audience reception work and particularly of the subject audience (Hartman and Husband, 1974; Hall et al., 1978; Said, 1978; Van Dijk, 1991; Philo and Beattie, 1999; Philo et al., 1999; Cohen, 2002; Buchanan et al., 2003; Finney, 2003; Welch and Schuster, 2005; Gross et al., 2007). The literature which does address representation of the issue of refugees seeking asylum focuses in the main on the print media (Van Dijk, 1991; Cohen, 2002; Buchanan et al., 2003; Finney, 2003; Welch and Schuster, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative that research is carried out in these areas in order to fill the gaps in knowledge of this subject.

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the study design and the methods used to examine the socio- cultural and political context of the research topic and to investigate the main research question: How do audiences respond to television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge? This chapter therefore addresses how the substantive topic was selected and the research methodology. By implementing the mixed methods of both quantitative and qualitative triangulation was ensured. These included participant observation, thematic content analysis and the research interviews with the subject audience, 'asylum seekers', the special interest participants and the general public participants.

RESEARCH DESIGN AROUND ISSUES OF ASYLUM AND REFUGE

The research model implemented to investigate audience reception of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge, has been modified and developed from different audience reception studies. The findings of audience reception studies have provided important insights as to how to develop the area of audience reception of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge. They have steered me to the research questions to be discussed and suitable methodologies for the study.

The aim was to design a study which would include the perspective of the subject audience, 'asylum seekers'. This was to allow their voice to be heard in audience reception studies as it is almost negligible in previous work. Very few audience reception studies have included this perspective. There has been no significant attempt to examine the impact or effect of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge on this particular audience. One aim was, therefore, to explore these issues with this specific audience. Second, the study was structured so as to explore the impact of the substantive topic on wider audiences in the general public. The aim here was to analyse sources of information on the subject of seeking asylum and key constituents of belief systems about the issue. Thirdly, the research is concerned with the process of how these audiences accept or reject television messages and the possible influence of these behaviours.

The research also included a third audience, that of special interest participants. This group included people who work with refugees seeking asylum, it was important to include their

perspective in order to further examine the possible impact of television coverage on audiences who are expected to be more informed on the substantive topic than the general public. Therefore the same aims of analysing sources of information, the nature of belief systems and processes of accepting or rejecting television messages also applied to this group.

Finally, this study compliments earlier research carried out into the nature and influence of television. The research model which examines audience reception has been used by the Glasgow Media Group to explore a wide variety of social, health or political issues (Philo, 1990; Kitzinger, 1999; Henderson, 2002). The ensuing sections delineate how and why empirical data was collected. First, I explicate the rationale for selecting the substantive area which forms the central study.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC

The topic of refugees seeking asylum is located within the British socio-cultural and political context. It is potentially sensitive, involving private trauma such as rape, torture, depression, self-harm, suicidal intent, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), adjustment disorder and anxiety/panic. The British Medical Association (BMA) assert

One in six refugees (17 per cent) has a physical health problem severe enough to affect their life, and two-thirds have experienced significant anxiety or depression. This compares with UK statistics that in 2000, 13 per cent of males and 15 per cent of females reported restricted activity due to illness or injury during the two weeks prior to interview. In 1998, 7 per cent of female patients and 3 per cent of male patients seen by a GP were treated for depression (*British Medical Association: Board of science and education*, 2002: 5)

The BMA state the origin of these health problems as ‘the physical or mental torture, or other harsh conditions from which they have escaped’ (*British Medical Association: Board of science and education*, 2002: 5). It is also estimated that 50% of all refugee women seeking asylum in the UK have been raped (*Women Against Rape, Rights and Information Sheet for survivors of rape seeking asylum in the UK*: 2008). The Refugee Council Vulnerable Women’s Project, a scheme running from 2006- 2008 and supporting one

hundred and fifty three women, reported that 75% of the women had been raped either in their country of origin or in the UK (*The Vulnerable Women's Project Good Practice Guide*, 2009).

Over the past twenty years global geopolitical and geoeconomic changes have led to an escalation of the international refugee crisis.. During this period asylum applications increased from just under 30,000 in 1996 (Refugee Council, 2003) to between 71,000 and 85,000 applications per year from 1999-2002 (Home Office, 2003). The most recent statistics on asylum show a fall in applications by almost a third, 33,960 asylum applications in 2004, 25,710 asylum applications in 2005 and 23,430 applications were received in 2007 (Home Office, 2008).

From the 1997 General Election asylum has become a prominent election issue. In the 2005 General election the government party, the Labour Party included the issue in its manifesto promising more Government action.

The contentious nature of the policy issue of asylum is therefore an issue of public interest and as such the media has a central role to play in informing the public policy debate. Media coverage has a tendency to use pejorative language and stimulate false impressions about 'asylum seekers' (Van Dijk, 1991; Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999; Buchanan et al., 2003; Finney, 2003). The House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights when looking at 'the treatment of asylum seekers' in 2007 expressed concerns regarding the impact of negative media reporting of asylum issues and its potential for influencing both the decision makers in the asylum claims procedure and government policy. Contesting media reporting has been a vital occupation of many of the organisations working in the asylum and immigration field (Buchanan et al., 2003).

SAMPLE AND METHODS

I wanted to examine the potential for television coverage to confront and influence public perceptions of 'asylum seekers' and further issues of asylum by way of audience reception. The main question I was exploring is how do audiences respond to television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge? For example, are the television messages generally accepted or rejected and what are the processes involved within this? Secondly, I was interested to know about the impact or effect of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge on the subject audience. Thirdly, I was concerned with the impact of television coverage on

special interest audiences who are expected to be more informed on the substantive topic than the general public. I intend to expound an analysis of the role of television coverage of issues of asylum and analyse the prospects of television coverage of asylum issues as a power for social and cultural shifts.

Over the six year period of this research project I was able to draw on an extensive archive I established by daily monitoring and recording of television news, documentary, current affairs, drama and film coverage, of issues of asylum and refuge. The news programmes monitored, recorded and archived were *BBC Breakfast*, *BBC One O' Clock News*, *BBC Six O' Clock News*, *BBC Ten O' Clock News*, *Newsnight*, *ITV Lunchtime News*, *ITV Evening News*, *ITV News at Ten*, *Channel Four News*, *Reporting Scotland* and *Scotland Today*. The documentary and current affairs programmes monitored, recorded and archived were *Panorama*, *Tonight*, *Dispatches*, *The Andrew Marr Show*, *Question Time*, *The Politics Show*, *This Week*, *The Paxman Interviews*, *Unreported World*, *This World: Murder in The Snow*, *True Stories*, *The Glasgow Girls*, *Detention Undercover: The Real Story*, *Asylum: A Place of Refuge*, *One Way Ticket*, *Election Time: Your Questions*, *Election Unspun: Why Politicians Can't Tell The Truth*, *White Season*, *The New Ten Commandments*, *Sighthill Stories*, *The Wright Stuff*, *Loose Women* and *UK Border Force*. The drama programmes monitored, recorded and archived included *EastEnders*, *Coronation Street*, *River City*, *The Street*, *The Liverpool Nativity*, *England Expects*, *Moving On: The Rain Has Stopped*, *Occupation*, *Skins* and *Moses Jones*. The films monitored, recorded and archived included *Trouble Sleeping*, *The John Aki Bua Story: An African Tragedy* and *Brothers In Trouble*.

The archive was immensely useful for analysis of interviews in order to track comments interviewees made about programmes which were not included in the script writing exercise or content analysis. I was able to view most of the original programmes interviewees referred to from this archive. It was also constructive as a method of learning the subject area as I maintained monitoring the archive on a daily basis. The archive also showed how extensive the coverage of the issue was across a variety of genres.

Content analysis sample

In order to concentrate on the possible effect of television coverage of seeking asylum and investigate the broader cultural repercussions for the role of television in shaping and influencing social change I draw on thematic content analysis of the television news reports from which the images for the script writing exercise were selected. The reports were from 16, 17 and 18 of May 2005 and were selected because they featured a broad

range of typical themes as well as key issues in asylum coverage in both the aforementioned archive and previous research as detailed in chapter two the literature review. I examined the lunchtime, early evening and late news bulletins for BBC1 and ITV (Channel Three), these are the most popular channels with the highest viewing figures. I also included *Channel 4 News* and *BBC Newsnight* for comparison. In addition I included *BBC Reporting Scotland* and *BBC Newsnight Scotland* in order to establish regional comparisons.

Content analysis method

Thematic analysis is a method developed by the Glasgow University Media Group. It is a way of understanding how meaning is conveyed in texts by analysing how they are organised around and include or exclude key thematic explanations. It assumes that events and history particularly associated with contentious issues will be described by the media in competing ways according to their competing interests (Philo and Berry, 2004: 95). This method of analysis was decidedly fitting for my research project as the topic of asylum is indeed a highly contentious issue which is described in competing ways. Thematic analysis is designed to look at the linkage of language and wider social processes. In this way research is not only looking at descriptions but factors such as competing histories by examining the processes of the emergence of key themes in television news reports and how these themes are used to both structure and develop stories. It is also concerned with revealing how specific ways of understanding and viewpoints are preferenced.

Philo and Berry in *Bad News From Israel* (2004: 94-99) set out the key components involved in thematic analysis; firstly establishing ‘explanations and ways of understanding’ within the public debate of the substantive issue and the evidence available for these. These are verified by examining relevant sources of published materials. This enables the research to establish ‘if some explanations were present on the news and others were absent’; secondly, the application of the ‘explanatory theme’ concept meaning ‘an assumed explanation gave a pattern or structure to an area of coverage’. Thirdly examination of the ‘social values’ and ‘value assumptions’ connected to media construction as these affect ‘who is seen as a legitimate authority and what status and deference is given to different speakers’. Alongside this it is imperative to ‘identify the manner’ in which differing views are reported or maybe even endorsed. In order to measure the dominance of differing perspectives it is necessary to ‘count their frequency and the manner in which they appear’, for example in headlines or as reported statements. In addition when analysing language the research must ‘try to account for the range of subtlety of language, as it is used to

convey a complex variety of meanings, and then to trace how these exact messages are received and understood by audiences’.

Therefore, thematic analysis accords the research the validity of triangulation when combined, as the Glasgow Media Group advise, with qualitative audience reception interviews. This enables in-depth analysis of the processes of both memory and belief which takes cultural factors of production and audiences into account. The Glasgow Media Group approach is characterised by John Corner as ‘being empirical, problem based, alert to questions of power and keen at points to inform public policy and public debate’ (Corner, 2001: 152). The Glasgow Media Group, with their focus on empirical research on audience memories and beliefs, engage with cultural, political and social factors influencing and formulating these beliefs. At the same time they accord the audiences the autonomy of a perceptible and discernible voice through empirical methods such as interviews and focus groups.

Thematic analysis

For this thesis quantitative thematic analysis was carried out on the sample, which featured a broad range of typical themes as well as key issues in asylum coverage. I began by analysing the quantity of coverage specified to different subject areas, such as statistics, illegal immigration and criminalisation. This was done by counting lines of text from programmes which had been transcribed. I then engaged in a comprehensive investigation of how the causes and origins of the substantive issue were represented. This was followed by a further analysis of how different perspectives were emphasized in the routine reporting, headlines and interviews. As well as analysis of the verbal text I have looked at the visual images and how they were given meaning and context when amalgamated with captions or voice-overs and how they were positioned in the report as a whole. The detailed analysis is shown in the next chapter.

Participant observation

By working closely with refugees I have tried to ensure that the ‘community of study’ has a degree of ‘group self-definition’. Rather than the ‘subject’ being a ‘passive object’, I wanted to include the communities as active critics of the research process (Blanner and Wellman, 1998: 312). Continuous involvement with asylum and refugee groups and individuals has also sharpened my awareness of theoretical and political issues of

contemporary racism. Additional material was gathered from participant observation whilst I was a voluntary case worker for an Asylum Support Centre, based in Glasgow, for a period of four years. This accorded me an invaluable insight into the social reality of seeking asylum and aided me immensely in the development of the research questions to be discussed and suitable methodologies for the study. I also gained experience of the issue working with people seeking asylum as a voluntary English tutor for several public sector organisations including a school in Glasgow and a Homework Club, for a period of four years.

Active involvement and learning in the field

The alternative methods of research posited by active involvement offered me a way forward in researching issues of asylum. It has alerted me to pitfalls which can be present in sociological research and broadened both my theoretical and methodological horizons, thus in turn equipping me to design a study which would include the perspective of the subject audience, 'asylum seekers' (this is further explained in the audience reception research methods section of this chapter).

Blanner and Wellman refer to marginalised communities having an awareness that research could be misused by the Government, through for, example, the police and welfare departments, as a tool for controlling them. My pilot study showed this to be the case with the asylum seeking participants who had a real mistrust of the Home Office and feared that anything they put in writing that was critical of the Home Office could prejudice their claim for asylum. Blanner and Wellman argue that 'In order to gain co-operation from the community, the gap between research and action had to be bridged in the immediate present' (Blanner and Wellman, 1998: 323). One of the measures they propose as a measure to decolonise research is 'Social action and service to the community' (Blanner and Wellman, 1998: 327).

My local area now houses many refugees seeking asylum and is also host to a Home Office Reporting Centre. For four years I worked as a volunteer case worker in an Asylum Support Centre based in the same district. As well as supporting people who had been detained, the Support Centre also supported people in their every day lives in a multitude of ways, for example, with housing, welfare and education needs. I also worked as a voluntary tutor for a Homework and Study Support Club for children who are refugees seeking asylum run by the Greater Govan Urdu Club in my local library. I worked with

Student Action for Refugees (STAR) at the University, in a project which tutors children who are refugees in a secondary school in the North of Glasgow, the area which houses the highest number of refugees seeking asylum in Scotland. I volunteered also with the Voluntary Tutor Organisation (VTO) where I tutored a child who is a refugee seeking asylum in my local area. My advocacy and community work further enabled my comparison of the social reality of seeking asylum and the television construction. My work at the Asylum Support Centre enabled participant observation in the field. This enabled me to apply the methods of ‘active involvement’ (Staples, 1998; Barnes, 1998; Blanner and Wellman, 1998).

Combining my advocacy, community work and participant observation has both informed my research and given me access to interviewees. This accorded me an invaluable insight into the day to day reality of seeking asylum and aided me immensely in the development of the research questions to be discussed and suitable methodologies for the study. I have had a positive response to my research from the asylum seeking communities I have both researched and worked with and my work has always been encouraged by refugees seeking asylum.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION RESEARCH SAMPLE

The thesis study is principally based on in-depth interviews with refugees seeking asylum, special interest participants who are professionals working with refugees seeking asylum and the general public. A total of 60 interviews were conducted, see Appendix 1 for interviewee details.

Refugee and ‘asylum seeker’ participants’ interviews: the sample

The research sample includes fifteen interviews with a wide range of people seeking asylum. The interviewees were selected principally for their status and particular knowledge as ‘asylum seekers’ in the UK. The sample is structured to include people who are now refugees, their perspective is important as they have spent many years seeking asylum before being granted refugee status.

As with other audience reception researchers (Morley, 1980; Philo, 1990; Livingstone and Lunt, 1994; Kitzinger, 1999; Henderson 2002), all three groups of the sample were also selected for inclusion of people with a wide range of social, cultural and material

experiences. The aim here was to capitalise on potential diversity, especially with regards to the precise issue under discussion. Efforts were also made to include participants with a range of demographic characteristics. Thus the sample included older people as well as young, with the age group ranging from eighteen to sixty two, and white people as well as Black. Special attention was given to the inclusion of women refugees seeking asylum in order to be statistically representative of the refugee seeking asylum population as a whole.

I also included the demographic variable of class in all three groups, which was highly problematic for this group. As with race I left it open for people to self-define these areas, this produced some interesting data on both areas which is discussed in chapter five. The latter two demographics were not pre-determined by the researcher but were left open for interviewees of the three participatory groups to self-define them. However, participants were selected according to their differing socio-economic status in accordance with their professions, in order to ensure measurable and distinct economic differentiation. I was interested to see if this correlated with people's own definition of their class. It was also necessary to enable self-definition of class within the refugees seeking asylum participants as many do not identify with the category of class. Table 1 in Appendix 1, shows the range of refugees seeking asylum involved in the study. Many different people from diverse nationalities, ages and gender, were enabled to voice both their opinions and personal experiences.

Special interest participants' interviews: the sample

The research sample also includes fifteen interviews with a wide range of professionals working with refugees seeking asylum. The interviewees were primarily selected for their particular knowledge and experience of 'asylum seekers' in the UK. The rationale for inclusion of this group is that those with professional experience may have a different point of view on the media and have access to a broader array of alternative sources of information and therefore influence. Efforts were also made to include participants with a range of demographic characteristics. Thus the sample included Black people as well as white people. For comparative purposes I also included the demographic variable of class which was included with the other two groups. As with race I left it open for people to self-define these areas, as with the previous group this produced some interesting data on both areas which is discussed in chapter six. Table 2 in Appendix 1, shows the range of special interest participants involved in the study. People from diverse professions, such as

Member of the Scottish Parliament, City Councilor and Social Worker, ages and gender, had occasion to state both their opinions and personal experiences.

General public participants' interviews: the sample

The research sample also includes 30 interviews with a wide range of the general public. The key variable is that they all live in Scotland. The interviewees, in the main, were primarily selected because they were not expected to have any special interest in the topic (e.g. members of a youth group, retirement group and unemployed workers group). I did, however, also include two community social activists as they are also representative of the general public and offer an important contribution on that level and in their own right as activists. Efforts were also made to include participants with a range of demographic characteristics. Thus the sample included Black people as well as white people. I also included the demographic variable of class. As with race I left it open for people to have the opportunity to self-define these areas, as with the previous groups this produced some interesting data on both areas which is discussed in chapter six.

Table 3 shows the range of general public participants involved in the study. People diverse in race, class, age, ranging from sixteen to seventy six, and gender, had the chance to express both their opinions and personal experiences. The 60 interviews provided sufficient data to ascertain some frequent configurations in understanding as well as to outline some of the differences and similarities in public perceptions of this topic. The sixty interviews represent a wide range of people. Ways of behaving, ideas and ways of thinking evident across the sample are likely to be common in the wider population of refugees seeking asylum, special interest groups and the general public.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION RESEARCH METHODS

I wanted to examine the audiences' relationship to a whole topic area, seeking asylum. I was interested in the impact of television coverage of this topic. I was also interested in how people source their opinions and knowledge of this particular issue. The research was, in the main, retrospective in that it was examining people's memories and their employment and comprehension of media messages a number of years after they were initially broadcast.

The study therefore was designed initially to explore people's beliefs about seeking asylum and 'asylum seekers' and track backwards to ascertain the components in the process of reception and/or in the text which makes possible the conveying, reinforcement and challenge to such a message. The research adopted and adapted a pioneering data collection technique developed by the Glasgow Media Group and called 'the script-writing exercise'. This exercise has been used to examine audience understandings of industrial disputes (Philo, 1990), conflict in Northern Ireland (Miller, 1994), child sexual abuse, (Kitzinger, 1999) and social issue storylines in soap opera (Henderson, 2002). The original exercise has been carried out with focus groups, who are given a selected set of still images taken from the coverage of the issue in question and they are invited to write a related text. These scripts then act as the starting point for dialogue, within the group, as people speak about how they think their scripts relate to actual television coverage and how the scripts connect to their own attitudes and beliefs.

This exercise offers several advantages over other techniques. A method of choice widely adopted by audience reception researchers is the 'video showing' approach (Morley, 1980; Lewis, 1985; Corner, Richardson and Fenton, 1986; Schlesinger et al., 1992). This technique limits the researcher to examining audience responses to individual programmes. The 'script-writing exercise' was more appropriate for my study as it gave me the scope to explore a whole issue in a wider social context. The method design shows what audiences have retained from television coverage by way of the 'script-writing exercise' as well as what they actually believed to be true by follow up interviews. In doing so this method moves away from a mere memory exercise of recording and detailing what viewers remember and opens audience reception study to concepts of perception and belief. The exercise shows what people have in their heads prior to the research process as opposed to giving them the message/programme and then asking questions. This rigorous method enabled me to explore the process of acceptance or rejection of the media message. The use of a still image was useful too for examination of visual elements within television coverage.

Another advantageous aspect of this research method is its ability to highlight audience memories of key issues without pre-determining them. By using still images the participants were enabled to express their own agendas with their own language and not affected by viewing whole scenes on video with original language. This is important when examining the audiences' ability to retain language as well as wider messages. It also enables participants to set the agenda; this was of particular importance for the refugee and

asylum seeking participants who, as members of difficult to reach communities, needed reassurance and the security of knowledge that the research was open (Henderson, 2002; Bulmer and Solomos, 2004). As a researcher I also benefited from the flexibility the still images accorded me; the screening of a video or DVD would have limited the location of interviews to those with the available technology; without this restriction I was enabled to conduct interviews in accordance with the participants' needs. This was fundamentally influential to this project as the interviews were carried out in a wide variety of locations ranging from community facilities, work-places and private homes.

By way of participant observation with refugees seeking asylum I was enabled to be actively involved with the substantive issue by means of 'Social action and service to the community' (Blanner and Wellman, 1998: 327). This in turn enabled inclusion of an extremely varied and diverse body of participants for the research project. It was also crucial to accessing difficult to reach community members such as refugees seeking asylum who voiced concerns about anonymity being ensured and therefore, would not have been confident in attending the institutional setting of a university for purposes of research. Another group this was important for was women, who in this study were the main carers of children, and this helped immensely with childcare issues, which could have prevented them from attending research sessions at the university. Another consideration was the financial costs of traveling to the university; many of the participants were in receipt of state benefits and some of the refugees seeking asylum were on food vouchers or destitute and had no financial means whatsoever to travel. Situating the interview in the location of the interviewee's choice had an additional benefit, of removing any pressure of time constraints from the interview process. This also helped in making interviewees feel more comfortable in their own choice of familiar settings.

DESIGN OF THE SCRIPT WRITING EXERCISE

Twelve images were selected from the television news coverage to be used in the script-writing exercise. These are reproduced in figures 1.1-12.1

Figure 1 - The still images used in the script-writing exercise



Figure 1.1 - Detention centre on fire



Figure 2.1 - People climbing fence

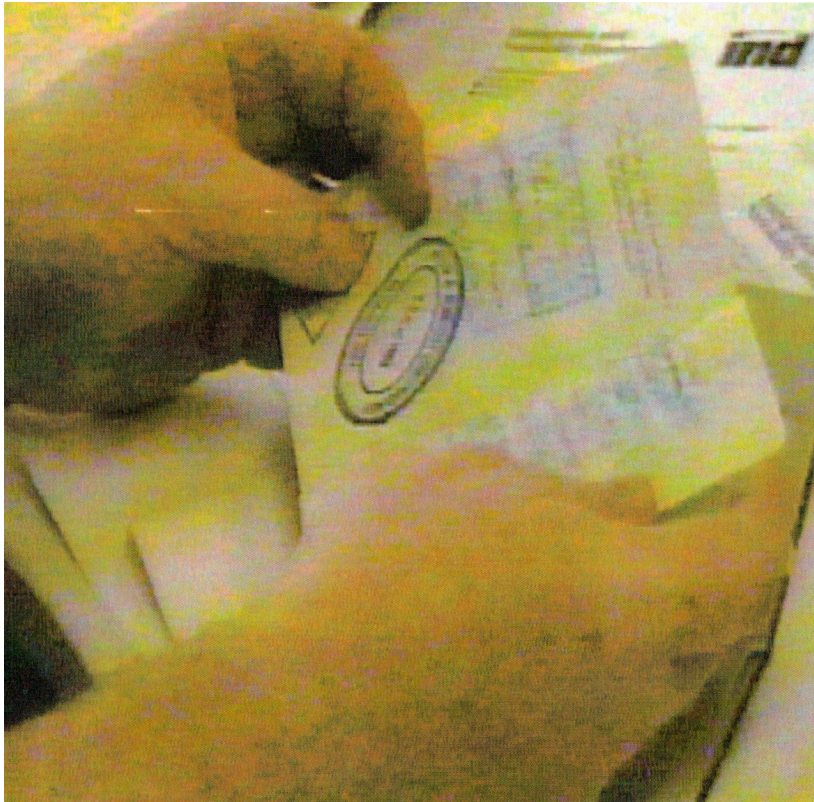


Figure 3.1 – Passport



Figure 4.1 – Home Office logo (Building a safe, just and tolerant society)



Figure 5.1 – People in desert



Figure 6.1 – People in small boat



Figure 7.1 – People in large boat



Figure 8.1 – Police



Figure 9.1 – Demonstration

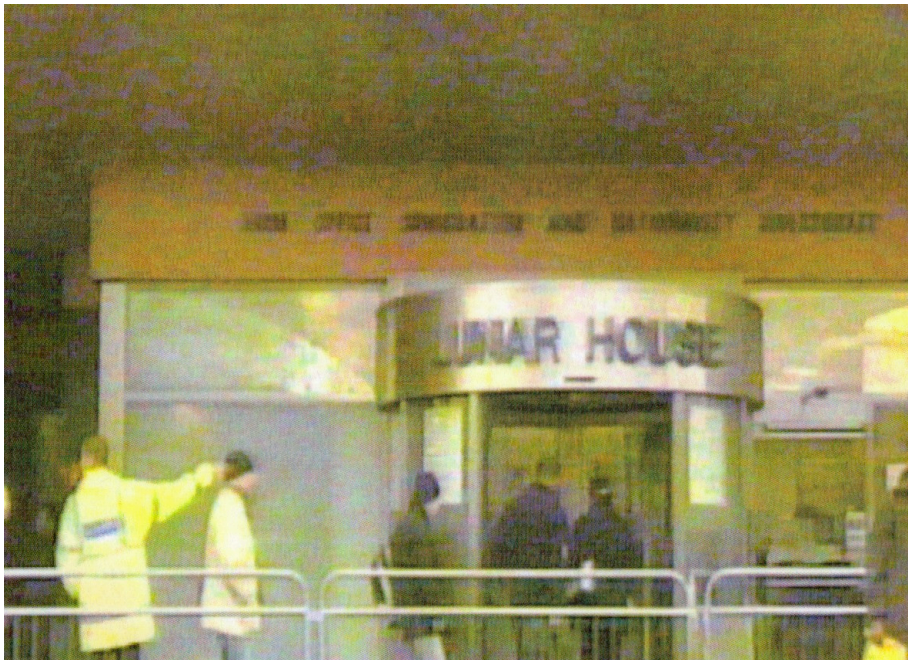


Figure 10.1 – Lunar House, London



Figure 11.1 – Person being escorted on to an airplane

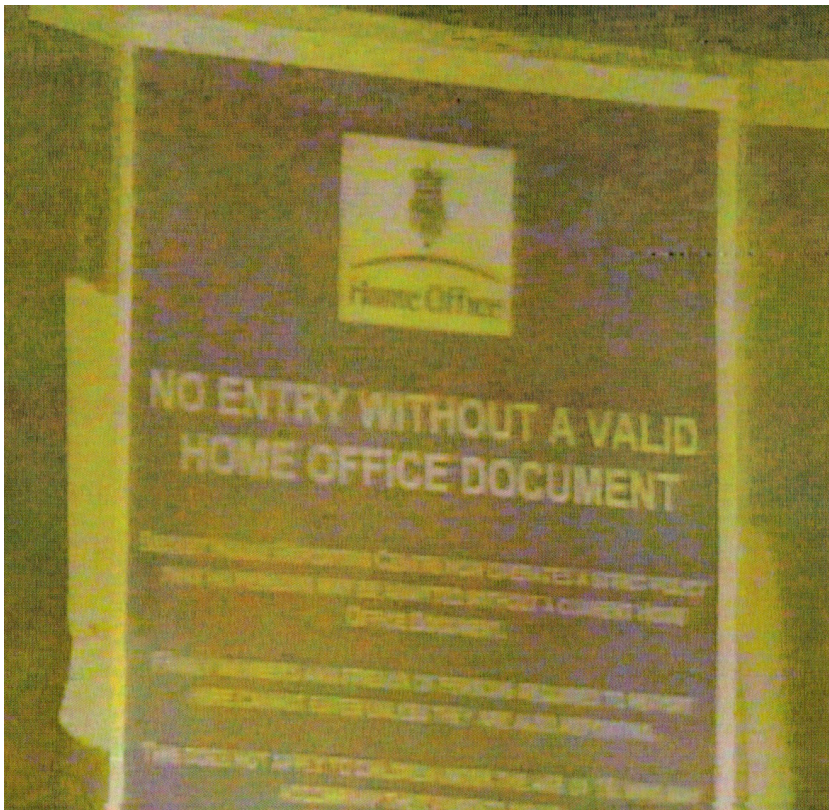


Figure 12.1 - Home Office notice

Eleven of the photographs showed the main areas of reporting of the issue as revealed in my content analysis. Most of which are commonly represented images associated with the issue of refugees seeking asylum, some are used as establishing shots (see chapter 3).

These consisted of:

Image 1: Detention centre on fire

Image 2: People climbing fence

Image 3: Passport

Image 4: Home Office logo (Building a safe, just and tolerant society)

Image 5: People in desert

Image 6: People in small boat

Image 7: People in large boat

Image 8: Police

Image 10: Lunar House, London

Image 11: Person being escorted on to an airplane

Image 12: Home Office notice

One other image used, image 9: Demonstration, was not common but distinctive in representing regional coverage, which was an area I wanted to specifically include in my research project. The twelve images described above and reproduced in figure 1.1- 12.1 were blown up into A4 colour photographs which were laminated. Thus they were made easy to transport, maintain and handle.

Modification of script-writing exercise

I carried out a pilot of the interview and the script-writing exercise with three people seeking asylum; this provided invaluable information for the future research which revealed the necessity to modify the script-writing exercise. The three participants all voiced deep concerns with regards to the written aspect of the script-writing exercise. Their concerns centered on their belief that there was a possibility the Home Office could target them in a negative way with regards to their claim for asylum, if they expressed publicly their critical opinions of it. Therefore, they were reluctant to put anything in writing, despite the fact that I had assured them of anonymity.

In line with Habermas's (1988) call for the opening up of research to new methods and perspectives and Black sociology's theories of active involvement, which encourage

researchers to accentuate cultural specificities (Staples, 1998; Blanner and Wellman, 1998), this research method enabled participants to take the lead and they directed me to a solution to the problem. The participants, whilst reluctant to write about the images, were more than willing to speak about the images, this in turn enabled the research to overcome this particular barrier. Thus each participant was asked to comment on their memories of each image and further questioned as to their opinions and beliefs connected to the image, thus providing a wealth of data regarding their memories and beliefs of them. For comparative purposes the script-writing exercise was modified to a verbal exercise for all groups. This also proved to be highly advantageous for researching with participants who were not confident in their literary skills. The fact that this research method, of visual stimulus and verbal response, contributes such flexibility for researchers illustrates its ability to be applied in highly sensitive areas and with difficult to reach communities.

In light of the difficulties highlighted with the collection of hand written data, I also extended this method of data-collection of verbal responses to participant's demographic information. Therefore, instead of being asked to write such information on a questionnaire I asked the questions and they gave verbal answers. The verbal aspect of this method also enabled a straightforward flow from the scriptwriting exercise to the additional data-collection technique of interview questions.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Alongside the modified script-writing exercise I conducted an in-depth interview with semi- structured questions. The interview was structured by way of asking all interviewees the same questions, which enabled the tabulation of responses from those occupying different groupings and positions within the research project thus functioning for comparative purposes. However it was also important to include open questions in order to generate reflexive responses and to allow the interviewees themselves to express their opinions and beliefs on the subject matter. Once again I conducted all of the interviews verbally and recorded all answers as well as taking notes, in order to address the issues raised by pilot interviewees regarding hand-written responses. The sequence of questions was as follows;

Questions 1, 2 and 3 were all asked before the modified script-writing exercise, in order, for interviewee's answers not to be directly influenced by the images included in the exercise.

1. What is the first thing that comes into your head when you think about asylum or refuge?
2. Which words/phrases or images do you remember from UK television with regards to asylum and refugee issues? Which programme were they in?
3. What are your sources of information/images of asylum and refugee issues?

Questions 4 and 5 were designed to actively include participant's personal experiences, and opinions, and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms. It was also important to gauge opinion on what is excluded, as well as included, in television coverage.

4. Do you think television influences people's opinions or behaviour towards people seeking asylum? If yes could you give an example?
5. Is there anything television does not show about asylum that you think it should?

Questions 6-13 were designed to ascertain the interviewee's information and basic knowledge of the subject matter.

6. Where do people in the UK who are refugees/seeking asylum come from?
7. Why have they come to the UK?
8. How many people do you think seek asylum in the UK in an average year?
9. Which countries in the world take in the most refugees/people seeking asylum?
10. How much per week in state benefit does a single adult person seeking asylum in the UK receive?
11. Do you know the rules concerning employment for people seeking asylum in the UK?
12. What percentage of refugees/people seeking asylum in Scotland have Degrees?
13. Have you heard of NASS (National Asylum Support System)?

Question 14 was also designed to actively include participant's personal experiences and opinions and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms.

14. What are the positive and or negative aspects of having an asylum seeking population in the UK?

Question 15 was designed in order to collect data on terminology associated with the issue. This also had the added benefit of enabling reflective thinking, for the interviewees, on their own language use.

15. What do you think of the term ‘asylum seeker’?

Question 16, the last question, was left deliberately open in order for the interviewees to decide if they wished to carry on or finish the interview at this point. It also created a space for interviewees to talk about their personal experiences and the issue in general.

16. Is there anything else you would like to say about asylum issues on television?

The conduct of the interviews

All interviews were carried out face to face. They took place in a variety of places such as workplaces, community facilities and private homes, as determined by the interviewees. They ranged in length from forty minutes to two hours. I did not place any time constraints on the interview. All aspects of the interview were designed for a verbal response including the collection of demographic data and the scriptwriting exercise in order to address the difficulties associated with hand-written responses. The interview was structured such that all interviewees were asked the same questions and all were included in the modified scriptwriting exercise. However, a number of the questions were left open to enable a semi-structured interview. All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and fully transcribed.

Interviewees were first asked questions which covered basic demographics such as age, gender, race and social class, the latter two demographics were not pre-determined by the researcher but were left open for interviewees of the three participatory groups to self-define them. However, participants were selected according to their differing socio-economic status, determined by their profession and/or income, in order to ensure measurable and distinct economic differentiation. I was interested to see if this correlated with people’s own definition of their social class. It was also necessary to enable self-definition of class within the refugee seeking asylum participants as many do not identify with the category of class. The interviewees who were refugees seeking asylum were also asked for their citizenship status in order to ascertain whether they had been granted citizenship status or whether they were still seeking asylum. Three questions were then

asked relating to the subject, these were followed by the modified script-writing exercise, and they were then asked the subsequent 14 questions, again related to the issue.

Issues of access, confidentiality, ethics and personal safety

60 in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with 60 participants living in Scotland. Participants were categorised in three groups, refugee and ‘asylum seekers’, professional interest- professional workers in the field, and the general public. Fifteen people were interviewed in the refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ group and fifteen were interviewed in the professional interest group, 30 were interviewed in the general public group.

Refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ formed a central aspect of this research project, in terms of investigating the impact of television coverage of the subject on the subject audience, therefore, gaining access to this group was crucial to the study. As a difficult to reach, socially excluded group, in terms of ethnicity, culture and social status, it was important for me, particularly as a white British person, to establish relationships of trust with the participants. This was necessary in order to, firstly, engage people to participate in the research interviews and, secondly, to enable them to impart worthwhile data. I achieved this goal by carrying out community work with refugees seeking asylum. This accorded me access to people who firstly agreed to participate and secondly trusted me enough to accept my guarantee of confidentiality and to speak openly about the subject matter.

Confidentiality was an issue of great personal concern for this group. People were anxious about being critical of the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate, now renamed the UK Border Agency, who process applicants claims for asylum. They believed that criticism of these institutions could influence the decision making process in relation to their claims. This attitude has serious ramifications for future research with these groups and needs to be investigated further. For the above reason people were very reluctant to put anything in writing during the interview. Research participants were guaranteed anonymity and informed that all data would be anonymous and that they would not be identified. All participants were given an information sheet, see appendix 4, detailing the research project and my contact information and all gave their signed consent. In addition to such standard ethical issues, the nature of the research topic in this case called for both cultural sensitivity and additional preparation on my part. My experience of working as an asylum case worker had included providing support services to people

seeking asylum. This enabled my sensitivity to the needs of those with personal experience of seeking asylum. This was important before, during and after the interview. I was always able to stay on after the interview, without time limit, for people to talk to me about their own individual asylum cases, which they always did. I also had to schedule in time for people to relax and talk about their personal experiences before the interview. This usually happened around the eating of a meal the interviewee had prepared. Therefore interviews which may only have lasted for one hour had to be scheduled for a whole day and/or evening.

