

University of Southern Queensland

Interpretive communities and the legitimation of news values:
A recursive framing analysis of the representation
of refugees in *The Australian*

A Dissertation submitted by
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the potential for bias resulting from the pursuit of journalistic ‘objectivity’ and news values. It presented the theoretical structure of frame analysis and interpretive community theory, and applied it to the representation of refugees in *The Australian*, with in-depth focus on the reporting of Villawood Detention Centre. It conducted structured observation of journalists undertaking a news factor selection test using a range of refugee topics as test material. It then extended this investigation to a textual analysis of all refugee reports published in *The Australian* between 2003 and 2006.

Findings from this research indicated that the basic principles of journalism provide minimal foundation for independent investigation and interpretation, rather operate to merely transmit the agenda of the seemingly ‘authoritative’ and ‘prominent’. Determining the answer to the journalistic ‘what’ only ever occurred within the limited parameters of an immediate event taking place within the boundaries of the immediate circulation district, with the ‘why’ it happened reserved only for the opinions of those who, in journalistic terms, identified as ‘authoritative’ and unproblematically ‘verifiable’.

The journalistic pursuit of ‘newsworthiness’, which resulted in *The Australian’s* focus on ‘event reporting, particularly those relating to conflict and drama’ (White 1996, p. 34), allowed no framework in which to discuss the complex and ongoing processes surrounding mandatory and extended detention. This contributed to the rallying of public support against those seeking asylum – which allowed the Howard Government to both limit the number of successful visa applications and gain voter support for the punitive measures taken against those refugees already detained.

On a broader scale, findings also indicated that it is not news values in isolation that make refugee issues newsworthy. Rather, the four domains in journalism as developed in this study: professionalism; nationalism and key events; journalists’ subjective beliefs; and institutional objectives, all express the complex processes that constitute journalists’ decision-making processes.

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

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ENDORSEMENT

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Context of research

This thesis develops the theoretical structure of frame analysis and interpretive community theory, and applies it to an analysis of the representation of refugees in the Press. It identifies key concepts in the social and cognitive sciences that serve as the foundation for this approach (Chenail 1995; Entman 2003; Goffman 1974; Johnston 1995; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Scheufele 2006; Tuchman 2002). It uses refugees as a case study to examine the role of news values in the framing process. It suggests the use of alternative approaches to analysing journalists, rather than viewing journalism as only a profession which, up to this point, has limited the understanding of journalism as ‘practice’. It argues that traditional approaches to examining media output, such as content analysis and surveys, have suffered from significant validity problems that are best addressed through the lens of journalists as ‘community’.

This thesis is an historical case study of Villawood Detention Centre (2003-2006), during which period the Howard Government was in power. As such, it focuses its investigation on media representation during the period of what a range of scholars have labelled draconian, illegal and immoral immigration legislation (see Betts 2003; Lygo 2004; Marr & Wilkinson 2003). Much scholarly criticism has focused on the Liberal Government’s introduction of the so-called ‘Pacific Solution’¹; — mandatory and extended detention of asylum seekers — and claims from a range of humanitarian groups such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Amnesty International of violations of human rights occurring from both mandatory detention and the conditions inside detention centres (Macken-Horarik 2003; Mummery & Rodan 2003; Murray & Skull 2005).

¹The Pacific Solution involves the processing of asylum seekers in two Australian-funded camps in the Pacific: Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

Since the Labor Government came to power in November 2007, there have been some positive developments in refugee and immigration policy (McMaster 2008; Murphy 2007). Some of these changes include: the abolition of the ‘Pacific Solution’; the resolving of difficult and intransigent cases that had resulted in refugees being detained for lengthy periods; and the development of Key Immigration Detention Values that aim to ensure detention is issued as a last resort and for the shortest practicable period (Evans 2008).

While there has been a reduction of people in detention from 449 in November 2007 to 348 in January 2010 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010), scholars have still noted inconsistencies and unfair treatment in current Labor immigration policy notably the accusation that the Rudd Government has made moves to stop boats before they reach Australian waters (McMaster 2008; Murphy 2007). Labor Immigration Minister, Senator Chris Evans, has also stated that the islands excised from the migration zone under the Howard Government’s ‘Pacific Solution’ would remain excised, meaning that people who arrive on those islands without a visa will continue to be prohibited from making certain applications under the Migration Act, particularly for protection visas (McMaster 2008). Given that the current number of refugees worldwide is 34.7 million (UNHCR 2010), it is suggested that this issue is one which requires ongoing attention, particularly in relation to the provision of fair and humane refugee policy.

This thesis restricts its analysis to *The Australian’s* reporting of those detained in Villawood Detention Centre between January 2003 and November 2006. This period has been chosen for examination as *The Australian* news cycle placed significant focus on Villawood detainees during this period. *The Australian’s* coverage of Villawood follows the issue attention cycle as put forward by Downs (1972) – it demonstrates the operation of a systemic cycle of heightening public interest and subsequent declining public interest in Villawood.

A recurrent theme within research findings from investigations into the media’s portrayal of ethnic affairs is continual stereotyping, biased and sometimes inaccurate coverage, and, just as disturbing – a distinct lack of representation of immigration and related issues (Pickering 2001; Saxton 2003; Van Acker & Hollander 2003). While media representation of immigration issues has been the focus of much research, there has not been significant study

of how those responsible for cultural reproduction of negative representation, journalists themselves, contribute to the social, economic and political marginalisation of refugees.

This study shows how *The Australian* newspaper, through its loyalty to the fundamental principles of journalism, particularly the pursuit of ‘objectivity’ and news values, has supported and inadvertently assisted Australian governments in their attempts to define asylum seekers as a threat to Australian law and order. It is not maintained this has been intentional bias, rather it is the consequence of the way in which the media operates. For example, normative news-gathering techniques will generally favour occurrences that are immediate and unexpected at the expense of those which are ongoing or have taken time to unfold. As stated by journalism educators Conley and Lamble (2006, p.88), the news media tend to put greater emphasis on events with an easily discernible time frame. Therefore, events that are immediate or recent have greater news value than those which occurred some time ago.

The journalistic pursuit of ‘newsworthiness’, which resulted in *The Australian’s* focus on event reporting, particularly those relating to ‘conflict and drama’ (Brooks et al. 2002; Conley & Lamble 2006), allows no framework in which to discuss the complex and on-going processes surrounding mandatory and extended detention. This has contributed to the rallying of public support against those seeking asylum – which has allowed governments to both limit the number of successful visa applications and gain voter support for the punitive measures taken against those refugees already detained.

1.2 Aim of the study

This study aims to determine the impact of journalistic ‘objectivity’ and news values on media output and apply it to *The Australian’s* reporting of refugee issues between 2003 and 2006, with in-depth focus on reporting of Villawood Detention Centre. News bias research that focuses on news values has conceptualised framing in terms of the generation of shared meanings and interpretation (Entman 2003; Scheufele 2006). However, with the exception of only a few scholars (eg. Liebes 2000), most researchers have neglected the methodological implications of this theoretical perspective in the design of their research projects. The reliance on content analysis by researchers such as Bell (1993), Chaudhary (2001), De Vreese & Semetko (2001), Galtung & Ruge (1965), Harcup & O’Neill (2001), Scheufele (2006) and

Semetko & Valkenberg (2000) ignores the discursive context in which news values are constructed. This study addresses this gap in the literature by empirically investigating how journalists develop and apply professional norms when engaged in news work.

Central to the aim of this study, is examining journalistic practice within the context of a range of key research questions:

- a) By what means did the speakers negotiate and construct meaning?
- b) Did they draw on other texts and discourses to construct meaning?
- c) Did they draw on journalism training and norms to construct meaning?
- d) To what extent do values such as *conflict* and *consequence* emerge in the framing of refugee news?
- e) To what extent did participants 'fall back on' external pressures such as institutional factors to justify their decisions?
- f) Was there evidence of personal opinion/subjective beliefs in relation to immigration issues?
- g) Do differing beliefs/schemata about refugees still result in support of the same values?
- h) To what extent do news values, when applied to the same issue, alter the discourse of participants?
- i) What differences will alternative news values hold, not only for cognitive activities on the part of participants, but also for the kind of affective reactions they experience, and evaluations they form, in connection to the reporting of the issue?

This thesis will explore the extent to which media bias which previously has been explained in terms of structural factors such as the interrelationship between the media and government (McChesney 2008; Bagdikian 2004; Schiller 1996), can be substantially explained in terms of the operation of normative rules that govern standard journalistic practice. Within such a framework, this thesis will focus on how journalists operate within restrictive time constraints which impose limitations that both support and inform the narrative form of news.

Journalistic practice rests on notions of 'objectivity, tightly written and cohesive copy' (Conley & Lamble 2006; White 1996) and the development of an internal logic designed to seek out stories which are considered '*timely, significant, and of interest* for a given community' (Harcup & O'Neill 2001; Schwarz 2006). For example, economic imperatives which dictate fast turn-around of copy both promote and inform the media's reliance on event reporting. Investigation of on-going processes that surround an issue is neither congruent

with ‘objectivity’ (Gauthier 2000; Schudson 2001), nor compatible with the limited time restrictions operating within the news room.

1.3 Focus of the study

Using Villawood Detention Centre as a case study, this thesis will investigate the significance of the media’s focus on events fulfilling ‘newsworthiness criteria’. It will explore whether such criteria led the media to present refugee issues within certain frames in a way that biases representation of the issue. Research on journalistic frames suggests that conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and responsibility are the most common frames used by the media (Lawrence 2000; Luther & Zhou 2005; Neuman, Just & Crigler 1992). Research on media framing is consistent with research on more general news values research in which the presence of conflict, drama and personalisation are consistently listed as some of the most important criteria for identifying which events will become news stories (Eilders 1997a; Galtung & Ruge 1965; Harcup & O’Neill 2001; McManus 1994; Staab 1990).

The thesis examines journalists as an ‘interpretive community’ which is built and maintained through a common discourse that teaches appropriate narratives and behaviours for their interpretation of occurrences (Berkowitz & TerKeurst 1999; Lindlof 2002; Zelizer 1990). This study critically examines whether the traditional view of objectivity, including ‘detachment, neutrality and letting the facts speak for themselves’ (Reeb Jnr 1999, p. 57), may severely restrict the information available to newspaper readers and hence their capacity to develop an informed understanding of an issue. In contrast to research which has focussed on political economy, ideology and *intentional* bias in the media (Bagdikian 1992; Golding & Murdock 2000; Herman & Chomsky 1988; McChesney 1999), this study explores the unintentional bias that results from the pursuit of journalistic norms of ‘objectivity’ and balance, and the criteria governing ‘newsworthiness’. Journalism educators such as Conley & Lamble (2006) and White (1996) define these criteria as ones which give significant preference to events, particularly those fulfilling the requirements of *proximity, timeliness, prominence, consequence, conflict, human interest, and the unusual*.

1.4 Theoretical framework guiding the study

This thesis is interested in the study of interpretive communities and, as its framework, experiments with ‘frame analysis’ to explore the processes by which journalists come to understand notions of newsworthiness and to sell their perspectives to a wider audience. Such an approach recognises literature which suggests that journalistic norms generate an ideological orientation towards the production of news stories that are necessary for journalism to maintain its communal boundaries (Janowitz 1975; Johnson-Cartee 2005). The informal networking among reporters has been overlooked in formal discussions of journalism as a profession. Sociologists have found that journalists work via a distinct sense of their own collectivity, favouring horizontal over vertical management, and collegial over hierarchal authority (Tuchman 1978). Such informal networking may be as responsible for consolidating journalists into communities as the highly standardised cues of association and interactions that tend not to be emphasised in formal analyses (Zelizer 1993).

The concept of ‘professionalisation’ in news maintains that there are constant and universal practices and standards within the field of journalism (Schwarz 2006; Traquina 2004; Weinhold 2008). Media analysis by both journalists and scholars (Eilders 1996; Fakaris & Russell 1998; Staab 1990) often conceptually measures news content against professional norms in order to assess its quality. Current and early traditions of news value research build on journalism text books and previous studies to provide news factors to subjects and, using standard content analytic procedures, convert their own observations into discrete units that can be used to make inferences about the producers of media content (Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1965; Schwarz 2006). Such a technique fails to acknowledge significant research which perceives journalists as members of an interpretative community (Berkowitz & TerKeurst 1999; Carey 2000; Zelizer 1993).

Key to the notion of interpretive communities is that journalistic work is embedded in both the broader cultural context and the context of social interaction among journalists. As stated by Carey (2000), this concept of interpretive communities helps explain why journalists are less concerned about the reaction of ‘the public’ to their reports than the reactions of their colleagues and superiors.

Using a news factor selection test administered to journalists, and qualitative textual analysis, this study will examine *The Australian's* reporting of news values. It is noted that the pursuit of 'news values', also referred to as 'news factors' in this study, serves as an important marker of modern journalism's efforts to position itself as a profession. The interpretive community constituted through the adherence to stories that are defined as 'newsworthy', symbolises journalism's bid to create a shared culture of professional values: reporters are rewarded for writing stories that are 'newsworthy' – they get promotions, they are the envy of their peers, they receive awards, and so on.

In contrast to previous studies of news values which present subjects with an arbitrary list of new factors for coding, this study explores the negotiation of interpretation of news values by 'journalists as community'. Rather than the application of predetermined 'news values', this study uses structured observation to study the negotiation of news values. It does this by means of a news factor selection test. The results of the news factor selection test will be used to make comparisons with how those topics were represented in *The Australian* by members of the same interpretive community.

Borrowing methodological insights from interpretive methodology (Parameswaran 2006; Zelizer 2003), the thesis will also undertake a qualitative textual analysis. This allows focus on how reporters position themselves in their stories by constructing, documenting, and perpetuating their authority to retell events (Parameswaran 2006). The argument is that the manner in which research participants and reporters at *The Australian* frame an issue, can usefully be investigated using the same lens of news values and objectivity.

This study is concerned with exploring what is generally known as 'professional socialisation'. New members are socialised into their profession, and this means that they have to take on a range of beliefs, values, basic assumptions and understandings as well as sets of occupational routines, in order to be accepted as qualified and successful (Hansen et al. 1998; Breed 1955). As stated by Hansen et al. (1998), much of this adoption and adaption goes on at unconscious or subconscious levels, hence the need to unpack the professional unconscious if we wish to know how it really operates. 'If the unpacking does not occur, then we shall still have to contend with media mythologies which are often expressed as tautologies. For example "it's news because it's news, and if you were a journalist instead of a remote social scientist, you would know why it is news" ' (Hansen et al. 1998, p. 20).

Essentially, news entails a selective production process leading to the presentation of a version of reality which is governed by professional values and routines (Hansen et al. 1998). ‘But these values and routines are not imbibed in a vacuum. They are assimilated in the course of professional socialisation; a process which itself reflects prevailing values about the role of the media in society and about the financial requirements for the media to stay in business’ (Hansen et al. 1998, p. 20). Professional socialisation is constrained by economic imperatives of time and space, and is shaped within this context, not as part of a conspiracy or deliberate bias (although this can and does happen at times), rather as the result of the bias inherent within the system.

The importance of my approach comes from what is at stake: the social power that comes from the coverage of stories that are deemed ‘newsworthy’.

Using a combination of recursive frame analysis and structured observation of journalists engaged in news work, it is envisaged that ‘news values can be viewed as a “deep structure” or a “cultural map” that journalists use to help them make sense of the world’ (Hall et al. 1978, p. 54; Harcup & O’Neill 2001). By examining the discursive context in which news values are constructed, the ideological determinants that govern news values can be illuminated and debated.

1.5 Scope of the study

This study is an effort to shine a spotlight on those responsible for the cultural reproduction of negative representation of refugees—journalists themselves. My own Honours research (Hall 2002a) and subsequent publication in the mainstream Press (Hall 2002b) shows significant evidence of human rights violations in Woomera Detention Centre, provided from both refugees themselves and staff working inside the centre during that period.

The study is limited to the structured observation of only three journalists, and will not involve the researcher ‘participating in the social life of journalists’ as evident in participant observatory methods (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). It still seeks however, to critically examine the development and application of norms within a framework of the decision making process surrounding what is deemed ‘newsworthy’. It will undertake structured observation of journalists engaged in a news factor selection test, which will be used to ‘set

up' the situation in order to both capture the important features of a more naturalistic setting while allowing the journalists to be observed over a shorter time frame.

The use of structured observation of discursive news factor identification and coding will allow preliminary analysis of the role of news values in the frame-building process, as well as which types of frames result from factors such as professional values, content, form and normative routines. *The Australian's* coverage of Villawood Detention Centre over a four year period (2003-2006) will be analysed, placing focus on a popular 'leading' newspaper, and thus does not examine the media output of regional and daily newspapers. If economic imperatives are found to be a determinant of anti-refugee sentiment, then it could be assumed that different scales of newsworthiness would appear for different types of newspapers, each with varying psychographic/socioeconomic markets.

Further, what is valid for print media, in this case *The Australian*, may not necessarily be valid for other media outlets such as radio, television, and the Internet. Organisational constraints and economic pressures may be different and non-commercial media could have different dynamics, internally as well as with their audiences, than profit-driven outlets such as *The Australian*. Therefore the findings from this research should be seen as introductory. Only further research encompassing a range of other media can determine whether and to what extent the present study's conclusions are more widely applicable.

This study examines coverage of refugee issues, which is a topic that is frequently examined in published research both domestically and internationally. While findings related to anti-refugee bias may be able to be transferred to other marginalised groups, this study does not reveal whether journalists will privilege the 'controversial' in the same way when applied to other topics and issues. The limited time-frame of three years in this study could be extended to a longer period in order to examine the potential influence of different federal governments.

Further, the findings of this research are only applicable to the reporting of Villawood Detention Centre and, as such, do not encompass other domestic detention centres. However, it should be noted that research up to this point (Bessant 2002; Bishop 2003; Klocker & Dunn 2003), seems to indicate that reporting of refugee detention is fairly standard and uniform across mainstream media and, within such a frame, tends to focus on *conflict*, *drama*, and

controversy. The methodology does not incorporate interviews with refugees themselves. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, this research effort, for the most part, gives priority to the construction of the theory of news. Secondly, there is already much information to draw upon about the conditions in relation to detention centres and, as a by product, the social life and daily experiences of those detained (Hall 2002a; Barrowclough 2009; Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission 2009; Refugee Action Committee 2009).

1.6 Overview of the study

This study is presented in five chapters. *Chapter One* introduces a framework for the research. It states the *Aim of the study*, which provides a context for the research and, further, emphasises the methodological limitations of current research in the field. It also provides a *Focus for the study*, which highlights the types of issues the research is concerned with, the type of media under analysis, and associated time frames under investigation. Importantly, it discusses the *Theoretical framework guiding the study*, which seeks to provide the reader with an insight into the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis - notably, how the research uses ‘interpretive community theory’ to both narrow the literature focus and, importantly, to guide methodological development and applications.

Chapter One also provides a *Scope of the study* which illuminates the project’s limitations, within a framework of preliminary recommendations for future research efforts. Importantly, the scope highlights how the study’s limitations impact the research findings and conclusions and, as such, to what degree the research outcomes can be applied to other media and topics.

Chapter Two defines the research focus within the framework of current literature.

Initially, it examines scholarly efforts in the specific field of refugee reporting, with specific focus on the tenets surrounding the myth of ‘objectivity’. It then puts forward a discussion of relevant writings on news frames, and builds a foundation for emphasising the methodological deficiencies of current studies in the field. Next, it provides a theoretical discussion of the normative rules governing journalistic practice, including an examination of news factor ‘criteria’, as evident in journalism text books, university training, and professional newsroom practice. Most importantly, it highlights how news values are translated into news frames, with particular focus on the theoretical underpinnings of the ‘immigration as problem’ frame.

The aim of the literature review is to identify and critically examine previous studies that have focused on how normative practice, such as the journalistic pursuit of ‘objectivity’ and news values, lead reporters to present refugee issues within certain frames. Providing such an analysis allows a framework to illuminate the contributions and limitations of current scholarly focus, while justifying my own approach to this study.

Chapter Three is the study’s methodology, and states the research orientation and design. Importantly, it examines current methodological approaches to news epistemologies, notably: news ethnography; journalists as interpretive communities; news values, and news frames. Such an examination provides a framework for justification of this study’s approach, which includes the structured observation of three journalists undertaking a news factor selection test.

In justifying this methodological approach, participant selection and sampling, ethical considerations and data analysis are provided in detail. Within this framework, the methodological relevance of the research procedures is discussed, with specific focus on the benefits of structured observation as a research tool. Methods of data analysis are put forward, which include how the recursive frame analysis and textual analysis will be used to guide the research outcomes.

Finally, the methodology provides justification of the choice of research procedures, and does so within a discussion of the limitations of current approaches to news value studies. It highlights the deficiencies of quantitative approaches to news work, by showing how they ignore the methodological implications of research (Cottle 2000; Zelizer 1993) which show that journalists learn about a community’s preferred interpretations through regular interaction with their journalistic colleagues.

Chapter Four presents the results and discussion. It explains how the transcript data was divided into ‘galleries’, in the interests of clarity and management of data. It highlights the relevance of such galleries within the context of the recursive frame analysis – which was designed to determine how the study’s participants were mutually shaping the meaning of ‘newsworthiness’ through their discourse.

Chapter Four presents key findings to the research, within the context of the theoretical underpinnings in Chapter Two, 'The Literature Review'. Results from the recursive frame analysis of the transcript data are discussed in accordance with key themes and sub-themes. Next, the findings are concluded with a textual analysis of the articles under investigation, incorporating the results of the news factor selection test and recursive frame analysis.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the findings from both the recursive frame analysis and the textual analysis. The purpose of the summary is to draw conclusions and to crystallise the data for the reader. The summary is designed to encapsulate whether the research orientation has proved productive in answering key research questions. Within such a framework, it will highlight the relevance of using interpretive community theory and framing analysis to provide insight into how journalists' interpretations are applied to refugee understanding and representation. It also returns to the aim of the research for the purpose of providing an overview of the findings, while illuminating the broader implications of this study with regard to journalism theory and its application.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Refugee reporting

A recurrent theme within research findings from investigations into the media's portrayal of ethnic affairs is continual stereotyping (Turner 2003), biased and sometimes inaccurate coverage (Mares 2002), and, just as disturbing, a distinct lack of representation of immigration and related issues (see Romano 2002). Research has revealed that the media have both (under-) and (mis-) represented those asylum seekers who are now incarcerated in one of more than five different detention centres operating in Australia (Gale 2004; Mares 2002). Scholarly investigations have focused on textual analysis and the problems of misrepresentation (Lygo 2004; Minns & Coghlan 2005). Such studies have used methods such as critical discourse analysis and reception analysis to show the intersection between notions of identity and the representation of asylum seekers and refugees (Burke 2002; Gale 2004).

Most research has focused on the shortcoming of journalists in fulfilling their *fourth estate role* of 'watchdog' over the government. These analyses of shortcomings have been embedded in cultural theory, notably theories of racism and xenophobia, and include analyses of the media's unprecedented antagonism to Muslim-Australians as members of the national community, and its role in excluding refugees through the production and reproduction of 'othering' discourses (Gale 2004; Turner 2003).

Australian analyses of media representations of refugees suggest that media discourses criminalise asylum seekers in order to justify the on-going exclusion by the Australian Government (Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley 1999; Dixon 2002; Pickering 2001; Saxton 2003; Slattery 2003). Such studies have maintained that the media construct specific 'facts' in their reporting and are influential in terms of the ideologies and practices of othering within a society. Discourse analysis undertaken by Saxton (2003) concluded that media representations of asylum seekers as illegal, non-genuine and threatening were worked up in news reports to legitimise government actions and public opinion concerning the exclusion of asylum seekers from Australia. Such representations, according to Saxton, function to justify oppressive nationalist practices by constructing them as acts of protection against threat from

a hostile or self-interested other. Within such a framework, exclusion would be difficult to justify if asylum seekers were represented as legitimate or like 'us'.

Haynes, Devereux and Breen (2006) analysed media discourse on refugees across the world, with particular focus on deconstructing negative coverage. They highlight a range of negative frames in international media discourse, with special focus on the illegitimacy frame, which is identified as being powerful in its capacity to define 'in' and 'out' group boundaries. According to the authors, it is characterised by a dominant message that asylum seeking as a system is inherently lacking in legitimacy and that all asylum seekers are therefore illegitimately resident in a host nation. In Australia, there is much evidence to support the existence of this frame (Dixon 2002; Klocker & Dunn 2003; Pickering 2001; Slattery 2003; Turner 2003), despite Australia's obligation to international treaties which oblige it, in certain circumstances, to refrain from returning non-citizens to their country of origin if their basic human rights are likely to be seriously violated in that country (UNHCR 2008).

According to a range of scholars (Mares 2002; Noble 2002; Perera 2002; Taylor 2001), asylum seeking is frequently represented in the media as something to which Australians are 'subjected', something they are, in essence, victims of rather than signatories to. Taylor (2001) notes that this discourse, reproduced by the media, focuses on the belief that the exercise of tight immigration control is all that stands between us and 'chaos'. Within this framework, there is a pervasive tendency to describe asylum seekers arriving without authorisation as 'queue jumpers' and, not surprisingly, this description encourages considerable public hostility towards those seeking asylum (Mummery & Rodan 2003; Rapley 1998; Richardson 2001).

Research to date has revealed that the journalistic framing of the refugee issue has shaped its politics, defining what counts as 'problems' and constraining the debate to a narrow set of rules (Mares 2002; Perera 2002; Romano 2002). Framing analyses of refugee reporting have included focus on the linguistic dimension of the marginalisation of asylum seekers (Clyne 2003; Macken-Horarik 2003). These studies have examined the lexical manifestations of refugee representation, and how strategies such as the use of language with negative connotations have the potential to directly impact reader interpretation. Linguistic framing is evident in the refugee debate in the use of terms such as 'illegal immigrant', and 'boat people' - and that these expressions are not neutral. However, studies to date have not used a

method which is able to examine the connection between this negative framing of the issue and journalistic loyalty to standard norms of practice.

2.2 The myth of ‘objectivity’

There has been much acknowledgment by journalism scholars of the problems with ‘objectivity’ (White 1996¹; Itule & Anderson 1994). In response to the recognition of these shortcomings, journalism training now emphasises ‘balance’, which is seen to be best achieved through providing two or more competing claims of any given issue (Hailey, Lawton & Haines 2000; Gelbspan 1997). Central to these notions of balance is the journalistic reliance on ‘credible’ and ‘reliable’² sources for information (Conley 2005; Fogg 2005). The balance norm declares that if you cannot tell what is true, then be sure to include all possible truth claims in the story. The reporter need not determine who is telling the truth (and who is not). By including a variety of viewpoints, the reporter instead declares that ‘the truth is out there somewhere’ (Dunwoody 2005; Boykoff 2005; Tuchman 1978).

The journalistic norm of objectivity requires that information should be objective in the sense of being accurate, honest, sufficiently complete, true to reality and separating fact from opinion (McQuail 2000). Central to this notion of accuracy is the belief that it is possible to determine objective truth in isolation from the cognitive functions we as ‘knowers’ possess (Galtung, 1996). Therefore, journalists as ‘objective’ observers are supposed to be able to use language to report on events in a way that reflects the way the world is. This objectivist approach to language sees linguistic expressions as getting their meanings only ‘via their capacity to correspond or failure to correspond, to the real world or some possible world’ (Lakoff 1987, p. 167).

This approach assumes that the mind can function as a mirror of nature, and human reason is correct, ‘when it accurately mirrors the logical relations in the objective world’ (Lakoff 1987, p. 162). While journalism educators acknowledge the impossibility of a totally objective observer (White 1996, p. 174), White’s claim that ‘Some stories need little sourcing if most

¹ Sally White is a journalism educator whose text *Reporting in Australia* (1996) has over recent years, been used as a standard text in a variety of Australian universities, such as the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Queensland, and the Queensland University of Technology. The text can be described as an introduction to the student of journalism the basic techniques and rules of the practices of journalism.

² Following journalism training, such criterion is judged by a range of factors including but not limited to: comparing information about the same topics across multiple sources; referral from other sources; ‘fact’ checking; gathering supplementary evidence; imputing facts through familiarity with official organisations/procedures (Fogg 2005; Conley 2005; Hirst & Patching 2005).

information comes from your own observation and initiative or double-checked facts' (White, 1996, p.43) does however assume the adequacy of the objectivist approach to language.

This highlights the close relationship between objectivism and subjectivism. As stated by Lakoff & Johnson (1980, p. 189), 'Objectivism and subjectivism need each other in order to exist. Each defines itself in opposition to the other and sees the other as the enemy'. For journalistic practice, while objectivity is the dominant paradigm, it does coexist with subjectivism. While the pursuit of journalistic 'objectivity' requires that journalists report news as a series of verifiable 'facts' (White 1996, p. 44), the pursuit of balance through the practice of reporting 'two or more competing claims' (White 1996, p. 216), highlights the acknowledgment that it is impossible to 'rise above our subjective limitations and to achieve understanding from a universally unbiased point of view' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 187). The result: on one hand, the acknowledgment that it is *impossible* to give a *unitary definitive* account of reality, thus the practice of the pursuit of journalistic 'balance'; and on the other hand, the continued pursuit of '*objectivity*' through reducing the chance of bias derived from a reporter's subjectivity by relying on only 'reliable and verifiable sources for *facts*' (White 1996, p. 47).

In the absence of an *objectively* correct description to define refugees, journalists use a variety of terms such as 'illegal immigrant', 'refugee', 'illegal refugee' and so on, in an effort to 'provide balance through offering both points of view' (White 1996, p. 217). The benefit of such a norm within the contested arena is that it declares that if you cannot tell what's true, then be sure to include all possible truth claims in the story. 'Lobbying a variety of viewpoints into the public domain sits well with a society that values the marketplace of ideas so, again, the reporter has done good work' (Dunwoody 2005, p. 90).

While journalism educators accept that 'a totally objective observer is an impossibility' (White 1996, p. 174), White's claim that 'Reporters should avoid using *connotative words* when the judgement they imply cannot be substantiated' (White 1996, p.74) does indicate an objectivist conception of meaning. This journalistic practice for favouring 'denotative words' over 'connotative words' (White 1996, p. 173), induces what is known as 'the literal figurative distinction' (Lakoff 1987, p. 172). The journalistic preference for 'denotative words as they are unambiguous and value-free' (White 1996, p. 173) assumes that 'literal' expressions can be produced to 'fit reality, that is, to be capable of being objectively true or

false' (Lakoff 1987, p. 172). This view of meaning, then, holds that words are objectively existing entities and thus have 'correct definitions — definitions that are objectively correct as a matter of institutional fact' (Lakoff 1987, p. 172).

In the absence of any *objectively* correct definition for those awaiting a decision regarding the visa application process, the media is alternating the terms 'illegal immigrant' and 'refugee' in an effort to describe this group and, as such, still being loyal to the dichotomy of literal and figurative meanings. Following this objectivist approach to language then, choosing to alternate between a range of terms does not 'imply journalistic judgement' (White 1996, p. 174), because the meanings of the terms are treated as *equivalent*, thus 'fairness and balance' (White 1996, p. 174) is seen to be achieved. The result — a demonstration of the belief that words are objectively existing entities and there is then *no investigation* or *discussion* of the *complex processes* surrounding those awaiting a decision regarding the visa application process.