The limitations of self-funding produced a personal safety issue for me whilst conducting my research interviews, particularly with this group. In order to facilitate the confidentiality and childcare needs of these participants, interviews were conducted in their homes at times which suited them. However, this group is housed in areas of deprivation, poverty and social exclusion commonly associated with high levels of crime and a high percentage of interviewees were housed in high-rise tower blocks. This presented me with a dilemma, in terms of my own personal safety, when traveling alone at night into and out of these areas, by way of public transport, as I do not drive a car. On two separate occasions, in the same week and in two separate locations, there had been women murdered in high rise tower blocks, where I had scheduled interviews. Whilst the safest option, when traveling alone at night, would have been to use a taxi cab, this was not an option as it was not financially possible. This had the potential of disabling my interviews and limiting them to locations and times which increased my personal safety; it did not, as I carried the research out regardless, but it could have implications for future researchers.

The professional interest participants were also accessed directly from my community work as a volunteer asylum case worker and voluntary English tutor. Some participants were accessed from conferences and workshops I attended in both capacities, as a researcher and a community support worker. As with the previous group they also expressed concerns around the issue of confidentiality. The main concern registered was a fear of not having the right answer and therefore being shown to be not knowledgeable in relation to their profession. This was overcome by an assurance that the research did not require right and wrong answers but merely their answer. The additional purpose of making this distinction was to get the participants to give answers as to what is actually in their minds.

As with the asylum seeking participants, some of these participants also expressed concerns at the prospect of being critical of the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate (UK Border Agency). However, their reasons differed from those of the people seeking asylum. Participants registered worries about their organisations being government or Home Office funded and felt that any criticisms of them might impact on future funding decisions. This has serious implications for future research in terms of access and bias and needs further investigation. Participants were also worried that their opinions may not be in line with the organisations they worked for. The guarantee of anonymity was therefore critical in securing the participation of these groups. Research participants were guaranteed anonymity and informed that all data would be anonymous and that they would not be identified. All participants were supplied with an information sheet detailing the research project and my contact information and gave their signed consent. The issue of personal safety did not come into play with these groups, so much, as most interviews took place in public places during the day. However, some interviews, scheduled in the winter, would still lead to me traveling alone in the dark, in unfamiliar locations which would have benefited greatly from the financial freedom to travel by taxi cab.

Access to general public participants was usually negotiated by visiting community facilities and social groups. The research was explained to the group gate keeper and they were given an information sheet, I produced, detailing the research project and my contact details, and asked if people would volunteer to participate. Many of the gatekeepers were hesitant about their group or project being involved because of the subject matter, they did not want their organisations being seen to be 'against asylum seekers or racist' and some refused me access on these grounds. Some general public participants were accessed through snowballing out from the groups who agreed to participate. Research participants were guaranteed anonymity and informed that all data would be anonymous and that they would not be identified. All participants were given an information sheet with details of the research project and my contact information and all gave their signed consent. As with the previous sample section, in order to facilitate the needs of these participants and to include a broad demographic, interviews were conducted sometimes in their homes at times which suited them. Personal safety issues were also a concern for me in reaching particular members of this group. In order to include all socio economic demographics I had to travel alone to areas of deprivation, poverty and social exclusion commonly associated with high levels of crime. These are the areas where the unemployed and low paid workers interviewed were housed.

Transcription and analysis

All 60 interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. There were several advantages to this method of recording; the digital recorder has a recording capacity which means it does not have to be stopped and started mid interview to turn a cassette tape over. I had used a cassette recorder in my pilot study and found it to be very intrusive in these terms.

The digital recorder also had the added benefit of storing data straight to the computer. This was useful with regards to storage of data because I did not have to worry about losing cassette tapes or storing them. It was also extremely advantageous for the purposes of transcription. For the pilot study I had transcribed from a cassette tape recording and the manual process of stopping, starting, rewinding and fast forwarding were much more laborious which in turn led to the transcription process taking longer than it did with the digital recording. Transcribing the data from a computer programme format was a much quicker procedure; it was also easier to locate specific parts of an individual interview.

There was also a tremendous difference in sound quality between the digital and cassette recordings, the digital recorder filtered out much more of the background noise. This was important because so many of my interviews took place in public places such as workplaces and community centres, and private homes where there was usually a high level of background noise, for example, from traffic, people and televisions. Transcripts were analysed and tabulated for key themes and recurring language and terminology.

Presentation of data

The subsequent chapters quote extensively from the transcripts. Although some quotes may have been made more comprehensible to the reader by, for example, the removal of repetition, I have in the main tried to maintain the details and characters of speech. Interviewees are identified by age, gender, social class and the sample section they represent; refugee and 'asylum seeker' participants are also identified by a name which is a pseudonym.

I felt it was important to humanise the people seeking asylum rather than have them represented as an abstract i.e. as an initial. This also encouraged active involvement and participation as I asked the participants to choose the name they would be represented by. Most people selected names of personal importance to them. For example, many chose

names of loved ones they had lost or left behind in their countries of origin. This method also produced some interesting socio-cultural insights; for example, one woman chose the name Amira because it meant queen and she wanted to feel all powerful in a country in which she felt completely powerless.

The term Black with a capital B is used in accordance with the Institute of Race Relations definition as representative of people of non-white descent's common experience of racism.

Chapter Four: Content analysis

INTRODUCTION

This content analysis focuses on television news coverage of asylum and immigration issues, in the wake of the sacking of the Home Secretary Charles Clarke on 5th May 2006. The reports were from 16, 17 and 18 of May 2006 and were selected because they featured a broad range of typical themes as well as key issues in asylum coverage as ascertained in both afore mentioned archive (see chapter three) and previous research as detailed in chapter two the literature review. I examined the lunchtime, early evening and late news bulletins for BBC1 and ITV (Channel Three), these are the most popular channels with the highest viewing figures. I also included *Channel 4 News* and *BBC Newsnight* for comparison. In addition I included *BBC Reporting Scotland* and *BBC Newsnight Scotland* in order to examine regional comparisons. Twelve images were also selected from this television news coverage to be used in the script-writing exercise for the in-depth interviews (see Chapters five, six and seven).

The actual subjects being covered by the news reports as evident in the headlines were as follows; ‘A thousand foreign criminals released by mistake’- *Channel 4 News* (16 May 2006); ‘Immigrant Fraud’- *BBC Reporting Scotland* (16 May 2006); ‘Illegal immigrants now the Prime Minister admits he doesn’t know how many are here’- *BBC 6’O’Clock News* (17 May 2006); ‘Welcome to Britain where illegal immigrants are free to stay and work without fear of being caught’- *ITV Evening News* (17 May 2006); ‘The foreign criminals, illegal immigrants and human rights’- *Channel 4 News* (17 May 2006); ‘Tonight; now the Prime Minister accepts he’s failed on illegal immigrants’- *BBC Newsnight* (17 May 2006); ‘Five Nigerian cleaners are in police custody’- *Channel 4 News* (18 May 2006); ‘Is immigration an unstoppable force?’- *BBC Newsnight* (18 May 2006); ‘On Newsnight Scotland from migration to asylum’- *BBC Newsnight Scotland* (18 May 2006); ‘Five illegal immigrants arrested as they arrive for work at the governments Immigration Directorate’- *BBC 10’O’Clock News* (18 May 2006). It is notable how similar the headlines are to press headlines and agendas (see chapter two; Van Dijk, 1991; Cohen, 2002; Buchanan et al., 2003; Finney, 2003; Welch and Schuster, 2005).

I identified five main areas of coverage in these reports which featured a broad range of asylum and immigration issues. The first was images, descriptions and discussion of criminality within immigrant groups which includes people seeking asylum. The second

area was images, descriptions and discussion of the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ this included people seeking asylum. The third area was images, descriptions and discussion of immigration controls. The fourth area was images, descriptions and discussion of the benefits of immigration. The fifth area was images, descriptions and discussion of the difficulties and inefficiencies in the process of claiming asylum.

There were three main elements to the content analysis, 16, 17 and 18 of May 2006:

1. To investigate the key areas of coverage in the news programmes and produce a quantitative assessment of their comparative importance by utilising the thematic analysis method. As part of this I identified the explanations which were given of the causes of the related issues.
2. To examine interviews to establish who got to speak and the conditions in which they did so.
3. To examine news headlines and how they might structure ways of perceiving the related issues.
4. To examine the visual images accompanying the verbal text and how these were given significance and perspective by the words that accompanied them.

CRIMINALITY

The coverage is dominated by images, descriptions and discussions of criminality within immigrant groups which also included people seeking asylum. Of the 1696 lines analysed 1091, including 38 lines of headlines, which altogether constitutes 63% of the coverage, referred to criminality.

One of the stories reported which focuses on criminality is that of the release by authorities of 1,023 ‘foreign prisoners’ without these individuals being considered for deportation. Amongst these were a group of nine foreign prisoners who were convicted of most serious offences, including murder, manslaughter, rape and child sex offences. This issue led to the sacking of the Home Secretary Charles Clarke. Mr Clarke offered an insight into just how seriously the Prime Minister takes the role of media coverage of the Home Office when he explained the reasoning behind the Prime Minister’s decision to sack him in an article in the *Guardian* newspaper ‘I think what he feels is the way the media has dealt with events over the recent period means that I as home secretary would be vulnerable over the next

two or three weeks to events which could lead to instability and therefore make it less possible to solve the problem.’ (*The Guardian*, 27 May 2006)

An important aspect of the ‘foreign prisoners’ story is that the prisoners included people seeking asylum and refugees, yet there was no explanation of this in the reporting, as in the following example from *BBC 6 O’Clock News* reporting on Prime Minister’s Question Time in the House of Commons:

Prime Minister (Tony Blair): In the vast bulk of cases, as was explained, there will be an automatic presumption now to deport and the vast bulk of people will indeed be deported and those people in my view should be deported, irrespective of any claim that they have that the country to which their going back may not be safe.

Newscaster (Natasha Kaplinkski): So Nick the Prime Minister making promises there but can he make them work?

Political Editor (Nick Robinson): Not at the moment he can’t no, because judges have said that they believe that even someone committed of a serious offence should have their human rights taken into consideration and that they perhaps should not be sent back to countries at which they’d be at risk. What Tony Blair is in effect saying is he needs to re-write the law to say only if there is a specific, a personal, an individual threat to an individual could they be kept in this country. *They couldn’t simply say oh I don’t want to go to Iraq or Jamaica or Afghanistan or anywhere else cos I might get into a bit of trouble given what my track record is.* That means changing the law, he can’t tell us yet how he’d change the law so there is still a big gap between the intention, the words, and the actual legislation. (*BBC 6 O’Clock News*, 17 May 2006; italics added)

The ‘human rights’ issue referred to directly also relates to people seeking asylum and refugees but this is not made clear. The political editor mentions Iraq and Afghanistan, countries where people seeking asylum have come from, but he does not make the link to refugees or people seeking asylum. It is precisely because people would be returned to war zones and countries where they are at risk of persecution that the human rights argument comes into play. However, the BBC Political Editor appears to somewhat minimise this fact, by parodying refugees, (the parody is emphasised with his use of informal English i.e. the word ‘cos’) human rights claims. This seems to contradict his previous statements with

regards to the legal issue of breaching human rights which is what the changes to ‘actual legislation’ mean.

The audience, therefore, may not be fully informed on the human rights issue. There is no explanation of the fact that the only way possible for the Prime Minister’s ‘intention’ to be made real with regards to changing the ‘legislation’ is for the country to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights altogether as it does not apply to only some people some of the time. In the following example the Political Editor does report that the government’s position has changed (‘it isn’t possible to actually deport all those people’) but he does not explain the reason in relation to the withdrawal from the Human Rights Act:

Political Editor (Nick Robinson): [reporting live from Westminster]:

Confusion in particular on that issue of foreign prisoners and deportations. You may remember when this row first got going, the Prime Minister, exactly two weeks ago as it happens at Prime Minister’s questions said and I’ll quote “ I say now let us deport all these people”. He was talking of course about convicted, those convicted of serious offences. Since then ministers have said something slightly different, that it isn’t possible to actually deport all those people. (*BBC 6 O’Clock News*, 17 May 2006)

The BBC Political Editor states that the Prime Minister was referring to ‘those convicted of serious offences’ when he spoke of his intention to deport ‘all those people’ but this is not in fact accurate. The *Guardian* on 8th May 2005 reported the Prime Minister stating at Prime Minister’s questions that ‘anybody who is convicted of an imprisonable offence and who is a foreign national to be deported’. It also reports Lord Falconer’s response to this statement: ‘consultation was needed on the plans to automatically deport released prisoners, adding that there were some offences which would not "remotely justify deportation"’.

The difference between a ‘serious offence’ and an ‘imprisonable offence’ can be that between murder and a driving offence, as with the recent case reported in *The Independent* newspaper of Vincent Onwubiko, a 42 year old wheelchair bound disabled athlete who has lived in the UK since 1994 and has an eleven year old daughter. Vincent, a power lifter, won five gold medals for Britain. In 2007 Mr

Onwubiko was sentenced to five months in prison for driving while disqualified after twice being convicted of careless driving, once after jumping a red light. As a result of these ‘minor convictions’ Vincent has spent almost a year in a detention centre and is set to be deported to Nigeria as a ‘foreign criminal’, (*The Independent*, 22 March 2010).

Despite the mention of the Prime Minister backtracking on his previous statement that all foreign nationals would be deported, again there is no explanation that this was due to recognition that the government would need to withdraw the country entirely from the European Convention on Human Rights in order to ‘deport all these people’. There is also no discussion of the ramifications of removing human rights from refugees seeking asylum. The report includes footage of David Cameron the Conservative party leader making reference to the Human Rights Act:

Conservative party leader (David Cameron): Whether it’s deporting dangerous criminals, sorting out the mess of the Human Rights Act or dealing with illegal immigration this is a government in, paralysis.
(*BBC 6’O’Clock News*, 17 May 2006)

The issue of abolishing the Human Rights Act or withdrawing from European Convention on Human Rights altogether, as the Conservative leader was advocating, was reported in the press on the same day, as in this report in *The Guardian*: ‘David Cameron, the Tory leader, said he would "reform, replace or scrap" the 1988 act’ (*The Guardian*, 17 May 2006) but this is not addressed or explained in any of the news reports.

The visual images accompanying this BBC bulletin are of men climbing fences. This footage is broadcast twice during the bulletin. They are operating as illustrative of both ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘foreign criminals’. This footage is actually from a story about Sangatte. The Red Cross Centre at Sangatte was a humanitarian shelter for refugees seeking asylum, who had been sleeping rough in the district of Calais. In the summer of 2001 refugees seeking asylum were filmed trying to jump aboard Eurotunnel trains and from this point media interest became relentless. It culminated in the UK government doing a deal with the French government four weeks later to close the Sangatte Centre, which forced people to sleep rough again.

The Cardiff School of Journalism conducted research on this issue in 2003 '*What's the Story: Sangatte; a Case Study of Media Coverage of Asylum and Refugee Issues*' (see chapter two). The research concluded that these images of unidentified male refugees pictured in gangs stereotyped refugees as threatening young males. They were being used to reinforce the predominant media message that migration including the forced migration of refugees seeking asylum, is a threat to the UK. (Buchanan et al., 2003:27-28).

It is notable that five years after these images were first broadcast they are still being used for the same purpose as they were when originally broadcast, to illustrate immigration as a threat to the UK. The same images were also broadcast on the same evening's edition of *Newsnight* (17 May 2006), again to illustrate the threat from 'illegal immigrants' and 'foreign criminals'. Not only are these images being used outwith their original context of the Sangatte story but as establishing footage for both 'illegal immigrants' and 'foreign criminals'. The BBC, the public broadcaster, appears to be misrepresenting refugees seeking asylum as criminals. This image is still being used in the same way by the BBC in 2010. Further research was conducted with this image in the audience reception chapters.

The report also uses the still image of a non-British passport as a studio backdrop and footage of a Home Office rejection letter with a close up on words ringed Application Refused. The Home Office logo BUILDING A SAFE JUST AND TOLERANT SOCIETY is also visible in this shot. The Home Office rejection letter could be applicable to people seeking asylum who cannot return to countries of war and torture. Further research was conducted into all of these images in the audience reception chapters.

The *ITV Evening News* report of the issue of 'illegal immigrants' interviewed an Algerian man who, we are told, is receiving treatment for clinical depression. His full name and 'illegal immigrant' are written beneath him. The interview was trailed in the introduction with the presenter stating 'The government has admitted today that they're too hard to find, but it can't be that difficult because today we did just that. We tracked down one man who's living and working in Britain, earning money, using the health service, he's even been in prison and yet he is still here as an illegal immigrant.' Within the interview he is also constructed as a 'foreign criminal':

Journalist (Philip Ray-Smith): But as I talked to him, it emerged he had been in trouble with the police, in prison twice in fact and yet he's still in the country.

illegal immigrant (Sofiane): I been to prison 2002, yeah for fifteen months.

Journalist (Philip Ray-Smith): What was that for?

illegal immigrant (Sofiane): For robbery.

Journalist (Philip Ray-Smith): Robbery?

illegal immigrant (Sofiane): Robbery... these last months from Brixton.

(ITV Evening News, 17 May 2006)

In a lengthy report of over eight minutes there is also no mention made of the human rights issue of deporting someone to a country where there is a war. The report seems to be suggesting that as Sofiane has committed a crime he should not be 'in the country', even though he is suffering from a mental health condition. This is a human rights issue of its own, with regards to deporting someone with mental health problems to a country where there may not be treatment available to him. The report is edited in a way that seems to show Sofiane was not aware of the context his interview would be placed in i.e. the implication that he is a 'foreign criminal', and that as such it is questionable as to whether he should be in the country. This is apparent from the fact that the journalist's statement 'he had been in trouble with the police in prison twice in fact and yet he's still in the country' is made in the form of a voiceover and not directly to the man being interviewed.

Within this framework of criminality in which 'illegal immigrants' are positioned, reference is also made to 'asylum seekers' when the Political Editor informs the viewers of a series of questions he asked of the Home Office. The questions are all individually shown on the screen one after the other with a still image of the Home Office logo but without the logo's accompanying words:

Political Editor (Tom Bradby): Voice-over- So what on earth is going on? Well we've been trying to work it out. We asked the government what checks are supposed to be carried out before someone is handed a National Insurance number? How many people have overstayed their visa since 97? Of these how many have you contacted, in other words do you really bother to chase them? How many people have claimed asylum

since 97 and how many of these have left the country? In other words, do you have the faintest idea of the scale of the problem we're dealing with? We'll keep you posted on the answers. (*ITV Evening News*, 17 May 2006)

In the posing of these questions asylum is directly linked to the context of the subject of the report which is illegal immigration. No explanation is offered as to the inclusion of the issue of asylum but later in the programme the Political Editor comments on the Home Office's response to them and although the question on asylum is not raised again at this point, he cites an explanation as to why the questions are being asked:

Political Editor (Tom Bradby): Well Mary, in the last 40 minutes or so we have. Just let me say, that the reason we posed those questions was, if you take the starting point, Tony Blair saying, look the reason we don't know how many illegal immigrants are in this country is of course they're illegal how would we know. So what we did was, we stepped back and we thought well what would we reasonably expect the government to know? What would we reasonably expect the government to be coming, which direction would we expect that to be coming at that from? (*ITV Evening News*, 17 May 2006)

The Political Editor verifies that the questions asked, which includes the question regarding asylum, are directly related to the issue of 'illegal immigrants'. The conflation of people claiming asylum with 'illegal immigrants' may invite the viewer to make the same link as no other explanation is given for their relevance.

The images broadcast in the headline which refers to 'illegal immigrants' are variations of the Sangatte images broadcast in afore mentioned BBC news programmes. The footage is of young non-white men, one with his face covered, between lorries. They operate here in much the same way as the BBC footage which is to constitute a threat to the UK. The previously mentioned research on these images pointed out that the fact that the images are all of men and that they have their face covered intensifies the sense of threat, however, when the researchers interviewed refugees seeking asylum they explained why they were reluctant to be publicly identified. They had a fear of being identified by their persecutors in their home countries and putting their friends and families in their home countries in danger. This was a factor in the images being produced of refugees seeking asylum hiding

their faces. Some people were also reluctant to identify themselves as ‘asylum seekers’ for fear of being stigmatised or harassed (Buchanan et al., 2003:27-28).

The studio backdrop of the introduction to the report is footage of non-white men being searched by police and put into a police van. This image also connotes somewhat threatening criminals. It is notable that these images too are of men and they are all non-white. This may influence the viewer to associate ‘illegal immigrants’ with criminality and to view race as a factor. This is an issue that is investigated in the audience reception section (see chapters five, six and seven).

The pejorative term ‘illegal immigrant’ is endorsed by the newscaster, journalist and Political Editor who all use it directly in their own speech. A value based assumption of who is seen as legitimate is being made here. Organisations such as Trade Unions and NGO’s who advocate for and support migrants use an alternative term, undocumented migrant, in order to disassociate migrants from a negative framework of criminality but this alternative is not evident in any of the sample news programmes.

The *Channel 4 News* (17 May 2006) report of the same issue on the same day suggests in the headline that the report will investigate the human rights issue ‘The foreign criminals, illegal immigrants and human rights.’ The headline cuts to the opening credits which includes a slow zoom close-up of a visual image of a Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS) application form. This image again suggests that the issue of human rights as applicable to people seeking asylum will be addressed.

Whilst mention is made of ‘human rights lawyers’ intention to ‘intervene to protect individuals’ within the report, there is no reference to the possibility of the ‘individuals’ concerned being refugees seeking asylum despite the visual image from the opening credits linking the issue to that of asylum and the further footage of a man being deported who may in fact be a refugee seeking asylum. The report does refer three times to the Prime Minister’s language as ‘rhetoric’ as well as informing the viewer that ‘existing laws and practice will make it extremely difficult for the reality to match his rhetoric’.

However, this lengthy nine minute report contained no explanation of the actual ‘existing laws’ (namely the Human Rights Act) which caused the Prime Minister to change his position from that implied by the statement ‘automatic deportation would apply to any foreign national convicted of an imprisonable offence’. Presumably it is the Human Rights

Act and the protection it offers which enables the reporter to refer to the Prime Minister's language as 'rhetoric' but the Act itself is never referred to nor are the government plans for amending the Act. Therefore, as with the previous reports there is no discussion of the fact that the government would need to withdraw the country entirely from the European Convention on Human Rights in order to achieve the Prime Minister's goal. Again as with the previous reports there is also no mention made of the ramifications of the Prime Minister's desire to remove human rights from refugees seeking asylum.

If asylum is not linked to human rights then it is left open to the viewer to link it to the other areas referred to in the headline and the accompanying image of the National Asylum Support Application namely 'foreign criminals' and 'illegal immigrants' and, therefore, to associate it with criminality and illegality.

As suggested, the opening credits include a slow zoom close-up of the image of a Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS) application form which is shown in conjunction with a slow zoom close-up of the image of multiple paper files and a slow zoom close-up of a deportation letter which states 'r.e. conviction for importation of drugs'. This footage constructs an immediate association with asylum which may also be associated with illegality and criminality as these are the topics of the report.

Later in the report, with a voice-over referring to the deportation of 'foreign prisoners' the footage includes a close-up of a person with a coat over their head on aeroplane steps being forcibly removed/deported by two security/immigration officials wearing yellow jackets. There is also footage of a bus with a young non-white man being escorted from the bus onto the plane. Although the report has constructed these men as 'foreign prisoners', this may in fact be footage of refugees seeking asylum being deported. This image was used in the audience reception research and was often associated with the deportation of 'asylum seekers' by the interviewees, particularly the refugees seeking asylum who reacted with fear and terror to this image. This image has been broadcast by the BBC as well and is a stock shot on their website as illustrative of the deportation of 'foreign criminals', 'illegal immigrants' and 'asylum seekers' (see chapters five, six and seven).

Asylum is associated with 'foreign criminals' and 'illegal immigrants' from the opening shot of the bulletin and the deportation images are not clarified. The journalist, politicians and presenter also all endorse the use of the term 'illegal immigrant' by using it continuously in their direct speech.

The human rights issues in relation to withdrawing from the European Convention on Human Rights were fully explained and analysed by some of the print media during the same period as with the following article and leader from *The Observer* entitled *Revealed: Blair attack on human rights law* and *Adrift on a tide of panic*:

Experts say, the government might be left with only the legal equivalent of a nuclear option. The article of the European convention under which they were originally allowed to stay - the Article Three anti-torture clause - *is one of only three which member states can abandon only if they leave the convention altogether*. (Ned Temko and Jamie Doward *The Observer*, 14 May 2006; italics added)

Few things in the record of the Blair government are shabbier or more destructive than its increasing tendency - intimately related to its own mounting political difficulties - to foster lies and bolster rightwing myths about its own Human Rights Act. (Leader, *The Observer*, 14 May 2006)

Another significant issue within this story, directly related to refugees seeking asylum was that of the government's controversial quota system for deporting refugees seeking asylum possibly being a contributory factor to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate failure to deport 'foreign criminals' as reported in *The Guardian*:

Mr Roberts [*the immigration service's director of enforcement*] admitted that part of the "intelligence-led" approach was to ensure that such operations would boost the Immigration officials' preoccupation with meeting Mr Blair's personal target on failed asylum seeker removals is leaving dangerous criminals to roam the streets, shadow immigration minister Damian Green warned. (*The Guardian*, 16 May 2006)

This issue was not reported by any of the sample broadcast news reports even though it had the weight of the authoritative voice of the shadow Immigration Minister behind it. The viewer may be being ill informed, due to the exclusion from the national news reports of any alternative arguments or analysis. Specifically, regarding the issues of government quotas for deporting refugees seeking asylum and human rights i.e. from human rights organisations, as reported in sections of the press. The issue becomes reduced, to that of

the need to deport ‘foreign criminals’, as this position is not questioned or challenged by any of the journalists.

Even in the programmes we would expect to give an alternative and wider analysis of the issues such as *Channel 4 News* and *Newsnight* there was no explanation offered as to the ramifications of the deportation of ‘foreign criminals’ with regards to the consequences for the country of politicians breaching the Human Rights Act. The main area of discussion was just how many the UK can deport and how quickly rather than the wider question of whether the UK should be deporting people back to unsafe countries and whether there should there be a quota for deporting refugees seeking asylum, as was reported in some sections of the press. This may be a reflection of the fact that the story was only told from the position of government and opposition politicians who were the only people given a voice in this reporting. The exception was the ITV report which still implied an acceptance of the government position whilst interviewing a man they labelled as an ‘illegal immigrant’.

The language used to refer to the people concerned is also the language of the politicians which has been adopted wholesale by the broadcast news services across the board. All of the national reports, including *Channel 4 News* and *Newsnight*, made direct use of the term ‘foreign prisoners’ or ‘foreign criminals’ both in their headlines and the main reports. This may have the effect of problematising, alienating and dehumanising the people concerned whereby they are reduced to a mass threat rather than seen as individual human beings with individual circumstances, such as the afore mentioned Vincent Onwubiko. The regional report from *BBC Reporting Scotland* did not use this terminology; even when directly referring to criminal actions of non-British people they were referred to as ‘criminals’ with no distinction being made as regards their nationality.

NUMBERS OF ‘ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS’

One of the reasons why there was an omission of any in-depth analysis of the consequences of the government breaching human rights issues as defined by the Human Rights Act may be that the story regarding ‘foreign criminals’ was conflated with another story regarding the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ in the UK, which also included people seeking asylum. This story was predominant in the sample with the most coverage (92%, 1542 of the total 1696 lines analysed including 30 of the total 46 lines of headlines) all refer to this issue. This is manifest in the following headlines and introductions to reports

of the appearance of Dave Roberts (the head of enforcement at the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND)) at the Home Affairs Select Committee. When questioned as to how many people he estimated to be in the UK illegally he replied ‘I haven’t the faintest idea’. This reply became the premise for news reports focusing on the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ in the UK:

Headline: Newscaster (Jon Snow): A thousand foreign criminals released by mistake, but no-one at the Home Office will lose their jobs. Whitehall’s most senior civil servant, Gus O’Donnell, said it wasn’t clear any officials were directly accountable for the fiasco, but another civil servant raised the spectre of systemic failure at the Home Office, when MP’s asked how the department tracked and deported illegal immigrants? The man in charge of enforcement told them “we don’t target individuals”. Our Home Affairs correspondent Simon Israel reports. (Channel 4 News, 16 May 2006; italics added)

Introduction: Newscaster (Natasha Kaplinkski): If Tony Blair thought the issue of illegal immigrants and foreign criminals had gone away, he must be a disappointed man. (BBC 6’O’Clock News, 17 May 2006; italics added)

Headline: Newscaster (Jon Snow): The foreign criminals, illegal immigrants and human rights. (Channel 4 News, 17 May 2006; italics added)

Introduction: Newscaster (Jeremy Paxman): Good evening; It’s a mess but we’ll sort it out. The Prime Minister’s position on illegal immigration can be distilled pretty concisely. In a sign of how worried he is though, he abandoned his previous position on foreign criminals and said the majority should be deported, even if they get sent to a country where their safety can’t be guaranteed. The opposition sniffed that on this issue too the government was in paralysis. (Newsnight, 17 May 2006; italics added)

Both the BBC and ITV reports broadcast a statement made by Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, in the House of Commons, where he explained why there are no official figures for illegal immigration: ‘There are no official estimates for the numbers of illegal immigrants into the United Kingdom. By its very nature illegal immigration is difficult to

measure and any estimates would be highly speculative.’ However this fact did not prevent the programmes from focusing on the issue of numbers with ITV even producing an unsourced statistic of ‘400,000 illegal immigrants’. The report went further with the assertion that they are ‘free to stay and free to work in the United Kingdom’ when they are in fact subject to immigration controls. The BBC report refers to the numbers having ‘ballooned’ and the Home Office’s struggle with the ‘sheer scale of illegal immigration’ when they have in fact reported there are no numbers available to corroborate these statements. *Channel 4 News*; report the numbers issue as a somewhat redundant question (‘no-one’s ever been able to keep track of the number of illegal immigrants’). However, this appears, to some extent, to contradict this previous report. Jon Snow pursues the issue, when he questions the Home Office Minister as to why ‘there’s still absolutely no information on how many illegal immigrants there are in Britain’.

A trend is evident here concerning the use of the term ‘illegal immigrant’ which is in common usage in all of the national news reports who may well be taking their lead from the politicians, as the Prime Minister uses the term as well. Oxfam in collaboration with the National Union of Journalists, Amnesty International Scotland and the Scottish Refugee Council, produced a document in 2005 entitled *Fair Play: Refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland: A guide for journalists*. Within this publication they give specific guidance regarding the term ‘illegal immigrant’:

The term illegal immigrant, although commonly used, is not defined anywhere within UK law. The phrase ‘illegal immigrant’ was found in January 2002 by the Advertising Standards Authority to be racist, offensive and misleading. Most international organisations including the UN and the International Organisation for Migration use the term ‘irregular migrant’ instead. (*Fair Play: Refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland: A guide for journalists*, 2005: 14)

Therefore journalists and politicians at the highest level including the Prime Minister are using language deemed to be ‘racist’. This raises serious questions with regards to the message being sent out to the audience.

The afore mentioned, Sangatte footage, is broadcast on five different occasions, during these reports. *Newsnight* broadcast it a total of three times during its report. The programme also used a still image from the footage as a studio backdrop during the studio

discussion. The *BBC 6'O'Clock News* broadcast the footage twice during the programme and *ITV Evening News* broadcast it once. There is then a heavy usage of this footage by all the broadcasters both mainstream and minority. This is an indicator as to the misrepresentation of refugees seeking asylum who are included as the subjects of the footage (Buchanan et al., 2003) as they are being reconfigured as 'illegal immigrants' as well as 'foreign criminals' who constitute a threat to the UK as opposed to vulnerable peoples in need of protection.

BBC Newsnight also pursued the issue of numbers in two of the sample programmes. The programme broadcast on the 17 May 2006 dedicates a full sixteen minutes to migration issues and the following evening's programme was entirely reporting on the subject for a total of 26 minutes.

The first *Newsnight* programme, broadcast on the 17th May 2006, consisted of a report, a studio discussion and an interview with a Home Office Minister, all of which focused on numbers. Despite recognition within the programme of the fact that numbers cannot be determined the programme proceeds to do just this and tries to determine the numbers of 'illegal immigrants' in the UK.

The report featured in the programme by Steve Moxon attempts to source a figure and then argues against the sourced figure in order to produce another figure which is not sourced. The report also functions as a framework to the studio discussion and interview with the Home Office Minister which follows it. The report is introduced with the afore mentioned statement from the Prime Minister 'There are no official estimates for the numbers of illegal immigrants into the United Kingdom. By its very nature illegal immigration is difficult to measure and any estimates would be highly speculative.' Despite this statement the reporter goes on to speculate about the 'numbers of illegal immigrants'. Steve Moxon adds 'two pools of migrants' to the estimated figure and thus increases the total figure to one million which he asserts as a 'proper total' based on his assumptions. He further increases this figure by citing various pull factors which on analysis may not be accurate representations.

The images broadcast in this section of the report appear to racialise the issue of 'illegal immigration'. Images of non-white people are again used to represent 'illegal immigrants' alongside the Sangatte images which imply a threat to the UK (Buchanan et al., 2003:27-28). In turn the UK is represented by the image of a white man and a Union Jack. The

claims being made by the reporter are also reinforced with visuals of each claim listed on screen.

The report continues by listing several reasons the reporter claims act as a ‘magnet’ for ‘illegal immigrants’:

Now this would not be such a magnet, were it not for the famously non existent checks, on anyone entering the country, and the relentless determination of the Home Office, not to pursue anyone, regardless of how flagrantly they contravene immigration law. But, it’s by no means the end of what makes the UK the number one favourite destination though. We have US style free labour laws, combined with EU style generous welfare benefits, and we also have a growing economy. So what is being done about it? Nothing. Ministers, who had full knowledge of bogus applications [close up image of Asian clothing shop], ignored the problem and embarkation controls were completely abandoned.

(Newsnight , 17 May 2006; parenthesis added)

He makes these claims, for which no evidence is provided, such as the ‘famously non existent checks on anyone entering the country’ and the ‘US style free labour laws combined with EU style generous welfare benefits’. There are in fact checks made when people enter the country, the US has a green card system for employment of migrants just as the UK has its own system of regulations. With regards to the welfare system being ‘generous’, as it stands at this moment a single person receives £62 a week in unemployment benefit, which makes UK welfare benefits some of the lowest in Europe. The UK has ‘the largest proportion of persons living below the national poverty limit in 1994, only surpassed by Greece and Portugal.’ (Castles et al, 2006). However, migrants tend not to claim welfare as they work and ‘illegal migrants’ could not claim any welfare benefits because of their legal status, as they would in fact be making themselves known to the authorities. There is also another apparently racialised image of an Asian clothes shop when reference is made to ‘bogus applications’.

The reporter continues his attempt to produce a conclusive figure:

Reporter (Steve Moxon): So can we quantify the number of illegal migrants? [image of non-white people] I asked Harriet Sergeant, who

produced the report *Welcome to the Asylum (2001)*, after spending many weeks with immigration service staff, for an estimate of illicit entry to the whole country.

Harriet Sergeant: My estimate for what I saw was 300,000 people coming in just in Dover alone but for the whole country we have no idea. Nobody has any idea. The point is that the system has so failed that any number of people can come into this country, nothing is stopping them.

Reporter (Steve Moxon): So overall whether you take, what you might call a top-down view. Looking at an estimate from Professor Salt, or a more, you might say bottom-up view, looking at the different avenues of entry of illegal migrants. Either way, you have to conclude that the total number of illegal migrants living in Britain today has to be in the millions not the hundreds of thousands and the problem is the government daren't even make in secret a guesstimate. (Newsnight, 17 May 2006; parenthesis added)

The reporter attempts to 'quantify the number of illegal migrants' by including an estimated figure of '300,000' illegal immigrants entering Dover. The report is brought to a close with the contention 'you have to conclude that the total number of illegal migrants living in Britain today has to be in the millions not the hundreds of thousands'. Thus he has produced a figure of 'millions', as a definite article i.e. with the use of 'have' and 'has'. There is a repeated use here of an image of non-white people as representative of 'illegal immigrants' further reinforcing the racialisation of the issue.

One of the questions arising from Steve Moxon's report is why he was deemed to be sufficiently well informed to be able to report for *Newsnight*. In his introduction he acknowledges 'Sections of the media even accused me of racism.' The following journalists' reports from *The Guardian* with regards to Steve Moxon raise serious issues as to the appropriateness of this editorial decision in terms of impartialty:

Conservative attempts to exploit the issues of immigration and asylum backfired yesterday with a frontbench spokesman being forced to distance himself from his party's own report and a book from a whistleblower which has been branded as "racist". David Davis, the shadow home secretary, had been due to chair the book

launch of former immigration official Steve Moxon. But amid claims that the book was an Islamophobic rant, Mr Davis failed to show. Mr Moxon's book, *The Great Immigration Scandal*, claims the term "paki" is not racist; predicts immigration leading to Ulster-style civil war; and Asians are more likely to be organised criminals. He writes: "Anyone with street sense knows to play by the sensible rule of thumb that predominantly Afro-Caribbean areas or where blacks deal drugs or pimp girls, are places where extra caution should be exercised." (Michael White and Vikram Dodd, *The Guardian*, 7 September 2004)

Can anyone doubt that Mr Moxon, in reality, loathes the idea of immigration? The truth is that though some whistleblowers are genuinely motivated by a large point of principle, others, like Mr Moxon, may be trying to further an extreme political position. (Philip Hensher, *The Guardian*, 12 March 2004).

There was some awareness of the controversial nature of the decision to accord the privilege to Steve Moxon to report on the issue of immigration as the presenter Jeremy Paxman stated 'That's Steve Moxon's personal view'. This appears to be some sort of attempt to qualify and disassociate the report from the BBC but it was broadcast on the BBC. The attempt to distance the programme from the report, is somewhat hampered by the fact that the studio backdrop visible is yet another image from Sangatte of men climbing a fence. This is the same image which was broadcast in the report.

The studio debate and the interview with the Home Office Minister following the report also focus on the number of 'illegal immigrants'. The newscaster takes up this issue with all three contributors. There is recognition of the fact that numbers cannot be determined, with the inclusion of the Prime Minister's statement. However, the Liberal Democrat Leader Nick Clegg is questioned about it and states; 'Well since we don't know where they are, since we don't know how many people there are it's extremely difficult to know what you do'. The Home Office Minister Tony McNulty is also questioned on the subject and comments; 'I would say that there's no official estimate'. The newscaster himself also acknowledges that the numbers cannot be determined; 'Yes but none of us really knows how many illegals.' The newscaster appears to contradict himself by both citing figures and requesting them as with the

following examples: ‘hundreds of thousands or perhaps quarter of a million according to Sir Andrew in this country illegally what is to be done with them?’; ‘I’m asking you what’s your figure?’ The viewer is left in the position of dealing with variable estimates and unqualified figures from the report, the studio debate and the interview with the Home Office Minister.

The pejorative term ‘illegals’ which has connotations of criticism or disapproval, introduced into the debate by Sir Andrew Green of Migration Watch, is now also being endorsed by the newscaster who uses it directly in his own speech. It was also used by the Home Office Minister: ‘under the new law and we think that is far tighter and it is right and proper that at the work level is where you can and should pick up many, many of these illegals.’ The more neutral terms of ‘undocumented’ or ‘irregular migrants’, as used by some politicians and widely used by the Trade Union movement could have been more appropriate for the newscaster who should remain impartial and the Home Office Minister, who could have been challenged for this derogatory language. The inclusion in the studio discussion of Migration Watch UK, a pressure group who rose to prominence as critics of immigration policy, could have been balanced with an NGO advocating or supporting migrants. Value based assumptions are being made here as to who is legitimate both as immigrants and as interviewees.

During the interview with the Immigration Minister the image in the studio backdrop is of Sangatte, showing a young man attempting to climb over a barbed wire fence, and the camera pans from this image to another Sangatte image continuously during the interview. It is often framed directly in the centre of the shot of the newscaster and the Immigration Minister for maximum impact. The Immigration Minister commented directly on the Sangatte footage ‘Remember too, the illegal population, such as it is, is multilayered and segmented. It’s not just as the pictures behind you show, those climbing over fences, very often, it’s those who come quite legitimately for six months’. The newscaster replied ‘Those are the visible ones.’ Thus the images, from the Sangatte Red Cross Centre, of refugees seeking asylum (Buchanan et al., 2003), are reconfigured and endorsed by the Immigration Minister and the newscaster as images of the ‘illegal population’. The Sangatte footage is continuously used throughout the programme and this again associates refugees seeking asylum with illegality as well as constituting them as a threat to the UK.

Another area which may cause confusion for viewers in this programme was the conflation of refugee and asylum issues with general immigration issues. This is evident in the interview with the Home Office Minister. The following example, taken from the interview, is directly related to asylum:

Newscaster (Jeremy Paxman): You mentioned your last time you were here, which was late last year, November last year, when we were dealing with the question why the government had failed to meet it's target of removing more people than had *failed claims*? You said, my head is on the block if we don't meet this target by February, March and I said, ok come back in February or March with or without your head. Presumably those figures are now available, have you met the target?

Immigration Minister (Tony McNulty MP): Those figures come out next Tuesday, and I'll be happy to come back here and I think it will be with my head in tow.

Newscaster (Jeremy Paxman): You know what they are obviously?

Immigration Minister (Tony McNulty MP): Yes I do, but without pre-empting their publication, I'm confident that we will have met the target, and in a sustained fashion over the last three months, and that goes precisely to Nicks point about getting the *asylum system* in order. Which is what much of the last number of years has been precisely what we're doing. (*Newsnight*, 17 May 2006; italics added)

The question being raised by the interviewer 'why the government had failed to meet its target of removing more people than had failed claims' refers to the issue of the government setting a quota for deporting what they refer to as 'failed asylum seekers'. As mentioned previously from the press reports, there had been much criticism of this policy, particularly with regards to the fact that this quota was a causal factor in the Home Office's failure to deport serious criminals such as murderers and rapists as the focus was on meeting the 'failed claims' quota. It is also questionable whether one can predict the figures for a quota within an asylum system which is designed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to be entirely objective. The high number of refusals to grant refuge in the UK was criticised by the UNHCR. This 'refusal mindset' may be directly connected to the government's 'target of

removing more people than had failed claims’.

Thus a report published in June by the UNHCR entitled: *Quality Initiative Project. Second Report to the Minister* was highly critical of UK asylum policy. It raised concerns about male immigration officers interviewing victims of rape, sexual assault, forced marriage or domestic violence. But its most serious criticism was directed at the handling of asylum claims, and includes accusations of racial stereotyping and an ignorance of human rights law. The report states:

UNHCR also continues to observe frequent use of speculative arguments which potentially weaken Reasons for Refusal Letters. Such arguments demonstrate a failure to apply the correct methodology in assessing the facts as set out in the UNHCR handbook [...] This could be a reflection of a number of things, such as flawed credibility assessments, an application of the wrong standard of proof, a failure to apply objective country of origin information, the adoption of a narrow UK perspective or a refusal mindset where caseworkers appear to be looking to refuse a claim from the outset. (*Quality Initiative Project. Second Report to the Minister*, 2005: 12-17; parenthesis added)

The context within which this question was raised by the interviewer is also in itself questionable. The whole programme had focused on ‘illegal immigrants’, from the headline to the introductory report to the studio debate and lastly with the interview with the Home Office Minister. This question regarding the targets being met for the deportation of ‘failed asylum seekers’, was positioned at the very end of this sequence and subsequently within the interview. This leads to the issue of asylum being associated with that of ‘illegal immigrants’ and criminality within the programme and therefore potentially within the viewers’ thought process.

As with the previous programmes there is no refugee or immigrant perspective throughout the whole of this sixteen minute programme, this might have been provided by the Refugee Council or any Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). Therefore the programme has highlighted the politicians perspective as well as that of an ‘anti-immigration’ writer, Steve Moxon and an ‘anti-immigration’ pressure group, Migration Watch UK. There is then an imbalance in terms of the opinions and perspectives being represented which may be why we have such an unbalanced and partial programme leading to the possibility of a misinformed audience.

In 2007 the BBC Trust produced a report entitled *From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: Safeguarding Impartiality in the 21st Century*. This report lays out ‘twelve guiding principles’ to amplify the *Editorial Guidelines* on the subject of impartiality. It is defined thus;

Impartiality involves a mixture of accuracy, balance, context, distance, evenhandedness, fairness, balance, objectivity, open-mindedness, rigour, self-awareness, transparency and truth. (*From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: Safeguarding Impartiality in the 21st Century*, 2007: 5)

Guideline 1, states that as the public service broadcaster; ‘Impartiality is and should remain the hallmark of the BBC [...] It is a legal requirement, but it should also be a source of pride. (*From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: Safeguarding Impartiality in the 21st Century*, 2007: 6; parenthesis added)

The issue of impartiality needs also to be considered in the following evenings *Newsnight* programme (18 May 2006), which was entirely reporting on the subject of migration for a total of 26 minutes. The format of the programme was that of five separate reports from different parts of the world, all focusing on economic migrants, interspersed with two studio discussions. Once again the focus was on the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ in all of the reports and the studio discussion. The programme headline highlights the issue:

Headline: Is immigration an unstoppable force? And is it a force for good or ill? It’s not just a row over the number of illegal immigrants in Britain. We’re in Spain where a new wave of Africans is flooding to the Canary Islands into the EU. [Images of dangerously overcrowded small boat of Africans, and Africans disembarking from a boat to the port with men and women in protective clothing including face masks and rubber gloves facilitating the process.] In America where George Bush is intent on staunching the flow of Mexican immigrants, [images of George Bush and Border patrol officers dressed in military style uniforms and large Border patrol vehicle with the words Border patrol visible on it] and in South Africa struggling with an influx of two million Zimbabweans [images of large number of Africans running]. We’ll be asking if anyone wants huddled masses anymore.

(*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

The language used in the opening headline such as ‘illegal immigrants’, ‘wave of Africans’, ‘flooding’, ‘staunching the flow’ and ‘influx’ has established migration from the onset as problematic as well as giving the impression of vast numbers of people being involved here echoes that in the findings of the Glasgow Media Group and the Cardiff School of Journalism research with regards to the ‘threat’ of illegal immigration with the terminology of a ‘natural disaster’ such as ‘flooding’ and ‘wave of Africans’ and ‘staunching the flow’. The focus on numbers within the terminology has also been replicated as with the focus on incorrectly sourced statistics (Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999; Buchanan *et al.* 2003).

The images accompanying the headline racialise the topic of the programme as ‘illegal immigrants’ as they are of Africans who are all Black. They are used as an illustration of ‘illegal immigrants’ in Spain and Zimbabwe; however, although the reports are located in countries with a high number of refugees seeking asylum and no mention is made of the fact that any of the migrants are forced migrants looking for refuge. The headline inaccurately asserts that all the ‘Africans’ are ‘illegal immigrants’ when large numbers of them will be refugees seeking asylum. The image of Africans disembarking from the boat to the port with men and women in protective clothing including face masks and rubber gloves facilitating the process gives the impression of a high risk of contagious diseases. The images of George Bush and the Border Patrol officers dressed in military style uniforms and a large Border Patrol vehicle with the words Border patrol visible on it intensifies the sense of threat.

The programme introduction continues the theme of vast numbers;

Newsreader (Kirsty Wark): Good evening. The opening years of the twenty first century have witnessed mass migration on an unprecedented scale. Of the 191 million migrants last year, more than half came to just ten countries, including the UK but beyond these statistics are other kinds of migration in the developing world where the impetus is economic, war and famine. (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

The statement made by the newscaster ‘the opening years of the twenty first century have witnessed mass migration on an unprecedented scale’ is immediately

contradicted in the first report when the journalist informs the viewers ‘The last time the world experienced a global flux like this was in the decades before the First World War.’ It is contradicted for a second time during the studio discussion by the interviewee Robert Reich the former US Labour Secretary:

Former US labour Secretary (Robert Reich): Well remember, in about 1890 we had in this country 12% of our population born outside the United States. Right now, we have about 12% of our population born outside the United States. In other words the great wave of immigration in the late nineteenth century is being replicated right now. We did it then, I think we can do it now. (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

The inclusion of accurate historical context again contradicts the newscaster’s statement. The newscaster appears to accept the contradiction but does not correct her own statement when she responds to the point made by the former Labour Secretary:

Newscaster (Kirsty Wark): Robert Reich, you said, there’s been a *wave of immigration* in America that hasn’t changed statistically, anyway since 1890. But how does it impact on communities with different waves, successive waves of different kinds populations arriving? (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

Therefore the programme has been framed from the outset with what appears to be inaccurate information with regards to the historical scale of migration which has been greatly exaggerated by the newscaster. This statement regarding the scale of migration is made in conjunction with the reference ‘of the 191 million migrants last year more than half came to just ten countries including the UK’. As with previous programmes the figures are not sourced. It does not give the actual number who migrated to the UK. The all encompassing and non-specific language of ‘migrants’ when the programme is focused on economic migrants is not representative of the complete figures. For example, does this figure include students and refugees seeking asylum? Does it refer to migrants such as students who return to their countries of origin as do many economic migrants?

The newscaster’s opening statement suggests that within the programme there will be recognition and analysis of the forced migration of refugees who then seek asylum

‘...but beyond these statistics are other kinds of migration in the developing world where the impetus is economic, war and famine’; however, none of the twenty five minutes of reports or studio discussions actually go ‘beyond these statistics’ with regards to forced migration or develop the issue of ‘other kinds of migration’ or ‘war and famine’ the entire focus is placed on ‘economics’, as in the following example which is the first report in the programme sequence and one of only three of the reports which makes direct reference to ‘refugees’. However, a reference is only made in passing as it speeds on to the issue of economic migrants and the focus is again on numbers:

It’s globalisation that has spurred the new wave of migration, less than ten per cent of migrants are refugees. Money and resources are flowing round the world, faster and freer than before, and so is information the push factors are obvious. (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

The second direct reference to ‘refugees’ within the programme is in the third report from South Africa. The report is framed with statements at both the beginning and end within the framework of ‘refugees’. The following examples are, in order, the first and last sentences of the report;

Journalist (Peter Biles): Here in Johannesburg the effects of migration are felt every day. One of the biggest concerns at the moment is the flight of refugees from neighbouring Zimbabwe. (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

Journalist (Peter Biles): The South Africans are alarmed by the influx of Zimbabweans in particular, they know there’s only one way of dealing with this kind of migration problem and that’s to help find a solution in the country from which the refugees have fled. (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

However, the main body of the report then shifts the framework to that of ‘illegal immigrants’ thereby conflating the issues. The first statement in the following examples is the second sentence in the report immediately following the initial sentence referring to ‘refugees’. The second statement immediately precedes the closing sentence which also makes direct reference to ‘refugees’:

Journalist (Peter Biles): South Africa has borne the brunt of this

exodus, and the government says 2 million Zimbabweans are now living in South Africa *illegally*. (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006; italics added)

Journalist (Peter Biles): Illegal immigrants [images of about thirty African men being deported by train all of them bent over in order to hide their identities] are often deported from South Africa, but more than likely they'll try their luck again within months. (Newsnight, 18 May 2006; parenthesis added)

If, as the initial framework suggests, the people being referred to in the report are refugees then they are not 'illegal immigrants' as they have the legal right to seek asylum/refuge. The framework may be confusing for the audience as it is not clear if the main content of the report is referring to 'refugees' or 'illegal immigrants'.

The accompanying image of about thirty African men being deported by train, all of them bent over in order to hide their identities, may reinforce the idea that these men are doing something illegal which is why they are hiding their faces. In actual fact they may be refugees seeking asylum who do not want to be identified by authorities or regimes they are fleeing from for fear of persecution (Buchanan et al., 2003:27-28).

As with this entire programme there is also a sharp focus on economics and the numbers of 'illegal immigrants' within this report, specifically in Zimbabwe. This results once again in a conflation of 'refugees' with economic migrants as the following example illustrates:

Journalist (Peter Biles): Robert Mugabe's policies have led to economic meltdown. With annual inflation now at 1000 %, the highest in the world. South Africa is now the country of choice, not just for Zimbabweans, but for many thousands of African migrants seeking a better life in what they hope is a land of opportunity. (Newsnight, 18 May 2006; italics added)

If, as initially established, the report is referring to 'refugees' then it is not the 'economic meltdown' in Zimbabwe they are escaping but rather fear of persecution, murder and torture. Therefore 'refugees' in the main do not select a 'country of choice' based on economic 'opportunity' as the report suggests. Refugees are not

merely 'seeking a better life' economically; they are seeking safety, protection, asylum and refuge in the nearest country because their lives and/or that of their families are at risk.

When the issue of 'refugees' is raised directly within the programme it is conflated with 'economics' and 'illegal immigrants', it is not related to 'war' despite the mention of this in the programme's introduction. In fact the issue of 'war' causing forced migration is never raised again. The importance of the need to make the distinction between economic migration and forced migration is evident in the programme's second report which is from Spain.

The report from South Africa and the report from Spain were introduced by the newscaster with the following statement:

Newscaster (Kirsty Wark): Well Paul Mason, we'll be discussing all this in a moment. First though, here's the view of two countries calling for help to cope with migrants who've arrived uninvited. (*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006)

Both of these reports concern 'refugees', therefore it is wrong to refer to them as 'uninvited'. The Refugee Convention establishes the right for anyone to seek refuge anywhere in the world; it is an extended and legally guaranteed open invitation. This report again concentrates on the numbers of 'illegal immigrants' but, as the example below demonstrates, it has not actually been established that the people being referred to are indeed so called 'uninvited' 'illegal immigrants':

Journalist (Katya Adler): I'm just back from the Canary Islands, where just today alone, more than *six hundred immigrants* arrived on makeshift boats from Africa. It's a perilous journey, hundreds die every year making it but the Nigerians, Ghanains, Senegalese I spoke to said it's worth the risk. *They are economic migrants and they believe Europe can offer them a better life.* [*Images of Africans being helped from boats onto portside by people dressed in white protective clothing with masks*]. Around two thousand *illegal immigrants* have arrived on the Canary Islands in the past week alone, and the flimsy fishing boats crammed with their human cargo just keep coming [*image of small empty boat and small, dangerously overcrowded boat with Africans*]. Spain aims to *send most of these immigrants back home* but, if no solution is

found within forty days they have to let them go [*images of African men on the portside looking exhausted and bedraggled*]. That is why Spain says this is a European not just a Spanish problem. Many *illegal immigrants* come to Spain from Africa [*images of Africans on an African coastline by a small boat*] because geographically speaking it's the closest European country but, their real goal is to reach France, Germany and Great Britain. Spain wants the EU to boost its air and sea surveillance and to coordinate a common European immigration policy. Government officials here, tell me they want Europe to start what they call plan Africa; invest more over there they believe and *fewer Africans will come over here risking their lives to look for work*. (Newsnight, 18 May 2006; parenthesis added)

The report begins by stating 'more than 600 immigrants arrived on makeshift boats from Africa'. No distinction is made with regards to forced migrants, this is necessary as many of the people may well be refugees. In the next statement they are configured as 'economic migrants': 'They are economic migrants and they believe Europe can offer them a better life.' As with the previous report the audience is told they are seeking 'a better life' when those who are refugees seeking asylum are in fact seeking safety, protection, asylum and refuge because their lives and/or that of their families are at risk. Once again the issue of seeking refuge is misrepresented as seeking better economic conditions.

The commentary continues with 'Around 2000 illegal immigrants have arrived on the Canary Islands in the past week alone', although there is no source or evidence offered to back up this figure. As with the previous report if the figure includes refugees seeking asylum then they are not 'illegal immigrants'. It is possible that 'refugees' have again been conflated with 'illegal immigrants' in this report. The following statement made by the reporter to the effect that 'Spain aims to send most of these immigrants back home' would not and should not apply to refugees seeking asylum who are likely to be included here as 'immigrants'. This may be problematic for the viewer to understand without the distinction being made.

This issue of the conflation of refugees seeking asylum with economic migrants continues throughout the entirety of the report, for example in the statement that 'Many illegal immigrants come to Spain from Africa because geographically speaking it's the closest European country but their real goal is to reach France, Germany and

Great Britain'. If refugees seeking asylum are as it appears included here as 'illegal immigrants', then they generally have no choice as to where they end up as they are at the behest of the people they have paid, namely agents, to get them out of their country. When the African refugees then arrive in unexpected countries in which they had no idea they would end up, they attempt to reach other European countries for many different reasons such as the colonial/commonwealth links which lead to people being familiar with the culture and the language of whichever country in question. These links have also enabled the establishment of African communities within European countries which may offer some comfort and security to refugees seeking asylum. These established communities may also contain relatives of these refugees seeking asylum.

The report then claims that 'fewer Africans will come over here risking their lives to look for work' but many of the 'Africans' referred to within this report may be refugees seeking safety not 'work'. No evidence is given that the 'Africans' being reported on are either 'illegal' or economic migrants since this was not established by verifiable sources or statistics. Despite the fact that the report is located in a city and a country with a high number of refugees seeking asylum no mention is made of the fact that any of the migrants are forced migrants looking for refuge, no mention is made of 'war', the focus was on economics and numbers of 'illegal immigrants' and falsely asserts that all the 'Africans' are both illegal and economic migrants.

Although the lengthy 25 minute programme sets out in the introduction that there are 'other kinds of migration' caused by 'war and famine' the key issues it actually addresses are the numbers of 'economic migrants' and 'illegal immigrants' with no distinction or analysis of the issue of forced migration. Eleven of the eighteen questions asked in both studio discussions focus on economic issues and three questions centre on controls, with the presenter giving her opinion in one that immigration is out of control. There is no mention whatsoever of refugees seeking asylum in either discussion. This leads to issues of asylum and refuge becoming conflated with the key issues raised 'economic migrants' and 'illegal immigrants' which in turn misinforms the viewer as to the structural reality of forced migration. The BBC Trust report warns in Guideline 7; 'Impartiality is most obviously at risk in areas of sharp public controversy' (*From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: Safeguarding Impartiality in the 21st Century*, 2007: 7).

The use of incorrect facts such as ‘the opening years of the twenty first century have witnessed mass migration on an unprecedented scale’ in combination with non-sourced and unverifiable statistics leads to both inaccurate reporting and analysis of migration issues. As a public service broadcaster there is an expectation as well as a public duty that the BBC will be both factually correct and accurate but in this instance it was lacking on both counts.

Unlike previous programmes there is inclusion of an immigrant perspective with the inclusion of an African immigrant in the studio discussion. His contribution was important for the purpose of balance as he humanised and personalised the ‘migrants’ who are generally reported as a mass. He was also able to include structural reality factors. The programme is, however, dominated by the voices of European politicians and academics. The studio discussion and the invited guests provided a vital element of balance in terms of much of the misinformation contained within the introduction and the reports, which they sometimes corrected. All of the invited speakers made positive comments on the benefits of immigration but the weight of the programme leaned towards the negative factors and this was apparent especially in the negative language and key issues concentrated on.

BENEFITS OF IMMIGRATION

Of the 1696 lines analysed 567 of them referred to the benefits of immigration, constituting 33% of the sample. Notably only one headline from *Newsnight Scotland* came under this category and 205 lines of these references came from one programme (*Newsnight Scotland*), examples and analysis of which are in the subsequent section entitled *Inconsistencies and Problems Associated with the Process of Seeking Asylum* in this chapter. The programmes in the sample which did not include anything regarding the benefits of immigration are the *BBC 6 o'clock* and the *BBC 10 o'clock* main news programmes. Although *ITN News*, *Channel 4 News* and *Newsnight* did include some statements with regards to benefits these were not discussed in all of the editions analysed, and some of their programmes in the sample contained none. Much of the indications of positive factors related to migration were provided within the format of the studio discussion.

Many positive factors were raised in these discussions such as the benefits to the host countries’ economy, cultural enrichment, contribution to societies and remittance income. However, it must be noted that many of the positive statements were conflated with

negative factors or negative language as the following examples show.

The Shadow Immigration Minister Damian Green in *Channel 4 News*, (18 May 2006) states positively ‘Well we welcome immigration; we think immigration is good for the economy and the Conservative party welcomes modern Britain which has been enriched culturally as well as economically by immigration’. He then brings the issue back to the legalities of immigration and the need for deportation ‘We need people who come here legally to work or to study, we need to know who’s here and we need to know that those who should not be here can be traced by authorities and can be deported.’ The deportation of undocumented migrants is a complex issue, morally, legally and financially. This is particularly the case if the undocumented migrant is a ‘failed asylum seeker’ who has been put in the position of being forced to return to a country where they have been persecuted and from which they have escaped. They are therefore deemed by government policy as ‘those who should not be here’. Many ‘failed asylum seekers’ cannot return, despite the Home Office ruling that they should voluntarily return or be forcibly removed, because of what happened to them that led to them seeking asylum. The country may be a dangerous war zone, for example, Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. His statement with regards to deportation is not questioned in any way and may give the impression that the state is justified in a straightforward procedure of detaining undocumented migrants and deporting them immediately.

The contribution made by Lord Tom McNally, the Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesman was an important counterbalance to migrants being criminalised:

Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesman (Lord Tom McNally): Very prosperous economies suck in people to work in dirty jobs. That happens the world over and it’s happening in Britain. It’s interesting that these people aren’t organised criminals, as sometimes our tabloids would like us to think that everyone that’s an *illegal immigrant* must be in organised crime. The vast majority are poor people looking for work and making a contribution to our economy by doing dirty jobs. (*Channel 4 News*, 18 May 2006; italics added)

Whilst his stance is sympathetic and challenges directly the media stereotypes of migrants he does still use the term ‘illegal immigrant’ as opposed to the more progressive and accurate terminology, undocumented/irregular migrant. This term also counteracts the

stereotype of criminalisation by not using the word ‘illegal’. One of the reasons for this is that the vast majority of immigration and asylum laws are civil laws and not criminal laws thus illegal is an overblown term for someone who may only be guilty of breaching civil laws.

This point was made by Baroness Scotland, the Attorney General, who introduced a new law relating to the employment of ‘illegal immigrants’, whereby all employers must keep copies of all their non-British employees’ documents which they must supply when applying for employment. Baroness Scotland fell foul of her own law when she employed a housekeeper without keeping copies of her documents and was subsequently fined. In defence of her position, as an Attorney General who was being heavily criticised for breaking the law, Baroness Scotland likened her breach to that of a parking offence, making the point that she breached a civil law in order to make the distinction between it being a serious or somewhat trivial matter. By contrast, the woman employed by the Baroness was sentenced to eight months in prison for using false documents.

The question relating to migration asked by the presenter Kirsty Wark in *Newsnight*, (18 May 2006) and answered by Robert Reich, Former US Labour Secretary, seemed contextually confusing. In the sequence of the programme this is the third question the presenter has asked regarding America’s ability to cope culturally with immigration. The presenter asserts that America is ‘hard wired to understand migration after all that was the way which your country was founded’. The colonisation which is at the foundation of America is interchangeable here with migration.

This assertion is followed up with the question ‘Culturally do you think America, despite it’s had racial tension before, culturally do you think America coped well with immigration?’ This question again de-emphasises the colonial historical context of America, as it is not including the experiences of the indigenous peoples of America in the context of America ‘coping well with immigration’. They were subjected to an occupation by European immigrants. Is this the ‘racial tension’ alluded to or, is it the European colonisation of Africa which resulted in the American systems of slavery, racial segregation and denial of civil rights? Are the African slaves who were abducted from their homelands and forcibly transported to America to work the plantations, also included simply as migrants? This de-historicising of European, African and American colonial history leads to a simplified and somewhat revised and reductive account of the historical context.

The Former US Labour Secretary's reply (cited in p.104) although vital in terms of accuracy regarding migration as a historical and natural continuum is also historically selective in terms of the date he uses as a comparator: 1890. The same question can be asked here in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of the experience of African slaves: are they part of the '12% of our population born outside the United States'? It is not clear to whom exactly this figure refers.

A significant contribution was made by the filmmaker Sorious Samara in *Newsnight*, (18 May 2006) who described himself as an 'immigrant'. He raises the issue of benefits to host countries from migration and gives a factual example with regards to highly skilled migrants- 'these nurses and doctors and who come here are already trained' - thus saving the host countries the money required to train them as well as providing the benefits of highly skilled professionals. This point was a critical counterbalance to a debate which tended to focus on migrants as a mass rather than as individuals and or highly skilled professionals.

He also makes a point relating to 'diversity' when he states the factual reality that 'this country Britain was built by migrants so too was America'. The 'migrant' contribution to these countries is included here as both fundamental and structural in developing these countries and not merely as a side issue. In this way the societies are shown historically as fundamentally 'diverse cultures' with 'diversity' embedded into their structures.

This was one of only three programmes, and the only national programme, to include an African immigrant's perspective and in this case it offered an essential counterbalance to some of the issues being raised throughout the programmes regarding immigration. The speaker both humanised and personalised the 'migrants' who are generally reported as a mass. He was also able to include beneficial factors which in general are absent from the overall national coverage. It was then crucial to include both an African and a migrant perspective into the debate which was dominated by European politicians and academics. However, the African country he is from, Sierra Leone, has endured a brutal civil war and it may be that he is actually a refugee of this war this would have been an important distinction.

Although reference is made in the sample to the benefits of migration it is minimal in the context of the wider representation of the 'vast' numbers of 'illegal immigrants' which are being discussed. The benefits are also sometimes conflated with the issues of criminality and illegality resulting in complex issues such as deportation being glossed over by a lack

of any in-depth analysis. There are also difficulties with regards to the exclusion of historical colonial factors such as the forced migration of African slaves, leading to coverage which takes as its starting point the post-colonial era. The exclusion of colonial historical links to migration also leads to the exclusion of many of the structural reality factors related to migration. The inclusion of an African migrant perspective from one guest made a tremendous difference in terms of counter-balancing much of the coverage; however, he was but one instrument trying to be heard above the rest of an orchestra.

IMMIGRATION CONTROL

The problem regarding the conflation of the benefits of immigration with other more problematised issues is also evident in another key issue raised in the sample; that of immigration control. 61% of the coverage, i.e. 1034 of the 1696 lines analysed referred to the issue of controlling immigration including 26 lines from the total of 46 headlines. The first example is of Damian Green the Shadow Immigration Minister (who is now a government Immigration Minister) responding to a question regarding the control of immigration:

Newscaster (Kirsty Wark): Damian Green, what is this conundrum then, you want to *control immigration* but you need immigration. But culturally you don't think immigration necessarily works?

Shadow Immigration Minister (Damian Green): No, I think immigration does help culturally; I think Britain has benefited both economically and culturally from immigration but, the one thing I would really want to add to this discussion is the rate of change. It seems to be absolutely crucial that many countries around the world, we've seen, want immigration and want immigrants but, it's got to be planned, and *it's got to be controlled*, and I think many of the problems we have in Britain at the moment, not just the short term problems that the Home Office is in, but longer term *problems come when people think it's all out of control*.

Newscaster (Kirsty Wark): But it is in a way out of control, if people don't know how many illegal immigrants are in this country. But there was the same situation in Spain, and the EU seem to be speaking with a variety of voices here. People have had an amnesty in Spain that was derided by France, there's a different test in France, you have to sign up to integration. Do you think there should be an EU wide policy on this?

(*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006; italics added)

He begins his response by commenting on the benefits of migration to the UK ‘No I think immigration does help culturally; I think Britain has benefited both economically and culturally from immigration’ he then links migration to the issue of control ‘it’s got to be controlled’. However he then qualifies his argument with regards to the need for stronger immigration controls with the assertion ‘but longer term problems come when people think it’s all out of control’. In so doing he recognises the issue is not that immigration is in fact ‘out of control’ but is perceived to be so by the general public. Therefore he felt it necessary to make the distinction between fact and perception. The newscaster failed to make the same distinction.

Despite the Shadow Home Office Minister’s qualification of the term ‘out of control’ the presenter pursues this line of argument with her assertion ‘But it is in a way out of control, if people don’t know how many illegal immigrants are in this country’. This implies an indefinite expansion when what is actually being acknowledged is that there are no exact figures. The presenter has now pushed her own personal opinion into the discussion which contradicts the Shadow Home Office Minister’s. With no factual evidence in the form of sources, statistics or expertise provided to either establish or support her argument she is now endorsing the argument that immigration is indeed ‘out of control’ and asserting her own opinion. The afore mentioned BBC Trust report states in Guideline 9; ‘Impartiality can often be affected by the stance and experience of programme-makers, who need constantly to examine and challenge their own assumptions.’, (*From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: Safeguarding Impartiality in the 21st Century*, 2007: 8). The BBC has a remit as a Public Service Broadcaster to be impartial and non-biased but in this instance that remit does not appear to have been adhered to as the newscaster submits her personal partial and biased opinion on the issue of whether immigration is out of control. This is an incendiary issue which has the potential to inflame racial hostilities and xenophobia. This places an expectation on presenters, journalists and broadcasters to be aware of the role they play in terms of social responsibility.

The same problem with regards to editorial partiality was evident in the previous evening’s edition of *Newsnight* from the outset with the following headline:

Headline: Newscaster (Jeremy Paxman): Tonight. Now the Prime Minister accepts he’s failed on illegal immigrants, as well as, on confidence in the

criminal justice system. But *is it now impossible for this country to regain control of its borders*, after a shambles this bad? We hear the view of an immigration whistle blower. (*Newsnight*, 17 May 2006; italics added)

By asking the question ‘is it now impossible for this country to regain control of its borders’ the presenter has introduced the programme from the editorial premise that the country’s borders are out of control. Once again this has not been established by any sources, statistics or expertise. This is an inflammatory argument being made without any substance on the BBC, the public service broadcaster. There is no sense of impartiality on the subject of immigration since it is contextualised here as highly problematical and as a threat to the stability of the country.

The images accompanying the headline consist of footage of a long line of at least 50 men running through railway lines, with sparks literally flying around their heads and smoke. This shows the dangers faced by them but it is used to illustrate the large numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ when, as with afore mentioned images, they may in fact be refugees seeking asylum.

The ITV news also claimed in a report in the *ITV Evening News*, (17 May 2006) that there is not enough immigration control and supported this argument with the contention that the immigration system is in a state of ‘chaos’. The reporter, Political Editor Tom Bradby is reporting live from Westminster which is titled above him: he is in the House of Commons lobby and this lends weight and authority to his report as does his job title of Political Editor which is titled beneath him. He refers directly to ‘another day of immigration chaos’ giving the impression that the ‘immigration chaos’ is an ongoing situation. This is reinforced with a banner headline during the report which says again ‘immigration chaos’: However, the words as they appear in the banner are ended with question marks but it seems the Political Editor has answered the question before it has been posed for the viewer. This is confirmed when he gives the viewer his personal opinion and, therefore, a value judgement ‘I think what’s emerging tonight from Philip’s interview there, from everything we’ve discussed is a system that I think genuinely is in chaos.’ He has come to his conclusion based on one interview with an Algerian man whom the programme labelled as an ‘illegal immigrant’. He may in fact be a refugee seeking asylum as there is a civil war in Algeria. In addition to this is the fact that the numbers of so-called ‘illegal immigrants’ are unknown.

He ends his report by linking his belief regarding ‘immigration chaos’ to the idea that there is not enough immigration control ‘But I think people watching this programme will be profoundly disturbed as it emerges how little control and frankly how little knowledge we have about what’s really going on.’ It appears that his closing statement may be prophetic in the sense that ‘we’ the viewers can hardly be expected to have ‘knowledge’ of asylum and immigration issues when the ITN Political Editor offers us such partial accounts of the facts. Not only is the viewer left with little in the way of accurate information but, more dangerously is being led to believe that the issue is a national threat. This can have serious repercussions with regards to racial and xenophobic hostilities yet there is no sense of a wider social responsibility from the programme makers.