Categories can indeed support and encourage specific actions and, in particular, marginalising practices (Jakubowicz et al. 1994; Van Dijk 1991). However, scholars have consistently overlooked that, by choosing not to focus on the technical aspects of categorisation, journalists, in the interests of 'balance', can more easily avoid appearing to take sides personally and politically. Journalists can interchange/alternate between terms such as *illegal immigrant*, *refugee* and *asylum seeker*, without laborious research into the substance of complex categorisations. In this instance, categorisation is seen as a necessary strategy for dealing with both the fundamental principles surrounding 'objectivity', and with the otherwise overwhelming amounts of data.

By treating 'refugee' as being equivalent to 'illegal immigrant', the media does not account for the special interests of the Government. That is, it has no way of accounting for those interests which are able to use particular terms to their own political and social advantage. By alternating between a range of terms, in an attempt to 'keep their distance from the ideas or statements of the people being reported' (White 1996, p. 170), the media is reaffirming the ideology of consensus, and this is first and foremost a *linguistic practice*. Importantly, this consensus, which assumes that refugees are a threat to law and order, is positioned on a set of values and beliefs — not 'facts'.

2.2.1 Interpretive communities

Research has documented how it is that the *socialisation of the news room* and the *preferences of editors* and so on, all combine to impact the selection of articles of publication (Eason 1986; Schudson 2001). Studies have shown that journalists belong to communities that are constituted through shared formal training and common professional values and practices (Donsbach 1981), as well as common narratives that shape communal interpretations of social reality (Berkowitz 2000). Journalists learn both at university and in the newsroom what it means to be a good journalist who serves the public interest. The relevance of journalistic discourse in determining what reporters do, informal contacts among them, and the centrality of narrative and storytelling, are all dimensions of journalistic practice that are not addressed in general discussions of the profession, yet help unite reporters (Berkowitz 2000; Zelizer 1993).

An interpretive communities' framework places journalists at the centre of news and suggests the relevance of analysing the commonalities of frame choice. Australian refugee studies have mostly downplayed or ignored the rules and traditions of journalistic story telling. Angela Romano (2002) is an exception. A proponent of public journalism³, she recognised the limitations inherent in the journalistic narrative in her study of journalism's role in mediating public conversation on asylum seekers and refugees in Australia. Using both quantitative content analysis and qualitative focus groups with advocacy groups, Romano's findings indicated that citizens need more information that would enable them to consider issues of current public concern, such as the 'legitimacy' of asylum seekers, the potential security and other risks relating to immigration, and the global processes leading to changes in the nature of refugee arrivals.

Romano, however, did not directly question the tenets of 'objectivity' and news values in a theoretical sense, nor did she undertake interviews with journalists. Her study showed that journalists' over-reliance on sources from government and, to a lesser extent, civil society institutions, reduces the likelihood that they will use the narratives and frames that may assist the public in turning antagonistic debates about asylum seekers and refugees into more

³ This movement is concerned to steer journalism towards reinvigorating public life which many see as excluding ordinary citizens and devaluing the need to inform them. The public journalism critique challenges a number of values held dear by journalists - Notably, the value of conflict as the primary narrative device; the validity of experts and absolutists as the primary voices for framing public issues; the convenient self deception that stories somehow frame themselves arising from facts which journalists merely need to observe and report. (Merritt 1998)

constructive deliberation. Sources outside government struggle for media attention because, as one stakeholder said, ‘they are reluctant or unable to expose individuals to media scrutiny, so don’t meet the media demand for talent or a photo op’ (Romano 2002, p. 51).

Through empirical investigation of the discursive process surrounding journalists’ news selection, this thesis argues that any alternative framing could not be contemplated without acknowledgement of the potential for bias resulting from journalism as ‘practice’.

Researchers have consistently overemphasised *deliberate* bias while underestimating the bias inherent in *standard newsgathering practices*. Researchers have conceptualised the bias with journalism principles within a framework of journalistic news values. However singular approaches to objects of inquiry such as content analysis (Bell 1993; Klocker & Dunn 2003; Poindexter, Smith & Heider 2003) and textual analysis (Lule 1998; Van Acker & Hollander 2003) have failed to take into account the intersubjectivity of reporting and, importantly, to examine how reporters not only use discourse to generate meaning about journalism, but do so to address elements of practice overlooked by the formalised cues of the profession (Zelizer 1993).

Central to Romano’s (2002) thesis was the call for a change in traditional reporting practices, to more *humane* and *just* journalism. However, her failure to discuss how this adjustment to standard reporting could be reconciled with the tenets governing objectivity and news values, exposes the potential limitation in this and a number of similar studies (Lule 1998; McFarlane & Hay 2003; Poindexter, Smith & Heider 2003). That is, while conceptualising bias within a framework of news values and objectivity, scholars often do not recognise how journalism derives a great deal of its legitimacy from the postulate that it is able to present true pictures of reality (eg. Schudson 2001; Wien 2005). As reaffirmed by Wien (2005) and Dunwoody (2005), no one would have use for journalism if the journalists themselves asserted that the dissemination of news consisted of false pictures of reality.

The value given to ‘objectivity’ can be identified by a range of different measures. The dominance of this value is highlighted by the methodologies employed to uncover news value bias, which centres on uncovering how the ‘verification of the truth’, and the values of ‘neutrality’ and of ‘objectivity’, are the most important values of the profession (Johnson & Kelly 2003; Tsfaty & Livio 2008). Studies undertaken within an interpretive communities’ framework (Berkowitz & TerKeurst 1999; Myers 2004; Parameswaran 2006; Zelizer 1993),

have shown journalists' allegiance to this norm through speeches, conferences, formal codes of professional ethics, textbooks in journalism education, debates and discussions in professional journals, and interviews of journalists' opinions. Ethnographers' observations of journalists at work and the occupational routines to which they adhere, also reveal how this value was primary for journalists, even if they are aware of its weaknesses (Eckman & Lindolf 2003; Heider 1996). The resistance displayed by reporters when adherents to the norm are openly challenged or criticised is also identified by scholars as evidence of its pervasiveness (Tuchman 1972; Zelizer 1993).

When investigating bias resulting from the disciplinary practices of journalists, objectivity and news values cannot be analysed in isolation from the discursive processes surrounding journalism decision-making. It is those events which meet the criteria governing 'newsworthiness' which direct journalists to ask questions which will enable them to obtain the 'facts' – the who, what, when, where and why (White 1996, p. 173). It is the promotion of 'objectivity' in journalistic terms, which is made possible through the pursuit of news values, with both these principles combining to severely constrain the choice of story generation.

A range of studies focusing on refugee issues have highlighted the media's preoccupation with 'events' such as 'riots' and other spontaneous or seemingly 'unpredictable' events, such as: the race-related rioting in several Sydney suburbs in 2005, termed by the media the 'Cronulla riots'; the Norwegian tanker, which took aboard 438 people from a sinking wooden vessel headed for Australia, termed the 'Tampa Crisis'; and the so-called 'Children Overboard Affair', whereby refugees were accused of 'throwing their children overboard' into the ocean in an attempt to pressure the crew of an Australian naval ship to pick them up and take them to Australia. These investigations have almost always centred scholarly focus on the problems of journalists failing to provide comprehensive analysis of the many aspects of any given topic (Kabir 2007; Kell 2005; Perera 2002; Mares 2002). An informed investigator could be expected to provide context and discussion of the complex processes surrounding any given issue. However, the reporter is more typically an uninformed lay person without adequate data and whose information is gained only *after the fact* from *quoted* attribution (Reeb Jnr 1999).

Journalists are trained to achieve objectivity by pursuing accuracy, clarity and brevity in news writing (White 1996). This ‘factual’ reporting leads to news manifesting in three main ways: ‘regular events, managed events and spontaneous events’ (Conley & Lamble 2006⁴; White 1996). However, the media’s reliance on ‘in the moment events of news’, (Carson 2001; Madigan & Dickens 2001) does not suit issues that have taken time to unfold or are ongoing. Discussion of the wider contextual issues that provide perspective on issues such as the ‘Tampa Crisis’ are often seen as outside the parameters of normative news reporting.

Contrary to the way it is reported in the media, there is not an isolated event that acted or acts as a catalyst for the arrival in Australia of refugees. Rather, this issue is a result of complex processes involving a decline in world living standards, an increase in civil wars, economic exploitation, harsh sanctions imposed by western powers, and the pressures of oppressive regimes (Refugee Council of Australia 2008). Any interpretive analysis, which would be required in order to highlight the complexities surrounding ongoing international events and issues, may be incompatible with journalistic notions of objectivity. According to journalism educators such as Conley & Lamble, journalists have a duty to keep dominant news values in focus and not aggravate emotional circumstances for some perceived reader benefit (2006, p.101).

A range of Australian researchers (Dixon 2002; Macken-Horaik 2003; Mares 2002; Slattery 2003) over recent years have investigated journalistic notions of fairness and accuracy, within the context of the ‘Children Overboard Affair’. On October 7 2001, then Australian Prime Minister John Howard, then Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock and then Defence Minister Peter Reith, accused Iraqi asylum seekers intercepted north of Christmas Island of ‘throwing their children overboard’ into the ocean in an attempt to pressure the crew of an Australian naval ship to pick them up and take them to Australia. These claims were apparently based on naval reports. A few days later, the vessel was sabotaged and began to sink. Photographic images and video footage of this later event were publicly released by the government, but with information that these images were from the events of October 7, when children were allegedly being thrown overboard in an attempt to blackmail the Australian navy. They were in fact, images of adults and children fleeing their sinking vessel in an attempt to save their

⁴ Conley & Lamble (2006) are the authors of *The Daily Miracle*, which is defined as a comprehensive guide for journalism students, providing a store of sound hands-on advice grounded in lucid theory. It is used as a standard text in a range of Australian universities, such as the University of Southern Queensland, and the University of the Sunshine Coast.

own lives. According to a range of research the initial story, as released by the Howard government, appeared to demonise the asylum seekers, depicting them as evil and inhuman (Mares 2002; McCallum 2002; Perera 2002).

Undertaking textual analysis of a selection of print news coverage of the issue, Slattery (2003) explores the 'children overboard' event as an example of agenda setting, whereby the issue was used by the Government as a political tool which, with the assistance of the media, was used to promote a continuing threat of 'others' to the nation in order to gain support of Government policy and legitimise national security. Slattery provides many examples in her study whereby the media circulated unsubstantiated and verbatim claims by the government in relation to the incident. Slattery (2003, p.99) rightly states how the Government was able to use the media to rally public support against those seeking asylum. What requires elaboration, however, is how this bias occurs within the context of the media's loyalty to objectivity and news values.

Within the political economy paradigm, the media's reliance on institutional sources, as evident in the 'Children Overboard Affair' (Dixon 2002; Slattery 2003), favours elite definitions of events, as large bureaucratic and business organisations have well-versed public relations departments skilled in manipulating the attitudes of the public. They are aware of the normative criteria of news values and, as such, are able to issue news releases and time press conferences which allow focus on an event and which, by journalistic standards, would be deemed 'newsworthy'. Less formal groups without economic resources and journalistic credibility are disadvantaged. To seek comment from less 'authoritative' and less 'reliable' sources would require, in the pursuit of objectivity, extra time in double-checking facts, which would leave open the possibility of 'inaccurate' and 'defamatory' reporting.

Central to the notion of balance is that journalists strive for accuracy and fairness in all reporting. Reliance on less familiar sources would require costly research and careful *fact* checking. In economic terms, it is more cost efficient to rely on what is presumed 'credible' sources, rather than use extra resources in checking and investigating claims from those who are, in journalistic terms, '*less credible*'. This potential bias from systemic factors is inextricably linked to the normative rules that govern standard journalistic practice. Journalism is a discipline that operates within restrictive time constraints which are

limitations that both support and inform the narrative form of news. This form encompasses notions of ‘objectivity, tightly written and cohesive copy’ (Conley & Lamble 2006; White 1996) and the development of an internal logic designed to seek out stories which are considered ‘*timely, significant, and of interest* for a given community’ (Harcup & O’Neill 2001; Schwarz 2006). For example, economic imperatives which dictate fast turn-around of copy both promote and inform the media’s reliance on event reporting. Investigation of ongoing processes that surround an issue is neither congruent with ‘objectivity’, ‘due to reporters adversarialism’ (Gauthier 2000; Schudson 2001), nor agreeable with the limited time restrictions operating within the news room.

Contemporary news writers are limited by the narrative form, which insists that the journalistic subject is the official statement delivered at a narrowly defined time and place (Koch 1991; Reeb Jnr 1999). Within such a framework, the false doctrines governing ‘objectivity’ – ‘an unemotional tone, a detached neutrality, and balance, do not allow any principled basis for either evaluating or discussing the actors and events surrounding the issue’ (Reeb Jnr 1999, p. 89). Despite the shortcomings of this conception of objectivity in the practical circumstances of news presentation, it permits elite perspectives to pose as ‘objective’ and therefore valid. ‘*Children were being thrown overboard in an attempt to blackmail the Australian navy*’ and even if these images are false and they are images of adults and children fleeing their sinking vessel in an attempt to save their own lives, today’s story will state as fact the opinions of then Prime Minister John Howard, then Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock, and then Defence Minister Peter Reith, ‘*that it is the refugees themselves that are the immediate culprits*’ (Dovez & Forbes 2001; Ludlow 2001). ‘No matter how foolish and inaccurate those statements may be upon investigation and examination, the narrative necessity of “who said precisely what at a specific time and place” has restricted the reporter’s job to that of official transcriber’ (Koch 1991, p. 130). It should be acknowledged that while Koch’s views highlight the potential problems with ‘objectivity’, his views are only true if the reporter fails to qualify the “foolish and inaccurate facts”. Even then, a reporter who has the power to privilege some facts over others in terms of placement within a story is doing more than merely transcribing.

2.3 News frames

While there is no single definition of news frame or framing, researchers all indicate similar characteristics and qualities as being central to framing (Entman 2003; Neuman, Just & Crigler 1992; Scheufele 2006; Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). According to Neuman, Just & Crigler (1992), news frames are conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information. Entman (2003) defines framing as capable of being either ‘deliberate’ or ‘unintentional’, yet in both cases is the deployment of specific properties of a news narrative which encourage people to perceive and think about events to develop particular understandings of them. According to Entman (2003, p. 53), salience and selection are essential elements of framing — ‘Salience makes the message noticeable, meaningful or memorable’. The selection process involves ignoring some pictures in order to emphasise others. Therefore, what is excluded is at least as important as what is included, as the audience is not privy to what information is required to develop alternative perspectives. In the case of refugee reporting, such an absence of emphasis results in significant ramifications, particularly in relation to an ill-informed public, who continue to provide on-going support to mandatory detention of refugees who do not arrive in Australia through ‘legal’ channels.

According to Scheufele (2006, p.66), the way stories are packaged contributes to meaning by telling people not only *what* to think about the news but also *how* to think about it. By framing an event in one way rather than another, the media can influence the way people think about it and, later, remember it. For example, when presenting refugee issues, the media can elect to show the local/Australian perspective, and *elaborate frames* about border security, terrorism, and a suspicion of foreigners in general, and *exclude images* showing the conditions that refugees are fleeing from, and the ongoing loss and failures experienced by those forced to flee their homeland.

Scheufele (2006, p.68) defines framing as both a macro level and micro level construct. As a micro construct, Scheufele describes framing as how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions (2006). Conceptual links between the role of frames in media reporting and the pursuit of journalistic news values show how traditional values such as *conflict*, *prominence*, *human interest* and *consequences* translate into news frames (Liebes 2000; Price, Tewksbury & Power 1997). Within this context, newsworthiness

is not independent of framing; rather it is a function of framing. Five news frames have been identified in many studies on framing and framing effects: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequence, and morality (Lawrence 2000; Neuman, Just & Crigler 1992; Semetko & Valkenberg 2000).

On the individual cognitive level, Scheufele (2006, p.67) defines a frame as a set of schemata for different aspects of reality. They emerge in newsroom discourse and in exchange with other (media) discourses; that is, they are not idiosyncratic but *shared* among those working in a newsroom. A range of research shows that news report structures (media frames) correspond to these newsroom frames and schemata (Berkowitz & TerKeurst 1999; Liebes 2000; Parameswaran 2006). According to Scheufele (2006, p.67), on an individual level, one should speak of journalist's frames (and schemata), while on the level of newsroom discourse, one should speak of newsroom frames (and schemata). These are more or less shared among those journalists working in the same environment. Within this framework, as part of identifying the bias associated with news values, this thesis seeks to examine the *discursive actions* of journalists as *key players* in the spread and activation of frames.

As a macro construct, Shoemaker & Reese (1996) discuss 'framing' in terms of the way journalists present information that resonates with existing underlying schema among their audience. Frames have been shown to shape public perceptions of political issues and institutions (McLeod & Detenber 1999; Saris 1997). Australian research has revealed a relationship between the Australian public's views on immigration, and the recurrence of the 'immigration problem' frame in the media (Bessant 2002; Mares 2002). This does not indicate that reporters try to intentionally deceive their audiences. Despite Australian research into refugee issues conceptualising such negative frames as reflective of journalists inherent racism (Gale 2004; Hage 1998), it is maintained in this thesis that framing for journalists is a necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue, given the constraints of their respective airtime and commitment to journalistic objectivity (Gans 1979; Koch 1990). As stated by Konig (2008), frames are not consciously manufactured but are unconsciously adopted in the course of communicative processes.

Investigations into the narrative rules of news, those limiting context by place, time and actor's role, show a narrative pattern whereby journalists are confined to a specific event in which only a minimal number of actors are involved in a narrowly-bounded, sanctioned event

(Koch 1990; Reeb Jnr 1999). Within such a context, journalists can only, at best, in the interests of balance, seek to give two or more competing claims equal representation (Conley & Lamble 2006). Frames, in other words, become invaluable tools for presenting relatively complex issues, such as refugee issues, efficiently and in ways that make them accessible to lay audiences because they play to existing cognitive schema (Scheufele 2006). For example, the official/government frame of mandatory detention is that if ‘we’ do not discourage refugees, Australia will experience a ‘floodtide’ or ‘waves’ of displaced people. Thus detention centres such as Villawood not only safeguard Australians from the immediate dangers of ‘unauthorised arrivals’, but also provide national security by protecting ‘us’ from an ‘inevitable deluge’ of displaced foreigners.

Journalistic framing involves identifying a problem, assigning responsibility, considering ethical or moral implications, and recommending a solution (Entman 1993). The Immigration Problem Frame — a frame that imposes a *structure* on the current situation, defines a set of ‘*problems*’ with that situation, and circumscribes the possibility for ‘*solutions*’. The moral implications feature of a frame can serve as an indicator of the moral judgements the concerned groups of actors make about the issue. These value judgements cannot be neglected, as they can act as strong indicators of how the issue comes to be presented (Nickels 2002). For instance, were an actor to evaluate all refugees as being, say ‘illegitimate’, he/she would frame the refugee question in different terms from an actor who evaluated all refugees as, say, people in genuine need of help and protection.

Studies that have focused on the media’s preoccupation with race riots and conflict (Frow 2003; Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2006; Mares 2001; Redden 2003; Turner 2003), have often relied heavily on qualitative discussion, most often textual analysis, without empirical acknowledgement of the *relationship* between this negative framing of refugees and the role of normative news gathering routines in this process. As such, researchers have not provided adequate examination of how the pursuit of normative news values, which is central to journalism as ‘practice’, both precedes and informs schemas, beliefs, and attitudes, pivotal to the ‘immigration problem’ frame. Van Acker & Hollander (2003) examined media releases from the Department of Immigration from 1999 to 2001. Undertaking textual analysis, the authors argue that the Government drew on a range of communication techniques producing political messages that constructed asylum seekers as criminals and a threat to Australian security. The findings revealed that figures on the numbers of arrivals, applications for

asylum, approvals, appeals and repatriations were difficult to find and, importantly, almost impossible to compare.

The authors did not make a connection between how it is the traditional merits of ‘objectivity’, including ‘detachment, neutrality and letting the facts speak for themselves’ (Reeb Jnr 1999), that allowed vague generalisations concerning ‘illegality’ and an absence of hard comparative data, to be disseminated, most often uncritically. As noted by Van Acker & Hollander (2003, p.104-105), the policy frames put forward by the Government, which centred on ‘people trafficking’, ‘boat people’, and refugees as being ‘undeserving’, are critical in defining the problem, predicting its probable *consequences* and delineating its solution. However, of crucial relevance is that such framing precedes and informs the doctrines governing ‘newsworthiness’, which gives significant preference to events, ‘particularly those fulfilling the requirements of *consequence, timeliness, prominence, and conflict*’ (Conley & Lamble 2006; White 1996).

Researchers studying media frames have used content analysis (see Semetko & Valkenberg 2000), textual analysis (see Entman 2003), and comparative analysis (see Baylor 1996; Neveu 2002; De Vreese & Semetko 2001). Up to this point however, framing studies have neglected to look behind the scenes and make inferences from the symbolic patterns in news texts (Baylor 1996; Lawrence 2000; Mcleod & Detenber 1999). For example, Van Gorp (2005) in his study of refugees in the Belgian Press sought to determine to what extent the victim frame⁵ and intruder frame⁶ are used to cover the issue of illegal immigration. Twelve individuals coded the selected articles and, in order to better define the frames, the researchers relied on homogeneity analysis by means of alternating least squares (HOMALS), an implementation of multiple correspondence analysis that is suitable for visualising a multivariate data structure that is made up of categorical variables. According to Van Gorp (2005), this method identified which frames appeared in the same news articles.

⁵ Victim Frame: If one considers an asylum seeker as a vulnerable victim ‘who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence because of a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion’, the issue is resolved by the awareness that these people are in need of help, and that the United Nations Geneva Convention (1951) should be applied flexibly (Van Gorp 2005).

⁶ Intruder Frame: This frame suggests that policy options should try and discourage people from seeking asylum, and if they do seek asylum in another country, to send them back to their homeland. This frame is strongly linked to issues of protecting national identity and the level of prosperity from external threats (Van Gorp 2005).

Van Gorp (2005) found that, despite his efforts, he could not neutralise the impact of the researcher in framing research. Van Gorp took a ‘metacommunicative’ approach, whereby the extremities of the continuum are clearly defined: on the one hand asylum seekers can be perceived as innocent victims and on the other hand they can be perceived as criminals. While a range of studies have supported such a conceptualisation, (Harrell-Bond 1999; Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2004; Huysmans 2000), such parameters do little to exhibit the diversity of frames evident in the reporting of refugee issues and, importantly, do not adequately reveal the role of reporters in the spread and activation of those frames. That is, what type of information is provided by only establishing that refugee reports are framed in terms of either ‘asylum seeker as victim’ or ‘asylum seeker as criminal’? Of greater relevance is the substance of what is being said about the issue, and the role of this frame - building process in the development of generic frames as they appear in print.

In his analysis of two quality German newspapers, Bertram Scheufele (2006) explores the empirical potentials of the frame concept for examining news bias. Taking incidents of xenophobic attacks in Germany as examples, Scheufele shows that ‘newsroom frames’ can shift after key events have taken place, and that newly established frames (as extracted from the newspapers’ commentaries) shape the subsequent framing of news reporting. The empirical analysis consists of two parts. First, a qualitative study (frame analysis) identifies newsroom frames and schemata. Second, a framing analysis explores whether they correspond to news report structures, that is, to media frames. Scheufele (2006) identifies riots in 1991, and other similar incidents, as key events and, as a result, his frame analysis focuses on frame shifts caused by these key events. According to Scheufele, if key events really shape frames and schemata, their elements should occur in each phase of orientation immediately after each key event. Therefore, these frames and schemata should not reflect editorial tendencies or individualistic attitudes of journalists. For analysing commentaries published after each key event, a coding manual was constructed which was similar to qualitative content analysis. It used objects, causes, and consequences as coding heuristics. Coders had to answer ‘coding questions’ such as ‘Which causes for xenophobia are mentioned in the commentary?’ or ‘Which features of culprits are listed?’

The analysis of framing processes (second part of the study), explores whether newsroom frames and schemata that were previously established (by taking commentaries as an indicator), correlate with media frames in terms of routine news coverage subsequent to

phases of orientation. If, for example, journalists ask for reasons of an attack, they may select objects causally related to the attack in accordance with the attack schemata and causes schemata established in the newsroom.

In contrast to other forms of news bias research, such as ‘synchronisation’ (which means that the print media adapt their reporting with editorial lines, that is, pro/con tendencies), and the theory of instrumental actualisation (which assumes that in public conflict, journalists stress information favoring their own position (Kepplinger et al. 1989), framing research proposes that journalists prefer information that is consistent with their schemata (Entman 1993; Scheufele 2006). That is, the more attributes of a right-wing attack, for instance, coincide with the ‘slots’ of journalists’ attack schema in newsroom discourse the more likely they will report on this attack. Here the degree of schema fitting is substantial.

2.3.1 Limitations of current framing research

According to Scheufele (2006, p. 80), his analysis of only media discourse results in certain limitations. He argues that future studies should include more examination other than media discourse. ‘Participant observations and surveys among journalists would be adequate methodologies. This would provide an insight into the actual news production process’. As reaffirmed by Entman (1993, p. 52) ‘To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, moral evaluation, and /or treatment recommendation for the item described’. Entman’s notion of ‘communicating text’ allows for a range of texts and documents to be analysed’ (Nickels 2002). It is argued here that to focus on only refugee news reports when investigating how an issue is framed is to limit analyses to just the ‘news’ – ignoring how the issue comes to be understood by journalists themselves. According to scholars such as Tewksbury & Althaus (2000), if framing is defined this generally, it subsumes any persuasive effects under the ‘framing’ label and, as a result, removes any input that framing as a concept could make to a more developed and theoretical understanding of media usage and its effects.

Like traditional content analyses approaches to news value research (Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1970; Harcup & O’Neill 2001), most news bias research that conducts framing analyses has not used journalists to code test material (Baylor 1996; De Vreese &

Semetko 2001; Lawrence 2000; Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). Tsfati, Meyers & Peri (2006) are an exception, as they conducted surveys which showed that Israeli journalists have a clear, relatively uniform perception of what constitutes worthy journalism. The researchers also revealed that Israeli journalists and the Israeli public *diverged in their responses* regarding the criteria by which they defined high journalistic work. Given that only 20% of the surveyed reporters had formally studied journalism or communication, this suggests that on-the-job training and diffusion of professional norms and values through common discourse is sufficient to create shared professional beliefs among Israeli journalists.

Approaches that fail to use journalists as coders in their studies (Baylor 1996; Lawrence 2000; McLeod & Detenber 1999; Semetko & Valkenburg 2000; Van Gorp 2005) suffer from significant validity problems, as they have failed to acknowledge the centrality of the negotiation of meaning within professional communities in making news value judgements (Parameswaran 2006; Zelizer 1993). According to Fish (1980, p. 171), interpretive communities ‘produce texts and determine the shape of what is read’. Interpretive communities display certain patterns of authority, communication and memory in their dealings with each other (Degh 1972). The notion of the interpretive community has been mostly invoked in audience studies, where local understandings of a given text are arrived at differently by different communities (Lindlof 1988; Morley 1980; Radway 1984; Silverstone 1996).

However, research reveals (Berkowitz & TerKeurst 1999; Cecil 2002; Entman 2003; Zelizer 1993) that communicators themselves, including journalists, can be examined as an interpretive community. Riegert & Olsson’s (2007) study of the importance of ritual in crisis journalism, Parameswaran’s (2006) deconstruction of journalists’ inner tales of September 11 in trade publications, and Meyers’ (2008) investigation of Israeli journalists as agents of collective memory, all suggest the importance of generating meaning through discourse.

This study addresses this discursive making of meaning by using working journalists to both identify news factors and to measure the intensity of news factors in a variety of refugee-related articles. It is envisaged that the recording and observation of the discursive coding of news factors by participants will provide data which will justify and, as a result, contribute to the validity of the later recursive frame analysis of the discursive actions surrounding journalists’ decision-making processes. This aims to capture what Liebes (2000) labels ‘the

taken-for-grantedness' of the concept of 'news value' by reconstructing the sometimes uneasy process through which the choice of a particular story and its transformation into a news item is carried out.

Up to this point, framing studies (Baylor 1996; Lawrence 2000; De Vreese & Semetko 2001) have neglected the processes linking key variables such as group dynamics and ideology, meaning that they have focused much on inputs and outputs and little on the connections between the two. By undertaking structured observation in the research, this thesis embraces a sociological perspective. Within such a framework, it enables access to the community and, as such, examines how journalists' perceptions concerning news-making decisions are different from an outsider. The use of structured observation of a news factor selection test in this research allows analysis of the role of news values in the frame-building process, as well as 'which types of frames result from factors such as differing ideologies, professional values, content, form and organisational constraints and routines' (Scheufele 1999). Keeping in mind the shortcomings of current research in the field of framing processes, framing research in this thesis stresses that journalism narratives are performative, epistemological and not given to objective or value-neutral depiction (Scheufele 2004).

2.4 Normative rules governing journalistic practice

Journalistic decision-making is a multifaceted phenomenon that depends on a number of preconditions which are difficult to examine in a single theoretical approach or empirical investigation. When investigating journalistic news values, contemporary researchers direct their investigations using a range of quantitative and qualitative methods. Discourse analysis, content analysis, framing effects approach, cultivation studies, survey research, and two-component (or news factor) theory testing, all currently inform and contend with news value approaches to the study of the media (Chaudhary 2001; Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig 2003; McQuail 1992; Perkins & Starosta 2001; Scheufele 2004).

Walter Lippman (1922; 1990) first referred to the term 'news value' as the property of an event that determines its probability of becoming news, and introduced *unambiguity*, *relevance*, *sensationalism*, *proximity*, and *tacticity*, as features that promote news value to events (Lippman 1990, p. 230). European scholars (Galtung & Ruge 1965; Peterson 1979; Sande 1971) expanded on this idea, and provided separation between the notions of 'news

factors' and 'newsworthiness', both of which are independent variables assumed to predict the selection and the editorial emphasis of news items. A range of scholars have assessed the total news value of a news item (usually measured as the number and strength of all news factors that apply) and related it to presentation characteristics (Harcup & O'Neill 2001; Schwarz 2006). While not every individual factor can always be shown to impact selection in the expected direction, for the most part the results confirm the theories of news value research: *relevance*, *elite persons* (in some studies: *prominence*), *elite-nation*, *damage* (sometimes referred to as *aggression* or *conflict*), *proximity* and *continuity*, are shown to affect journalistic decision-making (Eilders 1997; Harcup & O'Neill 2001; Schulz 1976; Staab 1990).

News value research builds on the assumption that events with certain attributes, that can be described as news factors, have a better chance at passing the selective filter of the mass media than events without those attributes (Eilders 2006). However, when attempting to predict the publication chances of an event, the objective status of event characteristics comes into focus. Most news value research bases its research designs on content analysis (Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1965; Schwarz 2006), therefore any analysis of news factors only reveals the results of the *identification of news factors by coders*, who convert their own observations into discrete units that can be used to make inferences of the producers of media content. Within the context of research validity, this raises concerns about whether journalistic perceptions are assessed in the content analysis.