Channel 4 News also asserts the arguments and idea of ‘chaos’ from the opening headline and the studio introduction as in the following examples:

Headline: After the Home Office admitted they didn’t have the faintest idea where the rest where, five have now surfaced, working in one of their own immigration buildings, in the city of London. The five Nigerian cleaners are in police custody. Tonight how much worse can the chaos in the Home Office get? (*Channel 4 News*, 18 May 2006)

Newscaster (Jon Snow): It’s the ultimate embarrassment for an embattled Home Office the mysteriously illusive *illegal immigrants* appearing right under their noses. Tonight *Channel Four News* has learned that five cleaners working in the very building responsible for removing *illegal immigrants* were arrested yesterday. They’d been employed by sub-contractors to clean the offices of the same officials who were supposed to get them out of the country. The Home Office has confirmed to us that the five cleaners were *illegal immigrants* and are now in police custody but the whole fiasco starkly reveals an immigration system in *chaos*. (*Channel 4 News*, 18 May 2006; italics added)

As with the ITV report the headline establishes an editorial line which asks the question ‘Tonight how much worse can the chaos in the Home Office get?’ In doing so there is a contention from the outset that the ‘chaos’ has been established. This is affirmed in the programme introduction with the newscaster’s statement ‘the whole fiasco starkly reveals an immigration system in chaos.’ The newscaster’s opinion as with that of the ITV

Political Editor, has been formed from the knowledge that the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ in the country are unknown. In addition the report of five cleaners working in a Home Office building being arrested for immigration offences also informed the presenter’s opinion. The report asserts that the cleaners are all ‘illegal immigrants’ but once again we do not know if they may be refugees seeking asylum. This is a possibility as they are Nigerians and there has been a civil war in Nigeria but, this is not explored at this point in the programme.

In the previous evening’s programme *Channel 4 News* extended the idea of immigration being out of control to the whole of the ‘Home Office’:

Newsreader (Jon Snow): Good evening. The Prime Minister gave every indication of losing traction in the House of Commons today, the old magic wilting in the face of Tory jibes over the Home Office’s spate of failures. The immigration boss’s admission, that he hadn’t the faintest idea how many *illegal immigrants* there are, has brought no comfort to the government. Its done worse, suggesting an arrogance of ignorance. Tonight *can the government regain control over the Home Office, and sort out the mess* or are the Tories right, they’re simply rattled. (*Channel 4 News*, 17 May 2006; italics added)

Shadow Immigration Minister (Damian Green): We know that immigration was much less, and we know that *illegal immigration* was much less, and indeed Jon, you’ve been a journalist for a long time and you don’t remember covering these stories ten years ago. Because these sort of stories weren’t about, because the fact is that, *over the past few years we have completely lost control in this country of our borders*. One of the first acts the governments did, for instance, was to abolish the embarkation controls. Controls of people going out of the country, so that’s why we don’t know who’s here, because they don’t know who’s left, and all over the world criminal gangs, people traffickers know that Britain is a soft touch, and that’s why we’ve become the centre for people working. Even at the heart of government, where you might think the security checks were pretty stringent. (*Channel 4 News*, 17 May 2006; italics added)

The programme presenter in his introduction asks the question ‘Tonight can the government regain control over the Home Office?’ As with the previous programmes the introduction has established as a given, the idea that immigration, by way of the ‘Home Office’, is out of control. The only evidence given for this claim is in the form of a statement made by the Shadow Immigration Minister ‘the fact is that over the past few years we have completely lost control in this country of our borders.’ He cites as evidence for his argument the abolition of ‘embarkation controls’. This is conjecture on the politician’s part as it does not necessarily follow that the re-instatement of ‘embarkation controls’ will result in reducing the numbers of so-called ‘illegal immigrants’ as he argues.

He also addresses the journalist personally with his statement ‘Jon you’ve been a journalist for a long time and you don’t remember covering these stories ten years ago because these sort of stories weren’t about’. However, the journalist does not respond to this claim which is in fact inaccurate as my literature review (see chapter two) shows that this story was indeed covered ten years ago. He then further claims ‘all over the world criminal gangs, people traffickers know that Britain is a soft touch and that’s why we’ve become the centre for people working illegally even at the heart of government where you might think the security checks were pretty stringent.’ Again this is all conjecture as he has provided no evidence for this claim. The conjecture then becomes hyperbole with his insistence that a cleaner working in a Home Office building is at ‘the heart of government’.

As an opposition politician it is in his political party’s interest to be critical of the government. It would be expected that journalists would be aware of this and therefore should be looking to require an opposition politician to provide substantiation for his argument in the way of factual sources, statistics and/or expertise, particularly with such a volatile issue. In this instance the editorial line taken by the programme is that of the opposition politician which leaves no room for his argument to be questioned with regards to its foundation and none of his conjecture, hyperbole or inaccuracies were critically questioned by the journalist. This is an example of why there is a need for an impartial editorial stance. It is also interesting to note that the focus on border control by the news programmes, and some newspapers (see chapter two; Van Dijk, 1991; Cohen, 2002; Buchanan et al., 2003; Finney, 2003; Welch and Schuster, 2005), was subsequently echoed by the UK government when they changed the name of the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate- the department responsible for immigration and asylum- to that of the UK Border Agency.

DIFFICULTIES AND INEFFICIENCIES IN THE PROCESS OF CLAIMING ASYLUM

Another area within the sample coverage was that of the inconsistencies and problems related to the process of seeking asylum. Of the total of 1696 lines in the sample analysed 258 made reference to such inconsistencies and the problematic treatment of refugees whilst seeking asylum. This area received the smallest amount of coverage of all five areas analysed, with only 15% of the total sample. However, this area was dealt with in very different ways by different programmes, with the regional programme *Newsnight Scotland*, for example, dedicating a whole programme to the issue; therefore, of the 258 lines referencing the area 201 are from *Newsnight Scotland*. This different approach resulted in some of the programmes actually failing to concentrate on the issue at all despite it being raised either in reports or by invited speakers as with the following examples from *Channel 4 News*.

In the first report, despite the Immigration Minister raising the issue of ‘asylum’, it is not addressed by the presenter. Therefore there is no critical questioning of his assertion that the ‘new system’ is ‘even more fair, transparent and effective’ when there are many alternative arguments concerning the failure of the government to treat asylum fairly. Instead the presenter’s focus is on the number of ‘illegal immigrants’ there are in the country.

Immigration Minister (Tony McNulty): Well, I don’t mean to sound like that but, there were clearly over the last eight or nine year’s priorities. If I could be forgiven for a touch of partisanship, the mess, unholy mess we inherited in terms of asylum had to be our first priority. In terms of working through that, sorting things out and getting to a stage where there were processes in place people could have a good deal more confidence in, and bringing a new system in that was even more fair, transparent and effective. We’ve done that, there’s still much to be done there too. We have developed a managed migration policy, and the third element of that, doing what we intend to do on borders, is part of that. But it is a matter of priorities and all these things can’t happen at once. (*Channel 4 News*, 18 May 2006)

In the second report the invited guest, who is from an NGO which supports migrants including refugees seeking asylum, raised an important point with regards to refugees

seeking asylum being denied the right to work. Here we have a clear example of the social reality of seeking asylum which many viewers may not know about. This was also the only national report within the sample which raises the issue of ‘failed asylum seekers’ and/or ‘asylum seekers’ being conflated with illegal immigrants. These were important alternative explanations being aired but none of these points are taken up or developed by the presenter/journalist Jon Snow. However, the inclusion of an NGO working with migrants, including refugees seeking asylum, enabled these points to be aired, and it is unfortunate that this was the only instance within the national news reports in the sample of an NGO being included as an invited guest.

Newscaster (Jon Snow): Would your sense then be, that in terms of employment, there will be *illegal immigrants* probably, in every government department and probably, well in a good number of party headquarters as well?

Chief Executive Immigration Advisory Service (Keith Best): Well they could be anywhere couldn’t they? I mean that’s the trouble, and you will find employers, who will say they’ve carried out all the checks.

I mean there’s a whole raft of different documents now, which the Home Office say, they can use to justify employing somebody, on the basis that they are in the country lawfully entitled to work. *You see the trouble is, I don’t know if these people were failed asylum seekers or not but, why doesn’t the government allow asylum seekers to work for example?* It’s an act of vindictiveness which really bears no deterrent validity whatsoever, and stops people contributing to the economy. (*Channel 4 News*, 18 May 2006; italics added)

A similar approach is evident in *Newsnight* (17 May 2006) when the ‘asylum system’ is criticised by the invited guest Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesman (current Deputy Prime Minister) when he was being questioned by the presenter Jeremy Paxman about how to deal with ‘illegal immigrants’.

In this example not only does the presenter fail to address the issue of the inconsistencies and problems within the ‘asylum system’ being raised by the politician but he responds to the first mention of it by Nick Clegg (‘I think part of the problem you’ve got is you’ve got an administrative cock-up on a large scale in which the asylum system is being run very poorly’) with a question which completely disregards his point regarding asylum. When

the politician attempts to raise the issue for the second time with ‘Well firstly I think the asylum system itself cannot be run by the Home Office itself there’s plenty of proof from other countries that you can run an asylum system more effectively if you were to hive it out from the Home Office altogether.’, the presenter interrupts him and cuts him off completely in an attempt to bring the issue back to that of the number of ‘illegal immigrants’ there are in the country. He asks ‘That’s a going forward but hundreds of thousands or perhaps quarter of a million according to Sir Andrew in this country illegally what is to be done with them?’ and cites figures, one of which comes from the invited guest Andrew Green of the ‘anti-immigration group’ Migration Watch. Although he qualifies his citation by stating they are Andrew Greene’s, the very fact that he does cite them may well be lending legitimacy and status to these figures which are in fact an estimate as he is asking the politician to respond to them thereby lending weight to them. This also somewhat contradicts his own previous statement when Andrew Greene first cited these figures, to which he responded ‘Perhaps but nobody knows.’ The viewer is left in the position of not being fully informed regarding the point which the politician has raised regarding problems within the ‘asylum system’ as the presenter/journalist steadfastly refuses to engage with the issue.

Whilst interviewing the Immigration Minister in the same programme the issue of asylum is raised again by the Minister:

Newscaster (Jeremy Paxman): We’ve heard the Director of the so-called removals unit saying, that it wasn’t effective to go after individuals, so what is the effective way of doing it then?

Immigration Minister (Tony McNulty MP): Well the effective way, I think, is to do what we’re doing. *First, to get the asylum system in order*, secondly, as we’re doing over the next couple of years, getting the borders in place, which will mean we can electronically swipe people in and out the country if they require visa’s. That will go very strongly to the heart of the overstayer issue.

(Newsnight, 17 May 2006; italics added)

The Minister’s comment regarding getting ‘the asylum system in order’ appears to support the point being made by the Liberal Democrat politician regarding inconsistencies and problems within the ‘asylum system’. Presumably it was at some stage out of ‘order’ for it to be necessary for it to be put back ‘in order’, however,

once again the journalist did not engage with this issue. As with the *Channel 4 News* report there is no critical questioning of his assertion that the government is getting 'the asylum system in order' when there are many alternative arguments regarding the failure of the government to do just this. Instead the presenter's main focus is on the number of 'illegal immigrants' there are in the country. The afore mentioned BBC Trust report states in Guideline 3; 'Impartiality must continue to be applied to matters of political controversy. But in today's more diverse political, social and cultural landscape, it requires a wider and deeper application.', (*From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: Safeguarding Impartiality in the 21st Century*, 2007: 5).

The following evening's *Newsnight* programme, which was entirely dedicated to the issue of migration, also failed to fully address the issue of the inconsistencies and problems regarding the treatment of refugees seeking asylum despite it being raised directly in a report by Phil Mercer from Australia. From the outset of the report there is a confusion with the terminology as the topic is introduced as 'immigration' when the report is actually referring to forced migrants, but this distinction is not made instead; the refugees seeking asylum are introduced firstly as immigrants and secondly as 'foreigners'. The report continues by informing us that refugees 'will be sent to offshore processing centres in the South Pacific.'; the report also tells us of the Australian government's 'tough talk' on immigration and 'no nonsense approach' which is exemplified by the fact that 'Outback Detention Centres were used to incarcerate thousands of asylum seekers' whom the government 'considered to be queue jumpers'.

These policies were far more than mere 'talk' as the report itself clearly illustrates visually. The images in the report of very young children being incarcerated behind twenty feet high 'razor wire' fences in a vast, heavily fortified Detention Centre (about 100 feet long) show the social reality of seeking asylum in Australia. This 'no nonsense approach' was heavily criticised by politicians, human rights organisations and refugee organisations as entailing illegal actions which breach people's human rights, all this led to the closure of the 'Outback Detention Centres' (see, for example, 'Revolt brews over Australian Immigration Bill', *The Guardian* August 10 2006; 'Australia and US to swap refugees', *The Guardian* 19 April 2007; 'Human cargo', *guardian.co.uk* 19 April 2007). Natalie Bennett, an Australian who is the editor of *Guardian Weekly*, cited these policies as one of the reasons why she left Australia:

‘one reason why in recent years I’m pleased to have done so is its horrific, inhuman treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.’ (*guardian.co.uk*, 31 May 2007)

There is a contradiction in the report when it refers to the detention of ‘queue jumpers’ as it has already explained that the actual policy was to automatically detain everybody seeking asylum ‘without a visa’. This law directly contravenes Article 31 of the Refugee Convention which stipulates that refugees should not be penalized for illegal entry into or presence in host countries, provided they present themselves without delay and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence. The UNHCR has stated that ‘in most cases a person fleeing from persecution will have arrived with the barest necessities and very frequently without personal documents.’

The conflation of refugees seeking asylum with economic migrants, operating in conjunction with the fact the report continued with no critical questioning of Australia’s asylum policies, results in the issue of asylum becoming framed as wholly problematic. No differentiation is made with regards to the different laws, policies and Refugee Convention protections which should apply to refugees seeking asylum. Therefore, there is no room for analysis of the country’s international human rights obligations.

The report selects as a timescale of migration a period it refers to as ‘modern Australia’ which ‘has been shaped by half a century of mass migration’: In so doing the history of Australia as a British colony is excluded and the country is thus reconstructed as a white country, as exemplified in the accompanying images of ‘modern’ Australians, who are all white people. The absence of the history of colonisation resulting in an English-speaking country negates possible colonial links to both migrants and forced migrants from the British Commonwealth.

This also results in the issue of ‘race relations’ being referred to in the report ‘But tough laws don’t necessarily make for good race relations, the race riots here in Sydney before Christmas have shown that modern day Australia still has some way to go.’ Again this account excludes the colonial history of racism to which the indigenous Aboriginal people were subjected to. This colonial link to racism would give historical context to the continuum of racism in ‘modern day Australia’ and may offer an explanation for the ‘race riots’, rather than the vacuum of racism and migration for which the report opts. In an article for *The Observer* newspaper

journalist Bernard O’Riordan explains that what this term actually refers to is large numbers of white youths, 101 of whom were charged with criminal offences, who organised, attacked and seriously assaulted random non-white people in the very place where in 1770 the British Captain Cook landed and begun the colonisation process. Even the name of the State in which the racial attacks took place is British: State of New South Wales. The article further notes that many community leaders, politicians and broadcasters believed the racial tensions were being stoked by the media in the form of local radio stations (see Bernard O’Riordan, ‘When the sands ran red’, *The Observer*, 18 December 2005).

The report is followed by a studio discussion in which the Australian Minister for Immigration, Amanda Vanstone, is interviewed. This is where we might expect some critical analysis of the issues raised in the report. However, the newscaster’s first question regarding the automatic detention of refugees seeking asylum reconfigures them inaccurately as ‘unauthorised arrivals’ when in fact the UNHCR guidelines and the Refugee Convention itself dispute this term. The newscaster then frames the issue as a ‘problem with race relations in your country’. In so doing there is no critical analysis of the extreme policy of immobilizing refugees seeking asylum by keeping them offshore in violation of their human rights:

Newscaster (Kirsty Wark): Amanda Vanstone, first of all, Australia has some of the toughest, hard-line controls. Right now, new legislation is going through Parliament that all *unauthorised arrivals* will be kept offshore. Is your main problem with *race relations* in your country?
(*Newsnight*, 18 May 2006; italics added)

The Minister is then in the position of only needing to respond to a question about ‘race relations’, rather than the controversial policy itself, and she reduces the large scale racial assaults to ‘a small localised issue’. This somewhat reductive approach is continued by the Minister when she attempts to construct Australia as a country of migrants by asserting ‘it is just a question of timing’. This approach reduces colonisation to a process of migration rather than the violent occupation and subjection of the indigenous Aboriginal peoples and their land. The simplification which implies that ‘we’re all migrants together’ also negates the fact of white racism in the country towards non-white peoples:

Australian Minister for Immigration (Senator Amanda Vanstone): No not at all. We had a small localised issue, last year, in the State of New South Wales, but across Australia generally? I mean look unless you're a full blooded indigenous Australian you've got migrant blood in your veins. If you're in Australia, and it's just a question of timing, did your family come a couple of hundred years ago, fifty years ago, five years ago, two years ago? It's just a question of timing. We're all, in a sense, immigrants or the sons and daughters of. (Newsnight, 18 May 2006; italics added)

The interview then continues with a discussion of Australia's asylum and immigration policies including the 'points test' (a system which was introduced into the UK by the Labour government three years later in 2009). In response to the newscaster's question about the 'points test' being both 'very particular' and 'very, very tough' the Minister makes the claim 'we do in fact welcome migrants to Australia' and refers to Australia as 'the third biggest customer of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees'. The report has by this point in the programme detailed in words and images how both 'migrants' and forced migrants, refugees seeking asylum, are not 'welcome', to the extent that the Australian government will no longer allow refugees seeking asylum to set foot in Australia and contains them in 'offshore processing centres in the South Pacific'. The stark images in the report of children being detained behind 'razor wire' fences also contradict the Minister's claim.

The Minister's use of the term 'customer' in reference to the 'resettlement' of 'refugees' is somewhat perplexing as it implies that this process is some sort of business practice whereby 'refugees' are commoditised and traded. This de-historicises the process from the historical realms of the Refugee Convention and international human rights obligations .

The Minister then goes on to contradict her own statement again when she explains how the new policy of a points-based 'skilled immigration programme' will actually work, which is by excluding 'the unskilled or semi-skilled' migrants. It seems, then, that Australia's 'welcome' does not extend to the working class migrants, who are indeed by and large the 'the unskilled or semi-skilled' workers, or to refugees seeking asylum, but to a selective few migrants who are both highly educated and highly skilled and have thus gained the points to qualify for entry to the country. This policy, now in operation in the UK, effectively bars working class migrants from legal entry to the country. It is therefore feasible that this policy may result in larger numbers of economic migrants being forced to

enter both countries without the required documentation. As the programme has focused heavily on the issue of what it claims to be high numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ in countries all over the world, this would be an opportune moment at which to critically question the Minister, but this equation is not made by the newscaster nor are any of the Minister’s contradictions queried.

In stark contrast to the previous programmes, the regional programme *Newsnight Scotland*, which immediately followed the afore mentioned edition of *Newsnight*, fully addressed the issue of the inconsistencies and problems associated with the process of seeking asylum, which was the topic of the whole programme. The regional programme moved the parameters of the debate from the issue of immigration (on which the national *Newsnight* programme preceding had focused) in order to deal directly with issues of asylum which were in the main absent in terms of analysis from the other sample programmes. This shift in focus was highlighted from the outset with their headline:

Headline: On Newsnight Scotland: From migration to asylum. Refugee organisations from across Europe gather in Glasgow, calling on EU countries to end inconsistent treatment of refugees. But can they really agree on a Europe wide policy, for those fleeing persecution [images of Africans including women in desert conditions in a makeshift shelter of flimsy sticks covered with pieces of cloth and plastic which is being torn apart by the wind, there is a woman attempting to shelter in one].
(*Newsnight Scotland*, 18 May 2006; parenthesis added)

The headline also highlights the perspective of ‘refugee organisations’ which is almost completely absent from the sample programmes despite the fact that the programmes refer both directly and indirectly to refugees seeking asylum. As we have seen, only one national programme (*Channel 4 News*) interviewed a representative from a refugee organisation. The headline informs us that the issue is being investigated here not solely from a UK perspective but from a wider European perspective.

The images of Africans including women in desert conditions show the difficult and impoverished living conditions of some African refugees. The women are shown in a makeshift shelter of flimsy sticks covered with pieces of cloth and plastic which is being torn apart by the wind, there is a woman attempting to shelter in one which offers little or no protection from the elements. They are in complete contrast of the preceding *Newsnight*

where the images focus on control and the policing of borders. The regional images which significantly include women appear to be designed to generate sympathy in the audience while the national programme images which are all of men are designed it seems to generate fear.

The studio introduction makes an important distinction between migration and forced migration as well as informing viewers of the international protections which are legally accorded to refugees seeking asylum. It also makes the point that refugees seeking asylum are being conflated with the 'wider debate' on 'immigration':

Newscaster (Anne Mackenzie): On the programme we take the debate on from those 'seeking a better life to those fleeing persecution. Is it time European countries adopted the same policies for asylum seekers and refugees [images of people in a desert with high winds blowing and creating a dust storm]? Good evening under international law it looks like an open and shut case if you fear persecution you can seek asylum in another country and if that fear is genuine you must be granted refugee status [studio backdrop image of young African woman holding a baby with yellow European stars superimposed on to this image]. Daily headlines reveal a different reality asylum seekers are being caught up in a wider debate from immigration to terrorism. Now refugee organisations from across Europe have gathered in Glasgow to finalise an effort to build a better asylum system but could the EU really agree a policy which didn't raise the drawbridge of fortress Europe? We'll be discussing that in a moment but first Kenneth McDonald has this report. (Newsnight Scotland, 18 May 2006; parenthesis added)

Within the opening minutes of the programme we have been informed twice, in both the headline and introduction that refugees seeking asylum are 'fleeing persecution' as opposed to merely 'seeking a better life' thus the distinction is made between economic migrants and forced migrants. This very phrase was used in the preceding national *Newsnight* programme to describe Africans arriving in Spain who may well be refugees seeking asylum rather than 'economic migrants' - the journalist asserts 'They are economic migrants and they believe Europe can offer them a better life'. The same phrase was also used in the programme in association with refugees from Zimbabwe. This problem of the conflation of refugees seeking asylum with economic migrants, as detailed in this chapter, is a key point, and is evident throughout the whole of the national *Newsnight* programme

as well as many others in the sample. There is, then, a clear difference in the way the issue of seeking asylum is being reported by the regional programme. There appears to be a clear attempt to balance what it acknowledges as failures of the media to represent the issue accurately by referring to the ‘daily headlines’ conflating refugees seeking asylum with both ‘immigration’ and ‘terrorism’.

As this programme takes a radically different approach to reporting issues of asylum it merits a full analysis of the complete programme for comparative purposes. Another clear difference in the reporting of issues of asylum is evident from the report which follows the introduction where we are introduced at the beginning to a list of world-famous scientists, politicians and artists, including a woman, who are all refugees. The report continues with interviews with three women seeking asylum who are framed as ‘Scottish counterparts’ of the famous refugees:

Journalist (Ken McDonald): Albert Einstein, Madeline Albright, Casanova, Chopin, Victor Hugo, Bela Bartok, Peter Lorre, President Tabo Mbeke, all in their time were refugees [image of each person]. Today, at this integration project, in Glasgow these are their Scottish counterparts. The United Nations says, the planet has more than nine million refugees, take in asylum seekers, displaced persons and other so called people of concern and that figure more than doubles [images of women of different nationalities learning a cultural dance and some women sitting watching them].

Refugee seeking asylum (Nune Patemian: Armenia): I have a big problem in my country. I come from Armenia and I leave my three children there and when I was pregnant I come in London. Even I don’t know about asylum seeker, but some people they help, they said, you can go in the Home Office apply to asylum.

Refugee seeking asylum (Sinit Gaberab:Eritrea): There is a big war in Ethiopia and they die, a lot of people there. Until now, they didn’t stop and if you are eighteen in Eritrea they take you in the army. It’s not your choice ,just you have to go, if you’re eighteen you have to go.

Refugee seeking asylum (Heather Lunkuse:Abok Uganda): When I was married, with my husband, *they wanted to circumcise me and my daughter.* That’s why I was *forced to come in this country.* (*Newsnight Scotland*, 18 May 2006; italics added)

This is the only programme in the sample to include both visual images and contributions as interviewees from women seeking asylum. The only other programme in the sample to include directly the perspective of a refugee seeking asylum was the BBC regional programme *Reporting Scotland* (16 May 2006) which featured an interview with Mohammed Asif of The Scottish Afghan Society who is also a studio guest in this programme.

The inclusion of women seeking asylum is highly significant as previous research has shown that the exclusion of women and children seeking asylum from both television and press coverage of refugee and asylum issues is a key problem (see chapters one and two). The women's contribution was important in informing the viewer of the social reality of seeking asylum. For example, the women gave as their reasons for seeking asylum as 'war in Ethiopia' and the fact that, 'they wanted to circumcise me and my daughter' as well as details of the social conditions they are experiencing 'I leave my three children there and when I was pregnant I come in London'.

The fact that the women are also mothers who are attempting to protect their children is also significant in terms of informing the viewer. Previous research from the Glasgow University Media Group provided clear evidence that the deaths of Palestinian children 'were treated with great sympathy' by some journalists as was not the case for adult Palestinians (Philo and Berry, 2004:145). This inclusion of the experience of children seeking asylum may in turn have an impact on the audience which could generate both empathy and sympathy, as too with the journalists reporting on these issues. The problem, however, in this sample is that the only references to both women and children refugees seeking asylum are in the regional programmes.

Referring to the women as the equivalent of world famous politicians, scientists and artists may have the added effect of associating these women and all refugees with highly educated and empowered individuals, which could challenge the stereotypes of refugees seeking asylum. This again reflects the social reality of refugees seeking asylum who generally are highly educated and skilled individuals. The Scottish Refugee Council, the National Union of Journalists and Amnesty International jointly published a pamphlet in 2004 entitled *Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland: Challenging the Myths* which informs the reader 'over 50% of refugees in a recent survey had a Degree and after studying in Britain this rose to two thirds.'

The inclusion of the experiences of women and children seeking asylum in this report gives agency to the women by giving voice to the fact that they have had to actively escape horrific conditions in order to protect themselves and their children. It also humanises the women and children as individuals with individual and different circumstances which have led to them being ‘forced to come in this country’. It is notable that the figures regarding the numbers of refugees are sourced to the UN whilst in the national programmes the vast majority of statistics are not sourced.

The report continues by detailing the legal protections which refugees seeking asylum should be accorded ‘under international law’ as well as inconsistencies regarding the ‘interpretation of that international law’ throughout Europe. Criticisms of asylum policies throughout Europe by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) are given a prominent position both visually and verbally.

The full explanation and sourcing of the legal definition of a refugee seeking asylum by the journalist (Ken McDonald), ‘Under international law a refugee is a person with a well founded fear of persecution and they must be granted asylum’, lends weight and authority to the issue and is the only such definition given in the sample. It informs the viewers that people have a legal right to seek asylum and that countries are also obliged legally to grant this right. The journalist’s questioning of whether people are actually being given asylum in Europe as is their right under international law also occurs only in this programme, ‘or at least that’s the theory but in recent years from Sangatte to Yarlswood it’s become clear that the interpretation of that international law varies widely even within a supposedly united Europe.’. This is the only programme in the sample where asylum policy is critically questioned by the journalists. Significantly this critical questioning of policy is not limited to the UK but extended to the whole of Europe. This is of paramount importance as European countries have been adopting standardised practices throughout Europe with regards to asylum.

The journalist reports verbally on the criticisms being made of European asylum policy. The accompanying visual image is the same text, listed on screen; ‘Help developing countries; Europe-wide resettlement; Fair asylum hearings; Integration help; Humane returns’ with an accompanying banner headline which says ‘REFUGEE AGENDA’. This text is superimposed on to an image of African children and a world map. The fact that so many criticisms are levied lends legitimacy to the editorial

decision to dedicate a whole programme to this issue. It also reflects accurately the many problems associated with seeking asylum none of which were raised by any of the other programmes in the sample, in relation to seeking asylum.

The point being made regarding the European Council on Refugees and Exiles criticism of asylum hearings, 'It wants a fair hearing for every asylum seeker wherever they are in Europe', is of crucial importance as it challenges the portrayal of 'failed asylum seekers' as 'illegal immigrants' and 'bogus asylum seekers' and reconfigures them as victims of an unfair system. During the period of the research sample the refusal rate ranged from 83 per cent to 88 per cent. The Home Office refers to people who have had their claim refused as 'failed asylum seekers'.

The decision making process is thus being called into question at the highest level, as is the refusal rate. Therefore the reporting of it in this programme is a noteworthy factor in terms of providing an accurate representation of the social reality of seeking asylum to the viewers. Within the overall coverage of the sample it also was distinctive as it explained how people become 'failed asylum seekers' through no fault of their own. This group, as we have seen, were many times associated with illegality and criminality, for example as 'illegal immigrants' when, they may in fact be, refugees who have been treated unfairly by the Home Office, as noted in the previously cited UNHCR report.

Another departure from the structure of the sample of national programmes is evident in the inclusion of a representative of an NGO which supports and advocates on behalf of refugees seeking asylum. Only one national programme, *Channel 4 News*, in one bulletin, included this perspective by interviewing a representative of an NGO. However, unlike this report they did not follow up his comments with any analysis of the points he raised. This report fully analyses all the points raised by the NGO representative.

The image in the report of Yarlswood Detention Centre on fire is illustrative of the social reality of the conditions to which people seeking asylum are subjected in the UK. This image was included in the 'script-writing exercise' of the in-depth interviews (see chapters five, six and seven). The images of a protest outside Dungavel Detention Centre, which includes a close-up of African men looking out of a window at the demonstration, are again illustrative of the social reality of the

conditions which people seeking asylum are subjected to in the UK, since the viewer can clearly witness the man's incarceration. The inclusion of the demonstration outside the Scottish detention centre is significant as it shows that not everyone supports the government policy of detention. This programme is the only one in the sample to visually illustrate opposition to the UK government's policy. Importantly it also shows public support for people seeking asylum.

In the following section of the report we again have representation from another three NGO's advocating and supporting refugees seeking asylum in the form of the Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council (Sally Daghlan) and the General Secretary of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (Peter Baneke). It is notable that two of the NGO representatives in the report are the people in the highest position within their respective organisations; this may lend even more weight and authority to their contributions. The other NGO is represented by a woman who is a refugee, Remzije Sherifi, of the Maryhill Integration Network. There is thus NGO representation at a local, national and European wide level included in this report.

The journalist follows up the previous point made regarding the high number of refusals of asylum claims and extends it to the whole of the European Union, 'the number of refugees being allowed to stay in the EU has fallen in recent years.' He continues, following up previous points by extending the point raised regarding the media conflation of refugees seeking asylum with both 'immigration' and 'terrorism' and also extends this point to the impact on the general public; 'Refugees and asylum seekers have become conflated in the public mind with economic migration, the non-deportation of foreign criminals and the so called war on terror'. The sample analysis shows that the national news programmes were indeed conflating these specific issues. The journalist then informs the viewer of the impact of this conflation on refugees seeking asylum themselves: 'the modern challenge for the refugee lobby is to make itself heard in an increasingly charged and confused debate.'

The historical context of seeking refuge is traced as far back as the 'medieval' times which positions 'the concept of offering asylum to refugees' as embedded within sections of European culture as well as highlighting the fact that, historically, there has always been a need for 'asylum'. The historical contextualisation continues with the Scottish Refugee Council NGO representative informing us of the history of the Refugee Convention and the legal and moral imperatives which secured these rights

‘We need to remember the very basis of international refugee law which was created in the 1950s and it was created in the wake of the Second World War and in recognition of the fact that millions of Jews who perished in Nazi Germany were actually denied access to safety in European countries.’ The absence of any legal and historical context to explain the practice of seeking asylum was another key issue in the analysis of the programme sample. This programme exemplifies how it can be included in order to both fully inform and educate the audience.

The NGO speaker also makes an important point regarding refugees seeking asylum not being treated fairly, ‘There’s a great deal of emphasis and money being spent on keeping people out and that includes people who are fleeing persecution.’ The addition of the historical facts regarding the treatment of Jews in Europe during the Second World War factually illustrates the fact that European countries have a historical track record in their unfair treatment of refugees. This historical link may lend credence and influence to her point and possibly make it more understandable for the audience.

The journalist informs the viewer of the dangers associated with the social reality of seeking asylum in the UK when he refers to the murder of a young man seeking asylum. The young man, ‘Firsat Dag’, is named in the report which dignifies him as an individual as opposed to an unnamed and possibly stigmatised ‘asylum seeker’ (Gross et al., 2007: 6). This may help to generate empathy and sympathy from the audience to view this murder in a more humane way. The social reality of seeking asylum is also reflected by the representative of the local NGO, a woman refugee who highlights the fact that refugees seeking asylum have to undergo the trauma of settling into to a whole new country.

The footage of the demonstration of Black and white people and children, with visible placards reading Sighthill United AGAINST POVERTY AGAINST RACISM ASYLUM SEEKERS WELCOME once again shows public support for people seeking asylum. It may also give an insight into the differences in regional news reporting of the issue. Many advocacy and campaigning groups have been set up and organised by political parties, trade unionists, religious organisations and members of the public in Glasgow and they may have contributed to a more humane response, a more informed media and a more informed audience. Further analysis of this image is

included in chapters five, six and seven as it is included in the ‘scriptwriting exercise’ of the in-depth interviews.

The image of a vast boat packed with people is similar to the image used in the preceding *Newsnight* programme. The national programme used the image to illustrate the threat to Europe of ‘illegal immigrants’ whilst the regional programme uses it to illustrate the harsh journeys endured by refugees fleeing persecution. Notably the images of the people on the portside include women and children whilst the preceding *Newsnight* programme also broadcast port images but, they are dominated by young African men. Further analysis of this image is included in chapters five, six and seven as it is included in the ‘scriptwriting exercise’ constituent of the in-depth interviews.

The studio discussion which follows the report additionally offers a contrast to the national news media’s approach. The guests invited to take part in the discussion are both representatives of a local based group, The Scottish Afghan Society (Mohammed Asif) and a European-wide NGO, the General Secretary European Council on Refugees and Exiles (Peter Baneke). Both, one of whom is a refugee, are advocating and supporting refugees seeking asylum. The representative of the European NGO, who also featured in the report, raises an issue which has not been reported anywhere else in the sample, which is that asylum is being politicised: ‘they said no we have a tough policy so they use that kind of political language and they make a political statement’. This is an alternative view of the discourse which is particularly important with regards to asylum as it should operate in a politically neutral manner. It is also particularly relevant to this analysis as this is also the language used by national news programmes in the sample, specifically in their references to the need for immigration controls.

He makes a further point regarding European countries ‘changing their own laws all the time’; and this is of particular relevance to the UK where there have been fourteen major pieces of legislation in relation to asylum and immigration in the last 100 years and six of those have been in the past seven years. The pace of the continuous changes to legislation adds pressure to asylum and immigration law practitioners who need to keep up with the legislative changes professionally. This is of crucial importance to refugees seeking asylum who depend on the law practitioners to represent them in an increasingly adversarial asylum system.

Another alternative argument made by this contribution is that governments are actively denying people seeking asylum their fundamental human rights 'They're also spending enormous amounts of money and making it impossible for refugees to seek asylum in Europe and they have the right to seek asylum, it's something given in the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights'. The accurate and sourced point is made again in this programme that refugees seeking asylum should be accorded protection as set out in international legislation.

The studio backdrop image of a young African woman holding a baby, with women and children immediately represented is a stark contrast to the Sangatte images of threatening men favoured by the national *Newsnight* programme, as a studio backdrop and broadcast by *BBC 6 O'Clock News* and *ITV Evening News*. The input from the Scottish NGO representative, who as well as being a refugee is also a journalist, offers the audience a first-hand insight into the experience of being a refugee seeking asylum, which again produces alternative explanations with regards to problems within the system:

The Scottish Afghan Society (Mohammed Asif): Well, I think, whatever the European, because I wouldn't know about that one. But, it's not realistic, whatever the policy the European have, it will be a tougher policy, it will be worse than the current one, and it won't be easier because the door in Europe is shut for asylum seekers and refugees. You know especially for the poor, who are persecuted in so many different countries and Europe is one of the countries which is responsible for many conflict across the globe, and creating refugees, and when the same people come, the door is shut for them. (*Newsnight Scotland*, 18 May 2006)

His comments include for the first time in the programme sample a direct reference to Europe's role in the creation of conditions which lead to people becoming refugees 'Europe is one of the countries which is responsible for many conflict across the globe and creating refugees and when the same people come the door is shut for them.' He also details colonial history as an explanation for people seeking asylum in Britain 'For example in Britain many people have family connections and also, you know, when Britain was a global Empire it's that connection as well'. These links with colonialism were absent from the national news sample. He also informs us that he has no faith that the asylum system throughout Europe will improve and that he fears it will become much worse.