Understanding journalism as a profession has long been instrumental in comprehending journalistic processes and products. Zelizer writes, 'Defined as an ideological orientation toward work that is realised via skill, autonomy, training and education, testing of competence, organisation, codes of conduct, and licensing, the profession is seen as giving the journalists a sense of community' (1992, p.6). Journalists gain status through their work by acting 'professionally' and exhibiting pre-defined traits of the 'professional community' such as objectivity, news judgement, the selection of sources and the structure of news beats (Soloski 1989). Berkowitz and TerKeurst's (1999) identification of the relationship between journalists and news sources revealed that organisational policy and localised journalistic practice restrict journalistic interpretive variability and reduce the likelihood that autonomous journalistic interpretations will occur on a regular basis. 'For the most part, journalists cannot truly challenge news sources who are part of a community's dominant coalition, because

alternative interpretations are constrained beforehand by the norms of the workplace’ (Berkowitz and TerKeurst 1999, p. 128).

While studies have supported this interpretation, they have not adopted this operationalisation in their methodological frameworks. For example, Chaudhary (2001) used quantitative content analysis, compares an American and a Nigerian daily newspaper with regard to the proportion of negative versus positive news, as well as the dimensions of collectivism versus individualism. Twenty non-journalist coders were used to identify and record the geographic emphasis of the story, slant of the story, subject of the story, and type of story. Chaudhary (2001) provided no normative criteria to govern her content categories, except the slant of positive or negative. Chaudhary (2001) also provided no explanation of the framework for her development of content categories. Central to content analysis, is to present a set of categories for classifying media content relevant to the research question. Each variable and its set of values was identified as being independent of every other (Wimmer & Dominick 1991). Significant to this technique, is the provision of definitions relevant to each category. However, merely counting and making inferences from these quantitative results, does not allow making any connection between the findings and how they are interrelated to the broader framework of media practices and routines. For example, Chaudhary’s (2001) category of ‘negative’, raises the question, ‘negative for whom?’ Bad news for some might be good news for others, and the same logic can be applied to the category of ‘positive’.

Further, assuming that it is possible to identify correctly and objectively the factors within a news item, this would not explain why that story was selected above others. It does not provide a framework to investigate whether some of Chaudhary’s (2001) categories such as *humour* and *unpleasantness*, were fundamental to the subject matter or simply how the newspaper chose to write about it in that instance. It is unclear why the researcher did not incorporate categories such as famine, natural disaster, and military strife, given that this emphasis was identified as recurring in Chaudhary’s (2001) literature review of western coverage of the third world. Immersing herself in the data *before* the development of categories (Wimmer & Dominick 1991), may have enhanced the content category validity, and would have also allowed the researcher to make more revealing comparisons between her findings and that of similar studies.

Up to this point, news value research suggests a 'predictive pattern' of which events will and will not be reported, and informs us how stories may be treated, yet does not provide a complete explanation of all the irregularities of news composition. As a result, it is argued that any analysis of the bias resulting from news values should be highlighted by examining influence of the preferred meanings that most often develop socially through the commonly-shared interactions of members in interpretive groups (Fish 1980; Zelizer 1993). Further, such a conceptualisation goes a long way in illuminating the potential methodological problems associated with objectivist approaches such as content analysis.

Triangulation approaches (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006), which use multiple modes of data generation (Lindolf 1994), have also been regularly utilised for both empirical studies and theoretical thinking on news-making. Such an approach involves a comparative assessment of more than one form of evidence about the object of enquiry (Lindolf 1994). Recently, the work of German scholars Eilders (2006) and Kepplinger & Ehmig (2006) have investigated advancements in measuring news factors as well as the relevance of news factors for the selection and perception of the news by audiences. Their research shows that news factors not only determine journalistic selection but also guide the information processing of the audience.

Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006), provide an empirical test of the 'two-component theory' of news selection. Central to this theory is a distinction between (1) news factors as characteristics of news stories (2) news values as the journalists' assessment of the relevance of news factors, and (3) newsworthiness as the likelihood of a news story to be selected for publication. Based on these distinctions, the authors show that news selection (that is, newsworthiness) is not only explained by news factors, but also by the relevance criteria (that is, news values) assigned to the news factors by different media outlets.

It is assumed in Kepplinger and Ehmig's study (2006) that there is a linear relationship between the intensity of news factors and the newsworthiness of news stories. If (a) five news stories on a traffic accident have only one news factor, for example, damage, and if (b) its intensity varies between 0 (nobody killed) and 8 (two dozen killed), then (c) the newsworthiness of the individual news story depends on the intensity of the news factor given. However, this relationship has yet to be tested in a research environment that uses

working journalists as subjects. Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) used a laboratory setting that focused on prepared unpublished articles with mass communication students as subjects. Further, central to Kepplinger and Ehmig's (2006) study is the assumption that news factors will have different news values for various media outlets.

It is maintained here that the investigation of this assumption does not necessarily yield relevant data, as it is expected that context factors will have an impact on journalism practice (Deuze 2005; Esser 2004; Pfetsch 2004). For example, it is accepted that the weight of news factors will be mediated by factors such as the demographics of the audience and the geographical location which the paper serves. For example, it is not novel to assume that local newspapers will place more weight on events that occur close to home, or that tabloids will place more emphasis on entertainment and stories that focus on celebrity and people of notoriety. Also, the representation of, say, asylum seekers in any given coverage may focus on conflict, and the coverage of election campaigns may also exhibit conflict, most often evident in the pitting of candidates against each other to 'play up' aspects of controversy and tension and so on. However, this does not indicate that both issues are framed in the same manner. Therefore, it raises questions as to any perceived benefit of determining that the media has a preference for events containing 'conflict'. As reaffirmed by Nickels (2002, p.229), what is of benefit is to gain understanding of how an issue comes to be understood by key actors; thus approaching any studies from only the perspective of generic news values does not seem to be of great informational value.

The recognition by scholars of journalists' interest in immediacy (Eilders 1996; Harcup & O'Neill 2001; Schwarz 2006) and search to provide the latest developments, has resulted in researchers hypothesising that the more news factors an event satisfies, the higher probability it will become news (Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1965). These event characteristics as perceived by journalists correspond to respective selection criteria in the cognitive system of the journalist (Eilders 1996). The single characteristics are called news factors, and it is assumed within this conceptualisation that events have certain characteristics that make them newsworthy. News factors thus are perceived event characteristics that serve as selection criteria.

However, there are epistemological difficulties with notions of an 'event'. The parameters of an 'event' do not exist in real terms, but rather are imposed by cognitive framing (Higgins

1987), which is then transposed by reporters into the limited parameters of the journalistic narrative. A media event, then, is not a mere representation of what happened, but has its own reality, which scholars argue (Fiske 1993; Schulz 1976) is articulated via socially-rooted discourse. Fiske (1993, p.7) states:

Discourse provides a social group with ways of thinking and talking about areas of social experience that are central to this life. The struggle over what is discourse or a discourse event should be recognised within a society as part of the reality of the politics of everyday life.

A similar understanding of news as a ‘negotiated enterprise’ is provided by Tuchman (1978 in Jha-Nambiar 2002) in her discussion of how the framing of news is similar to the framing of a simple conversation – we select and exclude items on the basis of whether they are pertinent to both speaker and listener in order to be judged newsworthy.

In considering journalists’ reporting of ‘*events*’ such as the ‘Children Overboard Affair’, the ‘Tampa crisis’ and so on, it is useful to not only consider what statements were made and were not made, but to examine the social world in which the reporting occurred. Fiske suggests that the continuity between events and discourse produces a ‘discourse event’ or ‘media event’, not a discourse about an event. News factors have to be seen as *hypotheses* used by journalists to guide their perception of reality, and thus lead to decisions about which aspects of events are newsworthy and which are not (Schwartz 2006). Therefore, what is regarded as an event and as a by-product of that — ‘news’ — is a social construction. Within this context, news factors serve as criteria of sense-making and constitute the newsworthiness of particular reality aspects as observed by reporters. Since most news-value research bases its research designs on quantitative content analysis only (Bell 1993; Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1965; Harcup & O’Neill 2001), most analyses of news factors fail to take into account the role of interpretive communities and do not use journalists as coders. Up to this point, there has been no primary empirical attention given to the potential for negative bias against refugees as a result of news values in the Australian context.

2.5 Translation of news values into news frames

This thesis is interested in the impact on the act of framing and actual frames by the narrative imperative of news reporting. This view is informed by the understanding of framing and related theories and models across disciplines that seem to indicate that framing and frames are determined by the rules and traditions of journalistic story telling (Goffman 1974; Jha-Nambiar 2002; Schefele 2004). Such examination requires analyses of the commonalities between frame choice and construction by the media on the one hand, and loyalty to the normative rules governing journalistic practice on the other. Entman (1993) states that communicators make conscious or unconscious decisions in deciding what to say guided by frames (often called schemata or schemas) that organise their belief systems.

Contrary to the assumptions made in many approaches to news value studies (Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1965; Harcup & O'Neill 2001), journalists do not produce news from only an arbitrary set of criteria. Examining aspects of schema theory that emerge from social and cognitive psychology, scholars (Price & Tewskbury 1997; Schefele 2006; Shoemaker & Reese 1996; Sniderman & Theriault 2004) have highlighted that schemas can be described as sets of expectations. People form a schema for stories. 'A story schema is a mental structure consisting of sets of expectations about the way in which stories proceed' (Jha-Nambiar 2002, p. 4). Examining the case of traditional stories which exist across cultures, Mandler (1978 in Jha-Nambiar 2002) states that traditional stories are full of regularities. From an early age people develop expectations about the overall form of traditional stories; they learn that these stories involve protagonists who have goals and who engage in attempts to achieve those goals, and that goals and events lead to other goals and events in predictable ways. If one relates these notions of schemata to journalistic news work, research into the correspondence of those elements within a framework of normative news values provides interesting results (Jha-Nambiar 2002).

A range of Australian studies show that when refugee issues are covered in the news, such representation often happens with a strong emphasis on conflict (Gale 2004; Turner 2003). The 'problem of immigration' frame⁷ thrives in the news for a number of reasons. At the

⁷The 'immigration problem' is set up by the notion that asylum seekers would be typical victims (victim schema), that riots in front of their detention centres would be typical events (event schema) and that all this is due to politicians not solving the immigration problem (causes schema) (Scheufele 2006).

most basic level, it fits many of the key criteria of ‘newsworthiness’ prevalent in the news business for decades (Scheufele 2006). Refugees, particularly when involved in conflict such as protests, result in reporters being able to place political actors and events into a framework of simple, two-sided conflict (Stapleton & Robinson 2005, ‘Detainees protest in blood after department’s betrayal’; *The Australian* 19 Apr. 2003, p. 3, ‘Political outcry over deportation of prostitutes’ “liberator” ’). Emphasising the conflict may also justify the publication of a news story above and beyond its news value and at the same time provide journalists with a clear conception of how to package and present the news (De Vreese & Semetko 2001 p. 164). It also reflects journalism’s tendency to focus on matters that occur close to home and, as a result, are able to personalise (Crawford, Karvelas & Powell 2002; *The Australian* 15 Jan. 2002, p. 4).

Researchers (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000; De Vreese & Semetko 2001) also define the ‘problem frame’ as being an important innovation to satisfy the entertainment dimension of news. ‘It is an organisational solution to a practical problem: how can we make real problems seem interesting? Or more to the practical side of news, how can we produce reports compatible with entertainment formats?’ (Jha-Nambiar 2002, p.7). This presence of the problem frame suggests that the considerations made by journalists when choosing events and issues for the news are translated into how these are presented in the news.

McFarlane & Hay’s (2003) research into the Seattle protests of 2002, as represented in *The Australian*, also revealed that the demonstrations were presented within the context of a ‘protest paradigm’, which through its central characteristics of story framing, drawing from official sources and invoking public opinion, made critical viewpoints salient, and served to delegitimise and marginalise protesters. A range of international studies (Baylor 1996; McLeod & Detenber 1999; Neveu 2002) has revealed this protest frame as one of the most common mechanisms by which power structures are supported. It is maintained in this thesis that the journalistic requirement of ‘balance’, which dictates that both sides be given equal representation (Conley & Lamble 2006), precedes and also informs such a routinised pattern of frame. Despite there almost always being more than two sides to an issue, the pursuit of ‘balance’ in the reporting of refugee issues usually only involves the Prime Minister and the Opposition: the left versus the right; a yes vote versus a no vote; one political party representative versus the Refugee Council or other activist organisation (Colman & Shanahan 2005b, ‘Under pressure, PM moves to soften immigration laws’; Gosch 2006, ‘Iranian boy

‘traumatised’ by life in detention’; Stapleton & Robinson 2005, ‘Detainees protest in blood after department’s betrayal’).

Political economy theorists such as Herman & Chomsky (1988) and McChesney (1999) maintain that critical and non-routine sources may be avoided because of their lesser availability and the higher cost of establishing credibility. While this is accepted, the inability of the media to regularly seek out dissenting views is as directly linked to news values, particularly the pursuit of ‘prominence’, as it is to the media’s reliance on the use of ‘cost efficient’ sources. As stated by White (1996, p. 14):

It is true that people who are well known for whatever reason – elite birth, personal achievement, notoriety, or effective publicly – provide more grist to the news mill than the person in the street.

It is relatively simple to build newsworthiness when the primary source is easily identifiable to the general public. As reaffirmed by White (1996) and Conley & Lamble (2006), it is a rough rule of journalistic thumb that recognises that governments are in a position to act and therefore the words of government members tend to be more reliable precursors of action. Oppositions have less ability to act in ways that impinge directly on people. Their words are, to some extent, just words. Thus, politicians have prominence because of the recognition factor and their positions of responsibility. As such, it enables government officials to exercise political influence over the public, with often little discussion and emphasis of the views of the opposition or lesser known political opponents (Colman & Shanahan 2005a, ‘“Compassionate” PM softens on detention’; Colman & Shanahan 2005b, ‘Under pressure, PM moves to soften immigration laws’).

There is general consensus among both researchers and journalism educators, (Conley & Lamble 2006; Schudson 2001; Traquina 2004) that news is event orientated. News work is a daily, practical activity, whose tempo mandates an emphasis on events, not issues (Tuchman 1978). Patterson (1997, p.447) states:

Journalists respond less to the pressing demand of issues than to the relentless churn of the news cycle. Journalists have a story to tell, and it must be different from yesterday’s. The speed of the news cycle and the relentless search for fresh stories steer the journalists toward certain developments and away from others.

The result is an emphasis on novelty. Valuing immediacy and novelty, as Gamson (1992) and Bennet (1996) pointed out, is often at cross purposes with giving sustained attention to any long-term issues or series of related but important developments.

Such long term phenomena are often reported through a succession of stories describing only the latest turn of events (Gerard & Williams 2003, 'Escape ringleader in court'; Robinson 2005c, 'Detainee arguing slave labour case'; Robinson 2005e, 'Sex charge detainee given option of court or quit country'; *The Australian* 19 Apr. 2003, p. 3, 'Political outcry over deportation of prostitutes' "liberator" '). Central to this logic, is the different weight accorded to the various 'news values'. For example, catastrophically negative events that have national significance, like the Canberra bushfires in 2003 and the 1997 Thredbo landslide disaster, score high on the criteria, so receive extensive television and newspaper coverage. In contrast, overseas disasters, like the pipeline explosion in Lagos Nigeria in 2006 that killed 200 people, or the Egyptian ferry that sank in 2006 killing 1060 people, received significantly smaller amounts of Australian coverage. As news information is predominantly gathered by national organisations, it generally consists of items which relate to that nation. This is the proximity criterion, which favours events that 'occur close to home' (Conley & Lamble 2006).

The importance of a national angle has been interpreted in more ideological terms as a type of traditional nationalism. For example, Gale (2003) defines the media's focus on asylum seekers in detention as representative of a subtle form of racism founded on symbolic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion within contemporary popular nationalism. It is argued in this thesis that an important element here is the market and audience orientations of the news organisations, a trait common to most news media all over the world (Gans 1979; Schudson 2001). As reaffirmed by journalism educators Conley & Lamble (2006); White (1996) and Itule & Anderson (1994): 'How does this affect us, what are the consequences for our area and our daily lives?' are standard questions that the news media try to answer.

Despite the viewpoint that the media's preference for domestic issues over those that occur internationally is only a result of the pressure from elite interests (Chomsky 1998; Hallin 1987), it is argued here that favouring events that are close to home is standard journalism practice. For example, in journalistic terms the London bomb attacks in 2005 would be considered timely since it was immediate and unexpected and, in addition, one of national

significance to an English audience and, indeed, audiences of the western world. This further relates to the cultural proximity criterion, which situates that ‘the things that happen in our own street or our own town to our people are more dramatic, more emotionally engaging to most of us than the things that happen far away, to people we have never met and with whom we have no cultural affinity’ (White 1996, p. 13).

Out of 100 disasters reported worldwide, only 20 occur in Africa, but Africa suffers 60% of all disaster-related deaths (National Institute of Health 2008). This is probably due to the type of hazards that affect this continent, to under-reporting, and to the fact that under the environmental circumstances prevailing in Africa, it is easy for any disaster to escalate and multiply its impact. Yet, the complicated processes surrounding these outcomes are ongoing issues and relate directly to government corruption, epidemics, endemic diseases, natural disasters, and, importantly, international trade and economic issues. All of these factors, in journalistic terms, would not be identified as having immediate impact on the daily lives of Australian readers. Further, it involves complicated processes that are difficult to communicate in a manner that lends itself to brevity and clarity. As reaffirmed by White (1996, p. 11), ‘what are common are those stories that have immediate relevance to people’s lives’. Yet as stated by Bishop (2003, p.139), it is discussion of such complicated processes that is the most likely to break down us/them barriers, and to engender a common sense of humanity.

Proximity as a news value has as much to do with shaping the presentation of stories as it does with story selection. Gamson (1992) suggested that news producers often feel they must make issues and events relevant to their audiences and, as a result, localise stories by relating the issues to concerns presumably held by ordinary people. According to Semetko & Valkenberg (2000, p.96), the economic consequences frame presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group, institution, region or country. Typically, they posited, this strategy takes the form of framing issues in terms of their economic impact on average consumers and, in the case of local outlets, in terms of likely effects on people and places nearby.

Peter Bishop (2003), in his examination of media engagement with demonstrations by activists at Woomera Detention Centre during Easter 2002, shows the Australian inflections to the framing of detention issues. In South Australia, the local media reported widespread

feelings that South Australians had been ‘imposed upon’, had not been consulted about the detention centres, and that the centres not only brought the already financially-strapped State little benefit, but actually cost it dearly in policing and servicing, as well as in reputation (eg. *Advertiser* 29 Mar. 2002, p. 2; 1 Apr. 2002, p. 9; 3 Apr. 2002, p. 21). According to Bishop, such representation was contextualised within issues of migration, national sovereignty, border control and, of course, terrorism (eg. *Weekend Australian* 30 -31 Mar. 2002, p. 21).

Using *The Advertiser* as an example, the author also notes, however, that the ambiguity and contradiction in the coverage of the Woomera demonstrations was patently clear. ‘From one edition to the next, or within any single edition, there was a constant shift from one position to another, between the front page, photographs, cartoons, letters, editorials, regular columns and irregular features’ (Bishop 2003, p. 141). While the author does not conceptualise his analysis within the framework of normative journalistic routines, his provision of examples demonstrates how the norms and standards within news organisations and news production reinforce episodic framing — in which news depicts social issues as limited to events only and not placed in a broader interpretation or context. ‘This practice simplifies complex issues to the level of anecdotal evidence and induces a topical, disorganised, and isolated, rather than general and contextual understanding of public affairs and social issues’ (Iyengar 1991, p. 136-37).

Bishop (2003, p. 140) also draws attention to the representation of the protests, in the absence of any anticipated violence. ‘Parties from all sides seemed thrown by its apparent absence. Protesters commented on the strange ease of access “almost as if the Police let us” ’ (*The Weekend Australian* 30-31 Mar. 2002, p. 9). Bishop (2003, p.144) states, with his views supported by some sections of the mainstream media, that some key sections of the media struggled to find confrontational images. As a result, debate about the ‘violence’ was polarised. Some suggested that the violence was virtually non-existent; others insisted that it was an extreme and misrepresented the majority; while some claimed it was harming the image of the asylum seekers (*The Age* 2 Apr. 2002 p. 12; *Advertiser* 2 Apr. 2008 pp. 16-17; *The Australian* 2 Apr. 2002 p. 10). It is argued here that such frames indicate the manner in which journalists’ report where no clear frame seems within grasp. That is, as the anticipated violence did not surface, such an absence could be defined as an event that ‘defied framing’ and thus ‘escaped the discipline of framing’, causing the media to speculate about the presence or absence of the much anticipated ‘event’. ‘It can be suggested that speculation

itself is a framing technique, a fundamental social process of meaning making' (Jha-Nambiar 2002, p. 8).

It has been noted by both staff working in detention centres and refugee activists, that peaceful demonstrations at detention centres attract no media coverage (Chil out 2005; Hall 2002; Personal communication October 5 2001; *The Australian* 3 Apr. 2002, p. 10). The inability of the media to cover peaceful protests would not be deemed 'newsworthy', because 'peaceful protesting' is not congruent with the media's preference for events containing 'violence and tension' (Masterson 1985, p. 91). Furthermore, it is not until protesting reaches crisis point, resulting in events consistent with the dominant news value of 'conflict', that the media is able to find a *news peg* or '*frame*' for the event. The result is reporting in its narrowest sense and following the 'timeliness' criterion, more violent protests are able to be positioned by journalists as 'unexpected' and 'unusual' given the absence of any prior reporting of the on-going peaceful efforts of refugees to draw attention to their current situation (Betts 2003; Bishop 2003). Further, the mandatory detention of refugees is not something that within the journalistic framework of news values, is identified as 'timely'. That is, given legislation providing for mandatory detention was introduced under a Labor government in 1994 (DIMMA 2008), this would be classified in journalistic terms as 'continuing and repetitive' (White 1996, p. 21).

Those actions of the media that serve to focus on conflict and tension in detention centres and, as a by product of that frame, demonise the actions of asylum seekers and activists, are not the result of any kind of direct collusion or conspiracy between media and elite groups - although it is accepted that such frames serve the desires of government to limit the number of successful visa applications (see Dixon 2002; Mares 2001; Perera 2002; Pickering 2001). Rather, it is the consequence of the way in which the media operates, designed to seek out those stories considered timely, conflictual, and of interest to one's community (White 1996). Thus the embedded bias of the news media is the 'logical outcome of the organisation of news gathering and processing and the assumptions upon which it rests' (Murdock 1981, p. 223). Support for the status quo often occurs without the conscious awareness of individuals producing the news messages (Tunstall & Machin 1999). 'An overall outcome is that the media act inadvertently as a form of guard-dog or gatekeeper, regularly covering protests from the perspectives of those in power and thereby entrenching hegemonic 'common sense' (McFarlane & Hay 2003, p. 216).

Research shows that the media and government share a symbiotic relationship, which operates from a platform of both economic necessity and reciprocity of interest (Bagdikian 1992). Investigations into this dynamic indicate that such interrelations usually favour the government in regard to both the formation of public opinion and acceptance (Chomsky 1988; Hall 1996). However, within the framework of immigration legislation, there have been a range of examples that highlight the role of the media in directly influencing the government, which resulted in a favourable outcome for refugees (Bishop 2003; Mares 2002; Romano 2002).

This is evident with the pressure placed on the Federal Government in regard to the mandatory detention of children. Following ongoing media reporting of the impact of detention on the mental health of children, the Federal Government announced on July 28 2005, that all children would be removed from detention (Chil out 2005). Despite the Federal Government being condemned in the National Inquiry into Children in Detention, conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, it is maintained that it was the media's ongoing reporting of three - year - old detainee Naomi Leong (who has spent her entire life in Villawood Detention Centre), that resulted in the Government changing its policy two months later.

The media's 'personalisation' and 'humanisation' of Naomi Leong is congruent with the news value criterion governing both *controversy* and *personification* (Eilders 1997a; Staab 1990). The more that an event exhibits an emotional sub-text, the more likely it is that it will be selected as news. 'The human interest frame brings a human face, an individual's story, or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem' (Semetko & Valkenberg 2000). In fact, sources may be selected and presented in the news because they will display private emotions and do it on cue (Colman 2004c, 'Classmates plead against kids deportation'; Colman 2005, 'Visa case mother fears leaving child'; Haslem 2003, 'Russian fails in bid to stay with her baby'). Importantly, however, is that in its reporting of the story, the media provided *more in-depth* analysis of the complex processes leading to the detention of Leong and her mother; the *difficult to quantify* impact on the mental health of children in detention and, importantly, issues relating to the debate concerning *longer term* alternatives to detention (Chil out 2005).

Australian researchers Klocker and Dunn (2003) provide a content analysis of media releases and subsequent reports, and conclude that the media largely adopted the negativity and specific references of the government. Klocker & Dunn (2003) explain this framing in terms of the ‘propaganda model’ that holds the pessimistic view of the news media’s critical abilities. However, on some occasions the media departed from the government’s unchanging stance, following some key events and revelations (Klocker & Dunn 2003). It is argued here that such interruptions of negative constructions from government to media relate specifically to the norms governing journalistic practice. Klocker & Dunn (2003, p.81) state that the policy of mandatory detention in general, and the detention of children in particular, was increasingly being questioned. As a result the media’s explanation of riots, hunger strikes and self-harm attempts began to diverge from the government’s entirely pejorative interpretations.

While Klocker & Dunn (2003, pp.86-87) define this shift towards non-routine sources as an attempt by journalists to contextualise events, it is argued here that a shift to non-routine sources indicates attempts by reporters to fulfil ‘newsworthiness’ criteria. That is, post Tampa and post Woomera, provided an environment whereby the media were able to ‘pit’ politicians against adversaries. Within such a framework, reporters often began to see more news value in highlighting the failings of the government, rather than to provide verbatim accounts from immigration officials (Plane 2001, ‘Inside the Woomera hell hole – Bleak life in the red dirt hell hole’; Wheatley 2001, ‘Detention Centre conditions likened to prisons’).

2.6 Summary of chapter

Chapter Two, the Literature Review, has examined current writings in the field of refugee reporting, with particular focus on the tenets surrounding ‘objectivity’, and news factors. It has provided discussion of scholarly efforts on news frames, with particular focus on the methodological deficiencies of current studies in the field.

The following chapter, *Chapter 3, Methodology*, puts forward the research orientation and design of this study. It provides discussion of current methodological approaches to news epistemologies, with particular focus on the justification for this study’s approach — which includes the structured observation of three journalists undertaking a news factor selection test.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Research orientation and design

This research applies frame analysis and interpretive community theory to the study of *The Australian's* representation of refugees incarcerated at Villawood Detention Centre. I identified key concepts in the social and cognitive sciences (Chenail 1995; Entman 2003; Goffman 1974; Johnston 1995; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Scheufele 2006; Tuchman 2002) that serve as the critical foundation for this approach. The purpose of this methodology is twofold. First, I implemented an empirical news factor selection test, to assess this effect on the news work of journalists as it relates to notions of journalistic newsworthiness. Secondly, textual analysis is undertaken to show that the relevant issues for refugees go far beyond what is being discussed, and that acceptance of the current framing impacts the material conditions of those detained.

This thesis will examine journalists' use of newsworthiness scales in the context of communities of practice. Newsworthiness scales have evolved through continuous, prolonged and arduous efforts of entire editing teams over decades, with the primary aim of reflecting the taste of the average reader (Clausen 2004; Hallin & Mancini 2004; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig 2003; Schultz 2007). In Australia, the American model of a commercial press has gained momentum aiming to reach the largest audience possible (Beecher 2000; Brisbane 1997). In addition to a balanced presentation of issues, which are the subject of public controversy and debated values, this model requires the construction and ranking of a mix of news topics which appeals to the average reader (Ewart 2005; Niblock & Machin 2007 for discussion of reader centred focus and organisational targeting of lifestyle groups).

Scholarly focus on refugees in detention indicates the media's focus on matters possessing *immediacy* – an element of newsworthiness - has resulted in significant political, economic and social ramifications for those incarcerated in Australian detention centres (Dixon 2002; Mares 2002; Perera 2002; Pickering 2001). This methodology aims to demonstrate the impact of such a focus on those refugees who are involved in the complex and on-going processes surrounding mandatory and extended detention.

Journalists do not work alone, nor use rules they invent themselves. Such a conceptualisation examines the ‘routines level’ of analysis by considering the constraining influences of work practices. ‘Routines’ are patterned practice that work to organise how we perceive and function within the social world (Reese 2001b, p. 180). From a methodological perspective, this thesis argues that approaches more congruent with ethnographic methods of research design are valuable because they allow the impact of these practices to be examined using qualitative observation techniques, and by relevant participants. The methodology looks to those on-going, structured, deeply naturalised rules, norms and procedures that are embedded in media work. This study recognises interpretive communities’ literature (Lindolf 2002; Meyers 2003; Zelizer 1993) which shows that reporters do not have complete freedom to act on their beliefs and attitudes, but must operate within a multitude of limits imposed by technology, time, space, and norms.

Central to this methodology, is examining journalistic practice within the context of a range of key research questions:

- j) By what means did the speakers negotiate and construct meaning?
- k) Did they draw on other texts and discourses to construct meaning?
- l) Did they draw on journalism training and norms to construct meaning?
- m) To what extent do values such as *conflict* and *consequence* emerge in the framing of refugee news?
- n) To what extent did participants ‘fall back on’ external pressures such as institutional factors to justify their decisions?
- o) Was there evidence of personal opinion/subjective beliefs in relation to immigration issues?
- p) Do differing beliefs/schemata about refugees still result in support of the same values?
- q) To what extent do news values, when applied to the same issue, alter the discourse of participants?
- r) What differences will alternative news values hold, not only for cognitive activities on the part of participants, but also for the kind of affective reactions they experience, and evaluations they form, in connection to the reporting of the issue?

3.2 News epistemologies

3.2.1 News ethnography

Ethnography is a key method for interpreting the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p. 3). Within a media context, research that focuses on the complexities of the modern media landscape are limited, as the majority of studies are Anglo-American and were conducted around the 1970s (Schultz 2007). The tradition of newsroom studies where ethnographers have studied journalistic practice in news organisations and on newsbeats have provided scholars with revealing insights into the day-to-day operations of media newsrooms (Cottle 2003; Schudson 1989; Tuchman 2002). Earlier newsroom studies have examined: individual gate-keeping mechanisms (White 1950); social control in editorial environments (Breed 1955; Warner 1971); and the competitor/colleague relationship among journalists from different news organisations working the same beat (Tunstall 1971).

Current newsroom studies (Baisnee & Marchetti 2006; Domingo 2008; Eckman & Lindolf 2003; Niblock & Machin 2007; Schultz 2007), while limited in number, all reflect a general trend in social science studies of journalism which use alternative frames to analyse journalism. Their methodologies use, to different degree and effect, a model developed by Herbert Gans (1979). Gans conducted ethnographic work in the newsroom through methods such as engaging in conversations about decisions, observing meetings, and document analysis. Such an approach was designed to determine ‘how journalists select news – what they left out, how they reported stories and why they chose as they did, and what kind of people they were’ (Gans 1979, p. xii).