The studio discussion continues by addressing the issue of the general public's conflation of 'refugees and economic migrants':

Newscaster (Anne Mackenzie): Peter, you've already made reference to the fact that governments are, to an extent, listening to their public, who are having problems with this issue of refugees, because many countries are finding it difficult to tell the difference between genuine refugees and economic migrants. You can, presumably, see that for these governments it is a problem that is almost impossible to overcome. Their democratic countries they have to listen to their voters?

General Secretary European Council on Refugees and Exiles (Peter Baneke): Well, it's not necessarily so difficult to see the difference. There's a proper procedure for that, a legal procedure and countries have a recognition rate. For example, in a country like Austria, more than 80% of people fleeing Chechnya are recognised. Proper procedure, legal procedure, their rights are being respected but, a neighboring country Slovakia it's 0 point, it's less than 1%. Same people coming to Slovakia will get no recognition or very few that can't be right. Now, in Slovakia, it's clear from our perspective, something has to change. They should adopt, perhaps, a procedure which is closer to that in Austria. It's a lottery for refugees, it can't be right and it is dangerous because people are being sent back from Slovakia to Chechnya. People can be in real danger. (*Newsnight Scotland*, 18 May 2006)

The representative of the European NGO responds by asserting that as there are specific legalities associated with refugees then there should be no problem. He then provides statistical evidence in the form of the 'recognition rate' which exemplifies the inconsistencies within the asylum system which he argues reduce it to 'a lottery'. This information is useful in informing viewers of procedural difficulties in seeking asylum which can lead to a high number of 'failed asylum seekers' who may not have received a fair hearing with regards to their claim.

The newscaster then raises the same issue with regards to conflation with the Scottish NGO representative:

Newscaster (Anne Mackenzie): Mohammed do you see the complication, as it were, for countries in Europe? For governments in Europe, who are

facing populations, who are concerned about this difference between refugee and economic migrant and so on?

The Scottish Afghan Society (Mohammed Asif): I mean it's a big issue. You know we always see the stories, people are confused between migration, asylum, refugees. The politicians are mixing the issue between asylum and illegal migration. I mean, the European states make it very, very, difficult for refugees who want to come legally, to apply. If I were to go to a British High Commission and say, look I want to apply for asylum can you let me in? Obviously, I would never be able to come legally.

Newscaster (Anne Mackenzie): But you, as a genuine refugee, must Presumably, be appalled by the waters being muddied, as it were, by economic migration?

The Scottish Afghan Society (Mohammed Asif): Economic migration? Each government should have different rules you know, that make it much easier for people who want to emigrate and it's already there. You know, when you have a Doctor in Asia or in Africa, the rich states take them away and bring them there and rob the poor countries from their Doctors, and leave them with nothing, and if they have a different way, easier way to bring people who are skilled legally to this country then that's ok. But, then politicians, the media, everyone is mixing the issue of illegal migration with asylum. I watched the Conservative leader, I think it was the day before yesterday, on Prime Ministers Question Time, he say "illegal asylum seeker" in Britain. If you're an asylum seeker, you're not illegal, you applied for asylum, you introduced yourself to the Home Office, so how can you be illegal?

(Newsnight Scotland, 18 May 2006)

He responds by stating that the media in the form of 'stories' and politicians are conflating the issue and also explains the difficulties for refugees in terms of trying to escape countries and meet the demands of the European asylum system regarding documentation. He makes the same point as the African migrant interviewed in *Newsnight* (18 May 2006) in relation to countries benefiting from the migration of trained doctors. Another example of conflation is raised again by him as an issue: 'the media everyone is mixing the issue of illegal migration with asylum', and as we have seen conflation of refugees seeking asylum with 'illegal immigrants' was indeed a key issue in the news programme sample. He further gives an example of a politician using the wholly inaccurate term 'illegal asylum seeker'.

Within my own research period of monitoring television coverage of asylum issues I also recorded instances of inaccurate terminology being used by politicians. One example was of Jacqui Lait, the Conservative Shadow Minister for London, using the same term ‘illegal asylum seekers’ in the House of Commons on 23 July 2006 which was broadcast on *BBC Parliament*. In 2003 the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) issued guidelines (2005) stating: ‘NO-ONE is an ‘illegal asylum-seeker’. This term is always incorrect. It cannot be illegal to seek asylum since everyone has the fundamental human right to request asylum under international law.’ Yet three years later politicians are still using the term.

The studio discussion and the programme concludes with yet another point being made regarding the problems within the decision making process this time around the issues of the length of time taken to make decisions and the process of appeals raised by an NGO representative, General Secretary European Council on Refugees and Exiles (Peter Baneke), ‘when you start talking, or start the procedure to recognise a refugee or not, that you invest a lot of energy right early on so that the decision is taken quickly but, it’s the right decision so you don’t have to go to appeal after appeal after appeal.’ This is a significant factor within the process of seeking asylum which is still ongoing. The Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, Donna Covey, stated in May 2010: “Initial decision making in the asylum system continues to give cause for concern, with 27% of appeals being successful. The new government has pledged to review the speed of asylum decision making, and it is essential that this review focuses on the importance of getting decisions right first time.’ (*Refugee Council response to first quarterly asylum statistics for 2010*, Refugee Council Online, 28 May 2010).

CONCLUSION

There is an entirely different approach in the news framework and presentational structure of this regional programme from that of the national news programmes in the sample. Specifically, in relation to the inconsistencies and problems associated with the process of seeking asylum, and more generally in relation to issues of asylum and refuge. There are very distinct and different perspectives in the regional and national programmes. Even when the inconsistent and problematic treatment of refugees seeking asylum is raised in the national programmes, there is no analysis of it either in

the journalists' reports or in the studio discussions. In contrast the regional programme provides a full and in-depth analysis of the issue.

Only one programme in the national sample, *Channel 4 News* (18 May 2006), included the perspective of any NGOs advocating and supporting refugees seeking asylum. The regional programme is dominated by this perspective. No refugees or refugees seeking asylum are given a voice in the national programmes which also means no women or children refugees seeking asylum are represented. The regional programme interviewed five refugees and refugees seeking asylum, four of whom were women, and also represented children. The national programmes give precedence to the politicians' perspective who were the predominant interviewees.

The historical and legal context of seeking asylum are absent from the national programmes whilst both contexts are highly prominent in the regional programmes. Any statistics cited by the regional programmes are accurately sourced which is not the case with the national programmes. The national programmes became examples themselves of how news programmes can be inconsistent and problematic in their reporting of issues of asylum and refuge.

Within the national coverage there is a significant problem regarding the conflation of migration and forced migration resulting in the term 'illegal immigrant' and 'illegals' being both endorsed and applied to people seeking asylum. Asylum is problematised and comes to be associated with the need to deport and reduce numbers of applicants. These perspectives are rarely challenged.

Social value assumptions and judgments are evident in the editorials with regards to the interviewees who are given the status to speak and also within the journalists' and Political Editors' opinions, as they go beyond reporting negative views on migration and directly endorse them. This in turn affects the balance of the programmes as the viewer is not given access to a range of perspectives.

Chapter Five: Audience reception: Professional Workers in the field participants

INTRODUCTION

This chapter details responses from the audience of special interest participants who are workers in the field. This group included people who work with refugees seeking asylum, it was important to include their perspective in order to further examine the possible impact of television coverage on audiences who are expected to be more informed on the substantive topic than the general public. Therefore, the same aims of analysing sources of information, the nature of belief systems and processes of accepting or rejecting television messages also directed to this group.

METHOD AND SAMPLE

Alongside the modified script-writing exercise I conducted an in-depth interview with semi- structured questions. The interview was structured by way of asking all interviewees the same questions, which enabled the tabulation of responses from those occupying different groupings and positions within the research project thus functioning for comparative purposes.

The research sample includes fifteen interviews with a wide range of professionals working with refugees seeking asylum. The interviewees were primarily selected for their particular knowledge and experience of ‘asylum seekers’ in the UK. The rationale for inclusion of this group is that those with professional experience may have a different point of view of the media and have access to a broader array of alternative sources of information and therefore influence. Efforts were also made to include participants with a range of demographic characteristics. Thus the sample included Black people as well as white people. I also included the demographic variable of social class measured by income level.

Table 2 in Index 1 shows the range of special interest participants involved in the study. People from diverse professions, such as an Ex Member of the Scottish Parliament, a City Councilor and a Social Worker, ages and gender, had occasion to state both their opinions and personal experiences.

RESULTS

The replies to the questions and the responses and discussions in the adapted script-writing exercise fell into seven categories. These were:

1. Memories and associations of asylum and refuge in general
2. Sources of information
3. Memories and associations of asylum and refuge television coverage
4. Knowledge and beliefs about asylum and refuge
5. Attitudes towards ‘asylum seekers’
6. Attitudes towards television coverage of asylum and refuge
7. The adapted script-writing exercise

I will discuss each of these in turn in relation to the three separate sample sections in this chapter and the following two. This chapter focuses on the professional interest participants who are all currently working in the refugee and asylum sector.

The first thing to note about this sample section was their concern with regards to their need for anonymity. This has serious implications for future research in terms of access and bias and needs further investigation. Participants were also worried that their opinions may not be in line with the organisations they worked for. The guarantee of anonymity was therefore critical in securing the participation of these interviewees. Research participants were guaranteed anonymity and informed that all data would be anonymous and that they would not be identified.

I conducted an exercise focused on the idea of self identity by leaving it open to the interviewees as to whether they identified themselves as a member of a racialised group in order to test my hypothesis that there is a need for balance between traditional ethnicity and identities and whether we have come to a point where what we should be investigating is the concept of race within ‘race’, race/‘race’ (see chapter two). The process revealed that whilst I as a researcher had adopted the language of ‘race’ the vast majority of the interviewees self-identified in terms of the traditional ethnicity race model of black and white (see chapters five, six and seven). As a researcher I am aware of the need to utilise both constructs and not to be limited by either.

Within this group the vast majority identified themselves as members of the racialised group white Scottish with one man identifying as Scottish Asian but one man and one woman chose not to be identified as a member of any racialised group. The exercise of self-identifying ones class also proved somewhat problematic and potentially divisive. One woman made the distinction ‘educated working class’, and several people had difficulties defining themselves with one man stating ‘i was born working class but I’m living middle class’ another man defined himself as ‘working stroke middle’ and one woman responded with ‘I don’t know’ and along with another man chose not to define herself by class at all. There were also instances where people with broad working class accents defined themselves as middle class and people with defined middle class accents identified as working class.

In my opinion it is important for social scientists to gather data in both the areas of race/ ‘race’ and social class as they are significant social factors within society. As a researcher I found the process of self-identification to be problematic in terms of representing a broad demographic as given the option of self-identified some people choose to opt out of demographic categories altogether.

Memories and associations of asylum and refuge in general

The first question respondents were asked was what was the first thing that came into their minds when they thought about asylum and refuge? All of the interviewees bar one associated refuge and asylum directly with the social reality and living conditions of refugees seeking asylum such as ‘persecution’, ‘hardship’, ‘safety’, ‘human rights’ and ‘unfair treatment’. The one person who did not associate it in this way associated it personally to her employment. It appears here that working with refugees seeking asylum has given respondents an insight into the conditions faced by refugees seeking asylum. A detailed breakdown of responses by this group is given in Table 4 in Appendix 2.

Two of the interviewees used the term ‘looking for a better life’ and ‘trying to make themselves a better life’. I identified the term ‘better life’ in my content analysis (see chapter 4) as commonly used by news programmes. However, the media context of the usage is different. The interviewees qualified the term by referring to ‘persecution, escaped and trying to make themselves a better life’ and ‘people escaped from torn countries looking for a better life’ therefore associating the term with the social reality of refugees seeking asylum.

The national broadcast news usage of the term conflated refugees seeking asylum with both ‘illegal immigrants’ and economic migrants who are seeking ‘a better life’. No mention was made of the fact that refugees seeking asylum are in fact seeking safety, protection, asylum and refuge because their lives and/or that of their families are at risk. They were represented as seeking better economic conditions.

It is notable that the two interviewees who re-contextualised this phrase are a journalist and a man who defines himself as Scottish Asian. These cultural and professional factors may be influential in their choice to put this phrase in the social reality context they preferred. This shows a complex pattern of thought processes which is able to reject the media representation whilst at the same time absorbing the language and reinterpreting it within they’re own preferred context.

Sources of information

Seven of the fifteen interviewees cited television news directly as a source. However, the people who did not cite television news as a source of information directly in response to this question, then went on to do so in section three, the adapted script-writing exercise and section four, memories and associations of asylum and refuge television coverage and section five, where they provided evidence regarding specific memories of television coverage and detailed memories of news coverage. This may be because overwhelmingly people responded to section four and five by rejecting the television coverage as ‘negative’ or ‘inaccurate’ and therefore not informative which may have led to them rejecting it as a source. One woman stated that whilst she watched television news ‘I don’t really use that as accurate information really’. For more information on the use of sources see Table 4 in Appendix 2.

The rejection of television coverage as ‘negative’ and ‘unfair’ was also apparent in the response of two of the three interviewees who cited alternative or independent media as a source. One man who is a print journalist stated ‘from independent media where you get slightly fairer reporting’ and another woman stated ‘I get to see more positive images than a lot of other people do as well.’ The interviewee linked this also to her role as a ‘political activist’ and as a member of a Glasgow campaigning group, The Glasgow Campaign Group to Welcome Refugees.

A total of four of the fifteen interviewees cited political or community campaigning groups as a source. One man stated, 'There's some community groups, I have some knowledge of it but it's not vastly available.' Another woman stated, 'A lot through community initiatives working together.' Three of the interviewees referred to emails from the Glasgow Campaign Group to Welcome Refugees, which is a local group, set up by members of the Socialist Workers Party. Community politics and organisations have then impacted upon this particular group and are playing an important role as a valued source of information.

As expected with this group the main source of information cited was that of their professional experience in their workplace, working with refugees seeking asylum with eleven out of the fifteen citing it as a source. One man referred to the importance in his workplace of the 'Community Profiler':

I think I'm in a fortunate position where in my work we have a Community Profiler who deals with stats in specific areas around poverty so we can identify different areas around Glasgow whereby asylum seeking and refugee communities are coming in and then the uptake of jobs, showing how many of these areas are allowing asylum seekers to settle. (Scottish Asian, working-class, male, professional worker)

It is interesting to note that he regards himself as 'fortunate' in having access to accurate statistics. This raises the question as to just who does have access to the information gathered by organisations working in the asylum sector. This information in particular, relating asylum to poverty, could be helpful in challenging the misinformation evident in my content analysis sample (see chapter four) such as the assumption that people seeking asylum coming to the UK and Europe do so for economic reasons.

Eight of the eleven interviewees who cited their work as a source of information made the point that their job entailed direct face to face contact with refugees and people seeking asylum. One woman, a journalist, described this as a 'real life' source. This workplace contact has impacted on this group as an important and valuable source of information. Therefore in terms of the categories tabulated this workplace experience can be categorised as indirect in the sense that the workers are not directly involved in seeking asylum but it has given them a degree of personal insight rather than personal experience of the process and experience of seeking asylum. One woman put it succinctly when she stated:

I work with asylum seekers, obviously I don't have first hand experience as I am not a refugee or asylum seeker but I do work in those communities.
(white, working-class, female, professional worker)

Television in differing formats is referred to as a source nineteen times including general media, documentaries and drama. Therefore even in a group where almost half of the interviewees do not specifically cite television news as a source, television including the news genre is the main source cited by this group. Other sources included newspapers, the internet and one man gained personal insight into the experience of seeking asylum from the novel *The Kite Runner* authored by Khaled Hosseini, which tells the story of a refugee seeking asylum from Afghanistan.

Memories and associations of asylum and refugee television coverage

This category incorporates questions 3, 4 and 5 and a detailed breakdown of responses by this group is given in Table 4 in Appendix 2. In response to question 3 (which words/phrases or images do you remember from UK television with regards to asylum and refugee issues and which programme were they in), the programme most cited by the interviewees was the News, reference was also made to Current Affairs programming, documentaries and dramas. My programme archive (see chapter four) also detailed the fact that the issue of asylum and refugee is covered by a variety of television genres and not limited to news programming. Interviewees were able to remember by name which programmes they had seen covering the issue such as *Question Time*, *Casualty*, *Holby City*, *Breaking into Britain*, *Asylum Night* and *The Glasgow Girls*.

The most common response was that the coverage of this issue was generally 'negative'. Interviewees backed up this belief with examples:

Everything the news shows or displays is of a negative nature focused on asylum seekers and refugees giving no concern for them, no sort of sympathy for them other than giving figures, giving statistics which make the public not want to embrace these new communities but rather challenge them which to my mind is disgusting. (Scottish Asian, working-class, male, professional worker; italics added)

There was instances with people coming into different ports, flooding the areas, taking aw the resources, *it was all negative*. (white, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

Mainly quite negative, the figures, so many people are coming to this country and their bringing with them problems. (white Scottish, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

On a par with the response detailed in the above examples was the memory of the use of inaccurate statistics and figures. One man explained how he logically deduced the inaccuracy from his informed knowledge of the subject:

Exaggerating in terms of quantities and numbers of people arriving which is false, totally false because I understand that at this precise moment we accept something like 2 % of the worlds refugee population. I know for a fact that the large majority of refugees are lucky if they make it across the border. I have seen this on *Question Time*, the *News* and prime time documentaries. (white, middle-class, male, professional worker)

I identified the focus on numbers as a main area of national coverage in my content analysis (see chapter four). Within the national coverage I also identified the problem of non-sourced and unverifiable statistics leading to both inaccurate reporting and analysis of forced migration issues. The focus on numbers as with the focus on incorrectly sourced statistics is a continuous problem in television coverage of migration issues (Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999; Buchanan et al., 2003). It is also significant that these connotations have now been completely transposed on to the issue of asylum which is evident from this group's response.

Some interviewees made a distinction with regards to regional broadcasting with regional news and documentaries cited as a 'positive' representation of asylum issues:

One disturbing one but also *positive* was in reaction to dawn raids and seeing the local population, no just the refugee population, in the area being totally distraught and outraged and the panic. I also remember scenes from outside the so-called detention centre. As a *positive* story *The Glasgow Girls* and all the momentum they gathered as a group, in fact, it was a perfect

example of a community getting together, of integration, of people saying look we are all the same, and what is happening is totally wrong, and we're gonny fight over it. Particularly seeing the young people and all the bad reputation that young people get these days, it was great, that was a great story. (white, middle-class, male, professional worker; italics added)

The programmes I remember were *The Glasgow Girls* and what they did, it was *very positive*. There's also been other things on *Reporting Scotland* I've looked at. Also things like churches helping people who are going to be getting deported. Also a saw the thing on the news about people up in the Red Road flats, but they were all there to stop the dawn raids and people getting deported, and it was a candle vigil at one time. (white, working-class, male, professional worker; italics added)

This finding is in line with the results of my content analysis (see chapter four) which found an entirely different approach in the news framework and presentational structure of the regional programme from that of the national news programmes in the sample. This was the case specifically in relation to the inconsistent and problematic treatment of refugees seeking asylum, and more generally in relation to issues of asylum and refuge. There are very distinct and different perspectives in the regional and national programmes. Even when the inconsistent and problematic treatment of refugees seeking asylum is raised in the national programmes there is no analysis of it either in the journalist's reports or in the studio discussions. In contrast the regional programme provides a full and in-depth analysis of the issue. Philo discovered that perception was conditioned by regional differences with many participants citing the regional press in the North as an alternative source of information (Philo, 1990: 179). This finding was echoed by Nissa Finney (2003: 220) in relation to issues of asylum and the press (see chapter two).

Regional programming was also linked by the interviewees to the issue of local campaign groups in particular a group named *The Glasgow Girls* which BBC Scotland has produced two documentaries about, one of which won the Nations and Regions Award in the Amnesty International UK Media Awards. Three references were made to this programme by the interviewees.

The Glasgow Girls are a group of young women who were all school students, some of them are seeking asylum and some are indigenous Scots. The group was established in

response to the detention of one of their school friends. They campaign against ‘dawn raids’, detention, deportation and the unfair treatment of refugees seeking asylum. The group won the Scottish Campaign of the Year Award in 2005 at the annual Scottish Politician of the Year ceremony.

The interviewees have gained knowledge of specific issues relating to asylum i.e. ‘dawn raids’, deportation and detention from regional programming, which is in turn responding to local campaign groups and reporting the issues in a more balanced way than the national media. This points to the important role played by both regional television and community campaign groups in informing the audience.

Finney argued that we must also consider ‘the motivations and values of individual reporters.’ (Finney, 2003: 211) These ‘motivations and values’ were influential in the most sensitive, informative and balanced reporting which is found where there is a dedicated asylum reporter and where there are good links between the local press and local refugee sector.

There appears to be links between the regional broadcasters and the local refugee sector within the Scottish media, which is resulting in a more informed and balanced reporting of issues of refuge and asylum. There is a need to investigate these links further in order to establish the causal factors of the differentiation in regional and national broadcast reporting.

Another finding from my content analysis (see chapter four) which was evident in the interviewees responses was the prominence of the term ‘illegals’ which was cited as a memory of coverage by two interviewees. One of the interviewees rejected the television usage of the term based on her own professional knowledge of asylum and immigration status:

The word *illegals* is quite often thrown in but I know it’s not an accurate status so I find it totally inaccurate. (white, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

My content analysis identified repeated use of the pejorative term ‘illegals’ which has connotations of criticism or disapproval, and was also being endorsed by a national newscaster who used it directly in his own speech. It was also used by the Home Office

Minister. Social value assumptions are being made here as to who is legitimate as immigrants.

Another interviewee remembered the television coverage of ‘the issue of illegal immigration’ being conflated with refuge and asylum:

Other asylum issues are again the issue of *illegal immigration* via freight or train to gain access here as if it’s a form of illegality that you have to sneak in rather than gaining access in terms of fleeing torture or persecution.
(white Scottish, working-class, male, professional worker; italics added)

My content analysis (see chapter four) identified the fact that within the national coverage there is a significant problem regarding the conflation of migration and forced migration resulting in the term ‘illegal immigrant’ and ‘illegals’ being both endorsed and applied to people seeking asylum.

One response highlights the importance of the Glasgow Media Group’s use of the script-writing exercise. Only one interviewee remembered specifically the Sangatte footage and yet when the image was used in the script-writing exercise it was the image most remembered and commented on by this group and all of the others. The exercise enables the research to recover memories which questioning alone does not bring to the fore. This in-depth approach produced a wealth of data which would have been omitted by the interviewees without it.

Another image used in the script-writing exercise and identified in the content analysis which interviewees remembered at this point was that of people in a boat or at a port. This was a common image in the content analysis national news sample and was used in a problematic way whereby refugees seeking asylum were not identified as such but in the main as ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘economic migrants’ (see chapter four). Both of the interviewees also referred to this coverage as problematic:

Pictures of people escaping in boats, cars or vans. They’re packed in, in order, to escape the countries their coming from,. Police stopping or barricading them, in order, to send them back without any knowledge or understanding or attempt to understand why or how or when it’s almost kind of force against them. (Scottish Asian, working-class, male,

professional worker)

There was instances with people coming into different ports, *flooding the areas*, taking aw the resources, *it was all negative*. (White, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

The interviewee was able to accurately remember not only the images but also the language accompanying them. The term ‘flooding’ is identified in my content analysis (see chapter four) as a problematic term in use by the national broadcast media specifically when accompanied by images of ‘ports’ and ‘boats’.

Questions 4 and 5 were designed to actively include participant’s personal experiences and opinions and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms. It was also important to gauge opinion on what is excluded as well as included in television coverage.

Question 4 asked “do you think television influences people’s opinions or behaviour towards people seeking asylum and if yes could you give an example?” All of the respondents believed television did influence people and many respondents made the point that they felt it had the power to influence ‘positively’ as well as ‘negatively’ but with this particular issue it was influencing people in an overwhelmingly negative way. Specific reference was made to the use of inaccurate statistics and the focus on numbers playing on people’s fears. Examples were also given as to how exactly television coverage influenced people.

One woman who is a Social Worker working with refugee families expressed a strong opinion that the ‘negative’ media coverage influenced the refugees she was working with. In that it led them to stay silent about any problems they may be facing:

There has been amongst the families sometimes a bit of reluctance to be critical of systems in any way. So they don’t say anything negative about anybody, and I suppose I just can’t believe that out of all the families we work with none of them have had any negative experiences, because that is not our usual experience of working with kids and families. For some of the children in school they have been having difficulties, we know that, but there’s an impression sometimes that parents are reluctant to be critical of anybody. If every time you turn on the television and all you see is negative views of

asylum seekers and refugees, and it's always negative I don't see how that couldn't have an impact on people. (white, working-class, female, professional worker)

Another woman gave an example which referred specifically by name to two television news broadcasters:

I think it hugely influences people, cos when you get intae a discussion with anybody who is being very negative, racist about asylum seekers they will fling back at you what Trevor McDonald said, or they will fling back at you what Jackie Bird said. That is their only point of reference, they don't have any prior knowledge or any other knowledge other than what they saw on the wee box. You can sit and try and shoot aw that down in flames but it has huge authority television and the news. (White, working-class, female, professional worker)

Question 5 asked "is there anything television does not show about asylum that you think it should?" All of the interviewees believed the social reality of seeking asylum was missing from the television coverage of the subject. They further believed issues such as the removal of the right to work, the 'horrific conditions they live in' (in terms of the specific locations and the poor housing), the difficulties faced and inefficiencies in the process of claiming asylum, the voucher and welfare support system and the shift in lifestyle from what they had to what they come to not being represented. A detailed breakdown of responses by this group is given in Table 4 in Appendix 2.

One woman gave an example of a young girl's family who she works with. Her father is a surgeon and her mother is a Doctor in Afghanistan but they are not allowed to work here in the UK. Another woman felt strongly that the reality of the housing conditions in which people are living is not portrayed:

The poverty, the belief that people get masses ae money and free housing, it's pretty poor housing, it's houses that are hard to let. I'm surprised at the acceptance they mibbe don't hiv any choice but other people see this as adequate housing when in fact it's pretty poor, it's ghettoisation. In fact wit they've gote you wouldnae gie it away if you hid it. (white, working-class, female, professional worker)

This group is dealing with the impact of asylum and immigration laws and policies every day in their professional lives and is informed and conscious of the social reality of seeking asylum. They are therefore able to speak accurately about social policy as well as asylum and immigration laws and policy. It is significant that all of the interviewees within this group, with their professional experience, believed that the social reality of seeking asylum is missing from coverage of the subject.

My own findings in the content analysis (see chapter four) shows their beliefs to be accurate. None of the national programmes in the sample reported on the 'horrific conditions they live in' in terms of the specific locations and the poor housing, difficulties and inefficiencies in the process of claiming asylum, the voucher and welfare support system and the shift in lifestyle from what they had to what they come to. Only one national programme, *Channel 4 News* mentioned the impact of the withdrawal of the right to work but it was not taken up or developed by the presenter/journalist Jon Snow.

Another area this group felt was not represented in the television coverage was the actuality of why people seek asylum and how that may be linked to colonial history. Eleven of the fifteen interviewees commented on this area. Several interviewees related the history to social and political responsibility:

Why they actually choose to come to Britain. I mean the fact that they speak English isn't unrelated to the fact that Britain was the colonial power. That's maybe why they choose to come here, *it's an historic link that we have responsibility for*, so I think that should be explained more. (white, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

I would like an international view it's always missing, why have you ran away fae Darfur? Why have you ran away fae Iran? What is Britain, what have we done to make the situation in they countries worse? The Kurdish people you know why are the Kurdish people in the situation their in? Who sold the weapons tae kill and oppress and torture, Christ we were making them in Maryhill. So if you're gunny tell the story tell the entire story and look at Britain's role in all of that. You can guarantee that when tortures used against an individual somebody somewhere in the UK is behind that. Whether they put a nut or a bolt on that machine, whether they ran that factory, that's

Maryhill plastics factory, that's what they used tae dae, they used tae make torture equipment. I would like tae see the real truth, so that we can be more inward looking and outward looking at the same time and *look at our responsibility and we huv gote a responsibility* and I don't think that's ever mooted tae the public. (white, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

The lack of a colonial context in national news coverage was identified in my content analysis. It resulted in some instances to a de-historicising of European, African and American colonial history leading to a simplified and somewhat revised and reductive historical context which may leave the viewer confused as to what exactly the actual context of the debate is.

One report from *Newsnight* (17 May 2006), made reference to Commonwealth history acting as a 'magnet' for migrants but this framework failed to take into account our colonial history as the British Empire, which led to the formation of the Commonwealth and to the imposing of a British education and culture, including the English language, in many of the colonised countries. It also failed to recognise the role played by our Commonwealth and Colonial links as a major factor in the active encouragement by the UK for people to migrate (see chapter four).

Knowledge and beliefs about asylum and refuge

This section incorporates the responses to seven questions which were designed to ascertain the interviewee's information and basic knowledge of the subject matter. For a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 4 in Index 2. This section were more informed in some areas than others.

This sample section as a whole was able to accurately detail the many countries people seeking asylum originate from. The most common response was that people come from all over the world. One man confused the issue of seeking asylum with that of economic migration and mistakenly referred to a Polish economic migrant, who he knows and who came to the UK to work as an engineer, as an asylum seeker. He believed that the highest proportion of people seeking asylum in the UK came from Eastern Europe 'At the moment it's mostly Eastern Europeans, we seem to have an influx.' In fact at the time of the

interview the highest numbers came from Somalia, Zimbabwe and China (Amnesty International, 2003: 24).

This sample also displayed accurate knowledge in their detailed responses as to why people seek asylum in the UK. The most common response was that of war with reference also being made to the many kinds of persecution faced by people seeking asylum such as religious, political and gender persecution.

Three of the interviewees used the term 'better life' in their responses a phrase which was also identified in the previous section and the content analysis sample. As previously discussed the context of the usage is different from the media usage. One interviewee qualified the term by equating it to survival, 'some people come here for a better life which is fair enough basically their coming here to survive and get a better life.' Another man challenged the perception that the UK offered a better lifestyle: stating 'they're not coming for a better life cos they're actually leaving a good lifestyle behind them'. Once again the term was associated by the interviewees with the social reality of refugees seeking asylum which was missing from the media usage of the term which as we have seen which equated it with seeking better economic conditions. The interviewees again re-contextualised this phrase, showing their ability to reject the media representation whilst at the same time absorbing the language and reinterpreting it within their own preferred context.

This sample section was very well informed with regards to the rules concerning employment for refugees seeking asylum. A total of fourteen of the fifteen interviewees knew that severe restrictions were in place which meant they could not work. The interviewees expressed their 'shock' at this system and several people commented on the fact that the country has skills shortages and these are skilled workers:

It's shocking! What better way to feel that your part of a community, part of a society, for your self esteem, self worth, than to have earned something, to have worked for it and earned it. It would also save a lot of money for the government in what they're paying out. (white, working-class, female, professional worker)

Its basic human rights that everybody's entitled to but, it seems to be you're only entitled to it if the government says you're entitled to it. You can't get benefits, you're not allowed to work. It's a catch 22 situation, it's basically

trying to force people back onto planes. (white, working-class, male, professional worker)

When questioned with regards to the state benefits refugees seeking asylum receive, eleven of the fifteen interviewees were aware of the fact that a separate support system outwith the traditional welfare state benefit system of the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) has been established. The National Asylum Support System (NASS) is administered directly by the Home Office. NASS has been criticised for being ‘badly designed, extremely bureaucratic, and poorly run’ (*Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland*, 2003:21, Amnesty International).

A number of the interviewees had direct experience in their professional lives of NASS and they too were highly critical of the organisation. They were most concerned about the ‘system making mistakes’, ‘separating people seeking asylum’ from the mainstream population and its potential as a Home Office ‘system of control’:

It separates you from the rest of the benefits system and prevents social cohesion. (white, middle-class, male, professional worker)

I think Nass is a system which has been established to control immigration, it polices the movement. (white Scottish, working-class, male, professional worker)

I don’t know why they have to have a separate kind of system to what other people in the UK have, we have a perfectly good functioning benefits system there, why do they have to have something else. I’m not quite sure why it exists and why it has to be separate. It breeds dependency, it’s very controlling. (white, working-class, female, professional worker)

Although this sample section appeared well informed as to the differences regarding NASS and the DHSS, when asked how much a refugee seeking asylum received each week only two of the interviewees stated the correct figure of £38. Two people did, however, know it was less than the indigenous population who would actually receive £54 and two more knew it was only a percentage of what claimants receive on Income Support. Eight people over estimated how much they receive, with one person estimating that they receive almost double the amount. Three people were concerned with the system of food vouchers which was introduced in 2000 when everyone seeking asylum had no entitlement to any cash

payments and received food vouchers. In 2002 the system changed to allow for some cash payments but 6,750 people seeking asylum are still only in receipt of food vouchers (*Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary*, April-June 2010 Home Office).

Question 8 asked the interviewees how many people seek asylum in the UK in an average year. There were 33,960 asylum applications in 2004, 25,710 asylum applications in 2005 and 23,430 applications were received in 2007 (*Home Office*, 2008). UNHCR statistics showed that at the time of the interviews the number of refugees seeking asylum in Europe was at its lowest level in three years. The numbers nearly halved in the ten year period 1992-2001- from 675,460 (1992) to 374,586 (2001) (*UNHCR*, May 31, 2002, Geneva Statistics). Their answers showed this to be one of the areas about which this group was least informed on.

Only four of the interviewees were able to give accurate figures of 20,000/25,000 meaning eleven of the fifteen interviewees were inaccurate. Almost half of the group (seven of the fifteen interviewees) stated that they either had no idea or did not know but they then went on to guess at a figure. It seems surprising that informed professionals with working experience of issues of asylum and refuge were reduced to a guessing game when it came to the important issue of accurate statistics. This sample section either vastly underestimated the numbers or vastly over estimated with responses ranging from the low hundreds to 300,000. The 300,000 figure was given by a journalist and a woman who is an active member of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees. Her response is in line with the findings of a Mori Poll which showed that the public over estimates by a factor of ten the number of refugees seeking asylum in the UK, believing that the UK hosts about 23% of the world's refugees. The real figure is 1.98% (*Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers for Refugee Week*, 2002 Mori).

It is notable that the majority of interviewees cited television news directly as a source. My content analysis (see chapter four) and previous research (Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999; Buchanan, et al. 2003) identified as problematic the news broadcasters' focus on incorrectly sourced statistics.

Another area where members of this sample lacked knowledge was when they were asked which countries in the world take in the most refugees/people seeking asylum. 72% of the world's twelve million refugees are given asylum by developing countries whilst Britain hosts less than 2% (*Statistical Yearbook*, 2002, UNHCR). Pakistan hosts the largest

number of refugees followed by Iran, Germany and Tanzania (Castles, 2003). The respondents identified multiple countries, the largest proportion of references with a total of eighteen were to European countries including France, Italy, Sweden, and the UK. Five people believed the UK takes in the most refugees with one woman stating 'I would go for the biggest countries so I would say the UK'. One third of this sample was wholly inaccurate in their belief that the UK hosts the most refugees. It is surprising that professionals with daily working experience of asylum issues do not have a grasp of such fundamental information relating to asylum.

However eighteen accurate references were also made with four direct references to countries which border conflict zones and ten references which accurately named Pakistan, Iran, Germany and Tanzania. One of the interviewees who was able to reference the countries accurately had also overestimated the number of people seeking asylum in an average year by ten times as 300,000. Therefore, being informed in one area is no guarantee that people will be informed in all areas of asylum issues.