Ida Schultz (2007) uses the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu’s (2005) reflexive sociology to investigate journalistic practices drawing inspiration from the analytical concept of the media field, journalistic doxa, news habitus and editorial capitals. Using ethnographic material from observations of editorial practices in a Danish television newsroom as a case study, Schultz revealed six overriding news values in her findings: *Timeliness*; *Relevance*; *Identification*; *Conflict*; and *Sensation*, and a lesser identified value in other news value studies, ‘*Exclusivity*’. In her study, Schultz revealed that news work was highly routinised and followed recognisable patterns from day to day. Despite participants in the study

reporting the ‘unpredictable’ nature of news, Schultz (2007 p. 192) reports the daily structuring of journalistic practice is very much the same from day to day.

‘[Participants] speaking of journalism as “completely unpredictable” can be interpreted as an expression of the freedom an agent will experience. But if news journalism is so “unpredictable” how can journalists process the hundreds of potential news stories before deadline?’

According to Schultz (2007), with her views supported in other ethnographic newsroom studies, (for example see Baisnee & Marchetti 2006; Domingo 2008; Eckman & Lindolf 2003), the answer to this question can be understood as a practical mastering of the news game, involving a strong sense of newsworthiness. Most significant for this study though, is the institutionalisation that is observable in talk and in informal conversations. Schultz (2007, p.198) states that in whatever context, and in print as well as electronic media, it seems that news reporters and editors are totally in sync when it comes to the five news criteria which they know by heart (Baisnee & Marchetti 2006; Domingo 2008; Eckman & Lindolf 2003). According to Schultz (2007, p.198) even when prompted for examples, it is often the same descriptions and examples of stories that serve as shared memory in the field. Another significant observation is that the news criteria may be on the tip of any news journalist’s tongue when a persistent ethnographer keeps addressing the question of newsworthiness. But in the everyday interactions of the newsroom and editorial conferences, this is not so. In fact, the news criteria are rarely mentioned (Schultz 2007, p.198). As stated by Schultz (2007, p.198), when the reporter describes the news criteria as something which is important when negotiating stories with the editor, this seems to indicate that the news criteria can serve as a discursive resource or even as legitimisation strategies.

Current newsroom studies utilise participant observation approaches that observe a naturally occurring situation that cannot be repeated (eg. Schultz 2007). This study addresses such a limitation by administering to participants a *pre-prepared news factor selection test*, which uses already-published articles as test material. Therefore the study can be replicated and, importantly, with a variety of different subject/participant groups. Cottle (2000) states that new(s) times demand a ‘second wave’ of ethnographic studies that deliberately set out to theoretically map and empirically explore the rapidly changing field of news production and today’s differentiated ecology of news provision. It is acknowledged here that structured observation in newsroom studies has been a neglected research tool, yet is one that can be a

valuable part of a triangulated research strategy. Further, it is argued that it is a technique most suited to exploring professional journalists' cognitive processes in relation to his/her practices, and how this informs the 'interpretive community' of journalism.

In the Australian context, ethnographic study of journalists has been limited. Derek Parker's (1991) 'The Courtesans' examines the inherent professional challenges journalists face as a result of their multifaceted relationship with sources. However, Parker provides no empirical framework for his study, and makes general observations in relation to the kinds of people in the Canberra Press gallery, their socio-economic status, and political preferences. Such an approach provides no substantial empirical evidence to show the collective nature of news work and journalistic values, and has been criticised by Australian academics and journalists for its lack of academic rigour (see Grattan 1991; Ward 1992).

Journalist Margaret Simons' (1999) *'Fit to print'*, provides a sociological study of political journalists where the author is participant/observer carrying out fieldwork within the 'ethnographic community' of the Canberra press gallery. Both studies, however, possess significant limitations, given Parker's undeclared conflict of interest as an employee of former coalition leader John Howard (Ester 2001), and Simons' occupation as researcher/journalist. As is the case with Parker's (1991) study, Simons' account makes few references to the norms which govern journalism as 'practice'. As reaffirmed by interpretive community theorists such as Oren Meyers, journalists may not be the most suitable researchers for this type of study, as they may have difficulty reflecting on their craft. 'Even though most journalists would admit to the collective aspect of their work, it is hardly imaginable that they would embrace this perception in its entirety, since this analysis undermines the ethos of the independent reporter' (Meyers 2003, p. 15).

The methodological framework in this study draws on the cultural approach to media studies (Carey 1989) that places less emphasis on the media's direct effects upon addressees, and stresses instead its socio-cultural function in constructing and shaping the community. Such an approach sees the communication process as a negotiation of meanings in which journalists and their audience share a common understanding of events, which is itself shaped by their common culture (Schudson 1989). According to this approach, journalists do not explore reality from an external point of view, but rather function as representatives of the society in which they operate and as delegates of the culture they share (Carey 2000). This

approach sees one of the main roles of the journalist/media as constructing, shaping and preserving the solidarity of a community over time (Carey 1989; Rorty 1991). Within such a framework, it is possible to identify potential validity problems, in instances whereby scholars use non-journalists to code research material (Chaudhary 2001; Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig 2003; Schwarz 2006) and, further, implement methodologies that require journalists to move between roles as both a 'working journalist' and 'researcher' (Parker 1991; Simons 1999).

The method undertaken in this research conducts structured observation of journalists engaged in the news factor selection test, in order to both capture the important features of the more naturalistic setting, while allowing the journalists to be observed over a shorter time frame. The use of *structured observation* of discursive news factor identification and coding will allow preliminary analysis of the role of news values in the frame-building process, as well as which types of frames result from factors such as professional values, content, form and normative routines. As pointed out by scholars (Fairclough 1992; Pan 2005), to demonstrate different levels and patterns of framing condensation, one needs to show the *discursive actions* undertaken by different actors, which, as Entman (2004) points out, have different motivations that are rooted in different structural locations and interests.

This research seeks to coordinate some of the disparate approaches to both news value research and framing research, by examining the discursive context in which news values are constructed. Such an approach requires empirical investigation of how journalists *think* and *talk about refugees* when engaged in news work. Under this perspective, the study of journalists' frames will provide insight into how reporters understand news values in relation to refugees.

3.2.2 Journalists as interpretive communities

Up to this point, there have been no studies internationally, not even in Australia, that provide first-hand empirical observation of journalistic news work as it relates to refugees. It is worth noting that most scholars (Chaudhary 2001; Eilders 2006; Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Schwarz 2006) dealing with news values studies have focused on individual subjects (or teams of subjects) and not on the organisational aspects or the influence of journalistic norms in and outside the newsroom. Little is known regarding how journalists talk about news values when engaged in routine news work, and even less is known about how individual

journalists identify newsworthiness, and how these decisions stand up to group discourse or judgement.

Investigating the relationship between journalist and news sources, Berkowitz & TerKeurst (1999) convincingly used *open-ended interviews* to show that localised journalistic practice reduces interpretative variability, and that the influence of journalists appears largely beholden to the preferred meanings of their media organisation, their news sources, and their geographic community's power structure. Central to their approach was attention to issues of confidentiality and, within this context, avoiding the use of direct quotes in their published findings and guaranteeing anonymity to journalists. While this enabled the researchers to access some valuable data, a range of researchers (Matheson 2005; Zelizer 1993) have noted problems in using reporters as 'self reflective' participants in their research.

For example, most studies (Becker, Fruit & Caudill 1987; Fee Jnr 2002; Himmelboim & Yehiel 2005) that use journalists as participants in their research show that reporters rarely admit their usage of constructions of reality. Instead they stress their adherence to notions of objectivity and balance, both of which are suggested by professional codes (Gans 1979). As a result of this conceptualisation, many studies within an interpretive frame have utilised textual analysis when investigating journalistic practice and storytelling. Zelizer (1990) undertakes diachronic textual analysis on narratives taken from a range of mediums such as the printed press and trade reviews to examine how reporters have used three narrative strategies – synecdoche, omission and personalisation — to assert their authority in their retelling of the Kennedy assassination.

Parameswaran (2006) uses qualitative textual analysis to examine the ways in which reporters and editors narrated their experiences of producing news about the events of September 11, 2001. Approaching journalists as an interpretive community, the researcher examined trade publications as they noted that trade media serve as important historical markers of modern journalism's efforts to position itself as a bona fide profession. The researchers examined 32 articles in depth, and analysed the metaphors that authors of essays and the journalists they interviewed invoked to describe the work of news production on and immediately after September 11. He then examined the professional labour that reporters prioritise and authors praise in their memories of how journalism unfolded during the crises. The second section explores how trade media's evaluative discourses on early news coverage, news technologies,

professional responsibilities, and international news, contributed to this community's construction of its interpretive boundaries.

A range of researchers have also relied on trade media in journalism as archival material that references a profession's collective response to internal and external crises (Eason 1986; Zelizer 1992). Eason used textual analysis to analyse reflections on race and on changes in reporting conventions in the aftermath of the Janet Cooke scandal. Cooke, a young African/American reporter, returned the Pulitzer Prize after it was discovered she had fabricated her emotional story of an eight-year-old heroin user. Using the same methodology, Zelizer (1992) analysed journalism's response to CNN's Gulf War coverage, (*Colombia Journalism Review*, *Washington Journalism Review*, *Quill*, and *Electronic Media*) to consider the challenges that live war reporting and satellite technology pose to the news industry.

Other interpretive studies have examined professional values such as independence and objectivity (Arant & Meyer 1998; Fee Jnr 2002), and demanded that reporters be reflective of practice through methods such as surveys and face-to-face interviews. It is argued here that such research designs shed only limited light on news work, given that journalists are often not aware of how their outlooks are so 'routinely' structured and would be unable to self-report honestly about it. Thus, is it right to assume that much of what journalists provide as reasons for their behaviour are actually justifications for what they have already been obliged to do by forces outside their control? (Meyers 2003; Reese 2001b)

While interpretive community theorists (Berkowitz & Terkeurst 1999; Carey 1986; Eckman & Lindolf 2003; Meyers 2003; Zelizer 1993) have conceptualised the relevance of group collectivity, no studies have used journalists as participants to examine how group dynamics may or may not interfere with competing journalistic frames. Guided by this conceptualisation of the news framing process, this study is an exploratory effort to empirically examine the effect of the pursuit of 'newsworthiness' on the applicability of both individual and group ideas and feelings as they relate to the reporting of refugee and related issues. This study hypothesises that even if significant differences in attitudes exist between participants, these differences will be eroded by the comprehensive mechanism of news production that removes the possibility of identifying it in the final product. This view maintains that only systemic change to journalism as 'practice' can lead to more comprehensive and balanced coverage of detention and related issues.

No previous study (with the exception of Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig 2003, who examined the role of gender in determining the editorial product) has put journalists through an actual news factor selection test. This study aims to determine whether participants' stated news selection criteria are carried out in practice by journalists at *The Australian* and, also, whether discourse about news factor selection impacts story framing and presentation.

3.2.3 News values and news frames

The on-going recognition of the potential for bias resulting from the pursuit of journalistic 'objectivity' (Schudson 2001) has resulted in the development of theoretical frameworks designed to show how the characteristics of 'objective journalism; separation of facts from opinion, balanced account of a debate, and validation of journalistic statements by reference to 'credible' and 'reliable' sources, and often 'prominent' sources have absolved the reporter of having to investigate or 'find out' the truth and set an accuracy standard in its place (Wien 2005). This study will show that the journalist as an organisational person or a team player is the primary actor in journalism, rather than the subjective individual constrained (or not) by structural factors. Within this framework, as part of identifying the bias associated with news values, this thesis seeks to examine the *discursive actions* of journalists as *key players* in the spread and activation of frames.

It is acknowledged that a number of scholars have provided evidence to show the recurrence in the media of what can be termed generic frames: the *conflict* frame, the *economic consequences* frame, and the *human interest* frame (De Vreese & Semetko 2001; D'Haenens & Bosman 2003; Lawrence 2000; Neveu 2002; Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). These generic frames have been most often examined within the context of election news coverage, and therefore cannot be identified as valid when viewed through the lens of refugee representation. Not only does this type of research fail to recognise the uniqueness of any given issue, it also tends to reduce the scope of that issue to what is being reported about it in the news media. As is also the case with news value research, simply focusing on these individual news values and frames only provides a very limited understanding of how the refugee issue comes to be understood by reporters themselves.

For example, what useful information is brought to the fore by simply establishing that issues are framed in terms of, say, conflict? It is not novel to state that refugees are most often

framed in terms of conflict, and there is already ample research to show that news is negative by nature (Cohen 2004; Graber 2006; Shapiro 2006). Hall et al. identify ‘negativity’ as the most important of news values (Hall et al. 1978). Stephanie Shapiro in her discussion of ‘depressing’ news items, claims that a trend towards depressing stories - or what she terms ‘emotional journalism’ — is a trend identifiable since the 1960s and 1970s, but one amplified since September 11 (Shapiro 2006). A range of research has also supported Shapiro’s findings within the context of post September 11 2001 (Marr & Wilkinson 2003; Mummery & Rodan 2003; O’Doherty & Lecouteur 2007, Padgett & Allen 2003).

Negativity is a news value underpinned by the assumption that bad news sells (Rosewarne 2008). Australian research reveals that refugee reporting is most often presented within the context of conflict, deviance and threat to community (Dixon 2002; Mares 2002; Perera 2002; Pickering 2001). Hartley states that negative stories provide diversion from the norm. ‘Bad news is good news, it’s unambiguous, it happens quickly, it is consonant’ (1982, p. 79).

Instead of attempting to identify generic frames in media content, this thesis is more interested in determining the nature and origin of the particular discourse in which the refugee issue is framed by reporters involved in the framing process. Such an examination involves looking behind the scenes and making inferences from the symbolic patterns in news texts. Similarly, to attempt to arrive at the kind of understanding that this thesis believes frame analysis to be lacking in, it employs structured observation of journalists engaged in undertaking an empirical test, with the data used for later recursive frame analysis.

Gamson (1992) argues that journalists present public issues within certain frames. These frames often reflect broader cultural themes and narratives, and they supply the public with a basic tool-kit of ideas they use in thinking about and talking about issues. For example, it is argued that the conflict frame in the news, when applied to refugee reporting, activates public cynicism towards refugees and diverts attention from systemic problems manifest in immigration policy (Clyne 2003; Dixon 2002; McCallum 2002; McEvoy 2001). Framing research proposes that media messages, by emphasising some aspects of a problem rather than others, can put people in mind of very different considerations when they contemplate the matter and form opinions about it (Iyengar & Simon 1993; Price, Tewksbury & Power 1997; Price & Tewksbury 1997).

News values therefore may guide the selection of particular stories – issues, events, and people deemed newsworthy and thus deserving of media attention. The inevitable selection of newsworthy issues and events out of the universe of possible incidents and developments can lead audiences to develop a media-induced, and perhaps distorted, view of the greater political environment (Price, Tewksbury & Power 1997 for analysis of the impact of news frames on readers' cognitive responses). This study assumes that news values, particularly those which place focus on *conflict and controversy*, and *events* possessing *immediacy*, work to determine what knowledge is activated when people are called to make relevant judgements in relation to refugee and related issues.

3.3 Texts for analysis

The Australian's coverage of Villawood Detention Centre over a four-year period (2003-2006) will be analysed. The study will videotape and observe journalists completing a news factor selection test (see Appendix A) that uses a range of news reports from *The Australian* that focus on Villawood Detention Centre as test material. *The Australian* has been chosen for analyses as it is Australia's only non-finance national newspaper and the refugee issue could be identified as primarily a national issue, due to its significant political and national ramifications. *The Australian* could be identified by journalists as being a 'credible' publication, and one which 'places a premium on journalistic modes of storytelling' (Zelizer 1990, p. 1). *The Australian* has been recognised as being the nation's foremost agenda-setting newspaper (Stutchburg 2002 in McFarlane & Hay 2003). In addition, legislation concerning refugees is enacted within the framework of Commonwealth law. Within this context, coverage in *The Australian* provides a suitable sample for examining framing of stories about local issues such as immigration.

This study used purposive sampling to select news articles for coding and analysis. Purposive sampling can be defined as a type of non-probability sampling, which is characterised by the use of judgement and a deliberate effort to obtain representative samples by including typical areas or topics in the sample. In other words, it attempts to do what proportional clustering with randomisation accomplishes by using human judgement and logic (Kerlinger 1986).

The articles which were to be coded by participants in this study include one article taken from each refugee-related topic which was given attention by *The Australian* during the period under investigation (January 2003 to November 2006) (see Appendix B). A ‘refugee-related topic’ is any story which focuses on detainees who are incarcerated at Villawood Detention Centre during the period under investigation. This project took an ‘issue specific’ approach to the study of news frames which allows for investigation of the framing of particular events in great specificity and detail (Lawrence 2000, p.100). The reports used in the news factor selection test are the *first story* that introduces the event or issue, that is, the initial reporting or the ‘breaking’ of the story. Selecting the first story of each topic/issue is important to the study, as it allows focus on the initial news factors that rendered the study ‘newsworthy’, and also provides introduction to later textual analysis of how the topic or event was subsequently constructed by journalists in follow-up reports.

The discussion of findings, however, will occur within the context of all news reports during the period under investigation (January 2003 to November 2006). Attention to all reports during the specified time frame is essential to this research as, in accordance with interpretive community theory, a narrative’s repetition in the news may have as much to do with connecting journalists with each other as it does with audience comprehension or message relay (Zelizer 1993). Within the context of potential bias against refugees, such communal boundaries, which provide an environment for the recycling of stories, and the recurrent use of the same sources in subsequent reporting of the same issue, has helped reporters neutralise less powerful or cohesive narratives of the same event (Tuchman 1978).

In the interests of brevity and clarity, the article titles are abridged and will be referred to as the following (Table 1):

Article	Name
1	Fire Story
2	Sex Slave
3	Medical Negligence
4	Russian Mother
5	Jim Foo
6	Willie Brigitte
7	Naomi Leong
8	Sexual Abuse
9	Detention Work

Table 1: Condensed titles of articles used in study

3.3.1 Participant selection and sampling

This study engaged three working journalists to code test material, and used purposive sampling which, in this study, selected subjects on the basis of their special characteristics or expertise and experience (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister 2000). Within the context of journalism as ‘practice’, participants are defined as possessing the ability to decide what is ‘news’, with this constituting the expertise that distinguishes them from non-reporters (Tuchman 1978).

The focus of the investigation is required to match the site under study (Fetterman 1998). Therefore, the first step was to decide how to sample members of the target population. It was decided that three journalists were all that was required to ‘set up’ the situation in order to examine the discursive context in which news values are constructed. While using more than three journalists was considered, it was decided that it was both unnecessary to the aims of the study and, further, would be impractical, as a result of the necessity to ensure that the data were manageable. Experts in the field of recursive frame analysis support this assumption, by stating that it is more advantageous to examine relatively small amounts of data (Chenail 1995).

Next, it was necessary to choose who and what not to study, so I decided I would need to contact the journalists directly. I did this by taking a ‘big net’ approach (Fetterman 1998) and

made email contact with 50 journalists at a range of News Limited and Fairfax newspapers. I described to potential participants the study's aims and issues relevant to their potential participation (see Appendix C). Despite the journalists being informed of monetary compensation for their participation, there was a clear reticence from the majority of the journalists to take part in the study. I described the project in terms of journalism decision-making processes surrounding newsworthiness, however their apparent reticence was in regard to it being related to the topic of 'refugees'. It is assumed since this is an academic research project, that participants may have had concerns regarding accusations of potential bias.

As stated by Zelizer (1993), various dimensions of journalism are not addressed in most formal discussions of journalism as a profession. Within the interpretive communities' framework, journalists' reticence to be part of academic studies indicates their position as members of a 'closed' community. The inability of the public to access the editing process is evidence of this type of parameter. 'Media professionals have themselves adopted the notion that professionals are more qualified than their audience to determine the audience's own interests and needs' (Tuchman 1978, p. 108).

Fortunately, three journalists registered interest in the project, but did have a range of concerns relating to their participation. Due to the controversy surrounding detention of refugees, including reports that claim journalists have demonstrated public antagonism towards refugees in the reporting of this issue (Gale 2004; Turner 2003), it was not surprising that securing participation was going to be potentially difficult. This was evident immediately when the first stage of the research process began. Informal email with the three participants revealed that it was essential to guarantee privacy and confidentiality in order to provide a framework of trust. All three participants were not willing to continue unless their identity remained concealed and, in addition, they were permitted access to the study findings. Further, all of these issues were reaffirmed in the participant consent form (Appendix D) that was signed and returned to the researcher.

In order to protect the identity of research participants, pseudonyms are used. Identifying which newspaper each source worked with may allow the possibility of determining who that person is. Thus care has been taken to ensure that their place of employment is concealed. Below is a bio of the three participants used in the study - in the interest of clarity the

pseudonyms of Gemma, David and Carmen are referred to in Chapter 4, Results and Discussion. The details below are broadly accurate, however effort is made to protect the identity of the participants.

Gemma has been in the journalism industry for 10 years. She is university-trained with postgraduate qualifications in journalism. She also possesses international experience, and has worked in various overseas news outlets. Gemma is senior reporter at her current place of employment.

David has been in the journalism industry for 17 years. He is an editor at his current place of employment. He is university-trained with an undergraduate qualification.

Carmen has been in the journalism industry for 10 years. Her current position is her first and only job working as a journalist. Her main role at her current place of employment is general reporter. Carmen is university-trained with an undergraduate qualification.

3.4 Research procedures

3.4.1 Structured observation

Structured observation is a research technique derived from participant observation in social anthropology (Wilson & Streatfield 1980). It can be defined as a research method set up to record behaviours that may be difficult to observe using naturalistic settings (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister 2000). While this research did not involve the researcher participating in the social life of journalists, it still aimed to gain first hand observations of their decision-making processes and, as a result, gain fresh insights into the negotiation of meaning surrounding what is deemed ‘newsworthy’. In this thesis, structured observation of journalists engaged in the news factor selection test were used to ‘set up’ the situation in order to both capture the important features of a more naturalistic setting, while allowing the journalists to be observed over a shorter time frame.

The use of structured observation of discursive news factor identification and coding will allow preliminary analysis of the role of news values in the frame building process, as well as which types of frames result from factors such as differing ideologies, professional values, content, form and organisational constraints and routines. Depending on the usefulness of data derived from the structured observation, it is envisaged such an approach may act as a

springboard, and perhaps justification, for researchers to re-examine the potential benefits of qualitative observation methods, notably longer term participant observation studies.

Observation methods are sometimes criticised because they do not address the ‘cognitive processes’ of actors in organisations (Snyder & Glueck 1980; Willard & Newhouse 1990). That is, it allows the researcher to observe actions and behaviour but not understand the reasoning behind that behaviour. My methodology addresses this limitation by engaging participants in a news factor selection test, which will yield both quantitative and qualitative results, designed to gain insight into the mind set and thought processes of participants. I can supplement the quantitative findings from the individual section (individual identification of news values and news factor intensities) of the news factor selection test, with my own observation and data derived from recursive frame analysis of the discursive processes exchanged between participants during the group section (consensus reaching) of the test. Such an approach provides a framework whereby journalists can be examined and recorded in the process of *developing* and *applying* norms. In this thesis, the use of structured observation of the development and application of norms by participants will allow preliminary analysis of the role of news values in the frame building process, as well as which types of frames result from factors such as norms, professional values, content, and form.

Up to this point, framing studies such as those by Baylor (1996), De Vreese & Semetko (2001) and Lawrence (2000), have neglected the processes linking key variables such as group dynamics and consensus building — meaning that they have focused much on inputs and outputs and little on the connections between the two. By undertaking structured observation, this thesis embraces a discursive post-structuralist perspective, which stresses that journalism narratives are performative and not given to objective or value-neutral depiction. Within such a framework, it enables access to the community and, as such, examines how journalists’ judgements concerning news-making decisions, may be different from those that would be made by a non-journalist.

Participant observation is a set of research strategies which aim to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals and their practices through an intensive involvement with people in their natural environment, often over several months or many years (Jorgensen 1989). As a result of time restraints, it is not possible in this research to

undertake such a process. A range of researchers examining the news, however (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Scheufele 2006; Schwarz 2006) have noted the methodological benefits (notably research validity), of having researchers observe journalists in the newsroom over extended periods of time. Due to practical issues such as access and time constraints, researchers have bypassed observation methods in favour of quantitative approaches such as content analysis (Chaudhary 2001; Harcup & O'Neill 2001), or qualitative textual analysis of published material (Entman 2003; Lule 1998).

3.4.1.1 Phase one

Phase One of the methodology administers to participants a news factor selection test. The article which is to be coded by participants is the first story that introduces the event or issue, that is, the initial reporting or the 'breaking' of the story. Choosing the introductory story does not reduce research validity, as all of the refugee issues for the three year period focused on topics which have the potential for negative representation of refugees. The nine articles to be provided to participants undertaking the news factor selection test are as follows (Table 2):

1	'Breakout foiled, fifth refugee centre burns'	January 1 2003
2	'Sick and alone...tragic end for a sex slave'	March 13 2003
3	'Detained children "scarred" '	May 14 2003
4	'Russian fails in bid to stay with her baby'	July 30 2003
5	'Foo detained but set to walk free'	August 1 2003
6	'A longer and tougher questioning in Paris'	October 28 2003
7	'Little Naomi's first taste of freedom'	May 25 2005
8	'Cover-up claim over detainee 'child abuse' ''	July 9 2005
9	'Refugees doing detention work'	September 8 2005

Table 2: Articles provided to participants

Refer to Appendix B for the news stories used in the news factor selection test.

3.4.1.2 Phase two

Phase Two of the methodology undertakes a textual analysis and will consider all of *The Australian's* coverage of Villawood issues during the 2003 to 2006 period. This enables examination of the treatment of those stories which reporters defined as warranting follow-up coverage. Using purposive sampling, which allows focus on the issues from beginning to end (Hall & Hall 1996, p. 109), demonstrates most convincingly the potential for bias by allowing discussion of how *The Australian* frames those events which merit follow-up coverage. This could not be achieved by using a selection method that employs representative techniques such as choosing texts from one week in September, one week in November, one week in January et cetera – a sampling technique more suited to quantitative content analysis approaches.

Items for analysis were restricted to *The Australian's* reporting of those detained in Villawood Detention Centre between January 2003 and November 2006. This period has been chosen for examination as *The Australian* news cycle placed significant focus on Villawood detainees during this period. *The Australian's* coverage of Villawood follows the issue attention cycle as put forward by Downs (1972) – it demonstrates the operation of a systemic cycle of heightening public interest and subsequent declining public interest in Villawood.

The terrorist attacks of September 2001 resulted in increasing focus by the media of possible relationships between terrorism and refugees seeking asylum on Australian shores (see Mares 2002; Slattery 2003). Subsequent reporting, notably between 2002 and 2003, focused on issues relating to the 'Tampa Crisis', the 'Children Overboard' Affair, and the Bali bombings, whereby *The Australian* focused heavily on the potential threat posed by refugees, both physically and economically, to the Australian community. Such reporting could be defined as the 'pre-problem' stage, whereby the community began to consider that Australia was not insulated from terrorist attacks, nor from potential economic and social problems associated with people seeking asylum in Australia.

My study began its focus from January 1 2003 when six buildings at Villawood were burned and guards injured, in an alleged breakout attempt by detainees (Shine et al. 2003). Downs (1972) defines such events as the 'alarmed discovery stage', whereby a dramatic series of

events, in this instance the riots/fires at Villawood, raise alarm as to the occurrences inside the detention centre. Approximately every two months throughout the remainder of 2003, the media retained interest in Villawood with focus on both the mental and physical impact of detention on detainees (Wynhausen 2003e, 'Sick and alone, tragic end for a sex slave'). Such coverage was paralleled by focus on those detainees who had allegedly used fake passports et cetera to gain access to Australia (Haslem 2003, 'Russian fails in bid to stay with her baby'). Such coverage follows Downs (1972) 'realising the cost of significant progress' stage. This stage sees focus on the apparent realisation that part of the problem may result from existing arrangements that see apparent exploitation of one group in society over another. In this instance there was suspicion by *The Australian* that people were entering Australia on false passports, and thus placing a potential drain on the resources of 'real' Australians. However, there was also suggestion that detaining people, particularly children, resulted in long-lasting psychological damage on those detained.

There was no coverage of Villawood throughout 2004, with this period indicating 'a decline of intense public interest' (Downs 1972). There were three articles published in 2005 that signified the 'post-problem stage' (Downs 1972). During this period *The Australian* revealed the long lasting ramifications of detention, and how there had been both cover-ups of sexual abuse inside Villawood (Robinson 2005b, 'Cover-up claim over detainee "child abuse" ') and also staff profiting by having detainees undertake work inside the compound (AAP 2005, 'Refugees doing detention work'). This focus by *The Australian* resulted in journalists seeking out the views of decision-makers, such as unions et cetera, who were working to help solve problems within the compound. Since September 2005 the coverage of Villawood whether on these or other issues, has been minimal. The full sample of articles is provided in Appendix E, (Tables E-1: E-9).

3.5 Data collection

Video recording in qualitative research is typically linked with qualitative ethnology and some forms of conversational analysis (Heath 1998). Researchers commonly select video recording as an observational strategy to examine contextualised sequencing of minute behaviours, concurrent behaviours, and nonverbal behaviours that are difficult to observe in real time, and to conduct detailed conversational analysis (Heath 1998). Such an approach can be defined to be aligned with ethnographic approaches to news-making routines, which

have resulted in researchers being participant observers in the newsroom and privy to news-making decisions by reporters and editors (Eckman & Lindolf 2003; Schultz 2007).

By observing and recording a news selection test, it is possible to examine the process by which journalists develop, challenge, and return to original frames. Importantly, it provides a framework for the observation of group dynamics, to determine how well strongly-held cultural models and alternative models that are more weakly-held but promise better outcomes for refugees, hold up to group critique. The project concedes that there is nothing at immediate stake for the participating journalists (for example, no paper coming out the next day) and that, within this framework, any interpretations by participants have the ‘luxury’ of space and time.

Current researchers seem to have the idea that they are interpreting only the externals, words and gestures, and not making inferences about events that occur within the speakers. Of course this is a misconception: any interpretation of human discourse involves swift, and largely unconscious, attributions to those involved in the discourse (Fish 1980; Fisher 1997; Murley 2005; Van Dijk 1980). I will explore the impact of context by providing a large amount of ethnographic detail, rather than engaging the issue of only text and topic. When reporters talk, how do they identify newsworthiness, what stories do they define as newsworthy? The goal of this study is to analyse the discursive process surrounding the frame building process. I have journalists examine the topics as well as the extent to which values such as *conflict* and *consequence* emerge in the framing of refugee news.

3.5.1 News factor selection test: prioritising topics and news factors

News factors may be interpreted as qualities of news stories. Such qualities might be the degree or consequence of the damage reported, the status or prominence of people involved, the geographical distance between the event and the place where the recipients of the news stories live, and the timeliness or currency of the reported event (Eilders 1997b; Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006). The intensity of news factors may vary. For example, the news factor consequence may be represented in a news story about a riot in a detention centre, and the intensity may be represented by journalists as the number of injuries, say one or two, or 25 or more. The relative impact of characteristics of news stories, the news factors, on the selection of news stories is called news value. News values are, other than news factors, not qualities of news stories, but characteristics of journalists – their judgement about the relevance of

news factors (Schulz 1976; Schwarz 2006; Staab 1990). This study will attempt to show that these factors emerge from a discursive process.

These judgements may have been taught in journalism schools, learned through experience in the newsrooms, imposed by economic forces (competition) and so on. News values or news factors indicate their contribution to the increase of the newsworthiness of a news story (Harcup & O'Neill 2001). Some news factors might be more relevant for some media outlets than for others. For example, the news factors *physical damage* and *prominence* may have more news value for tabloids than for quality papers. For quality papers the news factors relevance and status may have more news value than for tabloids (Eilders 1997b; Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Martinez 2004). Therefore, the same news factor can have different news values for journalists working for different media outlets. This goes some way in explaining why different media outlets report more or less intensively about the same event.

The most common empirical method for investigating journalistic commitment to news factors has been content analysis (Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1965). Quantitative content analysis is a research technique that is based on counting the amount of something (words, pictures, symbols, ideas) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated form of art (Berger 1991). A rigorous scientific approach to quantitative content analysis to gain maximum reliability requires that two or more coders are used. Even where a primary researcher conducts most of the research, a reliability sub-sample coded by a second or third coder is important to ensure that 'obtained ratings are *not the idiosyncratic results* of one rater's *subjective judgement*' (Tinsley and Weiss 1975, p. 359). This quantitative approach to content analysis has been criticised for its flawed assumption that sees meaning as objective, and the inherent assumption that these quantitative factors are the only or even the main determinants of media impact (Newbold, Boyd-Barrett & Van Den Bulck 2002).

Within such a framework, studies have presented coders with an arbitrary list of usually no more than five news values and requested that coders rank the intensity and overall newsworthiness on a range of Likert scales (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig 2003; Schwarz 2006). Such approaches ignore the methodological implications of research (Rock 1991; Zelizer 1993) which show that journalists learn about a community's preferred interpretations through regular interaction with their journalistic colleagues. While this study utilises Likert scales to rank the intensity of news factors and overall

newsworthiness, it addresses the conceptualisation of journalists as ‘community’ by engaging journalists to code material. It presents participants with a list of 60 news factors, which is derived from relevant literature in the field of news value studies (Eilders 1997b; Galtung & Ruge 1965; Harcup & O’Neill 2001; Masterson 1985; Ruhrmann et al. 2003; Schultz 1976; Staab 1990). (See Appendix F for the news factor list provided to participants).

Participants are instructed that the news factor list is a guide only, and that they have the option to choose their own news factors that do not appear on the list. This, in part, engages journalists to be responsible for the choice, and definition, of the news factors evident in the text, rather than presenting subjects with a pre-determined and arbitrary list of news factors. This approach allows journalism as ‘practice’ to be examined in its fuller political/cultural sense, as journalists themselves are the arbiters of news values, not the researcher.

This study used a news factor selection test which involves participants ranking both the newsworthiness and the intensity of news factors on a scale of 1 – 5. Each participant was presented with nine articles that focused on Villawood Detention Centre, and that were published between 2003 and 2006. The first question reads:

‘As a news editor of a major national daily, you have been asked to prepare the political part of tomorrow’s edition. Please read the articles and rank them according to their importance’.

A five step process was developed to test perceived newsworthiness as identified by journalists:

1. Participants were requested to individually rank a range of refugee articles published in *The Australian* in order of newsworthiness, from most important to least important.
2. Participants were requested to individually identify the news factors they see as important in making these articles newsworthy.
3. Participants were asked to repeat this process as a group and, in doing so, to reach a *group consensus* on rank ordering of articles and on news factors.
4. Participants were requested to individually code the intensity of these consensus news factors for each article on a scale of 1 – 5.
5. Participants were requested to *negotiate* and reach *consensus* in relation to the intensity of the agreed set of news values.

Correlations between a news factor and the newsworthiness of a news story provide an estimate of the news value of that news factor (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006). It is hypothesised in the proposed study that the higher the correlation, the more impact a news factor has on the newsworthiness of a news story. In order to draw conclusions about any similarities inherent in journalistic judgement, the calculated newsworthiness of the news stories will be transformed into ranks. Comparing the overall ranking of newsworthiness for each article, and considering this within the context of the specific values given for the intensity of the news factors, it is possible to formulate conclusions about any similarities/differences concerning journalistic judgement (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Schwarz 2006).

The group was placed in a conference room in order to facilitate observations and record/videotape data. In designing this method, I was influenced by anthropology and notions of interpretive communities, which suggest that journalists can be examined as a type of small society and, as such, amenable to structured observation techniques (Fetterman 1998; Lindlof 2002; Zelizer 1993).

My approach focused on the collection of detailed information of participants and their relationships to each other (behavioural observations), and also on the meaning of their work (news factor selection test) and their activities in this context. The research work itself is conducted by two different investigators (1) the interviewer (me, who acted as an outsider to the group but went into the observation room to explain research tasks, and 'to gain some insight into participants' attitudes, thoughts and feelings' (Fetterman 1998) and (2) a disinterested 'spectator' who was commissioned to videotape the observation.

3.5.2 Statistical techniques

Comparing journalistic judgements of the intensity of news factors in nine articles that focus on Villawood Detention Centre were conducted by comparing the mean of the individuals with the group choices of the dependent variables, (news factors, news stories). This process will be repeated to compare the variables of news factors and order of importance (or overall newsworthiness).

The results of the news factor selection test will assist in determining the meanings reporters assign to norms of news values and will reveal whether, indeed, they interpret such norms

differently. It is widely understood that news editors and journalists have developed distinctive procedures, values and methods to aid them in their challenging task of producing news quickly and on a regular basis (McLeod, Kosicki & McLeod 1994). The seven news values of *Timeliness*, *Prominence*, *Consequence/Impact*, *Proximity*, *Conflict*, *Human Interest* and *Novelty* (Conley & Lamble 2006) are highly institutionalised in the Australian Press. For example, they appear in similar form (albeit in varying intensities) in a range of different Australian publications (Brisbane 1997; McFarlane & Hay 2003; McLeod & Detenber 1999). They are also regularly discussed and debated in the professional trade magazines and journals of the Press (*Australian Journalism Review* 2008; *Reportage* 2008; *The Walkley Magazine* 2008) and, importantly, reinforced in university-required texts for journalism undergraduates (Conley & Lamble 2006; Duffield & Cokley 2006). Most significant for this news factor selection test is the institutionalisation that is observable in discourse and in informal conversations. However approached, it is maintained in this thesis that Australian news reporters are in agreement when it comes to the overriding news factors of *Timeliness*, *Prominence*, *Consequence/Impact*, *Proximity*, *Conflict*, *Human Interest* and *Novelty*.

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Recursive frame analysis

An indispensable step toward testing the effects of frames in the news is to learn more about the ways events and issues are framed in the news, and especially about whether there are common patterns in how the news is framed. Capella and Jamieson (1997) argue that to enhance our understanding of effects of frames, frames must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics and be commonly observed in journalistic practice. As a result, recursive frame analysis of the discourse process exchanged when journalists talk about newsworthiness may be considered an important prerequisite for examining the presence of news frames. It is of minimal benefit to investigate the complex relevance of news frames with frames that are ‘infrequent, insufficiently described or not a consistent component of the news environment’ (Capella & Jamieson 1997, p. 49).

The quantification of frames by participants undertaking the news factor selection test will be instrumental in identifying journalistic news frames. Rather than being solely limited to stock phrases, keywords, visual information and metaphors which traditionally make up a frame (Entman 1993), the proposed thesis also examines supplementing frames — those that

might appear insignificant and, as such, may register as possessing ‘low’ news value by participants. However, it is envisaged that the interplay of the ‘sub-frames’ with a primary frame will constitute the larger ‘meta-narrative’ frame in the wider context of news reports.

A study of framing of the discursive process exchanged while participants undertake a news factor selection test is designed to determine how participants make sense of the notions of newsworthiness they encounter in their news work. By using refugee reports as test material, it is envisaged that such norms can be examined within a framework of refugee reporting in *The Australian*, between January 2003 and November 2006. Under this perspective, the study of frames provides insight into how reporters understand newsworthiness arising during the editing process.

As stated by Gitlin (1980, p. 6): ‘Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters’. The many branches of frame analysis literature do not exhibit a consensus over some basic questions concerning what frames are and, importantly, how to identify and measure frames. Precisely because frames consist of tacit rather than overt conjectures, notorious difficulties to empirically identify frames arise (Maher 2001, p. 84). As reaffirmed by König (2008), the difficulty of measuring frames could partially explain the gradual theoretical shift towards a conceptualisation of frames as being more actively adopted and manufactured. Particularly in studies that focus on media bias, it has become commonplace to treat the choice of frames as a more or less deliberate process (see D’Angelo 2002; Reese 2001a; Tankard 2001). Scholars who focus on the reporting of refugee and related issues have even moved beyond this conceptualisation of framing as a deliberate process to suggest that reporters at times circulate frames to deceive their audiences, while at the same time serving the ends of governments and the elite (MacCallum 2002; Macken-Horarik 2003; Mares 2002; Mummery & Rodan 2003).

While the approach to consider frames as consciously manifested may have its merits in relation to studies that are undertaken within a ‘racist’ framework, and that aim to show that refugees are negatively represented in a disproportionate number of stories (Bell 1993; Jakubowicz et al 1994; Van Dijk 1991), frames in this project are considered more frequently as unconsciously adopted. While this raises questions methodologically, (which frames then can be detected?), it is maintained that the use of recursive frame analysis enables

examination of meaning-making, as it relates to refugee representation. Up to this point, recursive frame analysis has not been undertaken in framing studies that focus on media bias, rather has been a favoured approach by psychologists interested in charting the observations of how they see the talk of an interaction unfold with patients (Chenail 1995; Rambo, Heath & Chenail 1993; Tannen & Wallat 1993). It is argued, however, that such an approach is useful for media analysis, as it rejects macro discourse analysis and advocates a text dependent on micro discourse approach.

Johnston (1995), a scholar who has undertaken significant frame analysis for the purpose of analysing social movements, argues that framing occurs inside the ‘black box of the mind’, and that a myriad of factors present in any particular context influence the way people frame an issue or event (Johnston 1995, p. 218-90). In particular, Johnston argues the role an individual producer of text performs in an organisation, as well as the social roles which that individual plays in broader society, influence the framing processes that person undertakes. Ultimately, however, Johnston (1995) supports the notion put forward in this study that no researcher can peer inside the ‘black box’ of the brain and get a clear picture of what a person is thinking, and that ‘traditional frame analysis’ relies on inferential assumptions about mental activities and, consequently, yields a great deal of loose interpretation taking place too far from the data.

The approach in this methodology, rejects ‘macro-discourse analysis’ and advocates a text-dependent micro discourse approach emphasising analysis of words, phrases which mark frames, as well as visual interpretive clues people generate while producing oral text. Johnston (1995) states that such an approach confronts head on the fundamental problem in analysing textual materials – namely their infusion with *cultural*, *organisational*, and *interactional considerations* that always bend and shape what gets said.

It is acknowledged here that such an approach requires more cumbersome examination of detail than other forms of frame analysis, however Johnston contends that the key to this approach lies in collecting only small sets of text, as was the case with this study. Johnson, however, does not clearly address the question of where frames develop in discourse. Some authors such as Van Dijk (1980) show separate levels of framing at discursive and deep structural levels. Whatever the approach, at some level the researcher must draw inferential conjectures about ‘black box’ operations of the human mind to identify the markers of the

frame in the text (Gamsom 1975; Goffman 1974; Konig 2008). It is maintained in this study that recursive frame analysis provides such a framework.

Recursive Frame Analysis can be traced back to the work of Gregory Bateson (1972) and Erving Goffman (1974) and can be defined as one's conceptual or cognitive views of particular situations. Within this system, frame is synonymous with context: 'that which leads up to and follows and often specifies the meaning of a specific expression' (Chenail 1995, p. 1). A frame would be the smallest grouping of words that have a coherent meaning. A frame could be just one word or it could be a number of words such as a phrase or a sentence (Nofsinger 1991).

Using recursive frame analysis involves watching the videotaping of the discursive process of subjects while reading and rereading a transcript of the discourse of participants. The aim of this process is to note semantic shifts in conversations. I noted how I observed the subject matter of the conversation being developed (that is, an emphasis on content or what is being said) and when there were shifts from one participant to another in the course of the conversation (that is, an emphasis on process or how are things being said by the speakers). This method was especially useful in this project, as there was a specific interest in documenting how the talk of an interaction unfolds.

Pragmatic analysis was also used as it provided focus on *how* speakers use their language in an attempt to shift the flow of the talk (Nofsinger 1991). For example, where and when does the content being discussed by the subjects change and who helps to make that shift? Are questions being answered? Are answers being questioned? How does it make 'sense' that one speaker says 'X' after another speaker says 'Y', or how does it make sense that after one speaker says 'Y' that another speaker does not say 'X'? (Haslett 1987; Nofsinger 1991).

Within this framework, I charted the flow of conversation and marked when conversations shifted from one chunking to another. Along with charting changes in meaning or semantic shifts in these conversations, I also noted who was initiating these shifts and how the particular speaker was able to successfully move the talk from one gallery to another. This shifting phenomenon is called opening up closings (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). With an opening up closing the speaker uses certain words which allow for the opening up of a new line of conversation while simultaneously closing down the current topic of talk.

In the interests of clarity and management of data, recording the findings involved drawing boxes around all the different frames that were observed in a subject's words. Chenail (1995, p.6) suggests showing frames using an indentation-style of representation. Given this research is interested in examining the discursive process undertaken between subjects, each gallery was divided into three different sections. Frames in each gallery were placed in each of the subject's designated galleries. In this way, at a glance, a reader could determine how much and what is being contributed by whom in a particular conversation.

3.7 Presentation of key concepts

3.7.1 News factor selection test

This study engages participants in a news factor selection test, which yields both quantitative and qualitative data. The test (see Appendix A) is designed to gain insight into the views and thought processes of participants. These findings are supplemented with my own observation and data derived from recursive frame analysis of the discursive process exchanged between participants during the group section (consensus reaching) of the test. These findings inform part of the discussion for the recursive frame analysis and textual analysis components of the thesis. Such an approach provides a framework whereby journalists can be examined and recorded in the process of *developing* and *applying* norms.

In order to draw conclusions about any similarities and differences inherent in journalistic judgement and, more importantly, how these judgements are reconciled within a group decision-making context, the calculated newsworthiness of the news stories are transformed into ranks. Comparing the overall ranking of newsworthiness for each article, and considering this within the context of the specific values given for the intensity of the news factors, it is possible to make conclusions about any similarities/differences concerning journalistic judgement (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006; Schwarz 2006). The results of the news factor selection test assist in determining journalistic judgement in relation to news factors and associated intensities. In addition, these results demonstrate statistical similarities between the average (mean) of individual selections and that of the group.

3.7.2 Recursive frame analysis: Narrative themes and thematic categories

The first phase in the recursive frame analysis was immersion in the content of the videotape and transcript. This involved reading the transcripts and viewing the videotape several times before attempting to analyse the data. The aim of this was to experience the flow of the interactions and what happenings and effects were salient in the text. 'New meanings are pondered, considered, and reconsidered as the relationships of texts and contexts are compared again and again' (Chenail 1991, p. 375). Within such a frame, the form or shape of a conversation comes from this dynamic and fluid arrangement of the parts of the conversation. As stated by Chenail (1991, p. 375), recursive frame analysis then becomes a way to 'figure out talk' throughout this recursive process. The subject matter of the conversation being developed was observed (that is, an emphasis on content or what is being said) and also observed where there were shifts from one subject to another in the course of the conversation. Recursive frame analysis is a qualitative research tool for analysing narratives, conversations and other forms of discourse (Chenail 1991). In this study, recursive frame analysis is used as a type of sequential analysis which assists in noting the perceptions of semantic shifts in conversation. It was important to examine how meaning is negotiated and how discourse is used in the frame building process. This process was especially useful to chart observations of how the talk of the interaction unfolded.

The second phase towards analysis involved re-examination of the transcripts with a view to identifying patterns or regularities in the discourse. Such an approach can be aligned to ethnographic approaches to examination of data, particularly in relation to looking for patterns of thought and behaviour (Fetterman 1998). During this initial process it became apparent that it is not just news values that make refugee issues newsworthy, rather a variety of other factors such as, for example, the wider national context. Within such a framework, it was evident that such factors need to be examined when looking at news values, as it assists in explaining both why an event is defined as newsworthy, and how it is covered. Determining such decision-making processes is not possible if just looking at news values in isolation, as such analysis does not allow a framework for examining the processes that go into determining what is newsworthy. Preliminary analysis of the data revealed that decisions regarding 'newsworthiness' go significantly beyond standard notions of '*conflict*' and '*controversy*', and go to the centre of how journalists, the public, and even media editors, feel about refugees.

Donsbach (2004) supports this view, and says that the influence of existing news factors is only one influence in news-making decisions – rather, such processes are better explained if one examines the cognitive and emotional needs of the actors involved. ‘Most of journalists’ work is about perceptions, conclusions and judgements: to see reality; to infer from it developments and relationships; and to evaluate reality’ (Donsbach 2004, p. 136). Evaluative judgements, such as the news value of an event or the moral acceptability of a political actor’s behaviour lack, by definition, an objective criterion. They are always based on value judgements which can neither be verified nor falsified (Donsbach 2004; Koch 1990; Reeb Jnr 1999). According to Hardin and Higgins (1996, p. 28 in Donsbach 2004, p. 136), even basic cognitive processes are defined by the social activities in which they are manifested. They write:

In the absence of social verification, experience is transitory; random, and ephemeral, like the flicker of a fire fly. But once recognised by others and shared in an ongoing, dynamic process of social verification we term ‘shared reality’, experience is no longer subjective; instead it achieves the phenomenological status of objective reality. That is, experience is established as valid and reliable to the extent that it is shared with others.

Although shared reality might not necessarily yield the ‘truth’ in every instance, it is the best the individual can get in order to validate his/her own perception of reality (Donsbach 2004, p. 139). ‘The channel for achieving shared reality is communication....a hold on reality requires cooperative social activity; in particular, consensually validated social roles and relationships are required for the mutual creation, monitoring, and maintenance of the individual experience of reality’ (Hardin & Higgins 1996, p. 38).

This conceptualisation of ‘shared reality’ is useful in examining participants’ news decisions, particularly within the study’s framework, of investigating what influences the way participants examine and make their selections from the administered news articles. Using narrative themes as a theoretical basis, thematic categories appealed to by participants are being investigated. Themes are sets of patterns. There is no agreed methodology in narrative analysis to derive themes from patterns. One practice is to use a team of research participants, with ‘themes’ being whatever the team reaches consensus on, based on discussion of transcripts and analysis of patterns (Labov 1972). Labov (1972) encourages researchers to

look for sequences of core phrases which are repeated across interviews as indicators of themes.

Quantitative approaches to news value analysis such as content analysis merely count the occurrence of specified characteristics of a text, such as is evident in a range of news value studies (see Chaudhary 2001; Harcup & O'Neill 2001; Schwarz 2006). However, using narrative themes as a basis allows one to observe and analyse and then compare these observations with these models. These variants help to circumscribe the activity and clarify its meaning. The process requires further sifting and sorting to make a match between categories. According to Fetterman (1998, p. 96):

Any cultural group's patterns of thought and behaviour are interwoven strands. As soon as the researcher finishes analysing and identifying one pattern, another pattern emerges for analysis and identification. The level of understanding increases geometrically as the researcher moves up the conceptual ladder – mixing and matching patterns and building theory from the ground up.

In contrast, quantitative analysis counts the specified characteristics of the texts (which is quantitative) in the initial stages of the approach, in order to use these results to support a qualitative discussion. Investigating the thematic categories appealed to by participants is designed to determine how journalists compile reports in accordance with the pursuit of news values. Within this context, it requires extensive knowledge of journalism practice and, as such, the text is studied from the perspective of journalism disciplinary practices, and not just as 'an unambiguous message as in the case of content analytic approaches' (Jensen & Jankowski 1991, p. 4).

Examining participants' decision-making processes in relation to the articles within the framework of the thematic categories they aspired to allows the researcher to 'begin with a mass of undifferentiated ideas and behaviour and then collect pieces of information, comparing and contrasting and sorting gross categories and minutia until a discernible thought or behaviour becomes identifiable' (Fetterman 1998, p. 96). While the researcher then has not escaped from the imposition of theorists' categories and concerns, some scholars (Fetterman 1998; Wetherall 1998) would argue that this does not count as imposing theorists' categories on participants' orientations since such concepts are intensely empirical, grounded in analysis and built up from previous descriptive studies of talk. 'The

advantage of such an approach is that it gives scholarly criteria for correctness and grounds academic disputes, allowing appeals to data, and it closes down the infinity of contexts which could be potentially relevant to something' (Wetherell 1998 p. 402 in Slembrouck 2001 p. 33). Scholars such as Wetherall (1998) also argue that researchers should not import their own categories into participants' discourse but should focus instead on participant orientations. Further, analytic claims should be demonstratable. The notion of analytic concepts uncontaminated by theorist categories does not mean, however, that no analytic concepts should be applied. Rather, concepts such as 'shared reality' are used to identify patterns in talk and to create an ordered sense of what is going on.

3.7.2.1 Galleries

In accordance with normative recursive frame procedure (Benford & Snow 2000; Chenail 1991; Davis 1975) the data derived from the participants' transcripts was divided into galleries. Galleries were determined in relation to openings and closings (Chenail 1991). To do this, the flow of conversation was charted and marked when conversations shifted from one chunking to another. Along with charting changes in meaning or semantic shifts in these conversations, it was also noted who was initiating these shifts and how the particular speaker was able to successfully move the talk from one gallery to another. This shifting phenomenon is called opening up closings (Schegloff & Sacks 1973). With an 'opening up closing', the speaker uses certain words which allow for the opening up of a new line of conversation while simultaneously closing down the current topic of talk.

In the interests of clarity and management of data, the data were recorded by dividing each sequence of talk into a gallery which highlighted the speaker, the line as it appeared in the transcript, and the conversation/talk. For example:

[illegible]

Given that this research is interested in examining the discursive process between subjects, each gallery was divided into three different sections. Frames in each gallery were placed in each of the subject's designated galleries. In this way, at a glance, a reader could determine how much and what is being contributed by whom in a particular conversation. The frames in the transcript were punctuated into 15 galleries (see Appendix G). In this research, amended versions of 7 galleries are presented and analysed. These were selected because they are representative of both the descriptive and explanatory devices which, taken together, demonstrate how participants were mutually shaping the meaning of 'newsworthiness' through their discourse. This means, that 'attention is paid to the actual words spoken' (Rudes, Shilts & Insoo 1997).

It was necessary to determine with what methods the data was going to be recorded and analysed. At first, factors such as *shared reality concepts* were marked in each gallery. This was achieved by underlining where a participant validated his or her own perceptions with the help of the other participants and, also, where cooperative social activity was used to reach consensus (see Appendix G). Such examination was useful in determining the range of factors that affect journalistic perception of what is newsworthy. Donsbach's (2004) view of shared reality, when it is incorporated into frame analysis, seeks to draw attention to the ease with which people handle multiple, interdependent realities. It became evident when viewing the transcripts that Donsbach's (2004) notions of 'shared reality' provided excellent guidance in determining the decision-making processes surrounding newsworthiness. It was also interpreted that the act of 'shared reality' or reality perception as a means by which what is true, relevant and acceptable, is validated by the help of others. This validation was crucial in both negotiating meaning among the group, and reaching consensus.

News-making decisions can be theorised as language-using contexts which develop and shape descriptions about newsworthiness. Importantly, such processes indicate how participants bring together joint actions to co-create shared realities (Carey 2000; Donsbach 2004; Zelizer 1993). Rather than focus purely on normative practices as evident in the vast majority of studies concerned with news values (Chaudhary 2001; De Vreese & Semetko 2001; Harcup & O'Neill 2001; Lule 1998), it makes sense to focus on learning about notions of newsworthiness through interaction, in which journalists become involved and curious about their own thinking about news-making decisions. Such a conceptualisation is informed

by journalists' experiences and expectations rather than by all-knowing 'journalists as experts' who attempt to provide corrective experiences more in line with the normative practices of journalism (Donsbach 1981; Donsbach 2004). All of the galleries demonstrate participants' contributions to these new meanings through managing the talk. Inherent in this position is the concept of journalists as active participants in the evolving meaning process.

Such an examination involves looking behind the scenes and making inferences from the symbolic patterns in news texts. During subsequent examinations of the transcript, specific and consistent patterns became evident. Particularly noticeable was the way in which the participants were using fundamental practices and norms to deal with each other, make sense of things, and put their ideas and feelings into action. Notably, there were recurring themes that enabled them to interact, and to reach agreement about how stories would be ranked, and the level of intensity of each of the identified news factors.

Recursive frame analysis places focus on the conversation, and experts in the field suggest using a variety of methods to record recurrences and patterns (Chenail 1991; Keeney 1990; Rudes, Shilts & Insoo 1997). While notions of journalistic newsworthiness were relevant, it was essential to examine how, in practice, it functioned in verbal interaction between the study's participants. As stated by Donsbach (2004), news factors can be better explained if looking at cognitive and emotional needs of journalists. From reading, rereading and trying to identify processes and strategies by which the participants negotiated meaning and reached consensus, it was evident that news factors do not exist in isolation, but precede and inform a range of other factors. Four domains were interpreted that overlapped and were interrelated: *professionalism; nationalism and key events; journalists' subjective beliefs; and institutional objectives*

These categories were colour coded as the transcript was examined, and this provided excellent clues on how a range of factors affect journalistic perception of what is newsworthy. Chenail (1995) suggests showing frames using an indentation-style of representation. The transcript and discourse by participants was analysed, with particular focus on the thematic categories/narrative themes participants aspired to in their decision-making processes. Firstly, the core concept for each sequence of talk was marked, and then a notation system was developed for the identification of sub-categories. For identification

purposes, these were marked in abbreviations in brackets on the transcript after each frame/or sequence of talk (see Appendix G).

The purpose of this process was to determine the decision-making processes of participants and, importantly, what categories participants appealed to in order to reach consensus. Whether positions were accepted or disputed was also examined. For example, if a position was accepted, it was observed how the accepted position determined the rules and moral space in which the group operated, and how it impacted where participants ranked the news factors. Also analysed, was how a speaker's discursive actions impacted on their own subjective experience and the subjective experience of others.

The data is presented by providing amended versions of relevant galleries, and presenting the sequence of talk and, in doing so, identifying the gallery and the participants. Next, boxes have been drawn around all the different frames that were observed in a subject's words - a frame being the smallest grouping of words that have a coherent meaning. A frame could be just one word or it could be a number of words such as a phrase or a sentence or sentences (Nofsinger 1991). Following the organisation of frames into galleries, text boxes were inserted around the researcher's own frame analysis, in which the type of frame building used was observed and notes were made on their implications or effects as indicated (see Example 1 below). Through the practice of negotiating meaning, the participants were building and reaffirming relationships, operating within journalistic social norms, coping with differences and conflicts, and constructing shared knowledge. This part of the analysis proved to be a lengthy task that required persistence.

Example 1

Gemma: That's my thought too. I would have also assumed that there would have been other reporters working on this, and there would be other stories inside the paper on this.

This validates her professional decision of what is newsworthy by referring to how similar events have been covered before. When it comes to decision-making, only one group counts: other journalists - their work is the easiest to access and represents professional norms.

It was examined how participants related to each other and who dominated and who was less vocal. Also analysed was how participants presented themselves in the conversation. Within

such a frame, it was determined what they tended to focus on in the articles, how they agreed and disagreed, and how they interpreted questions.

3.8 Textual analysis

Textual analysis includes examination of the wider context in which the text was constructed including, but not limited to, understanding of the author(s) and their environment and of the sources of power and domination in that environment (Truex 1996). Fairclough (1995) states that researchers should use textual analysis to explore more fully the relations among knowledge, organisational practices, consciousness, and cultural contexts in which news circulates. Textual analysis will be undertaken to compare and contrast the data derived from the recursive framing analysis with the news frames as they appear in all reporting of the various refugee issues as they appear in *The Australian*. So far, the study of frames and framing has mainly been limited to an analysis of news frames, at the expense of an examination of journalistic frames (Nickels 2002). Approaching this qualitative technique from the same perspective of news values and objectivity, the textual analysis will provide illustration of how an alternative approach to the study of frames and framing can usefully be applied to both examine the framing of research participants directly and, in addition, to the wider interpretive community of reporters at *The Australian*.

A textual analysis of all refugee-related articles published in *The Australian* within the time frame under investigation (2003-2006) will be undertaken in order to make qualitative assumptions about how reporters have articulated their shared commitment to the pursuit of newsworthiness, at the micro level of the journalistic narrative. Qualitative research utilises methods and techniques which give rise to qualitative data. It provides rich and detailed information about activities, events, occurrences and behaviour that allows us to describe, define, and better understand actions, meanings, problems and processes in their social context (Marshall & Rossman 1989). The investigation of the reporting of Villawood Detention Centre within the frameworks of news values and interpretive community shows how the pursuit of newsworthiness operates to define the boundaries and inner-hierarchies of journalists as an interpretive community, and to enforce normative standards (Parameswaran 2006; Zelizer 1993). Within this framework, the selection of stories possessing increased intensity of news factors are utilised to reinforce the hierarchies of not just reporters working at *The Australian*, but the wider community of reporters.

As confirmed by Schwarz (2006) in his analysis of newsworthiness as applied to Mexico's Press, it is not only the decision to publish a news story or not that indicates its newsworthiness, but also the decision to emphasise a news story in terms of placement, text size and visual emphasis. As a result, assigned text space, visual emphasis, and recurrence of themes and topics will be highlighted in the study to make valid comparisons between how the subjects ranked news factors, and how members of the Australian interpretive community chose to emphasise the topics published in the period under analysis. Within the interpretive frame, it is anticipated that the stories which rank highly in terms of particular news factors will also be themes or topics which will be emphasised and more than likely to recur in all of the refugee-related stories published over the period analysed.

Following conceptualisations inherent in interpretive community theory, it is not sufficient to identify focus on particular news values without analysing their relationship to issues and topics that were deemed as not important or relevant. As demonstrated by interpretive studies undertaken by Berkowitz & TerKeurst (1999) and Zelizer (1993), omission and neglect of particular topics provides critical insight into the interrelationship between journalists and their news organisations. The study provides discussion of those topics and issues, which were excluded as a result of the incompatibility with the preferred meanings of *The Australian's* interpretive groups, including its pursuit of 'newsworthiness'.

Although a diversity of frames are of importance in the asylum issue, this textual analysis works from the idea that the extremities of this continuum can clearly be defined: on the one hand asylum seekers can be perceived as innocent victims and on the other hand they can be perceived as criminals (Harrell-Bond 1999; Haynes, Devereux & Breen 2004; Huysmans 2000; Van Gorp 2005). Both perceptions can be tied in with a frame and, as such, a frame is defined as a meta-communicative message, which makes news articles meaningful as a whole (McFarlane & Hay 2003; Van Gorp 2005).