Another area where a gap in the knowledge of this sample is identifiable was revealed when they were asked how many refugees seeking asylum are University graduates. Over 50% of refugees seeking asylum have a degree and after studying in Britain this rises to 75% (*Refugee Council*, 2002). Only one person gave the accurate figure of 75% and another three gave guesses in the range of 50-60%. A further three people accurately identified the majority and a high percentage. Over half of the group, seven people, underestimated the number and five of the seven underestimated it by at least 50% including underestimating it by as much as 70%. One may anticipate that this group with their professional experience and knowledge of the social reality of seeking asylum would have been more informed with regards to the client group, the people they are working with and for.

Attitudes towards 'asylum seekers'

This section encompasses the answers to questions 14 and 15 which were also designed to actively include participant's personal experiences and opinions and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms. Question 15 was designed in order to collect data on terminology associated with the issue. This also had the added benefit of enabling reflective thinking for the interviewees on their own language use. For a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 4 Index 2.

In response to the question what are the positive and or negative aspects of having an asylum seeking population in the UK all of the interviewees cited multiple answers. Very few people believed there were any negative aspects of having an asylum seeking population other than those faced by the people seeking asylum themselves such as the lack of support services for them, the racism they are subjected to and the mental health issues they have to deal with. Two people referred to the possibility of financial strain on services and one person referred to criminality but, he qualified this by asserting that there is criminality associated with all communities.

The most common positive aspects mentioned were cultural diversity/breaks down cultural barriers and cultural enrichment (food, language, education). Both of these categories were referenced nine times by interviewees. Six people made reference to their belief that people seeking asylum here demonstrates the UK to be a fair, just, civilised and/or democratic society which was contrasted with the countries people are seeking refuge from.

When asked what you think of the term ‘asylum seeker’ the most common response was that people had never thought about it or considered it at all. When they did consider it the sample overwhelmingly thought it to be a problematic term. Four people felt it has ‘negative’ connotations and creates ‘division’, ‘separation’ and a ‘sub-class’. Three people believed it to be ‘inhumane’ and ‘dehumanising’:

I never thought about that before I mean I use it all the time not very nice though is it I mean it does kind of separate them off as a different kind of sub-class really doesn't it? I think it's quite negative, I never thought of that.
(white, working-class, female, professional worker)

It takes away from the individual, their experience and their circumstance. I suppose I've just got used to it and taken it for granted, I never thought of that before. I suppose we could come up way something that's more real to the individual; it could be put in mer humanist terms. (white, working-class, female, professional worker)

Thirteen people believed the term has become a ‘term of abuse’ which stigmatises people seeking asylum as ‘bogus’ and here under false pretences. They believed it creates confusion with regards to asylum seekers and refugees and disassociates from the

sympathy that might be given to refugees and they argued that people should all be called refugees. One woman, a journalist explained this fully:

I think it's an invented term to try and disguise the reasons why people travel across continents. When you talk about refugees people think of people fleeing war zones with all of their stuff on their backs and their weans in their arms. When people hear the word refugee, you know, there's a reaction there, there's a sympathy. Asylum seeker is a new term that's been invented to disassociate all of that, which brings with it the connotations of bogus asylum seeker which gets used all the time, which gets used on the news. You can't be a bogus refugee, if you're a refugee you're a refugee, but this term, you can be a bogus asylum seeker because it's all about forms. Forms get filled in and judgements are awaited. (white, working-class, female, professional worker)

It is important to note that despite many of the sample identifying this term as 'abusive', 'negative' and 'stigmatising', every interviewee used the term freely both before this question which enabled reflection of their personal usage of the term and afterwards.

Attitudes towards television coverage of asylum and refuge

This section incorporates responses to question 16, "is there anything else you would like to say about asylum issues on television?" This last question was left deliberately open in order for the interviewees to decide if they wished to carry on or finish the interview at this point. It also created a space for interviewees to talk about their personal experiences and the issue in general. For a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 4 in Index 2.

The interviewees all believed that television coverage overall was 'negative' and 'unbalanced'. The most important aspects for respondents were cited by seven people who felt that there was a need for television to 'accurately inform' and 'educate' as they believed it is not doing this. They also felt that it should show the day to day reality, trauma and fear of 'dawn raids', detention, deportation and destitution as well as incorporating a diversity of voices including 'asylum seekers'. This was something which they felt was not in television coverage.

I identified this lack of a diversity of voices including 'asylum seekers' in my content analysis (see chapter four). The national coverage did not include any voices of refugees

seeking asylum whilst the regional broadcaster, BBC Scotland, had multiple voices of refugees seeking asylum within their news reports. This regional broadcaster also included coverage of the social reality issues this sample section felt was of high importance such as ‘dawn raids’, detention, deportation and destitution which was not present in the national sample.

The adapted script-writing exercise

This exercise was adapted for the research project from the Glasgow Media Group method (see chapter three). Participants were shown twelve images from the content analysis sample and asked questions regarding their memories and beliefs regarding them (see chapter three). For a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 4 in Index 2.

Many participants had a significant ability to remember both the content, including the exact language and terminology employed, and the structure of news reports from one isolated image.

The images most recognised by the group were image 6 of a small boat with people in it and image 2 of men climbing a fence. Thirteen of the fifteen interviewees recognised both of these images and remarkably eleven participants accurately remembered the content and or structure of the news report associated with image 2 and ten participants could remember the content and or structure of the news report associated with image 6.

Image 2, of the men climbing the fence, was identified in the content analysis sample as an image from coverage in 2001 of the closure of a Red Cross Centre named Sangatte in Calais in France which provided support services for refugees seeking asylum (see chapter four). It is notable that five years after these images were first broadcast they are still being used for the same purpose, as identified by previous research (Buchanan et al., 2003), as they were when originally broadcast, to illustrate immigration as a threat to the UK. Not only are these images being used out with their original context of the Sangatte story but as establishing footage for both ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘foreign criminals’. This image is still being used in the same way by the BBC in 2010. Interviewees were able to give remarkable details of the original story, as detailed in previous research (Buchanan et al., 2003), six to seven years after it was first broadcast from just the singular image alone.

As well as showing a high degree of accuracy in remembering this was a ‘Red Cross Centre’, the name of the camp, ‘Sangatte’, the city it was based in, ‘Calais’ and the country, ‘France’, the participants also accurately identified that the news reports problematised refugees seeking asylum and conflated them with ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘economic migrants’ (see chapter four). However, nine interviewees said they did not believe the news reports.

One of the main reasons given for not believing the reports was that they perceived the people climbing the fence to be refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ who should therefore be helped and supported. Many of the participants expressed sympathy towards them and their ‘plight’. This perception was supported by their own personal experience of working with refugees seeking asylum with one of the participants, an ex Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), referring to her personal contacts with refugees seeking asylum as a key influencing factor ‘I have met possibly them or people like them’.

Another key factor in their beliefs was borne out of their logical deduction of the perceived dangers the people climbing the fence were facing in trying to get to the UK. This led the participants to logically deduce that the risk involved was so high that there was an imperative motivating the risk taking, ‘when you’re taking a huge risk with you’re life you’re avoiding a much bigger risk’.

Two female participants commented on the fact that the image showed ‘only men’ and one of these women went further stating that because the men were wearing ‘hoods and hats’ this ‘constructs them in a way in which ‘they aw looked a bit risky and clandestine’. Previous research (Buchanan et al., 2003) of media usage of the Sangatte images supports both of these points that the image constitutes a threat by excluding women and stereotyping men (see chapter two).

Two of the interviewees used the term ‘a better life’ which I identified in my content analysis (see chapter four) as commonly used by news programmes. However, the context of the usage is different. One of the interviewees remembered the phrase being used directly by television news in connection with the Sangatte image and correctly identified its usage as conflating refugees with economic migrants, a problem identified in my content analysis (see chapter four). This participant rejected this positioning and re-positioned the people concerned as people seeking asylum as did the second interviewee who used the term:

It was *Sangatte*. These are people who were getting over and travelling by foot, or any other mode of transport, to get themselves into UK and into *asylum* was what I knew about that. The images and the story was like Britain was under attack. The Channel tunnel was opening the doorway to people who were gonny come here and do bad things. Almost a barbaric force that was gonny make it's way through the tunnel and come and get us, and come and get benefits here, and come and get a *better life* here, and they didnae really deserve to be here, and that something had to be done to stop these people getting to Britain. The people there, *I have met possibly them or people like them*, who are just doing what any of us would do when we're in danger and that is fight or flight and their doing a bit of both. It is very, very regrettable that people have to go to they measures of *putting their lives at huge risk*. *That always told me that when you're taking a huge risk with you're life you're avoiding a much bigger risk*, so I didnae and wouldnae believe the propaganda around that. It was very sensational and it was like *aw men* and they aw looked a bit *risky and clandestine*. Their aw *wearing hoods and hats* and climbing and running, and heading for Britain to exploit the benefits system. (white, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

It is notable that as with the previous references to this term identified in sections three and six of this chapter the broadcast news usage of the term was both remembered and rejected. Participants also correctly identified the focus on large numbers of 'illegal immigrants' present in the news bulletins' content. Participants remembered the language associated with large numbers and recalled phrases such as 'mass you can't hold back', 'It's an unstoppable tide', 'gatherings of thousands of people trying to get in' and 'this is part of the breaking into Britain stuff, this is chaos people are coming here illegally'.

Hartman and Husband (1974), Van Dijk (1991), Philo and Beattie (1999), McLaughlin (1999) and Buchanan et al. (2003) all identified in previous research this media focus on threatening numbers. Philo and Beattie (1999) also identified the same terminology of a 'natural disaster' at use in television news reports. They also found that asylum issues were conflated with illegal immigration (see chapter two) it is this point exactly that the participants rejected in the reports associated with this image, as they identify the people in the image as refugees seeking asylum.

I identified the focus on numbers as a main area of coverage in my content analysis alongside the conflation of asylum issues with criminality and illegal immigration (see chapter four). The focus on numbers as with the conflation of asylum issues is therefore a continuous problem in television coverage of migration issues which is in no way diminishing despite research findings.

The Sangatte footage was broadcast on three separate news programmes, *BBC 6'O'Clock News*, *ITV Evening News*, and *BBC Newsnight*, from within the three day period of the content analysis sample. It was structured as a headline image, studio backdrop and incorporated into reports (see chapter four). There is then a heavy usage of this footage by all the broadcasters both mainstream and minority. This may account for its predominance in the participants memories.

The second most recognised image by this group was image 6 (an image of a small boat with people in it). As with the previous image, thirteen of the fifteen interviewees recognised this image. Once again, ten interviewees accurately remembered in great detail the content and or structure of the news report associated with it, such as the district and country it was located in and the language used. However, eight of the interviewees said they did not believe the details of this news report.

The image originates from a report within a *BBC Newsnight* programme (18 May 2006) which was entirely reporting on the subject of migration for a total of 26 minutes. The focus was on the numbers of 'illegal immigrants' in all of the reports and the studio discussion within the programme included the report which contained the image of people on a small boat. The report was from the Canary Islands in Spain and the content analysis identified that this report had reconfigured and conflated refugees seeking asylum and misrepresented them as 'uninvited' 'economic migrants' and 'illegal immigrants' who were constituted as arriving in problematically high numbers(see chapter four). As with the previous image participants showed a remarkable ability to recall detailed information relating to the content of the news report solely based on viewing one isolated image.

Participants were able to correctly identify the location of the report as the 'Canary Islands', 'Spain' and 'South Europe'. Although the Canary Islands are not in Spain or South Europe (at least not geographically) they were reported as such. They also identified the themes present in the content, of the migrants being both 'illegal' and arriving in problematically high numbers. They were also able to correctly recollect that the report

was emphasising the need for these people to be returned to their country of origin. I identified this theme as problematic in the content analysis because refugees seeking asylum legally cannot and morally should not be returned to their country of origin (see chapter four).

This was a key factor in the interviewees, rejection of the news content; they did not accept the representation of the people in the boat as either ‘illegal immigrants’ or ‘economic migrants’ and reconfigured them as refugees seeking asylum who were escaping danger. This perception in turn engaged the issue of morality and generated a high degree of sympathy for the people concerned:

Escaping *terrible atrocities these people are facing*, I think that is my idea of it but what I can remember happening was authorities clamping or finding out that’s what they were trying to do and *returning them*. Not for a minute do I agree with that. (white, middle-class, male, professional worker; italics added)

This sample’s experience of working with refugees seeking asylum has resulted in an awareness of the reasons people seek asylum which was an influential factor in their understanding and reconfiguration of the image. This personal experience and rejecting of the report’s content may also explain their ability to recall so much accurate detail from an isolated image up to two years after it was originally broadcast. The very fact that they believed it to be inaccurate may have intensified their memories of it.

Image 9 (of a demonstration in Glasgow) highlights the participants’ ability to remember in great detail regional news reports as well as afore mentioned national news reports. The image was from footage of a demonstration which had taken place in Glasgow five years previous to this broadcast. The report details that people were demonstrating about the murder of a young man who was seeking asylum, Firsat Dag, and was critical of the lack of support services available at the time of this murder to enable integration.

Eleven of the participants recognised the image; eight people accurately remembered the detailed content and/or structure of the report. A notable difference from their beliefs with regards to the national news reports occurred here whereby the vast majority, seven of the eleven interviewees, believed the report (unlike the national news reports where the vast majority did not believe the reports). Some of the participants had actually taken part in the demonstration. As with the previous images the interviewees were able to recall with a

high degree of accuracy details such as the name of the man murdered ('Firsat Dag'), the location of the demonstration ('George Square'), the date of the demonstration ('eight years ago'), the name of the organisation which held the demonstration ('Sighthill United'), the significance of the demonstration and the outcome of the demonstration, all of which was contained in the report:

That was just efter *the murder of Firsat Dag*, he had actually been murdered and then the community came together it was quite positive. It established good positive relations and actually compelled Glasgow City Council to put mer resources into supporting asylum seekers but no just that. To actually put mer resources in as well, and pay attention to an area that was under major deprivation, and asylum seekers were just thrown into it. (white, working-class, male, professional worker; italics added)

It's when the laddie was murdered eight years ago. I attended that demonstration. The community came together and made a lot of changes in *Sighthill* but it took a man to die to make those changes. The white community came out and I was glad they did it brought out the best in people. (white, working-class, female, professional worker; italics added)

Some of the interviewees commented on the structure of the news report with regards to there being a significant degree of 'good analysis' which was 'more positive'. The findings of my content analysis (see chapter four) support these beliefs. It revealed an entirely different approach in the news framework and presentational structure of this regional programme from that of the national news programmes in the sample.

These results show that interviewees retained with a remarkable degree of accuracy content and structures of news reports which they believed and accepted as well as news reports they did not agree with and rejected. It is also significant how much detail is recalled from one singular image even some years after the original broadcast and just how accurately the reports, whether national or regional, are remembered.

CONCLUSION

This group of interviewees with their professional experience and direct contact with refugees seeking asylum did not believe television and specifically television news

coverage of issues of asylum and refuge to be accurate or balanced. They felt there was a great neglect of the social reality of seeking asylum by broadcasters, which they felt to be of high importance as an aspect of seeking asylum and therefore necessary in the representation of seeking asylum. In turn they perceived this as influencing the wider public to view the issue negatively as problematic rather than within the framework of the humanitarian principles established in the Refugee Convention.

They also accurately believed that the actuality of why people seek asylum and how that may be linked to colonial history was excluded from the national coverage. They related the history to Britain having both a social and political responsibility which was being excluded.

As well as television news and their own professional experience, community politics and organisations are playing an important role as a valued source of information for this group. In line with the content analysis findings, the group identified the regional news as a more accurate, balanced and positive source of information.

Although well informed and knowledgeable with regards to refugee and asylum issues there were three specific areas in which the group lacked knowledge. These areas related to the general statistics regarding asylum, the countries in the world which take in the most refugees seeking asylum and the educational background of refugees seeking asylum. It is notable that professionals with daily working experience of asylum issues do not have a grasp of such fundamental information relating to asylum.

Many participants had a significant ability to remember and recall with a high degree of accuracy both the content, including the exact language and terminology employed, and the structure of news reports up to seven years after they were originally broadcast, and from one isolated image.

This sample section's opinion of the media is of particular importance as they have professional experience and direct contact with refugees seeking asylum. It is thus significant that with such wide experience of the issues related to asylum and refuge they reject the television coverage. They need to be included in the national coverage as they are in the regional coverage (see chapter four) as their experience of the issues is a valuable media resource.

Chapter Six: Audience Reception: General Public participants

INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the analysis of the responses from the interviews with the general public group with a focus on both their memories and beliefs. As well as an exploration of the impact of the substantive topic on this wider audience the aim here was also to analyse sources of information on the subject of seeking asylum and key constituents of belief systems about the issue. The research is concerned with the process of how these audiences accept or reject television messages and possible influence on their behaviour.

METHOD AND SAMPLE

Thirty interviews were conducted with a wide range of the general public. The interviewees, in the main, were primarily selected because they were not expected to have any special interest in the topic (e.g. members of a youth group, retirement group and unemployed workers group). I did, however, also include two community social activists as they are also representative of the general public and offer an important contribution on that level and in their own activity. Efforts were also made to include participants with a range of demographic characteristics. Thus the sample included Black people as well as white people. I also included the demographic variable of class measured by income level.

I conducted an exercise considering self identity by leaving it open to the interviewees as to whether they identified themselves as a member of a racialised group (see chapter two). This exercise produced the same results as with the professional workers sample whereby some interviewees declined to be identified by either race/ 'race' or class. Within this sample section the vast majority identified themselves as members of the racialised group white Scottish with two men identifying as Scottish Asian and another as Black Scottish but one man and one woman chose not to be identified as a member of any racialised group. Three people identified as Scottish and one man identified as Church of Scotland. I also extended the self-identification exercise to the category of social class. I was interested to see if this correlated with people's own definition of their class. It was also necessary to enable self-definition of class within the refugees seeking asylum participants as the pilot project revealed that many do not identify with the category of social class. As noted in the previous chapter this approach would greatly hinder social science research from gathering accurate data and for this reason it was not the sole method used in this

research as participants were selected according to their income level in order to ensure measurable and distinct economic differentiation. As the categories of race/ 'race' and social class are real in that they are directly linked to consequences and causes of social inequalities it is important for social scientists to investigate them as such as they are of 'sociological interest in their form, their changes, and their consequences' (American Sociological Association (2003)).

Table 2 in Index 1 shows the range of general public participants involved in the study. People diverse in race, class, age, ranging from 16 to 76, and gender, had the chance to express both their opinions and personal experiences. As outlined in the previous chapter identical methods were applied to all three groups which incorporated in-depth interviews and the adapted script-writing exercise.

RESULTS

The replies to the questions and the responses and discussions in the adapted script-writing exercise will be considered in seven categories. These were:

1. Memories and associations of asylum and refuge in general
2. Sources of information
3. Memories and associations of asylum and refuge television coverage
4. Knowledge and beliefs about asylum and refuge
5. Attitudes towards 'asylum seekers'
6. Attitudes towards television coverage of asylum and refuge
7. The adapted script-writing exercise

Memories and associations of asylum and refuge in general

The initial question asked of interviewees was "what is the first thing that came into their minds when they thought about asylum and refuge?" A detailed breakdown of responses by this group is given in Table 5 Appendix 2. As with the professional workers sample a high proportion of people, (80%) associated refuge and asylum directly with the social reality of refugees seeking asylum such as 'people looking for safety and help' (white, middle-class, female, age 69), 'suffering, struggle and pain', (white, working-class, female, age 32) 'human rights' and 'unfair treatment'. The question engendered a high degree of personal reflection and emotion from the interviewees with people stating 'it's a good

thing', 'it's a necessity', 'I feel sorry for them', 'I don't blame any of them', 'we're all the same', 'how lucky I am to be in a safe and secure environment' (Black, working-class, male, age 43) and 'I'm angry at the way asylum seekers are treated' (white, working-class, female, age 47).

A significant finding within this group, which differed widely from the professional workers group, was that 20% of the interviewees displayed hostile attitudes towards people seeking asylum with phrases used such as 'they are taking my money away from me' and 'send them back to their own country cos there's too many of them'. It is notable that such a significant proportion responded immediately to the subject matter with unsympathetic and antagonistic beliefs. It is further noteworthy that for 10 % of these interviewees the hostility extended to a desire that refugees should be returned to countries they have escaped from. Thus they are unreceptive to refugees seeking asylum in extremis. The demographic of this 20% is of interest as it contains working class white men and middle class white men and women; the hostile attitudes appear within a fairly broad demographic in terms of class and gender. However, no working class women or Black people expressed any hostility, although the limited sample size means it is not possible to make generalisations from this. Whilst the interviews revealed attitudinal aspects it is important to be clear that this is not an attitude survey but a qualitative study of the ways in which beliefs are formed and changed.

Sources of information

Unlike the professional workers sample, where only half of the interviewees cited television as a direct source of information, twenty six of the thirty interviewees cited television as their main source of information regarding issues of refuge and asylum. For more information on the use of sources see Table 5 in Appendix 2.

As with the professional workers sample interviewees cited political or community campaigning groups as a source, a total of six of the thirty interviewees referenced them. One woman was actively involved in a campaigning group in her local area and had actually been given an award of (Scots woman of the year) by the local newspaper the 'Glasgow Evening Times' for her work within the group in support of refugees seeking asylum. Another interviewee (an elderly man) was active in his local church asylum support group. One of the interviewees referred to emails from the afore mentioned Glasgow Campaign Group to Welcome Refugees. Notably the internet was cited as a

source by five people four of whom were middle class and only one working class person cited it. All of the interviewees who cited political or community groups were working class and included both Black and white women and men. Community politics and organisations have then also impacted upon this sample and are playing an important role as a valued source of information.

As a direct result of their involvement with political or community campaigning groups all of the above interviewees and one other referred to their direct contact with refugees seeking asylum as a source. In the main their personal contact and involvement with people seeking asylum and political or community campaigning groups was as a direct result of refugees seeking asylum being housed in their local area whereby they established relationships:

I've spoke to people, some of them have been doctors, lawyers, nurses so they want tae go tae work but they're no allowed to which is ridiculous. Ayslum seekers are the nicest people you can meet because I've spoke to them and if you dae anything for an asylum seeker their ever so happy, so glad for you tae dae anything for them. They accept anything off you and they're so pleased that somebody even talks tae them. (white, working-class, female, age 69)

They're so nice and so pleasant I cannae understand why people are against them. I come fae Plantation, Govan area and their ever so nice and ever so grateful. (white, working-class, male, age 43)

We've a refugee who comes to the church every Sunday and she's lovely. (white, middle-class, female, age 32)

We meet with them in the Pearce Institute and get to know them. (white, working-class, female, age 27)

Where we stay there's refugees and you couldnae get nicer people. The boys come out to go to school and you pass them, and they say good morning or when their coming back from school 'Whit did you learn in school today?' 'The usual, sums.' And their father or mother comes out and I chat to them, have a blether. You get to know them, they're good neighbours. (white, working-class, male, age 71)

As with the previous group this direct contact with refugees seeking asylum has accorded these respondents a degree of personal insight rather than personal experience of the process and experience of seeking asylum. This may be an obvious factor as to why none of these people were in the 20% of interviewees who displayed hostile attitudes and in fact expressed sympathetic attitudes whilst commenting on the social reality of refugees seeking asylum.

Memories and associations of asylum and refugee television coverage

This category differs from the last as it relates specifically to interviewees memories of television coverage of the issue rather than of the issue itself which the previous category focused on. It incorporates questions 3, 4 and 5 a detailed breakdown of responses by this group is given in Table 5 in Appendix 2. In response to question 3, this group as with the previous group cited the News the most. They also made reference to Current Affairs programming, dramas and documentaries.

Some interviewees cited more than one memory and the most common response, which was given by six of the thirty interviewees, was that the news coverage of this issue criminalised refugees seeking asylum. This response differs slightly from the professional workers sample who gave as the most common response that coverage was ‘negative’. However, though only one member of this group’s response is directly ‘negative’ coverage, some respondents did focus on a specific negative element. Interviewees backed up this belief with examples:

All I can see on television is they ridicule racism and they ridicule asylum seekers. The view I get is asylum seekers are as bad as murderers according to them. They make asylum seekers out as though they’re bad people, they’re only trying tae get away fae trouble and strife that they’ve had in their ain country, where they’ve been murdered, cut up and lost aw their families. So their coming here to try and better themselves to get a *better life* for themselves instead of that their no given a chance. (white, working-class, female, age 69; italics added)

There tends to be a *negative* sense to it, a *negative* attitude about them nothing positive ever comes out. I never hear anything positive about them or anything constructive happening regarding them, it’s all about

containment or deportation. They're seen as scavengers and thieves.
(white, middle-class, female, age 42; italics added)

Really awful stories about things that asylum seekers have done in this country and why they should be sent back to be punished, you know, their all paedophiles or murderers. Just kind of faceless, nameless people just faces, and faces, and faces, with the words *illegal immigrant* or asylum attached. I've been shocked at *Channel 4 News* a few times for having dodgy stories. (white, middle-class, female, age 19; italics added).

The criminalisation of refugees seeking asylum was identified as a main issue in my content analysis (see chapter four). The sample coverage is dominated with images, descriptions and discussions of criminality within immigrant groups which also included people seeking asylum. Of the 1696 lines analysed 1091, including 38 lines of headlines, which constitutes 63% of the coverage, referred to criminality.

One of the above examples contains usage of the phrase 'a better life' which was identified in my content analysis (see chapter four) as commonly used by national news programmes. This phrase was also used in responses from the professional workers sample however their context of the usage is different from the media usage. Interviewees rejected the media positioning and conflating of refugees with economic migrants and re-positioned the people concerned as refugees seeking asylum (see chapter five). The above interviewee has gone through the same process of rejecting the criminalisation narrative as 'murderers' and 'bad people' and re-positions the people concerned as refugees seeking asylum who are 'trying tae get away fae trouble and strife that they've had in their ain country where they've been murdered, cut up and lost aw their families'. Thus the national broadcast news usage of the term was both remembered and rejected. As with the previous group this again shows a pattern whereby interviewees are able to reject the media representation whilst at the same time absorbing the language and reinterpreting it within their own preferred context.

The three other issues which were the most remembered were statistics and numbers, 'taking resources' and 'scare stories' all of which were cited individually by four of the 30 interviewees. The issue of statistics and numbers was identified in my content analysis as a main area of national coverage (see chapter four). The previous professional workers sample also cited this area as a significant memory (see chapter five).

The other two issues, taking resources and scare stories, although directly related, revealed different attitudes within the group. The four interviewees who commented on taking resources remembered coverage detailing the idea that refugees seeking asylum were ‘coming here for benefits’, ‘people coming here for an easy life to try and get what we’ve got, trying to get oor hooses, oor medical, oor jobs, oor money’ (White, working-class, male, age 41) these interviewees also stated that they believed this coverage to be accurate and truthful. The interviewees who believed this were two white working class men and two white middle class men, no women or Black people cited this as a belief.

The same idea of refugees seeking asylum coming to the UK for resources (such as welfare benefits, housing and employment) were raised by another four interviewees but in a completely different context. These interviewees did not believe this to be true and characterised the coverage as ‘inaccurate’, ‘hysterical’ and ‘scare stories’. Unlike the previous interviewees these are from a broad demographic consisting of one white working class woman, one white working class man, one white middle class woman and one Black working class woman. Although the interviewees were commenting on coverage of the same issue they interpreted this in entirely different ways. Some interviewees made reference to specific news programmes as with the following examples:

On *Newsnight* there’s too many coming in. (white, working-class, male, age 41)

I’ve been shocked at *Channel 4 News* a few times for having dodgy stories. (white, middle-class, female, age 19).

The content analysis chapter (see chapter four) reveals these memories to be entirely accurate as the *Newsnight* programmes within the sample did indeed focus on the representations of large numbers of migrants. Another finding concerning *Channel 4 News* was that their coverage of asylum and immigration issues did not differ from that of the national mainstream media and was just as inaccurate and problematic.

Questions 4 and 5 were designed to actively include participant’s personal experiences and opinions and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms. It was also important to gauge opinion on what is excluded as well as included in television coverage.

Question 4 related to television influencing people's opinions or behaviour towards people seeking asylum. As with the previous professional workers group (see chapter five) all of the respondents believed television did influence people. The most common example given was that people had experience of people relating to them in conversation what they had learned from television regarding the issue. One man claimed that television's focus on high numbers of refugees seeking asylum had led him to change his opinion, 'Sometimes it's changed ma opinion about them cos there's so many.' (white, working-class, male, age 44)

Question 5 asked "is there anything television does not show about asylum that you think it should." As with the previous professional workers sample the majority of the interviewees believed the social reality of seeking asylum such as their living conditions, problems associated with the process of claiming asylum, the voucher system, the change in lifestyle, dawn raids, detention, deportation, destitution and not being able to work was not represented in the television coverage of the subject. The highest number, ten of the interviewees, which included all demographics, believed that the reality of why people seek asylum was missing from the coverage. A detailed breakdown of responses by this group is given in Table 5 in Appendix 2.

Alongside this belief seven interviewees, again from across all of the demographic categories, believed there was no actual refugee voice evident in the coverage. This was confirmed in the content analysis (see chapter four) which did indeed show this to be an issue in the national coverage but not in the regional coverage which had included refugees seeking asylum within their reporting of the issue. A detailed breakdown of responses by this group is given in Table 5 in Appendix 2. Five people believed the coverage did not report widely enough the fact, in their view, that refugees seeking asylum came here to gain employment, benefits and better housing. These respondents did not include any Black people but did include all of the white demographic categories of gender and class. Three of these respondents had referred to Polish immigrants as 'asylum seekers', this conflation of economic migrants with forced migrants was identified as a problem with national coverage in the content analysis (see chapter four).

Knowledge and beliefs about asylum and refuge

This section incorporates the responses to seven questions which were designed to ascertain the interviewee's information and basic knowledge of the subject matter. For a

detailed breakdown of responses see Table 5 Appendix 2. This group were more informed in some areas than others.

The group as a whole were able to accurately detail the many countries people seeking asylum originate from. The most common response from ten interviewees was that people come from war-torn countries. Ten interviewees also cited countries associated with political/religious/gender/ persecution. These respondents displayed an awareness of the conditions leading to individuals seeking asylum. The demographic of these respondents show that of the ten interviewees, who provided both responses, five are Black. Five of the six Black interviewees cited these answers whilst only eight white people from the remaining twenty interviewees did. Nine white interviewees believed that people were seeking asylum from Europe and Poland. Many of these interviewees confused the issue of seeking asylum with that of economic migration as in the following example:

Most are Middle-Eastern countries and African nations *these countries that are really persecuted* but because of the open border policy now in Europe we're getting them coming from Europe. So we aren't concentrating on Africans, Nigerians, that type of thing. Now it's increased vastly from Europe, they're coming here saying the same things that these places have said for years like India, Pakistan in the early forties or fifties and that was acceptable, but these people aren't getting the same chance. (white, working-class, male, age 53; italics added)

This interviewee conflated forced migrants and economic migrants. Even though he associates asylum with persecution he still perceives European economic migrants as asylum seekers. The conflation of refugees seeking asylum with economic migrants was identified as problematic in the content analysis (see chapter four).

As with the professional workers sample, the majority of this group also displayed accurate knowledge in their detailed responses as to why people seek asylum in the UK. The most common responses were that they were in fear of their lives, looking for safety for themselves and their families and escaping from wars. Reference was also made to the many kinds of persecution faced by people seeking asylum such as religious and political persecution.

One third of the interviewees, ten of the thirty, believed refugees seeking asylum were coming to the UK for work, housing, to escape poverty and for a better standard of living. These interviewees thus equated this with seeking better economic conditions ‘To get an easy life, we’ve got free healthcare, we’ve got free this and free that and they’re coming here tae take it and to take jobs fae us as well.’ (white, working-class, male, age 66) and made no mention of the fact that refugees seeking asylum are in fact seeking safety, protection, asylum and refuge because their lives and/or that of their families are at risk.

As with the professional workers sample three of the interviewees used the term ‘better life’ in their responses, a phrase which was also identified in the content analysis sample (see chapter four). As with the professional workers sample previously discussed the context of the usage is different from the media usage. Two interviewees qualified the term by equating it to the life threatening dangers faced by refugees: ‘They’ve seen people getting murdered, they’ve seen their family getting killed they want a better life.’ (white, working-class, male, age 43), ‘A better life cos they’ve came fae the other end of a bullet.’ (white, working-class, male, age 60) The term was associated by the interviewees with the social reality of refugees seeking asylum, the professional workers sample interviewees did exactly the same. The social reality of refugees seeking asylum was missing from the media usage of the term which equated it with seeking better economic conditions. The interviewees re-contextualised this phrase.

This group was not well informed with regards to the rules concerning employment for refugees seeking asylum. A total of nineteen of the thirty interviewees responded that they did not know the rules and another four were confused, with one man believing refugees seeking asylum could work legitimately without paying tax or National Insurance. Only six of the thirty interviewees knew that severe Home Office restrictions were in place whereby applicants are not permitted to work.

When questioned with regards to the state benefits refugees seeking asylum receive almost all of the interviewees, except one, were unaware of the fact that a separate support system out with the traditional welfare state benefit system of the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) has been established. The National Asylum Support System (NASS) is administered directly by the Home Office.

When asked how much a refugee seeking asylum received each week the most common response from ten of the thirty interviewees was that they did not know. Only two of the interviewees stated close to the correct figure of £38; none of these were low income

working class. Seven people, of whom four were low income working class, did know it was less than the indigenous population who would actually receive £54 in welfare support. Three people over estimated how much they receive with two people over estimating by almost triple. Eight people including three of the five Black interviewees but none of the middle income, middle class interviewees were aware of the fact that some refugees seeking asylum were not entitled to any cash benefits and were only supported by a state system of food vouchers. The Black interviewees were more informed on this subject of state benefits than the white interviewees this may be due to the Black interviewees, having more personal contact and experience with refugees seeking asylum.

Question 8 asked the interviewees how many people seek asylum in the UK in an average year. Their answers showed this to be one of the areas this group was least informed about. Only one of the interviewees was able to give accurate figures of 20,000/25,000 with four citing the nearest figure of 30,000, i.e. 29 of the 30 interviewees were inaccurate. Over half of the group (sixteen of the thirty interviewees) stated that they either had no idea or did not know but they then went on to guess at a figure. As with the professional workers group the majority of the group was reduced to a guessing game when it came to the important issue of accurate statistics. The group as a whole vastly over estimated with responses of up to hundreds of thousands.

Another area where members of this group lacked knowledge was when they were asked which countries in the world take in the most refugees/people seeking asylum. The respondents individually identified multiple countries in response to this question, the largest proportion of references with a total of 26 were to European countries including France, Italy, Holland, Sweden, UK, England and Scotland. Only one of these responses accurately identified Germany. Thirteen people believed the UK takes in the most refugees. Almost half of this group were wholly inaccurate in their belief that the UK hosts the most refugees. Ten people stated that they did not know and nobody cited an accurate reference. Therefore, the group had practically no knowledge at all as to which countries host the most refugees seeking asylum.

Another area where a gap in the knowledge of this group is identifiable is when they were asked how many refugees seeking asylum are University graduates. Nobody gave the accurate figure of 75%, six people were in the range of 50-80%. One person accurately identified a 'high percentage'. The vast majority of the group, 24 people, underestimated

the number and over half, sixteen of the thirty, underestimated it by at least 50%, believing that around 35% was accurate. One man stated he did not believe anyone to have a degree.

The group as a whole could accurately detail the many countries people seeking asylum originate from and the majority also displayed accurate knowledge in their detailed responses as to why people seek asylum. However, one third believed refugees seeking asylum were coming to the UK for work, housing, to escape poverty and for a better standard of living. The interviewees were poorly informed with regards to the rules concerning employment and state benefits for refugees seeking asylum in the UK. They have almost no knowledge of how many people seek asylum in the UK and vastly over estimated the number with responses as high as the hundreds of thousands. They displayed practically no accurate knowledge or information as to which countries in the world take in the most refugees/people seeking asylum with the vast majority believing it to be European countries. There was also an identifiable gap in the knowledge of the group regarding how many refugees seeking asylum are University graduates, the vast majority of the group seriously underestimated the number and no-one knew the accurate figure. Therefore, the group as a whole have very little accurate knowledge or information regarding important elements of the social reality of seeking asylum.