Undertaking a textual analysis of all refugee reporting published in *The Australian* between 2003 and 2006 was to test the impact of the 'immigration problem' frame. The role of news factors as a 'framing mechanism' does not in any way exclude the existence of multiple frames (Tankard et al. 1991), meaning that overlapping frames may co-exist. It is possible to observe similar supplementary frames in the coverage of one story. Taking a 'meta-narrative'

frame approach allows one to subsume all pre-existing frames in a large corpus of data over an extended period (Douai 2007). As demonstrated by Van Gorp (2005) in his analysis of asylum seekers in the Belgian Press, and supported by studies undertaken by Haynes, Devereux & Breen (2004), Harrell-Bond (1999), and Huysmans (2000), the meta-narrative frame of ‘immigration problem’ is useful to investigate how frames assign blame for a range of events such as, for example, the deterioration associated with riots and conflict. In this study, taking a meta frame approach provides a context for judging how focus on events fulfilling the criteria governing newsworthiness, such as those events containing ‘conflict’, initiates with a demonisation or glorification of the parties involved in the conflict.

The illegal frame is perhaps the most commonly-used frame within the immigration debate (Haas 2008; Lakoff & Ferguson 2006). ‘But the illegal frame is highly structured. It frames the problem as one about the illegal act of crossing the border without papers. As a consequence, it fundamentally frames the problem as a legal one’ (Lakoff & Ferguson 2006, p. 4). Textual analysis of coverage of the refugee debate aims to demonstrate how framing the issue in terms of ‘problem’, may pre-empt discussion that contributes to broader understanding of the situation from entering the debate. It aims to show that by journalists focusing on a limited number of events containing predetermined criteria, this both precedes and informs the focus on only narrow domestic policy, with often no, or at best only minimal, attention to the complex processes surrounding the issue. The framing of the ‘immigration problem’ may operate to limit any focus on the experiential well-being and political rights of those currently detained. The textual analysis of this project will consider all of *The Australian’s* coverage of Villawood issues during the 2003-2006 period. This enables examination of the treatment of those stories which reporters defined as warranting follow-up coverage.

Iyengar (1991, p.137) maintains that journalists, responding to various structural and normative pressures, more often than not produce stories taking an episodic rather than a thematic perspective towards the events they cover. Instead of explaining the general background and implications of issues, news reports emphasise only the most recent and attention-getting developments – for example, covering immigration by focusing on vivid examples of people who have arrived in overcrowded boats with no identification, while failing to link asylum seeking to any broader social, economic, or political processes. This sort of episodic news imparts an ‘event’ with a focused and disorganised/disconnected view

of asylum seeker issues, rather than a well-informed understanding of the complex processes surrounding immigration (Dixon 2002; Mares 2002; Pickering 2001; Slattery 2003).

With so many negatively-reported events readers will invariably make personal attribution. For example, refugees are draining the welfare system and leaving 'real' Australians to go without; refugees get what they deserve because they arrived here illegally; refugees are a risk to Australian law and order. Such views can be contrasted to a more balanced view of the issue, which will place emphasis on systemic attributions. For example, people arriving in Australia by boat is due to institutional conditions and represents systemic problems in the government of their country of birth; many of the problems being experienced in detention centres are due to the Australian government's inability to treat refugee claims swiftly and with compassion.

3.9 Justification of methodology

It is argued here that it is methodologically impossible to explain the selection of news using only an analysis of news coverage. As a result, a triangulation approach which uses multiple modes of data generation (Lindolf 1994), was undertaken and involves a comparative assessment of more than one form of evidence about the object of enquiry. The combination in this study is a news factor selection test with a recursive frame analysis of the resulting data. In addition, textual analysis is undertaken as a separate but complementary research method.

The meaning of 'objectivity' in journalism is heavily contested. It has been taken to refer to the desire to be fair and accurate (in which case subjectivity would mean being unfair and sloppy), as well as the intention of avoiding bias and partisanship (in which case subjectivity would mean being an interested and committed outsider) (Schudson 2001; van Zoonen 1998). Such meanings of subjectivity relate to professional performance, but there is another 'domain' in journalism that relates to the identities of journalists as gendered, ethnic and social human beings and which, in some cases, is felt to be at odds with a notion of objectivity as neutrality and detachment. In this thesis, agency is manifested in *intersubjectivity* and refers to what journalists do within both the structural constraints posed by the organisation and, within this context, how they converse and draw conclusions about issues when they are immersed in routine work (Parameswaran 2006; Zelizer 1993).

Harcup & O'Neill (2001) were interested in the relationship, if any, between the news that actually appears in the press and the selection criteria discussed by Galtung and Ruge (1965). When piloting their content analysis, it became apparent to the researchers that their factors could be identified on actual newspaper pages only with the use of copious amounts of interpretation on their part. To minimise unreliability, they began by coding newspapers together, *reading and discussing each news story* and agreeing which (if any) of Galtung and Ruge's factors were evident. However, further issues of unreliability surfaced when the researchers were faced with the previously discussed questions such as, '*What is an unambiguous event?*'. Rather than deal with these potential questions in a theoretical sense, the researchers concluded that *any investigations* of news values can do little to escape from subjective interpretation. They did not consider the probability that ambiguity might be resolved within the interpretive community framework. They relied only on the domains of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity', without considering the interface between structures and the intersubjectivity of journalists.

Given it is the reporter's function to operate within the limits of 'objectivity and fairness', and to seek out stories congruent with the institutionally- legitimated ideology of news values, the methodology is built on the assumption that it is possible to determine the journalistic adherence to these fundamental principles. As a result of this conceptualisation and application, this approach makes an *original methodological contribution* to news bias research. Further, it is the *first study* to use *recursive frame analysis* as a method of *data analysis* in the field of journalistic news values and 'objectivity'. An extensive literature search revealed that while recursive frame analysis is a favoured approach by members of the medical profession interested in charting the observations of how they see the talk of an interaction unfold with patients (Chenail 1995; Tannen & Wallat 1993) — it has not been undertaken as a method for analysing journalism practice.

Using a triangulation approach to the object of inquiry, it is anticipated that journalistic adherence to the principles governing objectivity and newsworthiness would tend to negatively impact refugees. It expected that there would be acceptance and acknowledgement by research participants of the perceived news value of prominent and powerful sources such as immigration officials and that, given the Federal Government's on-

going implementation of mandatory detention policy, this would negatively impact refugees. It is also expected that research participants, when requested to reach consensus about evident news values, will exchange professional beliefs which will appear self evident, natural, and the-self explaining norms of journalistic practice. Such presuppositions can be defined, according to Bourdieu (2005, p. 37), as ‘inherent in membership in a field’.

It is envisaged that participants will be, for the most part, in sync when it comes to the identification of news values and associated news factor intensities. When there is disagreement, it is envisaged that examples or comparison from both the provided articles, and other similar stories or events, will serve as shared memory in the field. Further, it is envisaged that there will be little time spent arguing in relation to reaching a consensus and that, while journalists will be able to position themselves to a certain extent, with this demonstrated through potential disagreement over story details, that this will occur within the ‘social space which surrounds them’ (Bourdieu (2005, p. 37). Such a conceptualisation indicates that ‘while journalists may view themselves as autonomous in their daily work, the practical mastering of the news game involves a strong, bodily sense of newsworthiness’ (Schultz 2007, p.193).

It is also anticipated that *The Australian’s* reliance on ‘event’ reporting, particularly those occurring in only the previous 24 hours, will fail to capture the complex processes that contribute to the current material conditions of refugees. Given the media’s preference for conflict and drama, it is anticipated that the everyday feelings of hopelessness and uncertainty experienced by refugees will tend to be marginalised. It is envisaged that the media’s reliance on ‘factual’ reporting will favour ‘one-off’ events that can be easily quantified and, in accordance to the pursuit of clarity, are easily understandable to the audience. Within this frame, it is anticipated that there will be significant focus on ‘riots’ and other disturbances with the events leading up to these conflicts downplayed in favour of the ‘spontaneous’ and ‘unexpected’.

It is further hypothesised that the views of the ‘prominent’ will be favoured in placement and that any word usage by the ‘well-known’ will be given special emphasis in an effort to build ‘newsworthiness’. Given the media’s preference for favouring news that is emotionally engaging to the Australian audience, it is expected that the views of refugees themselves will be marginalised — they would not, in journalistic terms, be considered of interest to the

predominantly Anglo-Saxon community. As such, it is expected that in most journalistic treatment of this issue, the reality of refugees will be defined through more credible and accessible white speakers, with little effort given to providing refugees access to legitimate public discourse.

In accordance with the ideology of journalistic ‘objectivity’, it is hypothesised that the media will not independently investigate the treatment of those refugees detained, and will only instigate any form of interpretive reporting when there is an opportunity to build hysteria, sympathy or public outcry. Because of the media’s preference for events containing conflict, it is expected that, at least superficially, there will be no distinction between which groups are targeted for criticism. To the extent that this is the case, the Federal Government, just like their adversaries, will be targeted randomly and aggressively, with any opportunity to build ‘newsworthiness’ exploited. Within this context, it is expected that this will diminish the capacity for legitimate public debate, rather will function merely to position opposing groups against each other in an effort to build ‘tension’ and ‘antagonism’. That is, the pursuit of ‘newsworthiness’ does not allow acknowledgement of those issues which highlight the complex processes surrounding the gulf between different social standpoints. Refugees’ advocates in particular are disadvantaged because many members of the community have neither the *experience* nor the *knowledge* to understand the obstacles faced by refugees detained.

In contrast, the views of immigration officials will often appear more valid, particularly when framed with the context of ‘conflict’, because their opinions support and reinforce the economic and social inequality that keeps the average Australian comfortable. Therefore, it is expected that the pursuit of ‘conflict’ will not allow focus on those issues which highlight this inequality (such as the everyday experiences of asylum seekers), but will merely function to reinforce it.

It is expected then, that the dominant elite, particularly the government, will be ultimately supported by the media, particularly through the journalistic reliance on this group for ‘reliable’ and ‘verifiable’ attribution. Further, the potential for the negative representation of refugees resulting from the conflict criterion will be extensive, with the journalistic focus on criminal activities ultimately giving added influence to the government’s agenda of defining refugees as a threat to the Australian community.

3.10 Summary of chapter

Chapter 3 Methodology, has provided discussion of participant selection and sampling; ethical considerations and data analysis. Methods of data analysis have been put forward, with focus on how the recursive frame analysis and textual analysis were to be used to guide the research outcomes. It also discusses some of the deficiencies of quantitative approaches to news work, by demonstrating how they overlook key tenets governing interpretive community theory (Zelizer 1993).

The following chapter, *Chapter Four, Results and Discussion*, will critically examine the development and application of norms within a framework of the decision making process surrounding what is deemed ‘newsworthy’. It will demonstrate the results of the structured observation of journalists engaged in a news factor selection test, which was used to ‘set up’ the situation in order to both capture the important features of the more naturalistic setting while allowing the journalists to be observed over a shorter time frame. Such an approach allows for the collection of the same sort of data as participant observation, while having the advantage of catering to time and resource constraints/restrictions. Further, structured observation allows focus on aspects of interest to the study (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Further, it will provide the results of the textual analysis of all articles examined in *The Australian*, during the period under investigation (2003-2006).

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

4.1 Key findings

Over 80% of the refugee reporting in *The Australian* for this period focused on topics which framed or, at the very least potentially framed, refugees in terms of crime, deviance and disorder. The issues listed in Table 3 below: riots and protests; sex slavery; fugitive businessmen; litigation; slave labour; suspected terrorism; and sexual abuse, all represent refugees as non-acceptable and in terms of the increasing cost refugees pose to the Australian community both economically and socially. With the exception of ‘human rights’ issues, and the release from detention of Virginia Leong and her daughter Naomi, which accounted for less than 20% of coverage, all of the topics had the potential to negatively impact refugees.

Issue	Number of articles	Time period
Riots and Protests	10	Jan 2003-Nov 2006
Sex slave issue	13	March 2003-Dec 2003
Human Rights	9	May 2003 – March 2006
Litigation	16	July 2003- Dec 2005
Fugitive Businessman	4	August 2003
Suspected terrorist Willie Brigitte	4	Oct 2003 – April 2004
Released refugees Virginia and Naomi Leong	3	May 2005 – April 2006
Sexual abuse issue	4	July 2005 – June 2006
Slave labour issue	3	Sept 2005 – Dec 2005

Table 3: A break-down of refugee coverage in *The Australian* that focuses on Villawood Detention Centre, according to issue, the number of articles, and the time period of publication.

To demonstrate this more rigorously, Tables E.1 to E.10 in Appendix E provide all the headlines for the issues categorised in Table 4.1. The elements in the upper part of the table provide a description of the issue. Below the line are the headlines demonstrating the potential for negative bias. As evident in the tables, all of the headlines are inflammatory

and, with the exception of the headlines relating to human rights issues and the release of Virginia and Naomi Leong, most of the headlines frame refugees as being involved in deviant and illegal activity.

4.2 Results of news factor selection test

4.2.1 Ranking of articles in order of importance

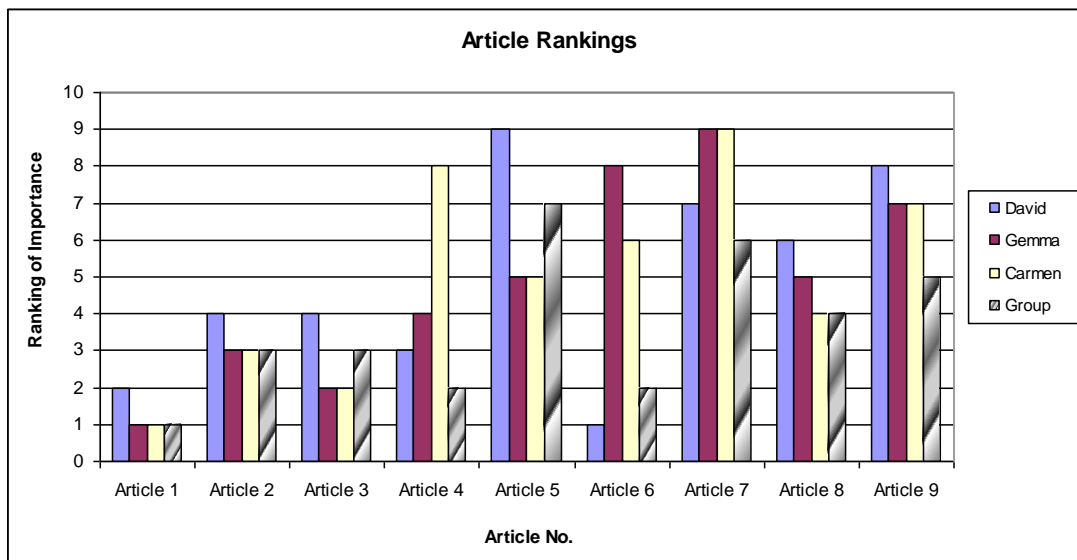


Figure 1: Individual and group rankings for each article

There was little statistical difference between the individual and group rankings for Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9. For articles 4 and 6, there is significant difference between the individuals' rankings compared to the overall group rankings.

According to Figure 1, there was a standard deviation between the individual choices and the final group choices of 1.6. Therefore, overall there was no real evidence here supporting any significant difference between individual notions of newsworthiness and how these are amended or altered when discussed within the context of a group.

The only general area where a difference was found was with domestic news relating to *national security* (Willie Brigitte story) and litigation and visa news (Russian mother story). The average rating of the Willie Brigitte story (article 6) by Gemma and Carmen was 7 and David was 1. Notably, this topic, which could be perceived as 'hard news', was rated higher by the male participant. Moreover, in general, no major difference was found between the female and male scores.

All participants identified Article 1 (Fire Story) as one of the most important stories, with Gemma and Carmen ranking it as the most important and David ranking it as the second most important. Such an outcome is unsurprising given Article 1 (Fire Story) involved significant injuries to staff and damage to buildings at Villawood Detention Centre. One of the most significant differences between an individual ranking and the group ranking was for Article 4 (Russian Mother Story) whereby Carmen individually ranked it at 8 but the group ranked it as the overall second most important story. This statistical difference is able to be explained in terms of Carmen's views on the Russian mother story (see gallery 7, line 1 in Appendix H).

The significant deviation between participants in relation to Article 6 (Willie Brigitte Story) resulted in significant discussion concerning both perceived newsworthiness in relation to domestic terrorism laws, and also the professional frame of perceived newsworthiness in relation to whether the story was written in a manner that would impact the audience (see gallery 8, line 1 in Appendix H). Notable is that by Gemma and Carmen agreeing with David and changing the Willie Brigitte story (article 6) from a low rank to the second most important, both Gemma and Carmen assumed that David possessed increased power as a result of his more senior status of editor. That is, in the hierarchy of participant's status, David is ranked number one as an editor, Gemma at number two as a senior reporter, and Carmen third, as a general reporter. As a result, it was unsurprising to note both Gemma and Carmen regularly deferring to David for input and clarification.

David's convincing argument that the Willie Brigitte story was of crucial importance to Australia's national security resulted in the group ranking the story as the second most important (see gallery 2, line 3 in Appendix H). According to Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig (2003), the physical security of the individual and the community will always be at the top of the newsworthiness scale as long as these continue to be salient in daily life.

This explanation follows Maslow's (1954) scale of motivation which sets security as one of the main, dominant motivational factors. Only after satisfying their security needs do individuals direct their attention to the other elements of life, for example, social intercourse, self-respect, et cetera (Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig 2003). Therefore, as a result of Australia's on-going fears concerning the potential relationship between security threats and refugees (Gale 2002; MacCallum 2002; Van Acker, Curran & Hollander 2002), it is not surprising that

a relatively rigid newsworthy scale has evolved which accords stories such as the ‘Willie Brigitte Story’ and the ‘Fire Story’ the highest priority. As reaffirmed by Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (p. 20) the continuous presence of a clear and immediate danger to the state and society may also influence the entire newsworthiness scale in such a manner that many ‘extraneous’ items will be evaluated in light of their potential to harm or benefit.

4.2.2 Identification of news factors and associated intensities

Figures 2 - 10 below show the news factor selection results for each of the articles presented to participants. The results showed that, overall, *follow-up* was the most commonly identified news factor in the news, followed by *relevance*, *conflict*, *emotion*, *drama* and *crime and scandal* respectively. As stated by Bell (1995), *follow-up* covers story future time – any action subsequent to the main action of an event. It can include verbal reaction by other parties or non-verbal consequences. Because it covers action which occurred after what a story has treated as the main action, *follow-up* is a prime source of subsequent updating stories – which are themselves called ‘*follow ups*’ by journalists. The identification of *follow-up* as the most commonly identified news factor may be able to be explained in terms of the nature of the exercise. That is, participants were making newsworthiness decisions on stories that had occurred in past time therefore, as a result, they would have been aware that the stories had received significant media attention and as such received significant follow-up coverage.

Human interest was noted as possessing the highest intensity of all cited news factors by both participants individually and the group. Notably, this news factor was cited as being an overriding frame in Article 2 (Sex Slave Story), Article 4 (Russian Mother Story) and Article 7 (Naomi Leong Story). With the exception of the Naomi Leong Story, there is no important difference in the classifications of these news items in accordance with this news factor. That is, while the Sex Slave Story and the Russian Mother Story centred on the ‘people aspect’ of refugees in detention, the stories were more about attracting audience interest through potentially sordid content, rather than highlighting the complications surrounding mandatory detention legislation. As such, neither of these stories talked about people living in detention per se, but functioned to reinforce wider cultural stereotypes concerning race and ethnicity. The identification of *conflict* and *drama* as frequently cited news factors by participants is congruent with standard news value research (Harcup & O’Neill 2001) which identifies

issues containing *conflict* and *controversy* as generally receiving the most interest by both journalists and editors.

There were 5 news factors identified by participants that did not appear on the provided list. These news factors are *health, affects families, children, treatment of children* and finally, *national security*. Gemma's introduction of the news factors of '*health, affects families, children and treatment of children*' may indicate the scale of newsworthiness beginning to change as a result of the increasing influence of women in the Australian media community. As stated by Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig (2003), there is firm ground for the claim that the incipient transformation of the newsworthiness scale constitutes an additional facet of postmodernism. 'The basic argument of postmodernism is that the "great theories" have disappeared, leaving the *relativity* of truth as the highest value' (p. 19). Traditional criteria of importance may reduce over time as a relativist approach spreads and brings to the top of the newsworthiness scale many issues which were previously excluded. Thus, it would not be surprising to find 'female' issues (women's news items) rising to the fore of the newsworthiness scale and being considered. It is important in this instance to note that organisational and group factors have shaped which (new) news factors were to be introduced and which, for all practical purposes, erased any personal influence grounded in the participants' genders. That is, while Gemma introduced four (new) news factors, overall the group only settled on the introduction of one of these.