Attitudes towards ‘asylum seekers’

This section encompasses the answers to questions 14 and 15 which were also designed to actively include participant’s personal experiences and opinions and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms. Question 15 was designed in order to collect data on terminology associated with the issue. This also had the added benefit of enabling reflective thinking for the interviewees on their own language use. For a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 5 Appendix 2.

In response to the question 14 in relation to positive and/or negative aspects of having an asylum seeking population in the UK, all of the interviewees cited multiple answers. Unlike the professional workers sample where very few people believed there were any negative aspects of having an asylum seeking population, sixteen references were made by this group to negative factors they associated with refugees seeking asylum including criminality, the financial strain on services such as housing and welfare benefits, the threat of violence to the wider community due to mental illness, taking British jobs and three people believed there was nothing positive about having an asylum seeking population in

the UK. The issue of refugees seeking asylum being associated with criminality was identified in the content analysis (see chapter four).

58 references were made regarding the positive factors. As with the previous group, the most common positive aspects mentioned were in relation to cultural diversity and cultural enrichment both of these categories were referenced 25 times by interviewees. Five people made reference to their belief that people seeking asylum here demonstrates the UK to be a country with democratic principles of justice and fairness. This issue was also referenced by the previous group. Seven references were made regarding the issue of refugees seeking asylum having to deal with the negative aspect of racism towards them, this issue was raised by all of the Black interviewees and only two of the white interviewees. Five people stated there was nothing negative for the host country associated with giving refuge.

When asked what you think of the term ‘asylum seeker’ the most common response was the same as the previous group. They had never given it any thought or consideration. However, when they had given it consideration, the majority of the group thought the term was problematic. Ten people thought it has ‘negative’ connotations and has become a term of abuse or a dirty word. Five people believed the term should not be used and that people should be referred to as refugees or ‘safety seekers’ or simply as ‘human beings’; ‘Don’t think they should be called asylum seeker I think they should be called just human beings like you or I, a person either a man or a woman.’ (white, working-class, male, 71) As with the professional interest group, although many of the group identify this term as problematic every interviewee used the term freely both before this question and afterwards. The white, working class and aged over 50 demographic groups associated the word asylum specifically with mental illness:

Asylum is a madhoos. (white, working-class, male, 54)

Asylum is for somebody who is mentally ill, that right away is derogatory. (white, working-class, female, age 69)

Asylum was the days where you were locked up in an asylum for being mentally inadequate. (white, working-class, male, 53)

They were all concerned that this portrayed refugees seeking asylum in a negative way. Their rejection of the term displays an apparent generational difference and development in the usage of language.

Attitudes towards television coverage of asylum and refuge

This section incorporates responses to question 16: “is there anything else you would like to say about asylum issues on television?” This last question was left deliberately open in order for the interviewees to decide if they wished to carry on or finish the interview at this point. It also created a space for interviewees to talk about their personal experiences and the issue in general. For a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 5 in Appendix 2.

The interviewees most common responses were that they believed that television coverage overall was ‘negative’, ‘unbalanced’ and ‘racist’. The belief that the coverage was racist was held by four of the five Black interviewees and only two of the 25 white interviewees. The most important aspects for respondents were cited by twelve people who thought that there was a need for television to highlight the concerns and issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers such as ‘dawn raids’, detention, deportation and destitution. Several of the interviewees spoke of having knowledge of these issues due to their direct contact with refugees seeking asylum who live in their communities. Six people believed there was a need to include the voices of ‘asylum seekers’ which they thought were not represented in television coverage. These beliefs accord with the content analysis findings (see chapter four).

The adapted script-writing exercise

This exercise was adapted for the research project from the Glasgow Media Group method (see chapter three). Participants were shown twelve images from the content analysis sample and asked questions regarding their memories of them and beliefs about them (see chapter three). For a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 5 Appendix 2. As with the previous group, many participants demonstrated a noteworthy capability to remember both the content, including the exact language and terminology employed and the structure of news reports from one isolated image.

As with the professional workers group the image most recognised by this group was image 2 of men climbing a fence. 24 of the 30 interviewees’ recognised this image and 21

participants accurately remembered the content and or structure of the news report associated with this image. As with the professional workers sample this group of interviewees were able to remember accurate details of the original story, (Buchanan et al., 2003) six to seven years after it was first broadcast (see chapter 2). from just this singular image alone. Examples of which are contained in the quotes which follow.

As with the previous group, this group showed a high level of precision in remembering the location of the story as ‘the Channel Tunnel’, ‘France’ and ‘Sangatte’, many of the participants also accurately identified the news reports’ focus on the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘economic migrants’ and that they were broadcast on the BBC which is exactly where this specific image was from (see chapter four). Examples of these are evident in the quotes which follow. Twelve interviewees said they did not believe the content of the news reports and eleven said they did believe the content.

One of the main reasons given for not believing the reports was that they perceived the people climbing the fence to be escaping ‘life threatening’ dangers and ‘trouble’, ‘in their own country’ and should therefore be assisted and given help. As with the professional workers sample many of the participants expressed compassion and pity towards them:

People coming oot of France and trying to escape over to Britain. They said they were breaking the law and they shouldnae be coming cos their illegal but I don’t agree. I feel sorry for them because *their only trying to get away from all the trouble they’ve got in their own country*, and their trying to come here with their families, and help their families oot, and make a *better life*, and instead we’re downtrodden them and keeping them doon. Instead of giving them a chance to get a *better life*. (white, working-class, female, age 63; italics added)

They’re terrified to go back; they can get *shot in the head*. (white, working-class, male, age 76; italics added)

The news and people climbing over fences near the Channel Tunnel to try and get into Britain. This is an ongoing, increasing problem these people trying to get in. If people have been *threatened with death* in their country of origin that’s bad enough but to me they shouldn’t be pushed to such desperate measures. (white, middle-class, female,

age 49; italics added)

This perception was supported for some by their own personal experience of living in communities which included refugees seeking asylum. This was an influencing factor in their rejection of the depiction of the people in the reports as ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘economic migrants’ and their reconfiguration of them as people fleeing danger which is in actuality what refugees seeking asylum are doing.

The people who believed the reports, all of whom are white, accepted the inaccurate construction (see chapter four) of ‘illegal immigrants’ who were coming to the UK for ‘work’ and the view that there was a ‘problem’ and a ‘need’ for them to stay in France:

That’s the Channel Tunnel. *They’re seeking work* and that’s why they’re coming here. (white, middle-class, female, age 38; italics added)

That’s them in France trying to get over here. You can see it in black and white *illegal immigrants* climbing the fence to try and get over here. (white, working-class, male, age 41; italics added)

That’s the refugee camp beside the Chunnel in France. The British media were slagging the French off for having their refugee camp right beside the tunnel where they can *pass the problem* on. The French government were complicit in *passing the problem* on. (white, middle-class, male, age 48; italics added)

That’s France near the border they’re trying to stop them crossing the border. They need to stay there. (white, working-class, male, age 28)

Another interviewee who believed the news coverage explained ‘I think I tend to believe the news cos if it wasn’t true they would get sued.’ (white, working-class, female, age 47) Almost one third of the interviewees believed the inaccurate reporting of this story and one man who had accepted that these were refugees still constructed them as a ‘problem’.

The second most recognised image by this group was image 6 (an image of a small boat with people in it). Twenty three of the thirty interviewees recognised this image

and eighteen interviewees accurately remembered in detail the content and or structure of the news report associated with it such as the district and country it was located in and the language used. Twelve of the interviewees said they did not believe the news report and ten said they did believe it.

As with the previous image these participants showed a notable ability to recall in depth information relating to the content of the news report based on viewing one isolated image.

Participants were able to correctly identify the location of the report as the ‘Mediterranean’ and ‘Spain’. They were also able to identify the themes present in the content of the migrants being both ‘illegal’ and arriving in problematically high numbers. They accurately recollected that the report’s emphasis on the need for these people to be returned to their country of origin. This theme was identified as problematic in the content analysis because refugees seeking asylum legally cannot and morally should not be returned to their country of origin (see chapter four).

This was a significant aspect in some of the interviewee’s rejection of the news content; they rejected the representation of the people in the boat as either ‘illegal immigrants’ or ‘economic migrants’ and reconstructed them as refugees seeking asylum who were ‘escaping terror’. This sensitivity in turn associated the issue with principles of fairness and engendered a high degree of consideration for the people concerned:

That was I think it was the Indian ocean, *refugees* piling on a boat leaving one country to another. I cannae remember what country but I remember the boat. They were risking their own lives by doing that and the coastguard, the military, whatever were stopping them from getting there. *Blatantly you can see* that’s what they’re doing they’re trying to stop them from getting to the port. (white, working-class, male, age 56; italics added)

Said it was people trying to come in *illegal*, but it’s *people trying to get away from the trouble and strife* and their trying to come here with their families and get a *better life*, and their just being downtrodden all the time, and the government isnae helping them any. (white,

working-class, female, age 63; italics added)

They're *escaping terror*. (white, middle-class, female, age 38; italics added)

Overcrowded boats of people desperately trying to get into Europe.

It's reiterating just how many people are trying to get in *illegally* as they put it. I think it's very one sided, blinkered, and it doesn't accord people the same rights as we have in Europe. (white, working-class, female, age 49; italics added)

On the news about *Africans trying to cross the Mediterranean illegally* especially to *Spain* and *Italy*. *These people are victims*, the reports are blaming them. (Black, middle-class, male, age 36; italics added)

As with the responses to the previous image several of the above quoted participants live in communities which include refugees seeking asylum. This is an influencing factor in their rejection of the national news narrative. They spoke of how their contact with refugees has enabled them to know about the reality of seeking asylum.

However this factor alone is not always influential in this way. Several of the participants who did believe the narrative also lived in areas which include refugees seeking asylum:

Overloaded with *illegal immigrants* and they were *taking them back to country of origin*. (white, middle-class, male, age 43)

We should *send them back*. (white, middle-class, male, age 28)

I think there's probably mer get across the border. (white, working-class, female, age 35)

That's them coming in by the boatload it showed you on the news, boat, after boat, after boat. It's *illegal immigrants* coming in by the day, every day, boatloads full of them. You can see for yourself, there's boatloads of them coming in. *The picture tells the story*. (white, working-class, male, age 41)

It is interesting to note the contrasting interpretation of two of the interviewees of the same image, one of whom believed the narrative and one of whom rejected it. The man who rejected the narrative cited as evidence of his belief the fact that ‘blatantly you can see’ his belief in the actual image. However, the man who believed the narrative cited exactly same evidence when he said ‘You can see for yourself. The picture tells the story.’ The picture tells completely different stories to both interviewees.

As with the professional workers sample these results show that interviewees accurately retained both narrative content and structures of news reports which they believed and agreed with as well as news reports they did not agree with and rejected. It is also noteworthy how much specific detail is recollected from one single image even a number of years after the original broadcast and just how precisely the reports can be committed to memory, whether they are accepted or rejected.

CONCLUSION

As with the previous professional workers sample section the majority of this group of general public interviewees did not believe television and specifically national news coverage of issues of asylum and refuge to be accurate or balanced. One third of the interviewees, like the previous group, believed a significant deficiency in the coverage was an absence in national broadcasters of accounts of social realities of seeking asylum such as the conditions they are living in, problems related to the process of claiming asylum, the voucher system, the change in lifestyle, dawn raids, detention, deportation, poverty and destitution and not being able to work. They were also concerned about the lack of actual refugees seeking asylum voices. All of the above issues were identified as problems within national news coverage in the content analysis (see chapter four).

Twenty per cent of the interviewees from the outset displayed hostile attitudes to refugees seeking asylum. One third of the interviewees accepted as true wholly inaccurate reports and considered that the coverage did not report widely enough about refugees seeking asylum coming here to gain employment, benefits and better housing. Respondents’ associated refugees seeking asylum with negative factors such as criminality, the financial strain on services such as housing and welfare benefits, the threat of violence to the wider community due to mental illness, and taking British jobs. Some interviewees went so far as

to say they did not believe there was anything positive about having an asylum seeking population in the UK. Respondents' often conflated economic migrants with forced migrants.

As well as television news, as in the professional workers sample, community politics and organisations have also impacted upon this group and are playing a critical role as a respected source of information. Interviewees also referred to their direct contact with refugees seeking asylum as a source. In the main their personal contact and involvement with people seeking asylum and political or community campaigning groups was as a direct result of refugees seeking asylum being housed in their local area whereby they established relationships. None of these people were in the 20% of interviewees who displayed hostile attitudes and, in fact, expressed sympathetic attitudes whilst commenting on the social reality and living conditions of refugees seeking asylum. This is a significant finding as this personal experience is a possible indicator of how peoples' beliefs are formed and possibly changed.

The majority of the group were well informed and knowledgeable with regards to the many countries people seeking asylum originate from and why people seek asylum. It is notable one third of the interviewees wrongly believed refugees seeking asylum were coming to the UK for reasons other than to seek refuge. They cited work, housing, and escaping poverty for a better standard of living as reasons they had come to the UK. The group lacked knowledge concerning employment and state benefits and were poorly informed to the point of having almost no accurate knowledge of how many people seek asylum in the UK. They had practically no accurate knowledge as to host countries, of refugees seeking asylum, in the world and the vast majority believed it was European countries. There was also little knowledge within the group regarding the educational standard of refugees seeking asylum. Therefore the general public group as a whole have very little accurate knowledge or information regarding some significant aspects of the structural reality of seeking asylum. It is noteworthy that even interviewees with personal and direct contact with refugees seeking asylum do not have a grasp of such fundamental information relating to asylum.

As with the professional workers sample interviewees displayed a significant ability to remember and recall, with a high degree of accuracy, both the content, including exact language and terminology employed and the structure of, news reports up to seven years after they were originally broadcast and from one isolated image.

The interviews provided sufficient data to ascertain some frequent configurations in understanding as well as to outline some of the differences and similarities in public perceptions of this topic. The interviewees represent a wide range of people. Ways of behaving, ideas and ways of thinking evident across the sample are likely to be common in the wider population of refugees seeking asylum, special interest groups and the general public.

The memories and beliefs of this group with regards to television coverage of issues of refuge and asylum are of value as representatives of the general public and as average viewers of television with no vested interest in the particular issue. It is of considerable importance that this group are a relatively uninformed audience on this specific issue. They represent precisely the group who need to be informed by the national coverage.

Chapter Seven: Audience Reception: Refugees seeking asylum-subject audience- participants

INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the analysis of the responses from the interviews with the refugees seeking asylum, with a focus on both their memories and beliefs. As well as an exploration of the impact of the substantive topic on this audience the aim here was also to analyse sources of information on the subject of seeking asylum and key constituents of belief systems about the issue. The research is concerned with the process of how these audiences accept or reject television messages. The aim was to design a study which would include the perspective of the subject audience, ‘asylum seekers’. This was to allow their voice to be heard in audience reception studies as very few audience reception studies have included this perspective (see chapter two). There has been no significant attempt to examine the impact or effect of television coverage of issues of asylum and refuge on this particular audience. It is important to look at how their personal experience informs their beliefs.

METHOD AND SAMPLE

The research sample includes fifteen interviews with a wide range of people seeking asylum. The interviewees were selected principally for their status and particular knowledge as ‘asylum seekers’ in the UK. The sample is structured to include people who are now refugees; their perspective is important as they have spent many years seeking asylum before being granted refugee status. Efforts were also made to include participants with a range of demographic characteristics. Thus the sample included older people as well as young, with the age group ranging from 18 to 62, and white people as well as Black. Special attention was given to the inclusion of women refugees seeking asylum in order to be statistically representative of the refugee seeking asylum population as a whole.

I also included the demographic variable of social class, which was highly problematic for this group. As with race/‘race’ I left it open for people to self-define these areas; this produced some interesting data on both areas which is further discussed in chapters five, six and seven.

It was also necessary to enable self-definition of social class within this sample as many do not identify with the category of social class. Interviewees associated their class with their status as ‘asylum seekers’ which they regarded as ‘lower than the lowest class’ (Sergei, white, male, Abkhazia, age 33, seeking asylum for 9 years) and expressed beliefs that they were excluded from societal structures including social class. In part they related this to the fact that they are not permitted to work by the severe restrictions of the Home Office but also that they were a stigmatised group who were only defined by society as ‘asylum seekers’. Participants believed the stigma associated with being an ‘asylum seeker’ was a dehumanising process resulting in them being defined as sub human. One man who had recently been granted refugee status and who believed this to be the case attempted to counteract this process by declaring he was of the ‘human class’ (Sivarthasan, Asian, male, Sri Lanka, age 20, seeking asylum for five years). Table 1 in Index 1 shows the range of refugees seeking asylum involved in the study. Many different people from diverse nationalities, ages and gender, were enabled to voice both their opinions and personal experiences. Interviewees are identified by age, gender, social class and the grouping they represent; refugee and ‘asylum seeker’ participants are also identified by a name which is a pseudonym (see chapter three).

This section of the sample, as with the other two sample sections, was also given the opportunity to self-identify race/‘race’ (see chapters five and six). An interesting point of difference in terms of identification was evident in the responses of this group in comparison to the previous two groups. Many of the African interviewees identified as African or Black African. In geographical terms there is a marked difference here in that there is identification with a continent whereas the UK interviewees never identified with the European continent as Europeans. Some interviewees including some of those who identified as Black or Asian did not even identify with the United Kingdom as a UK citizen or a British citizen but preferred the identity of the smaller country within the UK which functions as an administrative region within the United Kingdom such as ‘Northern-Irish’ and ‘Scottish’. One man of African heritage, who is a UK citizen, identified himself also as African. It would make for interesting future research to investigate these differences regarding identifying with a continent as opposed to identifying with a ‘region’ or a country.

This exercise produced the same results as with the professional workers sample and the general public sample whereby some interviewees declined to be identified by either race/‘race’ or social class. As noted in the previous chapters this approach would greatly

hinder social science research from gathering accurate data and for this reason it was not the sole method of gathering demographic data used in this research as participants were selected according to their income level and or profession in order to ensure measurable and distinct economic differentiation.

RESULTS

The replies to the questions and the responses and discussions in the adapted script-writing exercise fell into seven categories. These were:

1. Memories and associations of asylum and refuge in general
2. Sources of information
3. Memories and associations of asylum and refuge television coverage
4. Knowledge and beliefs about asylum and refuge
5. Attitudes towards ‘asylum seekers’
6. Attitudes towards television coverage of asylum and refuge
7. The adapted script-writing exercise

Memories and associations of asylum and refuge in general

The first question asked of interviewees was “what is the first thing that came into their minds when they thought about asylum and refuge?” A detailed breakdown of responses to all questions by this group is given in Table 6 in Appendix 2.

The question engendered a high degree of personal reflection and emotion from the interviewees with the vast majority of the interviewees, the subject audience, relating their memories and associations to their personal experience of the process of seeking asylum. That experience was professed by twenty three references to be overwhelmingly problematic and ‘unfair’. The process was described as a system of ‘non-belief’ (this culture of disbelief was recognised by the UNHCR).

Three interviewees described the system as one of ‘imprisonment’, and ‘limbo’ whereby the fact of having no citizenship status led to no actual status in society, and the experience of being a ‘non-person’. One woman described her experience as ‘escaping torture to torture’. Two interviewees directly related their experience of the asylum process as causing ‘depression’. The interviewees also associated asylum and refuge with the causal

factors of seeking refuge such as ‘human rights’, ‘war’, ‘victimisation’, ‘persecution’ and the threat to life. This chimes with the findings from both the professional workers sample and the general public sample wherein a high proportion of interviewees associated refuge and asylum directly with the same aspects of the structural reality and harrowing social conditions of refugees seeking asylum.

Sources of information

As would be expected with the subject audience sample their main source of information is their personal experience of seeking asylum which was cited by every participant. The second most common reference was that of friends’ experiences of seeking asylum whereby people seeking asylum share information in relation to their own personal claims for asylum, the process and the issue as a whole. Other sources referenced were local community campaign and support groups such as Church groups, African woman’s refugee group Karibou, and national campaign and support groups such as The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) as well as NGOs such as the Scottish Refugee Council and Amnesty International. As with the two previous groups, community political, campaigning and support organisations have impacted upon this sample section and are playing an important role as an esteemed source of information.

Four of the interviewees cited television as a direct source but this was qualified by all with statements regarding their perception of the media as wholly negative in its representation of the issue, ‘It’s never the truth, it’s propaganda’ (Chika, female, Nigeria, age 29, seeking asylum for eight years), ‘The News but I don’t believe them it’s totally fake.’ (Sivarthasan, male, Sri Lanka, age 20, seeking asylum for five years), ‘Television but they never really give full information. It’s not true according to what happens in reality, what the system does and what TV shows are totally different.’ (Ellen, female, Rwanda, age 38, seeking asylum for five years) Another man explained that he prefers watching cable or satellite TV because he believed the BBC represents ‘asylum seekers are criminals and we are not criminals’ (Sohaib, male, Nigeria, age 35, seeking asylum for five years). The participants who cited the news as a source revealed that although they watch the news they did not believe it to be accurate or truthful in its coverage or representation of the issue. Many of the interviewees said they would generally follow up a news report by seeking more accurate information in relation to the source report from alternative sources such as the afore mentioned campaigns, support groups and NGOs websites.

Memories and associations of asylum and refuge television coverage

This category differs from the last as it relates specifically to interviewees' memories of television coverage of the issue rather than of the issue itself which the previous category focused on. It incorporates questions 3, 4 and 5. In response to question 3 "which words/phrases or images do you remember from UK television with regards to asylum and refugee issues and which programme were they in?", the programme most cited by the interviewees was the *News*, reference was also made to *Newsnight*, current affairs programming, documentaries and dramas.

Most interviewees cited more than one memory and the most common response, which was given by fourteen of the fifteen interviewees, was that the news coverage of this issue represented refugees seeking asylum as 'criminals', 'bogus' and 'illegal immigrants'. The criminalisation of refugees seeking asylum was identified as a main issue in my content analysis (see chapter four). The content analysis (see chapter four) also recognized within the national coverage a major problem regarding the conflation of migration and forced migration which resulted in the terminology 'illegal immigrant' and 'illegals' being both legitimised when pertaining to people seeking asylum. The derogatory term 'illegals', was also being validated by a national newscaster who used it unequivocally in his own speech. It was also used by the Home Office Minister.

As with both the professional workers sample and the general public sample the majority of these interviewees either responded directly that coverage was 'negative' or focused on specific negative elements. It is significant, that the vast majority of interviewees' from all three groups recall the same themes which are actually present in the coverage (see chapter four). The interviewees perceived the coverage to be inaccurate and untruthful as it represented refugees seeking asylum as a problem for the country as they 'abused the system' by 'taking benefits, jobs and houses' and therefore reported a need for deportations and detention without any analysis of these complex issues. The issue of taking resources such as welfare benefits, jobs and housing was also remembered by eight of the general public interviewees four of whom believed this coverage to be accurate and truthful and four of whom rejected it as 'inaccurate' (see chapter six). The difference in beliefs is informed by their personal experience and knowledge of the issue. The following example demonstrates this.

They show the native of the country we are coming here only because of economic problem. They show the asylum seeker as poor people coming for a *better life*; they don't understand this is people running to get a safe place. They say this is an illegal immigrant they are coming here to get what you have, to get your job, to get your money, to get your house. Nothing else and people, they act negative to asylum seeker instead of welcoming them, show them, help them to be integrated, they insulted them and that is a problem being isolated. It doesn't help asylum seekers at all. (Sarah, female, Uganda, age 32, seeking asylum for three years)

The above examples contains usage of the phrase 'a better life' which was identified in my content analysis (see chapter four) as commonly used by national news programmes. This phrase was also used in responses from the professional workers and general public sample however their context of the usage is different from the media usage. These interviewees rejected the media positioning and conflating of refugees with economic migrants and re-positioned the people concerned as refugees seeking asylum (see chapter five). The above interviewee has gone through the same process of rejecting the criminalisation narrative which depicts as 'illegal immigrants' and the conflation of refugees seeking asylum as economic migrants, and re-positions the people concerned as refugees seeking asylum who are 'running to get a safe place'. Thus the national broadcast news usage of the term was both remembered and rejected. It is noteworthy that interviewees' from all three groups correctly identified this terminology which is indeed in heavy usage in the national news coverage (see chapter four) As with the previous sample sections this again shows a pattern whereby some interviewees are able to reject the media representation whilst at the same time absorbing the language and reinterpreting it within their own preferred context.

Questions 4 and 5 were designed to actively include participant's personal experiences and opinions and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms. It was also important to gauge opinion on what is excluded as well as included in television coverage. Question 4 asked "do you think television influences people's opinions or behaviour towards people seeking asylum and if yes could you give an example?" As with the previous professional workers sample (see chapter five) and general public sample (see chapter six) all of the respondents believed television did influence people. These respondents believed television influenced people to think 'negatively' about refugees seeking asylum by way of inaccurate reporting and that this in turn led to them facing 'anger', 'hostility' and 'violence'. They believed television is responsible for inciting this

behaviour in the general public. The following examples express this belief that television is directly affecting the conditions they live in:

They cause racial hatred, racial divisions. (Banga, male, Zimbabwe, age 62, seeking asylum for eight years)

It always makes them, it makes them even enemy of refugees because when they see the way they present them. The word they use 'illegal immigrant'. They come to the country to destroy the economic, taking benefit, taking houses, free houses you know. People sometimes you know, some of the places, even where I'm staying itself they murdered illegal immigrant. They murdered him, an asylum seeker, called him illegal immigrant you know. It's always the way they present it make people, raise peoples anger over illegal imm... over asylum seekers or illegal immigrant as they call them. It makes them, it raise their anger well, well that's why they're always fighting. (Ibrahim, male, Nigeria, age 31, seeking asylum for nine years)

Children in school started telling our asylum seeker children, I saw you on the TV, you are not normal, and they make our children not feel they belong here because they are different. I have the experience myself. Once the TV showed asylum seeker given money, they are eating the tax of people working here. Once you go outside people are shouting at you 'you are taking my money go away your country, go away to the jungle.' We didn't understand why the media are doing this to us. (Sarah, female, Uganda, age 32, seeking asylum for four years)

It brings about negative thoughts to people. So far, the pictures I've seen, it affects peoples behaviour and racial prejudice. The TV is one of the greatest ways of influencing peoples behaviour, ignorance of who asylum seekers are, what they are expected to do, their rights, how they are expected to live in the country. The media has portrayed it in the wrong way, the total wrong way and it gives the audience, the public negative thoughts. With asylum seekers they look at us like you've come to steal our money, you've come to take our jobs away from us, you've

come to take so many things away from us. People don't have the right information about asylum seekers. (Zarar, male, Afghanistan, age 19, seeking asylum for nine years)

After some programmes we feel ourselves how people's opinion change. There is more tension. (Fina, female, Azerbaijan, age 32, seeking asylum for five years)

It is notable that all of the respondents believe national television news represents them in a 'negative' way to the general public and that they hold the media directly responsible for generating racial prejudice in the general public as well as inciting racial hatred and violence towards them. They experienced heightened tensions immediately after the broadcast of inaccurate material. Many of the respondents gave disturbing graphic details of racially motivated crimes including racial attacks and assaults they themselves, their family and friends had been subjected to and also of murders. All of them associated the crimes with media coverage making them vulnerable targets.

Question 5 asked "is there anything television does not show about asylum that you think it should?" As with the previous, professional workers sample and the general public sample, whereby the majority of the interviewees believed the social reality of seeking asylum was not represented in the television coverage of the subject. All of the interviewees believed the social reality was missing: i.e. that there was a lack of coverage of issues such as why people claim asylum, the refusal of the right to work, fear of detention, dawn raids, deportation, the signing process, destitution, food vouchers, racism and difficulties associated with the actual process of claiming asylum. Concern was also raised about the need for actual refugee voices to be evident in the coverage. This was confirmed in the content analysis sample (see chapter four) which did indeed show this to be an issue in the sample national coverage but not in the sample regional coverage which had included refugees seeking asylum within their reporting of the issue.

Knowledge and beliefs about asylum and refuge

This section incorporates the responses to seven questions which were designed to ascertain the subject audience's information and basic knowledge of the subject matter. This group were more informed in some areas than others.

The group as a whole were able to accurately detail the many countries people seeking asylum originate from. The most common response from nine interviewees was that people come from war-torn countries. Four interviewees also cited countries associated with political/religious/gender/ persecution. As could be expected, these respondents displayed an acute awareness of the conditions leading to seeking asylum. Every one of these participants, spoke at great length, of their own experiences regarding the countries they came from and the reasons they fled. As with the professional workers group and the general public group, the majority of this group also displayed accurate knowledge in their detailed responses as to why people seek asylum in the UK. The most common responses were that they were in fear of their lives, looking for safety for themselves and their families and escaping from wars. Reference was also made to the many kinds of persecution faced by people seeking asylum such as religious and political persecution. Although keen to impart the knowledge of their experiences of why they were seeking asylum, it was deeply upsetting for them, and they were highly emotional in their expression of these details.

All of the interviewees knew the rules concerning employment for refugees seeking asylum. Comments were made regarding the stigma of having 'employment prohibited' printed on their Home Office identity card. Interviewees expressed anxiety about being restricted from work for years upon years saying they were made to feel 'worthless', 'useless' and 'isolated' by this policy. Many of the respondents said they were active as volunteers in community and charity organisations in order to counteract these feelings.

When questioned with regards to the state benefits refugees seeking asylum receive all of the interviewees raised the issue that they receive their benefit from NASS, a separate support system out with the traditional welfare state benefit system of the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) . The National Asylum Support System (NASS) is administered directly by the Home Office. Respondents believed this was another way in which they were being 'isolated' from society. Interviewees also raised concerns with regards to the Home Office administering NASS and therefore controlling their access to

support, ‘They control you whenever the Home Office wants you to do anything they will threaten you to cut your money’. (Amira, female, Somalia, age 34, seeking asylum for six years), ‘People are afraid of NASS they can take your food away, your house, so you have to play by the rules; it’s a good tool the Home Office has.’ (Sakit, male, Azerbaijan, age 33, seeking asylum for five years). These issues within NASS of ‘isolation’ and ‘control’ were also raised by the professional workers sample.

Concerns were also raised by interviewees that the general public is not aware that they are prohibited from working or of the fact that they do not want any financial support from the state. They felt this validated the general public’s belief that they were ‘only here for benefits’ and all of the respondents desperately wanted to work. This was verified by the general public sample interviews where only six of the thirty interviewees knew that severe Home Office restrictions were in place whereby refugees seeking asylum are not permitted to work. Within the content analysis sample this issue of prohibiting employment was indeed raised by an NGO in only one national programme, *Channel 4 News*, in one bulletin. However the programme did not follow up the NGO representative’s comments with any analysis of the issue raised (see chapter four).

Interviewees were also deeply concerned and anxious about the voucher system which was an issue also raised by the professional workers sample. The system of food vouchers was introduced in 2000 when no one seeking asylum had entitlement to any cash payments and received food vouchers. In 2002 the system changed to allow for some cash payments but 6,750 people seeking asylum are still only in receipt of food vouchers (‘Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary’ April-June 2010, Home Office). Interviewees again emphasised how this policy left them feeling ‘isolated’ and ‘stigmatised’ as in the following example:

It make people seem separate, separate people from the community because we always having, you go to the shop other people be paying cash you pay with voucher. Everybody will know you are illegal immigrant they call it. From there they won’t serve you, they won’t, people be talking, swearing at you, you know, looking at you oh it’s very bad, very bad. (Sarah, female, Uganda, age 32, seeking asylum for four years)

Question 8 asked the interviewees “how many people seek asylum in the UK in an average year?” None of the interviewees were able to give accurate figures of 20,000/25,000 with

three citing that it was 'not that many'. Over half of the group, eight of the fifteen interviewees, stated that they either had no idea or did not know. As with the professional workers sample and the general public sample the majority of the interviewees were reduced to a guessing game with regards to the important issue of accurate statistics. The sample as a whole vastly over estimated with guesses of up to one million. It is notable that even the subject audience was not accurately informed regarding the fundamental statistics relating to the issue of refugees seeking asylum.

Another area where members of this sample lacked knowledge was when they were asked which countries in the world take in the most refugees/people seeking asylum. The respondents individually identified multiple countries, the largest proportion of references with a total of thirteen were to European countries including France, Holland, Germany, and the UK. Eight people believed the UK takes in the most refugees. As with the two previous sample sections over half of this sample were wholly inaccurate in their belief that the UK hosts the most refugees. Three people cited an accurate reference. Therefore this group as a whole had very little knowledge at all as to which countries host the most refugees seeking asylum.

An area where the sample has accurate knowledge is when they were asked how many refugees seeking asylum are University graduates. Over 50% of refugees seeking asylum have a degree and after studying in Britain this rises to 75% (Refugee Council, 2002). Three people gave the accurate figure of 75%, two people were in the range of 70% and eight people accurately identified a 'high percentage'.

The sample as a whole could accurately detail the many countries people seeking asylum originate from and the majority also displayed accurate knowledge in their detailed responses as to why people seek asylum. The interviewees were fully informed with regards to the rules concerning employment and state benefits for refugees seeking asylum in the UK. They have almost no knowledge of how many people seek asylum in the UK and vastly over estimated the number with responses of up to 1 million. They displayed very little accurate knowledge or information as to which countries in the world take in the most refugees/people seeking asylum with the vast majority believing it to be the UK and other European countries. The group were knowledgeable regarding how many refugees seeking asylum are University graduates. Therefore the subject audience as with the professional workers sample, and the general public sample, have identifiable gaps in knowledge of important elements of the social reality of seeking asylum.

Attitudes towards ‘asylum seekers’

This section encompasses the answers to questions 14 and 15 which were also designed to actively include participant’s personal experiences and opinions and to stimulate discussion of the subject matter in these terms. Question 15 was designed in order to collect data on terminology associated with the issue.

In response to the question “what are the positive and or negative aspects of having an asylum seeking population in the UK?” all of the interviewees gave more than one answer. As with the professional workers sample they related the negative aspects of having an asylum seeking population to the social conditions faced by the people seeking asylum themselves such as the lack of support services for them, the racism they are subjected to and the mental health issues they have to deal with, adults having no access to University and being prohibited from working. The latter two issues were not raised by either the professional workers sample or the general public sample despite their centrality to the subject audience.

The most common positive aspects mentioned were the expansion of the country’s skill base, workforce and economy; these categories were referenced fifteen times by interviewees. Eight of the interviewees cited voluntary work as a positive factor associated with refugees seeking asylum. Almost all of the interviewees, twelve of the fifteen, were involved in voluntary work. One young man from Sri Lanka whose family received Refugee Status after five ‘heavy mental’ years claiming asylum was awarded the title Young Scot of the Year for his voluntary service to his local community. The interviewees explained the high figure as a direct result of refugees seeking asylum being prohibited from working. The interviewees also valued the voluntary work as a way to mix with the wider community which they felt they were being excluded from by being prohibited from working. No-one from the previous sample sections referenced voluntary work despite the scale of this contribution. Six references were also made to cultural diversity/breaks down cultural barriers and cultural enrichment (food, language, education).

When asked what you think of the term ‘asylum seeker’, the sample all thought it to be problematic. The interviewees believed it to be a term of abuse which stigmatises them as ‘bogus’ and is conflated with criminals and ‘illegal immigrants’. Evidence from the content analysis sample showed the television representation did indeed conflate refugees seeking asylum with criminals and ‘illegal immigrants’. This was also a common

perception within both the general public and professional workers' sample sections. Nine of the interviewees said the stigma was so intense that they did not want people to know they were 'asylum seekers' and they would try to hide the fact.

Eight of the interviewees believed they should be referred to as refugees rather than 'asylum seekers'. Unlike the previous sample sections, who despite many of the interviewees identifying this term as 'abusive', 'negative' and 'stigmatising', used the term freely both before this question which enabled reflection of their personal usage of the term and afterwards, the subject group interviewees rejected personal usage of the term. Many of the interviews expressed a deep discomfort when using the term.

Attitudes towards television coverage of asylum and refuge

This section incorporates responses to question 16, "is there anything else you would like to say about asylum issues on television?" This last question was left deliberately open in order for the interviewees to decide if they wished to carry on or finish the interview at this point. It also created a space for interviewees to talk about their personal experiences and the issue in general.