Figures 2 - 10 below: News Factor Selection Test Results

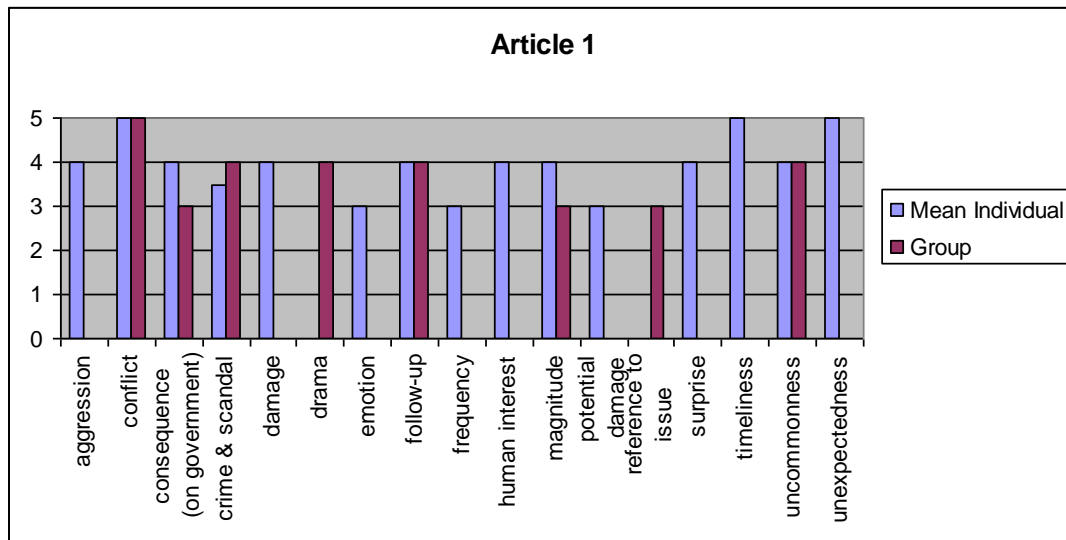


Figure 2: Results for Fire Story

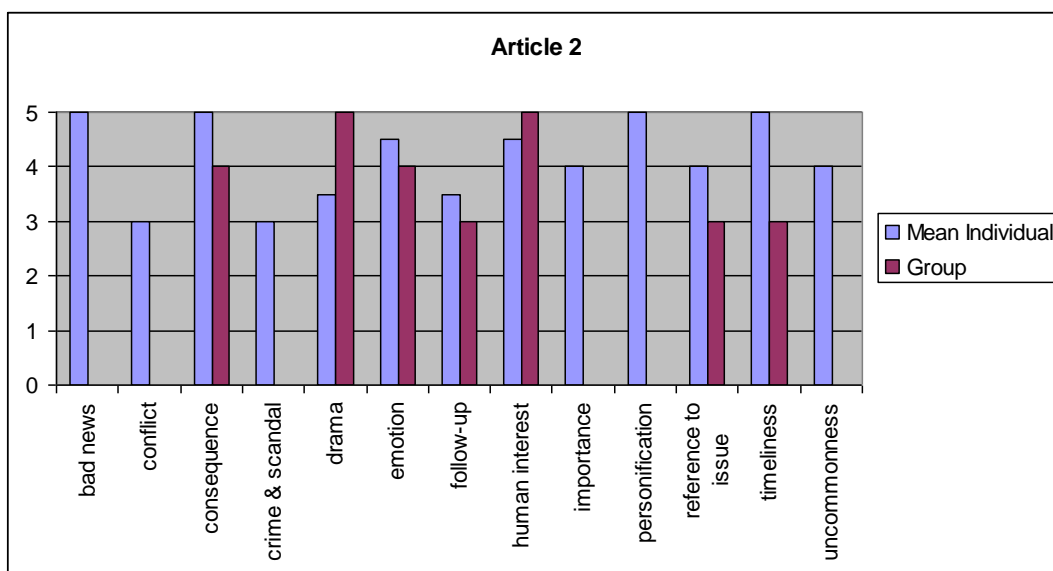


Figure 3: Results for Sex Slave Story

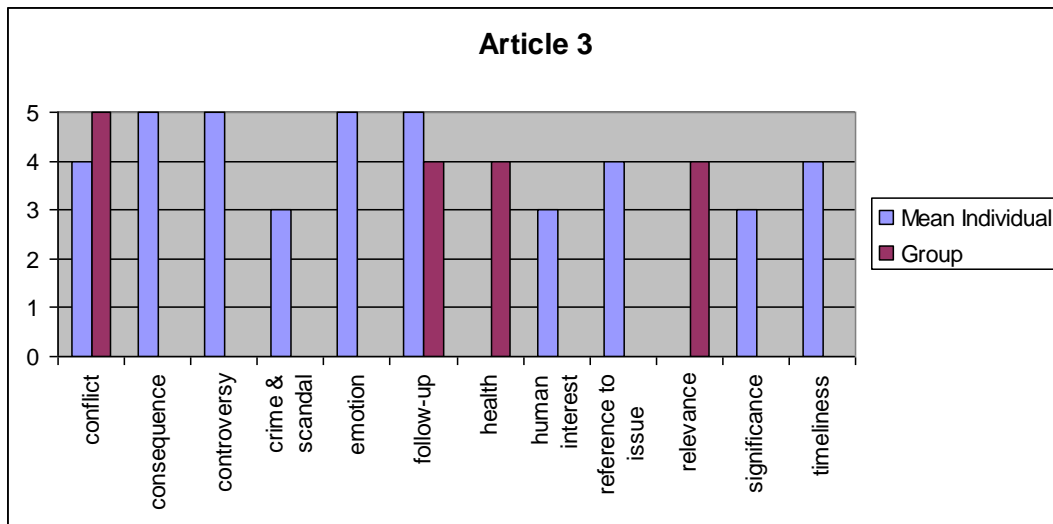


Figure 4: Results for Medical Negligence Story

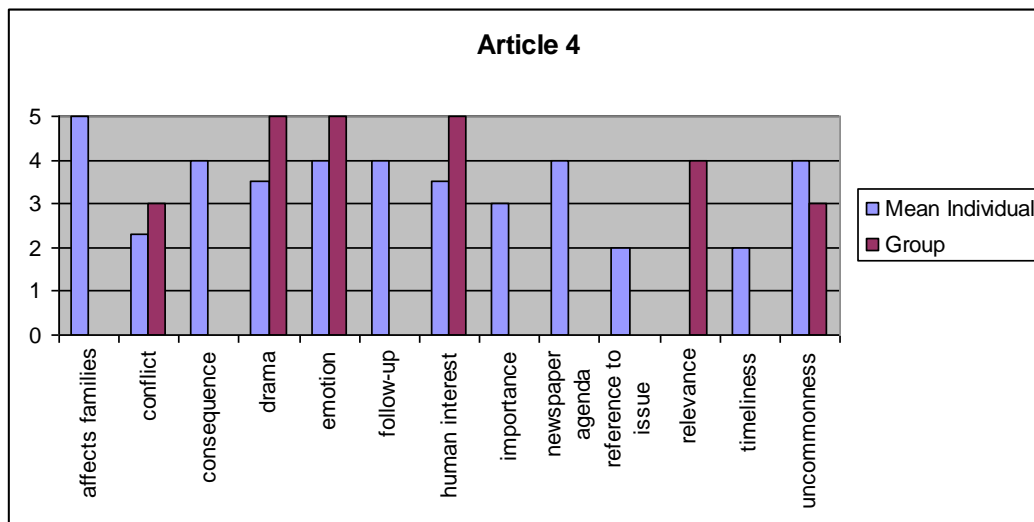


Figure 5: Results for Russian Mother Story

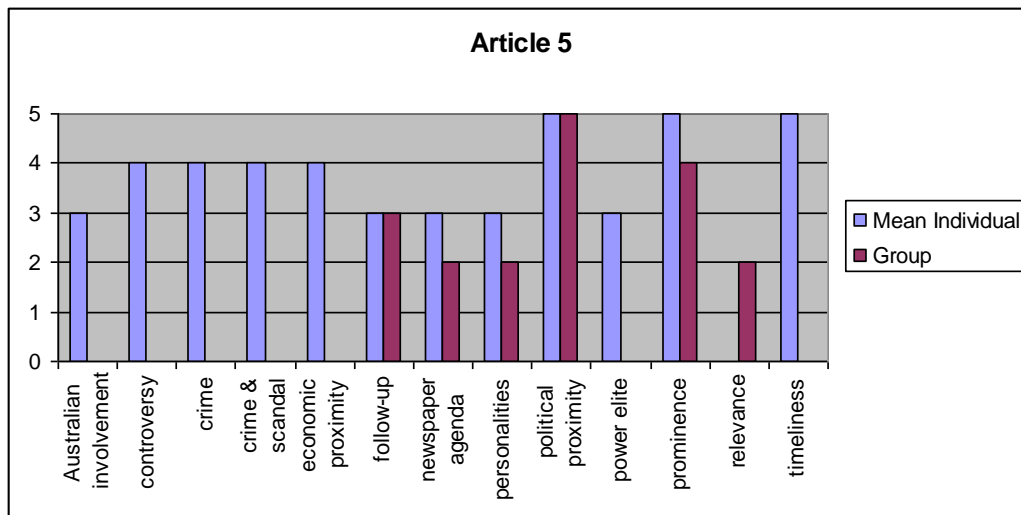


Figure 6: Results for Jim Foo Story

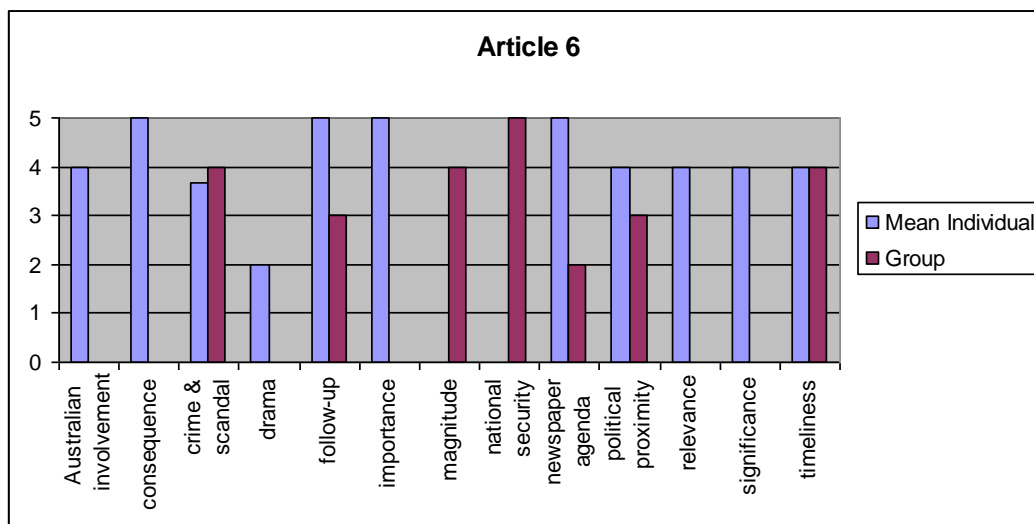


Figure 7: Results for Willie Brigitte Story

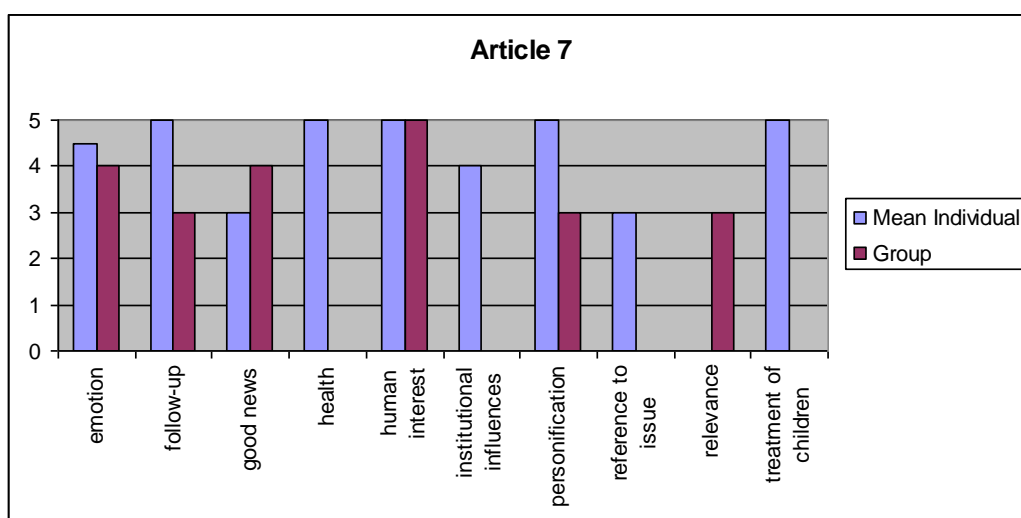


Figure 8: Results for Naomi Leong Story

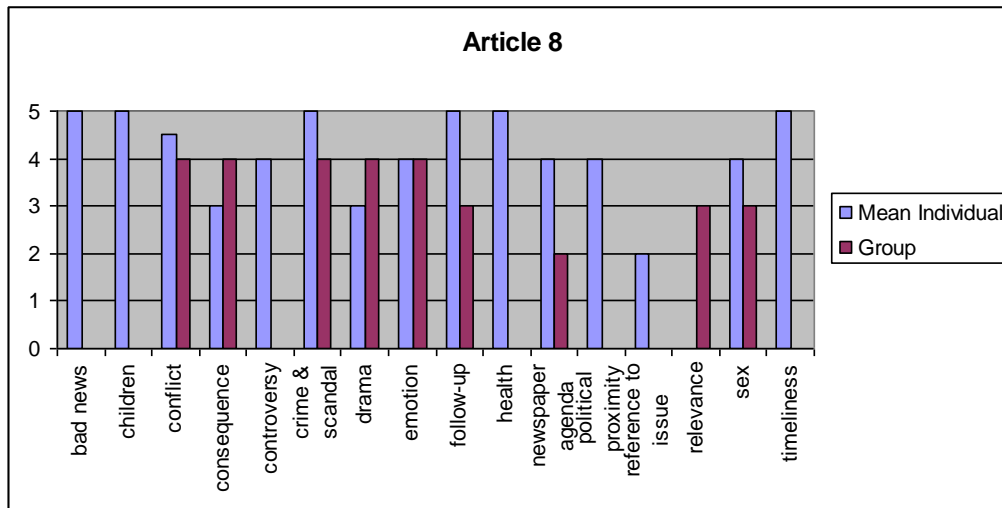


Figure 9: Results for Sexual Abuse Story

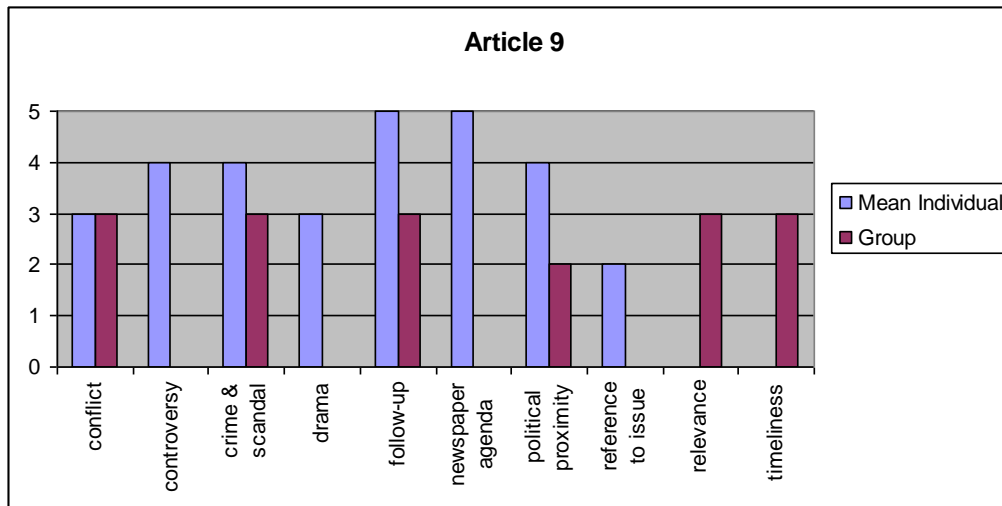


Figure 10: Results for Detention Work Story

4.3 Domains in journalism

Framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media but, instead, on the particular ways those issues are presented, or the ways public problems are formulated for the media audience (Price & Tewksbury 1997). According to Price & Tewksbury, behind issue-framing is the notion that, by formulating public choices in different terms, media messages can put people in mind of very different considerations when they think about public issues and decide their opinions. This suggests that media messages can help determine what knowledge is activated and, once activated, presumably used when people are called on to make politically relevant judgements.

Narrative analysis is marked by the need to analyse the content in a manner that captures the causes and effects and the structure of the narrative itself. One form of analytical outcome consists of causal networks, which can be defined as flow charts that indicate the causes, effects and outcomes – as well as the influences and junction points within a story (Labov 1981). The diagrams below provide an empirically grounded account of the ways in which knowledge was used by participants to evaluate the overall newsworthiness of each article and its associated intensities. A number of general models and approaches are already available in media studies literature for conceptualising how journalists make decisions regarding ‘newsworthiness’ (Gale 2004; Herman & Chomsky 1988; Nossek & Berkowitz 2006; Reese 2001b; Van Dijk 1991; Weinhold 2008).

While these models and approaches vary in their basic structures, they provide an excellent framework for identifying a range of constructs that inform the frame building process. In this study, these domains are defined as *professionalism*, *nationalism and key events*, *journalists’ subjective beliefs* and *institutional objectives*. They centre on the status of journalism as a prime institution in democratic Australia and, in addition, relate to the journalistic requirement to satisfy and serve their audiences. ‘These goals need not be contradictory, but in recent times they are often seen to be conflicting, especially by journalists working for institutionally oriented media’ (Hallin 1996 in van Zoonan 1998 p. 126). The findings presented here coordinate some of the approaches to news value research and framing research by examining the discursive context in which news values are constructed.

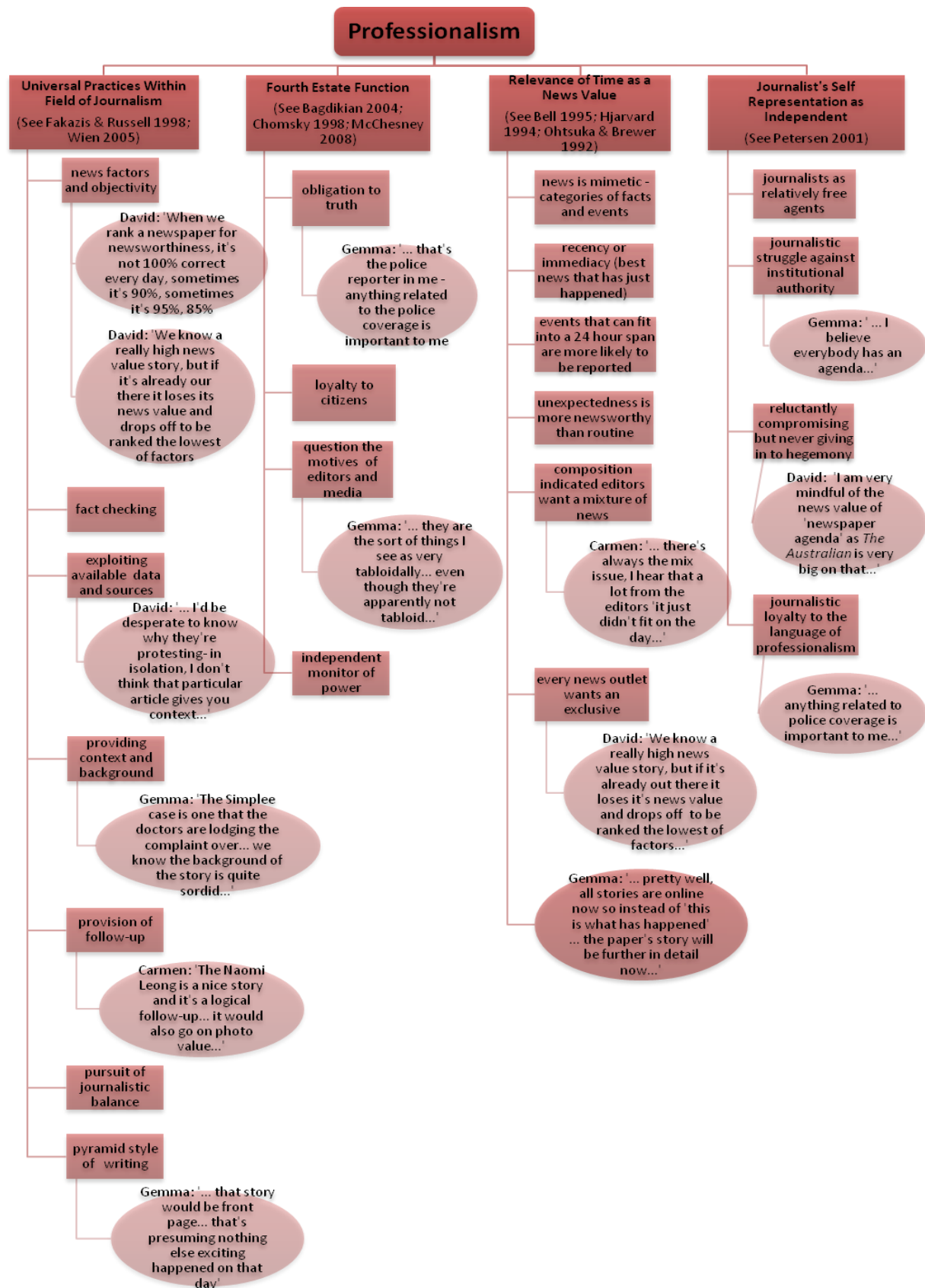


Figure 11: Domain of professionalism

The first domain, *journalistic professionalism* (see Figure 11) centres on ‘universal practices within the field of journalism such as the pursuit of news values and objectivity’ (Conley & Lamble 2006; Fakazis & Russell 1998). Significant to the pursuit of newsworthiness is the relevance of ‘time’ as a news value (Bell 1995; Hjarvard 1994; Ohtsuka & Brewer 1992). A range of scholars have noted how the ideology of journalistic objectivity is structured by accuracy, clarity and brevity in news writing (White 1996). Within this framework of ‘factual’ reporting is how news manifests itself in three main ways: ‘regular events, managed events and spontaneous events’ (White 1996, p. 90). Therefore, the media’s reliance on ‘in the moment’ news events for news will not favour issues that have taken time to ‘unfold’ or are ‘on-going’. Figure 11 demonstrates participants’ focus on the relevance of gaining an ‘exclusive’ which, in this instance, may have prevented a discussion of the issues contributing to an increased number of refugees in Australia.

Central to *journalistic professionalism* is journalists’ ‘fourth estate’ function to protect the rights of citizens and question the roles of government. Within this pluralist model, journalists are seen to be free of any government control thus enabling them to put forward any view they choose (McQuail 2000, p. 69; Wien 2005). The media are seen as fulfilling a public service role, acting in the best interests of the public and, as such, operating within its ‘fourth estate’ function of keeping a close watch on abuses of power by politicians and other groups such as corporations. Those who own and control the media are seen to be autonomous from political parties, corporations and organised pressure groups. Evidence of participants’ self-representation of being independent was apparent both in their questioning of the motives of media editors and their accusation of the tabloidisation of the press (see Figure 11).

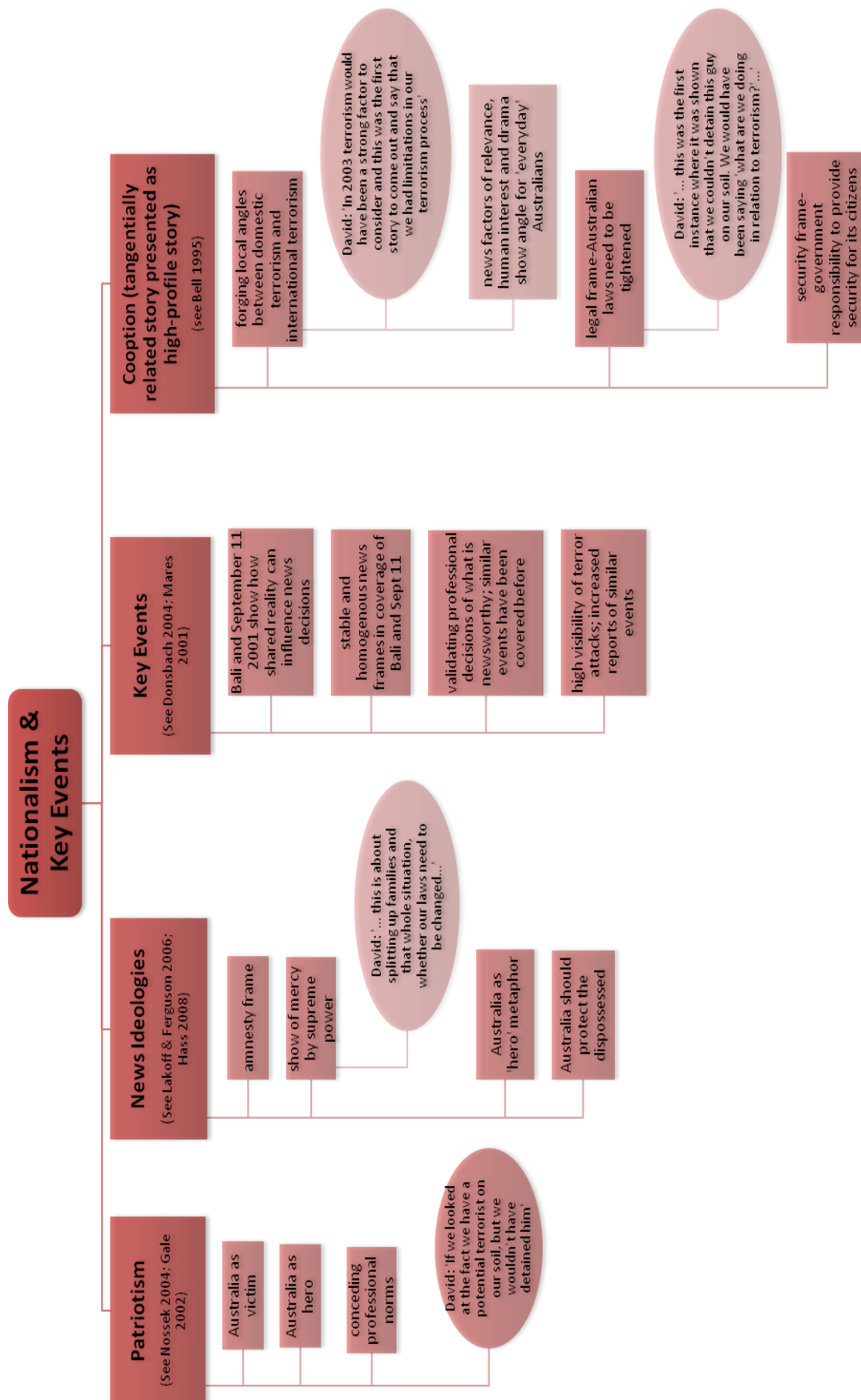


Figure 12: Domain of nationalism and key events

The *nationalism and key events* domain contains all the elements that are necessary for journalistic loyalty to protect the national interest. Such a conceptualisation can be viewed within the framework of *key events* whereby events with a high visibility such as September 11 2001 and the Bali Bombings of October 1 2005 result in increased reports of seemingly ‘similar events’.

Key to this conceptualisation is the journalistic promotion of a patriotism frame which centres on both ‘Australia as victim’ and ‘Australia as hero’ metaphors. Such a dichotomy highlights the competing frames of both the role of ‘Australia protecting the dispossessed’ and the journalistic role to ‘protect the national interest’ (see Figure 12). Evidence of participants forging a local angle between international terrorism and the activities of refugees in detention occurred in a significant amount of discussion of the articles. Participants tangentially relating terrorist actions to refugees in detention may have operated to pre-empt any discussion of the social economy and cultural nuances that have resulted in the 26 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR 2008). As a consequence, any discussions of humanitarian concerns were somewhat limited, with the overriding journalistic charter to reinforce their domestic viewpoint that Australia needs to be protected from potentially dangerous external threat. It could be suggested that such discourse may have functioned as a result of journalists attempting to meet national ends by having a belief system such as patriotism.

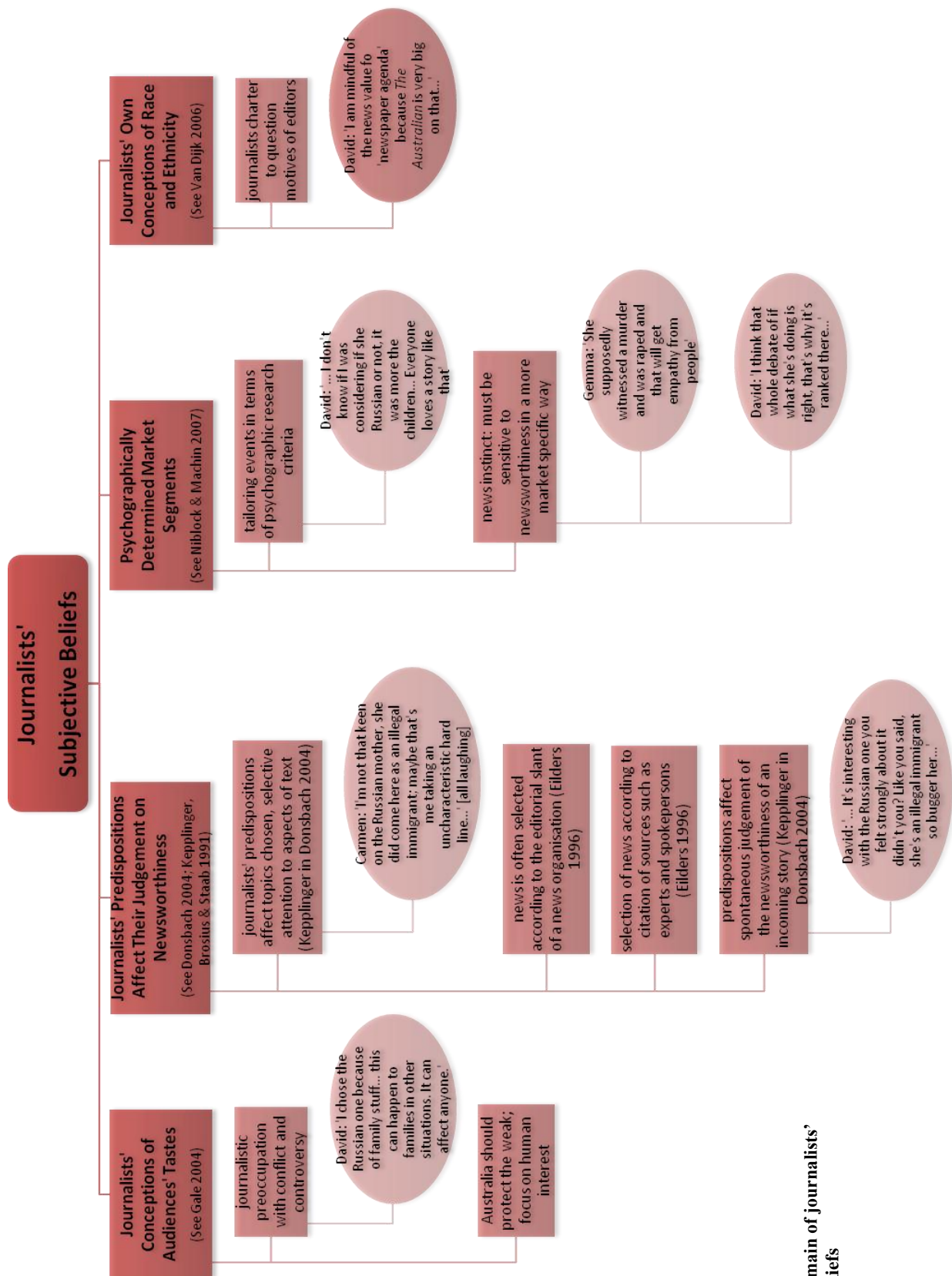


Figure 13: Domain of journalists' subjective beliefs

According to scholars such as Donsbach (2004), there is sufficient evidence that a journalist's predispositions towards an issue or an actor can affect his/her news decisions, though the degree of this influence might differ from journalists from different countries, within different news organisations and with different professional values.

As stated by Van Dijk (2006), almost exclusively white newsrooms contribute to a lack of diversity in daily routines of news gathering, source selection and quotation. Van Dijk further states that ethnic news events are construed from a white European perspective. Van Dijk states (p. 2) that in relation to ethnic reporting, journalists tend to deemphasise positive aspects of refugees and ethnic groups. 'This polarisation in the formulation of news events is an expression of familiar patterns of biased underlying mental models of ethnic events that are familiar in social psychological research on prejudice and inter-group conflict' (pp. 3-4). The expression of such models in news reports has consistently been shown by scholars (see Downing & Husband 2005; Gale 2004; Van Dijk 2006) to have similar characteristics at all levels of news reports, editorials and opinion articles. Contrary to news about autochthonous citizens, news about refugees is organised by a limited number of negative topics: (1) arrival of immigrants is defined as a problem; (2) integration of resident minorities is defined as problematic, if not impossible because, 'they do not want to integrate thus blaming the victim'; (3) immigrants are often associated with deviants, illegality, crime, violence or terrorism, and refugees with abuse of social services.

According to Gale (2004, p.321), media reporting on what is represented as the 'refugee crisis and the subsequent war on terror' is reflective of a politics of race and a new era in Australian political life. The politics of 'race' has become a central political issue confronting governments, as well as a political strategy by some political parties and governments alike. Central to this, popular politics are representations of 'race' in media discourse (see Figure 13). News media, particularly newspapers, have played a crucial role in the emergence of the new language of 'race' and nation. Anxieties over world order and the increasing heterogeneity of Euro-American societies have also contributed towards a perceived crisis in 'national security' and a decline in the material comfort of western space and territory (Rattansi & Westwood 1994 in Gale 2004, p.324).

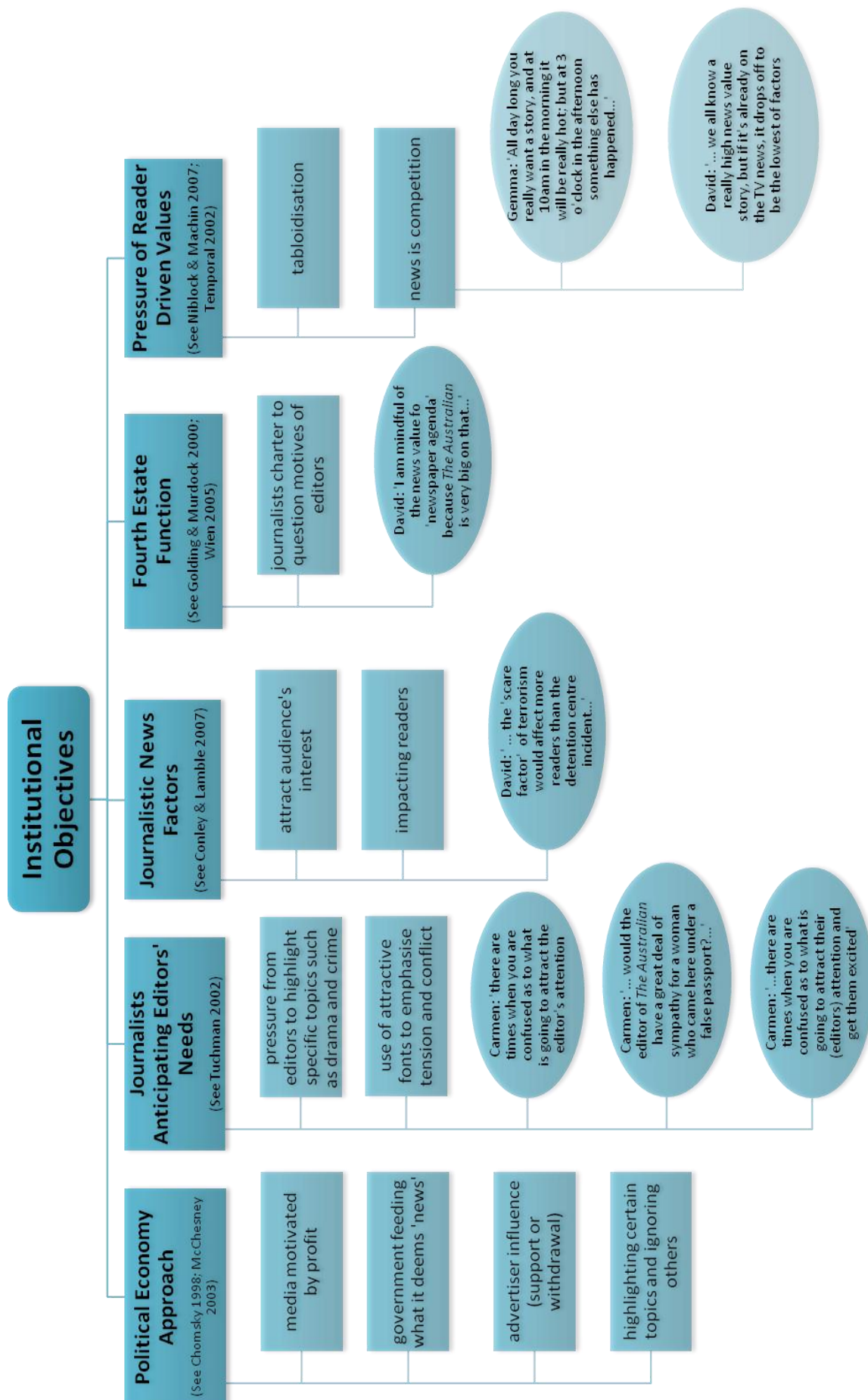


Figure 14: Domain of institutional objectives

Political economy scholars have posited media bias by external factors including the belief that newspaper and broadcast stations advertisers, the concentration of media ownership and political power, all combine to coerce journalists into producing copy that brings members of society to accept the interests of its dominant elite (Bagdikian 2004; Chomsky 1998; McChesney 2008). It is contended in this study that the extent to which structural bias exists in news in its current form is that these factors are both the result of, and dependent on, the journalistic adherence to the practical and fundamental principles of journalism. Within this context, any investigation into media bias, particularly that relating to economic imperatives, is deficient without investigating the role of standard journalism practice in contributing to media distortion. The interrelationship between structural bias and bias resulting from the disciplinary practices of journalists was most evident with participants' claims that they felt pressure from editors to highlight specific topics in relation to refugee issues (see Figure 14). Importantly, participants worked to anticipate the needs of editors with the desire to attract their attention and satisfy audiences' needs. It could be suggested that such a frame may function to both minimise the contribution immigrants make to Australian society and, importantly, play into nationalistic stereotypes concerning race and ethnicity (see Figure 14).

As reaffirmed by van Zoonen (1998, p.126), such an orientation towards audiences produces a frame of reference for journalists that is said to be characterised by interesting (as opposed to 'important') issues, convenient and practical information, committed and emotional (rather than objective and rational) and a mode of address that assumes audiences as consumers (see Figure 14). Therefore the trend in journalism as a whole is towards attracting audiences' attention and attracting readers. As stated by van Zoonen, there are many news texts that can be considered purely aimed at attracting the largest audience possible, but there are few that are purely institutional.

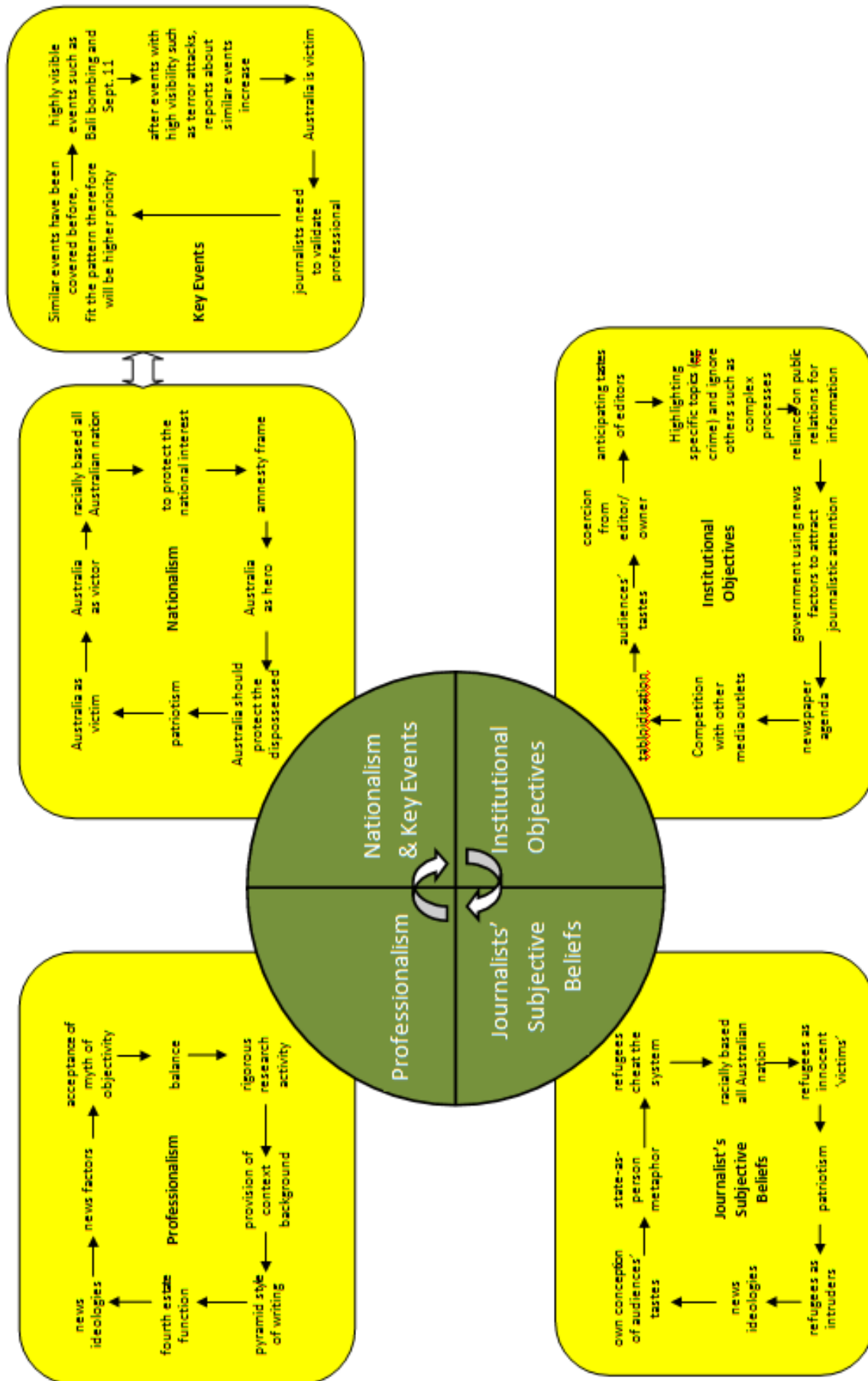


Figure 15: Interrelationship between the four domains in journalism

Here, there is heavy reliance on the concepts included in both the above theories and approaches and data derived from the structured observation transcript. That is, this model (see Figure 15 above) assumes that participants' constructs are linked together, but that these links do not form a predetermined hierarchy. Rather, they may be more accurately described as what Anderson (1983) calls, 'tangled hierarchies' (Price & Tewksbury 1997, p.185). Price & Tewksbury (1997, p.185) state that constructs may hold different (and multiple) positions in different sub-networks and so are not clearly hierarchical in nature. The great advantage of this type of structure is that it provides a framework in which to explain how decisions concerning 'newsworthiness' can spread from one construct to a related concept - that has not been specifically triggered by some external stimulus. For example, if journalists' subjective beliefs indicate 'refugee as intruder' frame, there is an increased likelihood that such constraints will precede and inform the journalistic preoccupation with '*conflict*' and '*controversy*'.