As with the professional workers sample all of the interviewees believed that television coverage overall was 'negative' and 'unbalanced'. The most important aspects for respondents were that it should show the day to day reality, trauma and fear of 'dawn raids', detention, deportation, destitution, the prohibiting of work and the poor accommodation they are housed in. Eight people felt there was a need for television journalists to question and challenge government policy. Nine interviewees believed television coverage conflates asylum seekers with 'economic migrants', 'criminals' 'illegal immigrants' and 'terrorists'. Seven interviewees believed the coverage to be racist and six people believed there was a need to incorporate a diversity of voices including 'asylum seekers' which they felt was not in television coverage.

I identified this lack of a diversity of voices including 'asylum seekers' in my content analysis (see Chapter four). The national coverage sample did not include any voices of refugees seeking asylum whilst the regional broadcaster BBC Scotland had multiple voices of refugees seeking asylum within their news reports. This regional broadcaster also included coverage of the social reality issues this group felt was of high importance such as 'dawn raids', detention, deportation and destitution which was not present in the national

sample. I also identified the conflation of ‘asylum seekers’ with ‘economic migrants’, ‘criminals’ ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘terrorists’ as a problem within the national sample. The regional sample identified, addressed and challenged this conflation directly.

The adapted script-writing exercise

This exercise was adapted for the research project from the Glasgow Media Group method (see chapter three). Participants were shown twelve images from the content analysis sample and asked questions regarding their memories and beliefs of them (see chapter three) for a detailed breakdown of responses see Table 3 Appendix 2.

As with the professional workers sample and the general public sample many participants had a noteworthy capability to remember both the content, including the precise language and terminology in use and the formation of news reports from one isolated image.

This sample section responded and reacted to the images in a more visceral and emotional way than the two previous sections, as all of the interviewees related them to their own personal experiences of seeking asylum. This was evident in both the physical and linguistic reactions to the images. Interviewees’ flinched, shook their heads vociferously, put their head in their hands and used agitated hand gestures.

As with the two previous sample sections one of the images most recognised by this group was image 2 of men climbing a fence. Thirteen of the fifteen interviewees’ recognised this image and all of the fifteen participants accurately remembered the content and or structure of the news report associated with this image. This is the highest proportion of recognition and remembrance of all three sections. As with the two previous sections, this sample of interviewees, were able to remember exact particulars of the original story (Buchanan et al., 2003) six to seven years after it was first broadcast from just this single image alone.

As with the two previous sample sections, this section showed a high gradation of accurateness in remembering the location of the story as ‘the Channel Tunnel’, ‘France’ and ‘Sangatte’. Many of the participants also correctly recognised the news reports focus on the numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘economic migrants’ and that they were broadcast on the BBC which is exactly where this specific image was from (see chapter four). Unlike the two previous sections where some interviewees said they did believe the content, all of these interviewees said they did not believe the news reports. As with the

two previous sections the main reasons given for not believing the reports was that they perceived the people climbing the fence to be refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ who were attempting to escape life threatening dangers ‘they want to save their lives because their lives in dangerous’ (Vladimir, male, Russia, age 39, seeking asylum for five years).

Interviewees also accurately identified the focus on large numbers of ‘illegal immigrants’ present in the news bulletins’ content. They believed that refugees seeking asylum were being conflated with ‘economic migrants’, ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘criminals’. I identified the concentration on numbers as a main area of coverage in my content analysis alongside the conflation of asylum issues with economic migrants; criminality and illegal immigration (see Chapter four). The concentration on numbers as with the conflation of asylum issues is identified in the literature review as an incessant problem in television coverage of migration issues (see chapter two).

A significant difference between the responses of this group and that of, the professional workers and the general public is the influence of this group’s personal experience of the issue. Several of the interviewees stated that they knew people personally who had first hand experience of entering the UK in the method illustrated in the image, ‘My friend came this way because his family were threatened, his uncle was kidnapped in Afghanistan (Ibrahim, male, Nigeria, age 31, seeking asylum for nine years). The interviewees believed them all to be refugees seeking asylum. One man when referring to the journey to seek asylum and the general public’s perception of refugees seeking asylum stated ‘There is a joke with refugees, ah we all came through the tunnel’ (Sakit, male, Azerbaijan, age 33, seeking asylum for five years). All of the interviewees expressed solidarity, empathy and sympathy through their personal identification with the people in the image.

Image 11 of a person being escorted on to an aeroplane engendered a higher degree of both recognition and accurate memories within this group. Twelve of the fifteen interviewees both recognised and accurately remembered this image. All of the twelve also stated they did not believe the content of the news report accompanying the image.

The image is taken from *Channel 4 News* on 17/5/2006, the headline states that the report focuses on ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘foreign criminals’. The opening credits include a slow zoom close-up of the image of a Home Office National Asylum Support Service (Nass) application form which is shown in conjunction with a slow zoom close-up of the image of multiple paper files and a slow zoom close-up of a deportation letter which states

r.e. conviction for importation of drugs. This footage constructs an immediate association with asylum which may also be associated with illegality and criminality as these are the topics of the report. Although the report has constructed this person as a 'foreign prisoner' this may in fact be footage of a refugee seeking asylum being deported. This image has been broadcast by the BBC as well and is a stock shot on their website as illustrative of the deportation of 'foreign criminals', 'illegal immigrants' and 'asylum seekers'. Asylum is associated with 'foreign criminals' and 'illegal immigrants' from the opening shot of the bulletin and the deportation images are not clarified. (see chapter four)

The interviewees correctly identified the focus of the report as 'illegal immigrants' and 'criminals' but the reason they did not believe it was that they believed the person could in fact be a refugee seeking asylum. As with the previous image people responded to this image in a highly emotional way as they related it to their personal experience of seeking asylum. On viewing this image interviewees would let out large audible sounds and their demeanour would change from an established one to one that was distressed and sad. There was visible stress in the expressions on their face and the change in tone of their voices. I could both hear and see how upsetting this image was for them.

The interviewees believed the person being deported was in 'danger' and one man described the deportation as 'equal to a death sentence' (Vladimir, male, Russia, age 39, seeking asylum for 5 years). The interviewees also made reference to the fact that the person was not humanised as an individual as in the following example:

I don't believe if this person, for example, father and he has a children and family and maybe this person in 99 per cent will be killed when, after, when this person arrives to his country because this person I think left his country because his life was in dangerous. It's difficult to explain because nobody can understand now what, what, what can feel this person in this moment before they, before this person will be taken to the plane. (Sarah, female, Uganda, age 32, seeking asylum for four years)

The interviewees were both empathetic towards the individual being deported whilst at the same time being sympathetic, in that they were fearful of the same thing happening to them. All of them identified as refugees seeking asylum with the fear of deportation and made reference to this fear and to the consequences of a deportation being something missing from the report. This was indeed accurate as the main area of discussion in the

report was just how many the UK can deport and how quickly rather than should the UK be deporting people back to unsafe countries. This may be a reflection of the fact that the story was only told from the position of government and opposition politicians who were the only people given a voice in this report (see chapter four).

These results show that as with the two previous sample sections, interviewees retained with a remarkable degree of accuracy both the content and structures of news reports which they believed and accepted as well as news reports they did not agree with and rejected. It is also noteworthy how much specific detail is recalled from one image even some years after the original broadcast.

These findings highlight, the important need, for broadcasters to give consideration to the potential distress inaccurate reporting can cause the subject audience of refugees seeking asylum. It is disturbing to recognise the anguish caused to people who are suffering from the trauma of the conditions of being a refugee seeking asylum. As such they have much higher rates of mental health problems due to the 'harsh conditions from which they have escaped' (*British Medical Association: Board of science and education*, 2002: 5).

CONCLUSION

All of the respondents believed television and, specifically, national television news coverage of issues of asylum and refuge to be inaccurate or unbalanced and represented them in a 'negative' way to the general public. They further believed the media is directly responsible for generating racial prejudice in the general public as well as inciting racial hatred and violence towards them. They experienced heightened tensions immediately after the broadcast of inaccurate material and all of them believed the 'negative' media coverage made them vulnerable targets.

All of the interviewees believed the social reality of seeking asylum was missing in that there was a lack of coverage of issues such as why people claim asylum, the refusal of the right to work, fear of detention, dawn raids, deportation, the signing process, destitution, food vouchers, racism and difficulties associated with the actual process of claiming asylum. They were also concerned about the lack of voices of actual refugees seeking asylum voices and a lack of any challenge or criticism of Home Office laws and policies. These issues were also raised by the two previous sections. All of the above issues were

identified as problems within national news coverage in the content analysis (see chapter four).

As well as television news and their personal experience, national and local community campaign and support groups are a valued source. As in the two previous sections campaigning and support organisations have impacted upon this group and are playing an central role as a prized source of information.

The sample section as a whole could accurately detail the many countries people seeking asylum originate from and the majority also displayed accurate knowledge in their detailed responses as to why people seek asylum. The interviewees were fully informed with regards to the rules concerning employment and state benefits for refugees seeking asylum in the UK. They have almost no knowledge of how many people seek asylum in the UK and vastly over estimated the number with responses of up to 1 million. They displayed very little accurate knowledge or information as to which countries in the world take in the most refugees/people seeking asylum with the vast majority believing it to be the UK and other European countries. The sample was knowledgeable regarding how many refugees seeking asylum are university graduates. Therefore the subject audience as with the professional workers and the general public sample have identifiable gaps in knowledge of essential elements of the structural reality of seeking asylum.

Although this sample section was the most informed and knowledgeable with regards to refugee and asylum issues there were two specific areas in which they lacked knowledge. These areas related to statistics with regards to how many people seek asylum in the UK and the countries in the world which host the most refugees seeking asylum. It is notable that even the subject audience do not possess such fundamental information relating to asylum and that none of the sample sections did so.

Many participants had a considerable capacity to remember and recall with a high measure of precision both the content, including the correct language and terminology in use, and the structure of news reports, up to seven years after they were originally broadcast and from a single image.

This group's opinion of the media is of particular substance as they are the subject audience. It is thus significant that this group, with such wide experience of the issues related to asylum and refuge, reject the television coverage. They are exactly the group

who need to be incorporated in the national coverage as they are in the regional coverage (see chapter four) as their personal experience of the issue is an important media resource.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Interviewees' memories of television coverage of refugee and asylum issues on television correlated with the main themes identified in the content analysis sample, namely the criminalisation of refugees seeking asylum, the focus on numbers and the conflation of refugees seeking asylum with other migrant groups such as economic migrants. However, their memories did not necessarily correlate with their beliefs.

The Glasgow Media Group Script-writing Exercise method was adapted from the original method of focus groups writing a script based on a set of pictures to that of individual interviewees commenting on their memories and beliefs in relation to a single image. The interviewees showed a remarkable ability to recall actual language, structure and themes from the news reports from a stand alone image up to seven years after it was initially broadcast.

For example from image 2, of men climbing a fence, as well as showing a high degree of accuracy in remembering this was a 'Red Cross Centre', the name of the camp, 'Sangatte', the city it was based in, 'Calais' and the country, 'France', the participants also accurately identified that the news reports problematised refugees seeking asylum and conflated them with 'illegal immigrants' and 'economic migrants' (see chapter four). Image 9, of a demonstration in Glasgow after a young man seeking asylum was murdered, showed that interviewees were also able to recall a high degree of accurate details from regional news reports such as the name of the man murdered 'Firsat Dag', the location of the demonstration 'George Square', the date of the demonstration 'eight years ago', the name of the organisation which held the demonstration 'Sighthill United', the significance of the demonstration and the outcome of the demonstration, all of which was contained in the report.

The majority of interviewees rejected the national news coverage as 'inaccurate', 'negative' or 'unbalanced' which they believed influenced viewers to view and understand the issue of refugees seeking asylum as a negative problem. They further believed this led directly to refugees seeking asylum encountering hostility, racism and violence. They were influenced to negotiate and reject the coverage as a result of their own personal experience

of the day to day reality of the issue either from seeking asylum themselves, working with people seeking asylum and or living in communities with refugees seeking asylum, which in turn generated sympathy and compassion for refugees seeking asylum. They thought there was a need for national television coverage to ‘accurately inform’ and ‘educate’ as they believed it is not doing this. They also felt that it should show the day to day reality, trauma and fear of ‘dawn raids’, detention, deportation, destitution and having no right to work as well as incorporating a diversity of voices including ‘asylum seekers’ which they accurately identified as missing from national television coverage (see Chapter four). The removal of the right to work has resulted in refugees seeking asylum playing an important role as unpaid volunteer staff in the charity and voluntary sector, but this was also missing from the coverage.

Participants overwhelmingly believed regional news reports and coverage and some of the interviewees commented on the structure of the news report with regards to there being a significant degree of ‘good analysis’ which was ‘more positive’. The findings of my content analysis (see chapter four) support these beliefs. There are very distinct and different perspectives in the regional and national programmes. The interviewees have gained knowledge of specific issues relating to asylum (e.g. ‘dawn raids’, deportation and detention) from regional programming which is in turn responding to local campaign groups and reporting the issues in a more balanced way than the national media. This points to the important role played by regional television in informing the audience.

A significant number, 20%, of the general public interviewees demonstrated antagonistic and unsympathetic attitudes to refugees seeking asylum. One third of the general public interviewees believed wholly inaccurate reports and believed the coverage should report more widely about issues such as, refugees seeking asylum coming here to gain employment, benefits and better housing. Respondents’ connected refugees seeking asylum with negative aspects such as criminality, the financial strain on services such as housing and welfare benefits, the threat of violence to the wider community due to mental illness, and taking British jobs. Some interviewees even went so far as completely rejecting the right to seek refuge by saying, they did not believe there was anything positive about having an asylum seeking population in the UK. The main source given for these beliefs was television news. It is however not possible to make generalisations from a limited sample.

The interviewees overwhelmingly lacked knowledge of basic information and fundamental facts related to refugees seeking asylum. There are two specific areas in which all interviewees lacked knowledge. These areas related to statistics regarding how many people seek asylum in the UK and the host countries. Interviewees overestimated the numbers and wrongly believed the UK and other European nations to be the countries which host the highest numbers of refugees seeking asylum when in fact, they host the lowest numbers in the world. Both the professional workers section and the general public sample lacked knowledge of the educational qualifications of refugees seeking asylum. Within the general public one third of the interviewees wrongly believed refugees seeking asylum were coming to the UK for work, housing, to escape poverty and for a better standard of living. The general public had no knowledge with regards to the rules prohibiting refugees seeking asylum from employment or of any of the facts associated with state benefits for refugees seeking asylum.

Therefore the interviewees have very little correct knowledge or information regarding these central aspects of the structural reality of seeking asylum. There is a correlation between the interviewees' lack of knowledge with regards to the facts associated with seeking asylum and the absence of such factual information in the content analysis sample. It must also be noted that the interviewees overwhelmingly cited television as a main source of information even if they rejected that information.

Although television is cited as a main source interviewees were also engaging with a variety of alternative sources such as national and local community campaigns and support groups. Campaigning and support organisations are playing an important role as a valued source of information in an attempt to balance what was viewed as a biased and uninformative television news service. Interviewees would generally follow up a news report by seeking more accurate information in relation to the source report from these alternative sources. Refugees seeking asylum had also developed a network of shared information based on people's personal experiences. This source of shared information was regarded as one of the most accurate and informative as it was based on facts and provided first hand information about the reasons given for refusal for seeking asylum and entitlements to support.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and conclusion

INTRODUCTION

The Glasgow Media Group's varied audience research work has repeatedly demonstrated media representations as having both effects and influence (see, for example, Eldridge, 1993; Henderson, 1995; Kitzinger, 1990; Kitzinger, 1995; Kitzinger and Miller, 1992; Macintyre et al, 1998; Miller, 1994; Philo, 1990; 1996; Philo and Berry, 2004, 2011; Reilly and Miller, 1997). These effects can be denoted in multiple ways. People can recall definite factual information, images, and themes very clearly. People are also able to reproduce noticeably accurate dialogue from a soap opera some weeks after the initial broadcast. Media transmitted information can influence beliefs and lead to inaccurate public beliefs.

My thesis confirms and expands on these findings from earlier Glasgow Media Group research by its demonstration of the effects and influence of media coverage. I have shown how people clearly recalled particular accounts of what happened in specific cases (i.e. the Red Cross Centre at Sangatte and the murder of Firsat Dag) and highlighted the ways in which the media helped to establish particular associations (e.g. between 'illegal immigrants' and 'asylum seekers') and images (e.g. of 'asylum seekers' and economic migrants). I have also shown how people were influenced by the presence and absence of particular explanations and facts. In the second half of this conclusion I will sum up in brief the substantiation of media influence emerging from my investigation of public understandings of issues of asylum and refuge. I consider how the results of my work may inform the interests of policy makers, NGOs and broadcasters. Finally I identify some areas in which future research may be developed.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The content analysis carried out informed the audience reception work. The images used for the adapted 'script-writing exercise, which was executed during the in-depth interviews, were taken from the content analysis sample. The reports were from 16, 17 and 18 of May 2005 and were selected because they featured a broad range of typical themes as well as key issues in asylum coverage. I examined the lunchtime, early evening and late news bulletins for BBC1 and ITV (Channel Three), as these are the most popular channels with the highest viewing figures. I also included *Channel 4 News* and *BBC Newsnight* for

comparison. In addition I included *BBC Reporting Scotland* and *BBC Newsnight Scotland* in order to examine regional comparisons.

Five main areas of coverage were identified in these reports which featured a broad range of asylum and immigration issues. The findings show a complete contrast in approach in the news framework and presentational structure of the regional programmes from that of the national news programmes in the sample. Specifically, in relation to the inconsistencies and problems associated with the process of seeking asylum, and more generally in relation to issues of asylum and refuge. There are very divergent standpoints in the regional and national programmes. Even when the inconsistent and problematic treatment of refugees seeking asylum is raised in the national programmes there is no examination of it. In comparison the regional programmes present a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter.

Only one programme in the national sample, *Channel 4 News* (18 May 2006), included the perspective of any NGOs advocating for refugees seeking asylum. In contrast the regional programming is dominated by this point of view. Refugees and refugees seeking asylum have no voice in the national programmes this leads to women or children refugees seeking asylum being missing from the representation. The regional programme interviewed five refugees and refugees seeking asylum, four of whom are women. The national programmes give precedent to the politicians' perspectives, who are the principal interviewees. The Cardiff School of Journalism's research also found that for the most part the media were relying on official sources such as government and police chiefs with little space being given to the refugee voice even via non-governmental organisations or other agencies such as refugee support groups, whilst the voice of women seeking asylum was the scarcest (Buchanan et al., 2003; Gross et al., 2007). Most journalists only considered contributions from refugees and 'asylum seekers', for human interest stories. The journalists never mentioned them as a source for commenting on government policy (Gross et al., 2007; 51-53). This is an issue of concern also for NGOs, in its evidence to the House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights, Oxfam made the point that the UK media should reflect 'a full range of refugee voices' (see chapter one). It is significant then, that the UK national broadcast news service gives no voice at all to refugees or refugees seeking asylum, let alone reflecting a range of voices.

Although I could find no research that investigates regional news broadcasters' coverage of asylum issues, these findings chime with those of Nissa Finney. Finney emphasises the

significant role of local media in her research into the local press (Finney, 2003). The key findings revealed that local press portrayals of asylum seeker dispersal follow the tone and themes of national coverage, concentrating on numbers of people seeking asylum, control, cost and conflict. Flood metaphors as identified by the Glasgow Media Group research (Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999), are frequently used. Headlines are often misleading and inaccurate. However Finney did find examples of a local newspaper portraying 'asylum issues sympathetically' (Finney, 2003: 224-226). Her research recognised that 'local press coverage goes beyond the 'moral panic' when discussing dispersal by constructing the policy, rather than the people (asylum seekers) as the problem.' (Finney, 2003: 264). Finney argues that relations between the local press and local public attitudes towards asylum dispersal are significant on both an individual and community level as it 'has the potential to influence opinion and public agendas on both' (Finney, 2003: 259). Finney was surprised that so little research has focused on the local press, given its recognised significance for community relations.

My findings show that BBC Scotland regional news is indeed 'constructing the policy, rather than the people (asylum seekers) as the problem' (Finney, 2003: 264) I would argue, however, it is going beyond the single policy issue of dispersal that Finney focused on and widening the construction to that of the entire process of seeking asylum itself. In so doing it portrays 'asylum issues sympathetically' (Finney, 2003: 224-226) which in turn generates 'a more informed, balanced and humane discussion' which potentially changes the debate from the 'bottom-up' (Finney, 2003: 276-277).

Another factor for consideration, in relation to regional news being more informed is the role of local advocacy, campaign and support groups. The fact that these groups regularly organise demonstrations leads to regional news coverage of them. An example of this was included in the content analysis chapter whereby BBC Scotland reported on a local demonstration organised by a local support group. The local political activism became newsworthy and was therefore reported.

A further point of consideration, which may also be at play in Finney's research, is the location of the research. During the industrial period both Scotland and Wales were at the heart of the heavy industries such as shipping and mining. This industrial history contributed to strong social democratic traditions in both countries. This may mean the viewers are receptive to social democratic reporting and that the journalists are also schooled in this tradition.

Another area where identifiable differences were evident between the national and regional programming was that of the historical and legal context of seeking asylum. Both contexts are absent from the national programmes but are highly prominent in the regional programmes. The lack of historical context in national news programming was identified by Philo and Berry in their research on news coverage of the current Israel/Palestine conflict (Philo and Berry, 2004; 2011). Their findings were supported by a report commissioned by BBC Governors which noted ‘an absence of historical background and deficiencies in the provision of other contexts’ (Thomas, 2006, cited in Philo and Berry, 2011:3). Research into the media and the Rwandan crisis also revealed the exclusion of both the colonial context and the role of contemporary western powers such as France (Philo et al., 1999). This issue was also identified as a significant absence by many of the interviewees who believed there was a need to inform viewers of the historical and colonial links to issues of asylum and refuge.

The issue of the media use of unsourced statistics in relation to asylum and refuge has been identified in previous research (Philo and Beattie, 1999; McLaughlin, 1999; Buchanan et al., 2003; Gross et al., 2007). My findings show that ten years after the Glasgow Media Group research highlighted the problematic use of statistics and sources they are still very much at play within the national broadcast media. It is also noteworthy that they have now been entirely transposed onto the issue of asylum. The national programmes became illustrations themselves of how news programmes can be contradictory and problematic in their reporting of issues of asylum and refuge. It is therefore, important that the statistics cited by the regional programmes are all correctly sourced.

Another problem identified within the national coverage is that of the conflation of migration and forced migration resulting in the term ‘illegal immigrant’ and ‘illegals’ being both endorsed and applied to people seeking asylum. Previous research also identified consistent failures to distinguish between economic migrants, ‘illegal immigrants’ ‘asylum seekers’ and refugees (Philo and Beattie, 1999; Buchanan et al., 2003; Gross et al., 2007). The Cardiff School of Journalism’s research in relation to news production factors identified, from their own interviews with journalists, that the journalists suspected many ‘asylum seekers’ were in fact economic migrants (Gross et al., 2007; 45-46). The audience reception findings show that many of the interviewees could not make the distinction either and that they also conflated forced migrants with economic and ‘illegal’ migrants. The subject audience of refugees seeking asylum also identified this

conflation as a problem which affects them personally as they believe it misleads the general public which results in them facing hostility.

It is evident that the national broadcast media problematise asylum i.e. claims that there is a need to deport and reduce numbers is rarely challenged. The Glasgow Media Group also pointed to the danger of media context enabling and providing ‘a rationale for changes in asylum law’ (Philo and Beattie 1999: 196). This finding is backed up by the Cardiff School of Journalism’s research (Buchanan et al., 2003: 12). This is also an area of concern raised by the UK Independent Race Monitor. In 2005 they registered their concern with regards to references to reducing numbers reinforcing the misconception that abuse is happening on an enormous scale rather than an extremely small scale (Cousey, M. (2005), p100) . Unlike the national programmes the regional news programming both addressed and challenged these issues by focusing on the humanitarian need to grant refuge and asylum.

Social value assumptions and judgments are evident within the national coverage, in the editorials, with regards to the invited speakers’. The journalists go further than reporting negative views on migration and unequivocally sanction them in their language usage and opinions. There are many examples of editorial partiality with journalists and political editors submitting their personal, partial and biased opinions. This in turn has an effect on the balance of the programmes as the audience is not given access to a breadth of viewpoints.

A trend is evident here concerning the language use of the term ‘illegal immigrant’ which is in common usage in all of the national news reports, who seem to be taking their lead from the politicians as the Prime Minister uses the term as well. The National Union of Journalists, give specific guidance regarding why the term ‘illegal immigrant’ should not be used by journalists. They deemed it to be ‘racist’ and suggested using the alternative term ‘irregular migrant’ (*Fair Play Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland: A Guide for Journalists*, 2005: 14). Therefore, journalists and politicians at the highest level including the Prime Minister are using language deemed to be ‘racist’. This raises serious questions with regards to the message being sent out to the audience as well as the treatment of refugees seeking asylum. The House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights are concerned with the duty of the state and the media to protect the private life dignity and physical integrity of ‘asylum seekers’ (see chapter one). This protection was not accorded by the national news broadcasters or state politicians.

Media representations provide a rich socio-cultural terrain for investigators. As such it is important to continue to document and analyse these representations and misrepresentations. It is also important to examine the production processes of representations such as narrative themes, language use, visual images and who is invited to speak and be interviewed. Analysis of content can be advanced and developed through audience reception research into how people watch, talk about, remember and understand media coverage. This provides essential data which may confirm and challenge aspects of content analysis and produce new insights. In light of the findings with regards to consistent problems within national broadcast news coverage of migration issues, it is imperative that this issue remains a focus of academic research. It is a further imperative that research is continued within the specific area of television news coverage of forced migration, seeking asylum, as these findings reveal this to be an area of great concern. As a recent area of study it is important for academics to give it the full attention that has been given to the overall issue of migration.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION FINDINGS

60 in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with the participants. They were categorised in three sample sections, refugees and ‘asylum seekers’, professional interest-professionals working with refugees and ‘asylum seekers’, and the general public. Fifteen people were interviewed in the refugees and ‘asylum seekers’ sections and fifteen were interviewed in the professional interest sections, 30 were interviewed in the general public section.

This thesis was also concerned with the potential impact which television news reporting may have on different audiences. The findings demonstrate that audiences bring their personal experiences of an issue to their viewing experience. The study demonstrates the necessity to explore both social experience and knowledge in relation to audience reception. We have seen that diverse people within the groups may respond differently to news reports. However, the audience responses were, in the main, surprisingly unvarying. They adhered to unambiguous models of knowledge, experience, and the use of logic to think about feasible outcomes or concerns. Whilst differences are evident, the research participants did not create their own immeasurable meanings. Interviewees’ memories of television coverage of refugee and asylum issues on television correlated with the main

themes identified in the content analysis sample. However, these memories did not necessarily correlate with their beliefs.

Alongside the interviews I also conducted the 'script-writing exercise' method. The results showed interviewees' had a remarkable ability to recall very specific elements of news reports such as actual language for example, interviewees from all three groups remembered usage of the term 'better life'; structure, many of the participants commented on who does and does not get to speak; and themes, interviewees were able to identify multiple themes accurately. These findings are in line with previous Glasgow Media Group research findings in relation to influence (See, for example, Eldridge, 1993; Henderson, 1995; Kitzinger, 1990; Kitzinger, 1995; Kitzinger and Miller, 1992; Macintyre et al, 1998; Miller, 1994; Philo, 1990; 1996; Philo and Berry, 2004, 2011; Reilly and Miller, 1997).

The majority of interviewees were critical of the national news reports and demonstrated a capacity for audiences to question and challenge media representations. They rejected the national news coverage as 'inaccurate', 'negative' or 'unbalanced'. This rejection was influenced by their knowledge, experience, and the use of logic as people working and living with refugees seeking asylum and of seeking asylum.

Participants overwhelmingly believed the regional news reports and coverage and some of the interviewees commented on the structure of the news report with regards to there being a significant degree of 'good analysis' which was 'more positive'. The findings of my content analysis (see chapter four) support these beliefs. The interviewees have gained knowledge of specific issues relating to asylum i.e. 'dawn raids', deportation and detention from regional programming which is in turn responding to local campaign groups and reporting the issues in a more balanced way than the national media. This finding points to the important role played by regional television in informing the audience.

A clear example of a different response to the news reports is evident in the general public interviewees. Twenty per cent of the general public interviewees from the outset displayed hostile attitudes to refugees seeking asylum. One third of the interviewees' considered the coverage did not report widely enough about refugees seeking asylum coming here to gain employment, benefits and better housing. Respondents associated refugees seeking asylum with negative factors such as criminality, the financial strain on services such as housing and welfare benefits, the threat of violence to the wider community due to mental illness,

and taking British jobs. Some interviewees went so far as to say they did not believe there was anything positive about having an asylum seeking population in the UK. The main source given for these beliefs was television news. Their memories of television coverage of refugee and asylum issues on television correlated with the main themes identified in the content analysis sample. Unlike the majority of participants, these participants' memories did correlate with their beliefs. Whilst they responded entirely different from the majority of the interviewees', their responses were also remarkably uniform in their beliefs of what the coverage meant to them.

The findings demonstrate an interesting point in relation to knowledge and experience. Whilst the vast majority of participants' rejected the national news coverage by way of their knowledge and experience, the interviewees overwhelmingly lacked knowledge of basic information and facts related to refugees seeking asylum. Two specific areas in which all interviewees lacked knowledge related to statistics, regarding how many people seek asylum in the UK, and the countries in the world which take in the most refugees seeking asylum. This points to the important role, even, of limited knowledge of the substantive subject.

The subject audience of refugees' seeking asylum all expressed a level of distress with regards to the national news coverage. The coverage, including the images broadcast, had a visceral impact on them which greatly disturbed them. This was an issue raised by ICAR in 2004 when they referred to the need for research to focus on broadcast media images, political images, hostile media coverage and their impact on 'asylum seekers' and refugees (see chapter one). They felt utterly victimised by the broadcast news and they blamed it for causing tension and hostility which led to physical assaults. The House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights registered their concern regarding the impact and effect of negative reporting on individual 'asylum seekers'. They also raised the issue of a possible link between hostile reporting and physical attacks on 'asylum seekers' (House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights (2007) *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers* Tenth Report of Session 2006-2007 volume 1, p101). The refugees seeking asylum interviewed firmly believed in the existence of this link. This is an extremely worrying and sinister trajectory which needs further investigation in and of its own right.

The audience reception research provides valuable insights into the memories and beliefs of the subject audience, an audience rarely heard in television audience reception studies,

the general public and professional workers working with refugees seeking asylum. This enables a deeper understanding of the processes of diversity regarding cultural, political and social factors in influencing and formulating audience acceptance and or rejection of media content.

FUTURE RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

News production

The method of content analysis of broadcast news coverage of issues of asylum and refuge along with a related audience reception study which includes the subject audience of refugees seeking asylum has never to my knowledge been used to examine effects, impact and influence with regards to knowledge and beliefs. However, valuable insights could be gained by adopting a different methodology. For example, it would have been instructive to have been in attendance at news room meetings where these issues were discussed and to observe the decision making process in situ. A more ethnographic approach would have allowed a depth of insight into the production process. However, other academic research which has attempted this ethnographic approach has found it difficult to gain this level of access to news rooms (Gross et al., 2007). This reluctance by the industry to open itself up to academic research in order to inform the public of their methods of news production, particularly the BBC, a public service broadcaster, is completely at odds with the broadcast industry's public service remit in terms of news provision. This is all the more reason for academic researchers to persevere in attempting this form of ethnographic study. It is crucial that the production processes and the potential tensions and conflicts within this process are fully analysed.

Regional news provision

Another point of interest specific to my research is the study's findings with regards to regional differences and the important role of regional news in terms of balance and informing viewers. Philo discovered that perception was conditioned by regional differences with many participants citing the regional press in the North as an alternative source of information (Philo, 1990: 179). This finding was echoed by Nissa Finney (2003: 220) in relation to issues of asylum and the press. This crucial area of alternative information is currently an area at great risk both in television and the press. The recent OFCOM (Office of Communications) ruling on regional broadcasting claimed that ITV's

UK-wide network of local news programming was unsustainable. With regards to the Scottish service it states:

We have decided to reduce stvs obligations in some genres, including news and other programmes produced in Scotland. To maintain the future of regional news in southern Scotland, Border and Tyne Tees areas will be served by a single regional main weekday bulletin (OFCOM News Release, Jan 2009).

This has led directly to reductions in regional news services. One of the Scottish services I have been monitoring, STV (Scottish Television), have reduced their service and the public have lost their morning bulletin completely and seen their lunchtime news service reduced from a 30 minute show to a three min bolt-on bulletin at the end of the national news.

It would be particularly useful to carry out further research into (a) why these contain better journalism than the national media; (b) what can and should be done to arrest their alarming decline which is all the more alarming given what this thesis reveals about the valuable information role they play.

Cultural identity

The exercise on self identity (see chapter two) produced some interesting findings with regards to 'race'/race and social class. The vast majority of the interviewees self-identified in terms of the traditional ethnicity race model of black and white (see chapters four, five and six). There was a marked difference, in geographical terms, in relation to identification in the responses of the refugees seeking asylum sample section in comparison with the other two sections. Many of the African interviewees identified as African or Black African. They identified with a continent whereby the UK interviewees never identified with the European continent as Europeans and many of them identified with a region. It would make for interesting future research to investigate the role played by these different geographical identifications.

A key finding emerged, with regards to social class in relation to refugees seeking asylum. Many of them did not identify with the category of social class at all. These interviewees' associated their class with their status as 'asylum seekers'. They defined themselves as 'lower than the lowest class' (Sergei, white, male, Abkhazia, age 33, seeking asylum for

nine years), and expressed the belief that they were excluded from all societal structures, including class. In part, they related this to the severe restrictions of the Home Office prohibiting them from working but, also that they were a stigmatised group, who were defined by society only as ‘asylum seekers’. Participants believed the stigma associated with being an ‘asylum seeker’ was a method of dehumanisation, resulting in them being re-defined as sub-human. It is therefore, crucial, that future research is carried out in relation to class identification. It may well be that another sub-group is being formulated out with the conventional indicators of social class, such as income level, in terms of the refugees seeking asylum, who are prohibited from working.

Accessing research participants

A major concern for future research and researchers was the participants’ deep concerns, with regards to the written aspect of the ‘script-writing exercise’ (see chapter seven). These concerns related to their beliefs that there was a possibility, that if they were publicly critical of the Home Office, then they could be targeted in a negative way. They believed this could affect their claim for asylum. This is a major concern for researchers and needs to be investigated further; it adds another barrier to this section of the community making them even more difficult to reach.

The professional workers group also expressed concerns, in relation to being critical of the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate (UK Border Agency). Participants were worried that any criticisms of them may impact on future funding decisions regarding their organisations. These findings offer two areas for future research in terms of professional knowledge and the funding of NGO’s. It would be of interest to discover the impact of these areas on academic research, as well as on the ground support services, and the professionals themselves. It is of concern that they do not feel at liberty, to freely express their informed opinion of their own professional area of expertise.

Further studies of media representations of asylum and refuge

As so few studies have researched the area of broadcast television representations of issues of asylum and refuge in terms of either production processes, content or audience reception this necessitates the need for further research into this substantive topic on all of these levels, singularly or in combination. Although this study focused on national and regional news coverage the topic is represented in many other genres. Therefore future research

needs to examine such genres as documentary, current affairs (i.e. *Question Time*, *The Andrew Marr Show* and *The Politics Show*) soap operas and dramas all of which feature the substantive topic of seeking asylum and none of which have been studied.

Inclusion of refugees seeking asylum

This research had as one of its aims the inclusion of the subject audience of refugees seeking asylum in the audience reception. This was important firstly because the content analysis and literature pointed to the fact that their voice is being excluded from national broadcast news representations, particularly women refugees seeking asylum. Significantly that voice is also rarely heard in media research studies. It is important for future studies to actively include this audience in the research process in order to ascertain the links between their personal experience and their perspective on media representations. It is hoped that this thesis has demonstrated the validity of this topic as an area worthy of serious study for those with an interest in media effects, impact and influence as well as public knowledge. In so doing it has added to the Glasgow Media Group and the Cardiff School of Journalism Media and Cultural Studies body of work on this subject area by including audience reception work on the issue. I hope that the findings here will both illuminate social debate and inform policy making in this crucial area of public understanding.