Most news value research has failed to identify relevant cognitive processes (Price & Tewksbury 1997). The model (Figure 15) incorporates a wider range of phenomena. Examination of the discursive context in which news values are constructed has received far less scholarly focus than have more easily defined constructs, such as beliefs (Arant & Meyer 1998; Tsfaty, Meyers & Peri 2006). This study provides a model that is sufficiently comprehensive to allow inferences about multiple forms of journalistic constructs. Importantly, it also provides a framework for potentially demonstrating how these processes inform political judgements of citizens in relation to refugee issues.

4.4 Recursive Frame Analysis

4.4.1 Theme 1: Professionalism

Example 1

The following sequence highlights the relevance of journalistic loyalty to normative practices such as the relevance of background and context.

Gemma: I ranked the September 2003 ('fire' story') as number 1....

David:I'd be desperate to know why they're protesting. In isolation, I don't think that particular article gives you context but it is a massive story (hand signal indicating enormity)

This reflects the complexity of the news factor selection process. While David identifies the importance of the story by ranking it at number 2, he identifies the lack of background in the story as impacting its newsworthiness. In this instance, loyalty to professional norms of exploiting data and sources overrides the discrete events of the ‘protests’.

Carmen: I thought that this wouldn’t have come out of the blue. There would have been articles preceding about protests that were occurring on a smaller scale

By stating ‘this story would not have come out of the blue’, Carmen is affirming journalism’s professional values, which are integral in reinforcing the boundaries of journalist as ‘community’.

Carmen: Now we’ve got one where there are six buildings, so I imagine previous protests and maybe demonstrations inside the detention centre on a smaller scale, may have been on the inside of the paper previously.

Gemma: That’s my thought too. I would have also assumed that there would have been other reporters working on this, and there would be other stories inside the paper on this.

This validates her professional decision of what is newsworthy by referring to how similar events have been covered before. When it comes to decision-making, one group counts: other journalists - their work is the easiest to access and represents professional norms.

David: Umm... it’s obviously a capitulation as to what was happening in that week.

Such an observation is congruent with the *momentary nature* of the media which favours events that fit an easily discernible time frame, whereby new information can be accessed conveniently between edition times.

The concept of professionalism has been broadly interpreted to include numerous concerns including job satisfaction, news values, autonomy, commitment, responsibility, perceived societal roles, and job orientations (Sallot, Steinfatt & Salwen 1998). The concept of professionalism in news maintains that there are constant and universal practices and standards within the field of journalism (Weinhold 2008; Wien 2005). Media analysis by both journalists and scholars often conceptually measure news content against professional norms

in order to assess quality (Fakazis & Russell 1998, p. 2). There are a variety of examples in this study whereby participants centred their news decision-making processes in relation to organisational norms and routines. This was most evident in their focus on the importance of the provision of background and context in news writing. Such a charter states that journalists provide knowledge of previous events that assist in providing a context for the current issue or event. These are frequently previous events which probably figured as news stories in their own right at an earlier stage of the situation (Bell 1995; Breen 1998; Lorenz & Vivian 1996).

The fire story was seen by study participants in terms of the burning of buildings and attacks on Villawood staff. This fits easily into standard news questions asked by journalists: ‘who’ and ‘what’. The apparent clarity accepted by all study participants ignores the story limitations that result from the lack of broader context provided by the ‘fire story’.

Carmen’s comments that there would have been articles preceding the story are conceptualised in terms of her notions of ‘context’ in the narrowly-bounded parameters of ‘protests of a smaller scale’, *not* on issues that would provide more comprehensive coverage, such as the problems with Australian immigration policy, and issues occurring overseas that have forced refugees to seek asylum in Australia. This is not surprising, given all of the participants identified the story in terms of the ‘protest’ frame. Such a frame may be conceptualised in terms of the ‘protest paradigm’, which works to make the issue a legal one that requires ‘legal’ solutions, such as stricter measures to control the crime. This may also be linked to the illegal frame, which frames the issue as a legal one, and in doing so, over inflates the severity of the crime (Hass 2008).

Rather than focusing on the complex issues that have contributed to the refugees’ actions, this frame looks at solutions such as tightening laws and increasing security in terms of a narrowly defined problem. David’s assumption that the protests were a ‘capitulation of what was happening in that week’, demonstrates ‘stated’ journalistic loyalty to the provisions of background and story context. Here the category of ‘background’ covers any *events* prior to the current action – story past time. These are usually previous events which figured as news stories in their own right at an earlier stage of the situation (Bell 1995). Focus on such a limited time frame does not allow for study participants to discuss Australia’s role in failing to address the activities of oppressive governments, nor its role in contributing to international agreements that have contributed to people’s need to flee their place of origin

(see Amnesty International 2007; Refugee Council of Australia 2008). Rather, the reported ‘event’ of the protest is defined as the merely the ‘capitulation of what was occurring that week’.

There was agreement amongst all participants that context would have been provided in the form of previous reporting of this issue. Notably, David agrees that context would have been provided by focus on smaller protests. There is no reference to his earlier point (which both Gemma and Carmen agreed with) about lack of ‘focus’ on ‘why’ refugees were protesting. The group now collectively agrees that focus on other protests may have provided the apparently ‘*missing*’ context. In prioritising a concern with *conflict, tension and antagonism*, participants did not consider the complex and ongoing processes surrounding the riots – which would not be uncovered by reporting the events immediately prior to the riot, but only be reporting what occurred in the extended periods leading up to the riots. This is congruent with the media’s reliance on ‘*event*’ reporting, and its commitment to journalistic ‘objectivity’.

Carmen’s reference to the importance of ‘how many buildings were burnt’ fits with the media focus on *conflict* and *antagonism*. As refugees were engaged in behaviour perceived as ‘violent’ during the burning of buildings and attacks on staff, then the damage they caused is immediately newsworthy. Not surprisingly then, any discussion by the participants of the provision of context and the assumption that there would have been other stories ‘on the inside of the paper previously’, is not conceptualised in the form of complicated immigration legislation nor the difficult-to-quantify mental health of those detained. Carmen’s comments that there would be other stories inside the paper that covered this issue, reaffirms the perceived newsworthiness of the event. Scope of coverage, that is, how many items were devoted to the subject and how long the coverage lasted, indicates newsworthiness (Schwarz 2006, pp.46-47). Emphasis on the relevance of the importance of ‘conflict’ as a news value demonstrates group loyalty to norms governing news values. Such a statement demonstrates an exact perspective on the nature of norms in interaction. In this view, norms are not learned rules which speakers carry around in their heads, but they are ways in which situations unfold, so that participants feel they have to behave in a particular way, or make amends for doing so (Collins 1988).

Despite *The Australian* giving no attention to this issue prior to the reported event of the protests, the group falsely believe that convergence of this judgement is proof of its validity. Agreement between participants that there would have been previous reporting of the protest story indicates a social validation of journalistic judgement (Donsbach 2004). Experience is no longer subjective; instead it achieves the status of ‘objective’ reality. While *The Australian* had not previously reported on this issue, nor provided adequate context in additional reporting of the issue, experience is established by the participants as ‘valid and reliable to the extent that it is shared with others’ (Donsbach 2004, p. 137).

Gemma’s lack of focus on the nature of the protest, allows the event to be easily accorded into the category of a ‘key event’. That is, similar events have been covered before as part of standard police reporting, therefore fit the pattern and thus will be covered with higher priority. Gemma’s assertion that this is a ‘straight police report’, indicates that she sees the ‘riots’ as a crime, and not as an act of ‘protest’. Her identification of this story as the ‘most important’ indicates that she identifies *crime* as the most important factor influencing coverage. Her commitment to ‘police coverage’ suggests that the news value of crime actually functions at the higher level of news ideology, and reflects how journalists see their general role in society and also towards the political system. That is, it is the public’s right to know about crime, and journalists’ role to protect the public as part of its ‘fourth estate’ function (Prichard & Hughes 1997).

The media’s emphasis on crime helps to maintain the salience of crime as a political issue (Surette 1992 in Pritchard & Hughes 1997). It also causes some people to be unduly fearful of victimisation (Liska & Baccaglini 1990 in Prichard & Hughes 1997). Both of these factors are independent of the very low threat that refugees pose to the community (see Mares 2001). Importantly, the media’s framing of the protests in terms of ‘riots’, tends to increase citizen’s openness to oppressive and inequitable immigration legislation (Bishop 2003; Dixon 2002; Gale 2004) .

Example 2

The following sequence further encapsulates the Willie Brigitte story whereby the information source of the story is identified as a tool for both measuring the newsworthiness of the event and as a factor affecting the news frame of the story (Servaes 1991).

Carmen: So if the story was that ‘Australia lacks the legislative power to prosecute suspected terrorists like Willie Brigitte. Buggaluggs Ruddock said yesterday that’ ...That may have impacted on my decision...

The nationalism frame accepted by all participants’ works to inform the ‘prominence’ news factor. Within a nationalism frame, the problem is ‘terrorists’ and the solution to ‘terrorism’ is to introduce tougher laws, tighten borders, increase police power in this area

Gemma: I didn’t rank it high. This other story is a daily breaking news story, buildings are burning. But I might be biased...

The daily breaking’ news story’ enables reporters to cover it within 24 hours of its occurrence. It fits the short duration frequency of the print media, thus is able to be accorded neatly into its schedule.

David: I understand that, within the context of this issue (pointing to all articles), it probably falls to a lower ranking.

Gemma: Was that (the Bali Bombing) October 2002? This was around about the anniversary

Gemma’s acknowledgment of the relevance of the ‘timeliness’, assists in the social validation of David’s judgement.

David: Yes, around October 2003, that would still be really high profile on the newspaper agenda. Umm, and I think that that’s the scare factor of terrorism would affect more readers than the detention centre incident. But I’m quite prepared to go back to ranking this (pointing to article 1 ‘Fire’ Story) more relevant than the Brigitte story

This sequence demonstrates the nationalism frame – which is accepted by all participants and works to inform the ‘prominence’ news factor. Following the journalistic rule which recognises that governments are in a position to act, therefore their words are ‘newsworthy’ (Petersen 2001; Traquina 2004), journalists seek out the views of those in a position of power, with little or no questioning of how their statements support the Government’s agenda of propagating anti-immigrant sentiment in the community.

The report consists of seemingly ‘factual’ descriptions of the unexpected actions of detainees in the previous 24 hours. Importantly, Gemma’s statement ‘I might be biased’ is used here as a hedging device to both debunk the notion of journalistic objectivity and also to handle multiple independent realities. The participant becoming involved and almost ‘curious’ about her response, shows that journalists’ decision-making is informed by journalists’ experiences and expectations rather than by an all-knowing expert who attempts to ‘rectify’ faulty thinking of other journalists. As such, meaning here is negotiated through self reflection.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Nationalism and key events

The following sequence demonstrates the debate between participants of the category of nationalism versus the category of professional frame. This sequence demonstrates the only real point of contention between participants, whereby David’s loyalty to national ends was placed in opposition to Gemma’s and Carmen’s loyalties to the conflict evident in the ‘Fire’ Story.

Example 1: Validation of nationalism

David: The only story I ranked above that one [Article one, the ‘fire’ story] and the reason was that it was the Willie Brigitte story.

While David defines the Brigitte story as the most important, he still rates the protest story as significant at number two. This socially validates Gemma’s and Carmen’s decision to rate the protest story as the most newsworthy. Such a validation means that the introduction of the competing reality of the relevance of the Brigitte story will not threaten the parameters of the group.

David: ...in 2003, terrorism would be a strong factor to consider and this was the first story to come out to say that we had quite significant limitations around our terrorism process

The labelling of Willie Brigitte, the ‘French terrorist’, lays the foundation for the development of the ‘nationalism’ frame, which is manifested in the desire to protect Australia’s interests.

David: So up to that time we would have been saying, ‘what are we doing in relation to counter terrorism’ and this was the first instance where it was shown that we couldn’t detain this guy on our soil ... I don’t know what facts were brought out afterwards...

‘I don’t know what facts were brought out afterwards’: demonstrates the tension between the professional frame of ‘fact checking’ and the nationalism frame. The participant handles this tension by reinforcing the journalistic need to meet national ends.

Carmen: I ranked that quite far back

Gemma: I ranked it further back also

David: I originally did too, but when I started looking at the relevance of getting away from this issue (points to ‘riot’ story), I think this story has a relevance of its own

This indicates a social validation of the judgements of Gemma and Carmen. Such a validation plays a key conciliatory role in introducing the competing reality of his view of the superior importance (his ranking of the article at number 1) of the Brigitte article.

Carmen: In that time frame, yes, but it’s actually quite a weak lead that story’s got, so it didn’t grip me

This demonstrates the tension between ‘timely’ key events, that is, the perceived relevance of the relationship between the suspicious Willie Brigitte and the Bali bombings and, in contrast, a professional frame, which dictates a focus on the newsworthy, designed to ‘impact’ the audience.

David: I would have actually asked for it to be rewritten ... That was the thing down there (pointing to last paragraph of article)... ‘quite significant limitations on’ [our terrorism laws]

Carmen: Yes, maybe if that had been used in the lead that may have persuaded me

This indicates that the subjective view that maybe Willie Brigitte is more important than the protest story, now becomes objective reality. This change or shift receives group validation through acceptance that it is not the story itself that has caused potential disagreement, rather the ‘way it was written’.

This study revealed the recurrence of the nationalism frame, such as when David highlighted the relevance of key events in forging a relationship between the Bali bombings, September 11 2001, and the potential threat that suspected terrorist Willie Brigitte posed to Australian citizens. According to Nossek (2004, p. 347), journalists generally handle any tensions between their journalistic values and the need to meet national ends by having a belief system

such as patriotism. Within the framework of post September 11 2001, scholars suggest that the closer reporters/editors are to a given news event in terms of national interest, the further they are from applying professional news values (Nossek 2004). David's preference for the Willie Brigitte story over the highly conflictual 'fire story', may support this view. David's views on forging a relationship between the Bali Bombings, September 11 2001, and suspected terrorist Willie Brigitte, is an example of 'co-option', whereby a story which is only marginally related can be interpreted and presented in terms of a high-profile continuing story. 'Timing is everything here – the ability to hitch on to a bandwagon while it is moving' (Bell 1995, p. 322).

In accordance with interpretive community theory, journalists have a need to validate their professional decisions of what is newsworthy, by focusing on similar events that have been covered before (Donsbach 2004). Such a link forges a '*local*' *angle* between identified potential terrorist activities at home, and those terrorist events which occurred overseas. David's labelling of Willie Brigitte, the 'French terrorist', reflects the widespread belief that the average Australian is at risk (Newspoll 2004). Despite Brigitte, a former social worker, living an unremarkable life in Australia, with the Government finally admitting they had no concrete evidence against him (Dixon 2003), David conceptualises the story's newsworthiness in terms of a nationalism frame, and how 'outsiders' have the capacity to threaten 'everyday' Australians. This nationalism frame may also evoke the 'legal' frame - and used in this way indicates there is a serious problem that needs to be addressed – that Australian laws need to be tightened to be able to prosecute terrorists more harshly and more effectively. Such a notion may also evoke the 'security' frame – the Government has a responsibility to provide security for its citizens from criminals and invaders.

When analysing journalists' decisions surrounding what is deemed 'newsworthy', key events such as Bali and September 11 2001 are examples of how strong the assessment of such a shared reality can influence news decisions. It is plausible that such patterns of reporting can, at least to a certain extent, be explained by the journalists' need to validate their professional decisions about what is newsworthy: because similar events have been covered before, something that fits the pattern will be covered with higher priority at a later date. That is, news ideologies are news factors at a higher level (Donsbach 2004). David's views concerning the Willie Brigitte story also articulate the security as containment metaphor – keeping the 'evil-doers' out. It could be suggested that such a result may be manifested by a

belief system in patriotism, and demonstrates how ‘shared experience’ (which in this instance is revealed in previous reporting of terrorism and the media’s acceptance of the need to ‘protect’ Australian borders) functions to operate, when judgements cannot be falsified or verified.

David’s comments: ‘*but when I started looking at the relevance of getting away from this issue (points to article 1)*’, suggest that the other articles represent an ‘issue’, not a range of events and processes affecting individual people and their families. Such a conceptualisation may prevent the acknowledgment that many of the people detained have actually fled to escape precisely what Brigitte is suspected of undertaking. One group is seeking merely a normal life free from terror and to contribute to society in a normative matter. The other is motivated by hatred and the desire to destroy the lives of innocent people. Such a distinction is not really made by any of the participants. Brigitte is defined in terms of a threat to ‘national security’, while refugees, incarcerated within Villawood, are nameless people who have arrived in dilapidated boats without adequate identification. This distinction by David, which is unquestioned by Gemma and Carmen, provides a framework for the social validation of the difference of opinion in relation to the ‘most important’ story.

In contrast, if any study participants had noted the complex relationship between terrorism and detention, the professional norms governing objectivity would have been questioned. Such a departure would have had the dual role of highlighting the problems surrounding ‘factual’ reporting and, within this framework, raised questions concerning what is ‘true’, ‘relevant’ and ‘acceptable’. By all of the participants accepting the premise that the issues are *separately* bounded entities, the competing reality is able to be introduced by David, without its merits ever being disputed, questioned, or openly criticised. Within such a framework, any potential disruption to the nationalism frame is dispelled through adherence to the categories of ‘terrorism’ as threat and ‘immigration as problem’ frames.

Such a conceptualisation of newsworthiness by Carmen, ‘but it’s actually quite a weak lead that story’s got, so it didn’t grip me’, is closely interrelated with institutional objectives whereby there is pressure from editors to produce a certain slant and highlight certain topics (Temporal 2002). Such a frame reflects how news is produced in the context of psychographically determined market segments. Within such an environment, notions of

newsworthiness function at the level of a market- driven formulation of the audience and, as such, will play a key role in deciding what makes news (Niblock & Machin 2007).

It could be suggested that David's comment: *'I would have actually asked for it to be rewritten.... That was the thing down there (pointing to last par of article)...quite significant limitations on [our terrorism laws]'*, may illuminate the nationalism frame. This nationalism frame demonstrates a range of metaphors. Firstly, it focuses on crime - such a frame requires 'victims' and 'perpetrators'. Stricter laws are required to restrict the activities of potential terrorists, and this crime frame entails law, courts, lawyers, trials, and sentencing. Such a frame articulates the 'Australia as victor' metaphor, as stated by Lakoff (2001):

Such evil is inherent, and the enemy of evil is good. Good is our essential nature and what we do in the battle against evil is good. If you disagree with that, you are essentially unpatriotic. Not to show overwhelming strength is immoral, since it will induce evil doers to perform more evil deeds because they think they can get away with it. Only superior strength can keep evil at bay.

Such 'strength' is only possible through tougher laws, the tightening of Australian borders, and punishing those who arrive illegally and partake in 'terrorist' activities. Not surprisingly, soon after the Willie Brigitte 'event', Australian terrorism laws were changed, giving increased police powers to the Government (Epstein 2004).

4.4.3 Theme 3: Journalists' subjective beliefs

The following sequence demonstrates notions of newsworthiness within the framework of journalists' own conception of audiences' tastes.

In this example, participants' beliefs of the Russian mother being 'illegal' both precede and inform the news factors of human interest, conflict and drama.

Example 1

Carmen: I didn't rank the Russian mother but (Looking at Russian story), I think I had an empathy lapse for the Russian mother.

This demonstrates how a journalist's predisposition towards an issue or an actor can affect his or her news decisions

David: I don't know if I was considering if she was Russian or not. It was more the children. Everyone loves a story like that.

This indicates an ability to openly disagree, which works to operate as a validation of judgement.

Gemma: Especially with a lot of foreigners in the country.

Evaluative judgements such as the news value of the Russian mother or the moral acceptability of her behaviour lack objective criteria and cannot be verified nor falsified. In such an instance, the focus of decision-making returns to the audiences' tastes and preferences.

Carmen: Don't forget though, we're editing *The Australian* here. Would Chris Mitchell (editor of *The Australian*) have a great deal of empathy for a woman that came here under a false passport?

This demonstrates the political economic implications of corporate media ownership. Such an acknowledgement is in opposition to US research which states that only 6% of reporters had their copy changed by seniors in the newsroom (Donsbach 2004).

Gemma: They are the sort of things I see as very tabloidally and they hate tabloids even though they're apparently not 'tabloid'.

This demonstrates journalistic loyalty to the primary role of the 'fourth estate' function, and a requirement not to titillate.

Carmen: I am mindful of the news value of 'newspaper agenda' because *The Australian* is very big on that... Umm, I can picture Chris Mitchell going 'I've got no sympathy for her because she came here under a false passport, you know. She thinks having a baby is going to make it OK for her to stay here, well not necessarily'

This demonstrates how journalists' communities' ideology contradicts the other. Here, the participant is caught between the journalists' traditional paradigm of objectivity and neutrality, when confronted with the implications of the boundaries of hierarchical and authoritative pressures.

Gemma: ... I went through a lot of crap to get my husband here legally, so anything that is illegal makes me mad... But thinking of the children...

This demonstrates how a journalist's prior knowledge or attitude towards an issue can impact news decisions. Such an opinion may evoke the Immigration reform frame, which suggests that the Government has not been able to control its borders.

David: I think that whole debate of if what she's doing is right that's why its ranked there.

Carmen: I don't know what it is, but I'm just not keen on her, but you two both ranked it high, so (weighing gesture). The Brigitte one, yes, if it was rewritten in a different way, particularly with *The Australian's* pursuit of that agenda anyway, and support of those tough laws than...yes...it probably should come up in ranking. (looking to Gemma) What do you think?

This shows personalisation where events are seen as the actions of individuals. Incompatibility between the government's policies on immigration and the opposition is able to be presented as a personal showdown between 'right' and 'wrong'.

David: It's interesting with the Russian one is that you did feel quite strongly about it didn't you? Like you said, she's an illegal immigrant, so bugger her.

The channel for achieving shared reality requires cooperative social activity and consensually validated social roles and relationships. Here the emerging frame of 'controversy to spark debate' is introduced.

Carmen: I know.. it's weird isn't it?

This shows a need for social validation of perceptions and a need to preserve those existing predispositions. Also, sharing her beliefs with the group makes them intersubjective, ie. reliable, valid, generalisable and predictable.

David: So that story did have relevance to you – so its reasonable we say 'bugger her' .?

Carmen: Yes, so it's the sort of story that would spark quite a bit of debate

David: ... it is one of those ones that goes to how we feel about foreigners, how we feel about the detention of foreigners, how we feel about breaking up families

This is a news ideology, which is not only a criterion for deciding about the newsworthiness of an event, but also how journalists see their general role in society and towards the political system.

Gemma: She supposedly witnessed a murder and is a victim of rape, so that will get empathy from people

This sequence encompasses the proximity and consequence frame: that is, participants are searching for the 'local angle' and how it relates to 'everyday' Australians.

David: That's right, but is she trying to cheat our system, do we let her come here and tell all these stories to cheat our system?

This demonstrates the 'immigration as problem' frame: Such a frame may promote notions of refugees 'draining' the system, to leave 'real' Australians to go without.

Carmen: Yes, I'm persuaded on that too – So do we bump up the Russian and the Brigitte story?

A factor that influences news decisions is the audience. Some of this influence is picked up by the institutional objectives to cater for audience taste.

The occurrence of the nationalism frame was also evident in the reporting of the Russian mother (Article 4) who came to Australia illegally - this is also a news ideology. In the above sequence, participants introduce the 'amnesty' frame, whereby there is a 'pardoning' of an illegal action – a show of mercy by a supreme power. It suggests that while the fault may lie with immigrants themselves, it may be advantageous for the Australian government to reassess its laws. This relates to the Australia as hero metaphor, which articulates that Australia should protect the dispossessed.

David's agreement with Carmen on the relevance of the debate is in accordance with notions of interpretive communities. As journalists have similar values and attitudes, more than

members of most other profession, it is rather easy for them to develop a shared reality (Donsbach 2004, p.126). This sequence encompasses the *proximity* and *consequence* frame; that is, participants are searching for a ‘local angle’ and how it relates to ‘everyday’ Australians. Such news factors are manifested in notions of how meaningful the event will appear to receivers of the news. Such a frame may prevent focus on possible conditions overseas that contributed to this, but rather place focus entirely on the immigrants and the government agencies charged with implementing immigration laws and processes. According to scholars such as Lakoff & Ferguson (2006), these are the only roles present in the immigration as problem frame. In contrast, if the issue was defined in terms of the long-term problems immigrants will experience as a result of their treatment in Australia, then the problem would have been more likely to be discussed in terms of viable long-term solutions.

News is news because it protrudes from the ordinary (Conley & Lamble 2006, p.97). According to Petersen (2001) news is constituted as a figure-ground problem. The ground of news constitutes the everyday world of common sense; the figure represents some breach in common-sense reality that allows one to constitute a story. In order to frame stories as news, journalists must rely on pre-existing cultural knowledge to establish this distinction. This use of pre-existing cultural frames will inevitably tend towards cultural reproduction, even though each given interaction is open-ended and offers scope for invention, ambiguity and interpretive play. The previous sequence (Example 1) demonstrates how journalists’ prior knowledge or attitudes towards an issue may impact news decisions. Research shows that news items supporting journalists’ own opinions on an issue are often attributed a higher news value than those which ran counter to those opinions (Kepplinger, Brosius & Staab 1991).

Example 2

Article 8, the ‘Sexual Abuse’ Story, clearly demonstrates how journalists construct notions of newsworthiness often in accordance with their own predispositions. In the following sequence, participants discuss perceived newsworthy differences between sexual assault of children by detainees and by detention centre staff.

David: If it had been staff members allegedly assaulting the boys...and not actual staff... it would have been stronger. I mean staff are in a position of trust, whereas other detainees are under pressure in that situation and there isn’t that argy bargy about...

This is a competing frame, one side articulates refugees as criminals and intruders, the other suggests refugees as the victim. Central to both frames is the ‘Australia as hero’ metaphor, that states that it is Australia’s role to protect the dispossessed, but only if they are ‘deserving’.

Gemma: But then the staff should have been able to protect the children, from the other prisoners.

Here the previous frame is renegotiated: that staff should be providing protection to all detainees. Such a renegotiation, however, does not challenge the ‘Australia as hero’ metaphor.

Carmen: ..this is a good illustration of the consequence of having children in detention and a growing chorus criticising the detention of children because of mental health issues. So the three doctors, medical negligence talking about mental health of children, then the death of the young girl, and the family of two boys....I thought that would be logical.

This shows the news factor of consequence and the relevance of focus on key events. Similar events have been covered before, and therefore fit the pattern of reporting

The above example of Carmen’s comments: *‘So the three doctors, medical negligence talking about mental health of children, then the death of the young girl, and the family of two boys....I thought that would be logical’* indicates that the ordering of stories in terms of ‘logic’ fits the narrow narrative of news. Journalists promote, legitimise, and secure their authority to control the process of reporting and retelling events, that is, to dominate the process of constructing variants of reality according to the audience’s expectations (Coman 2005, p. 51 in Riegert & Olsson 2007). They do this by presenting sequences of facts and their meaning as if they had a pre-established order, setting them into the context of ‘generally acknowledged truths’ and by assuming a role in which they speak for society as a whole (Bell 1995, pp.306-308).

4.4.4 Theme 4: Institutional objectives

Example 1

The following sequence shows how participants' loyalties to their 'fourth estate' function to question the motives of media owners can in this instance override the 'prominence' news factor.

Carmen: I had it as 7 then I thought about it and then I rated it as five, it was a much more important story because of his links with Philip Ruddock.

This is the news factor of prominence. Governments in power are in a position to act; therefore their words are newsworthy.

David:It is not a huge deal, we don't even know what he has done...all we've got is his connection to Ruddock

This shows the professional frame. that is, journalism's charter to exploit available data and resources and to undertake acceptable and rigorous research activity.

David: I looked at that Brigitte story in similar ways and this goes (points to Foo story) to something that Foo has allegedly done that we don't really have the details for. Brigitte goes to terrorism, whereas Foo goes to his connections to Ruddock.

This is the professional frame: the journalistic charter to exploit available data and resources, and acceptable and rigorous research activity. Central to this is the charter to provide background and context.

David: I think the extent it's been done, we know – (pointing to article and below phrase): '*The Australian* has learned that Mr Foo has a defacto partner and a one year old son who live in Sydney'. There is obviously a newspaper agenda.

Journalistic recognition of the pressures of institutional forces and objectives.

Carmen: I'd be happy to drop that back on that basis

This indicates participants' 'unstated' awareness of newspaper agenda, and their subsequent ability to 'fight' against it as part of their group loyalty and their 'fourth estate' function. They are not going to rank highly those stories that are superficial and not based on 'fact'

Gemma: Yeah, me too!

Group loyalty to ideology of ‘factual’ reporting overrides ‘prominence’ and ‘newspaper agenda’ news factors.

According to Weinhold (2008, p.476), the canons of newspaper journalism include an obligation to truth, dedication to the creation of a high-quality product, objectivity, and responsibility to readers who are the foundation of journalists’ work ethic. Journalists’ activities inside and outside newsrooms, as well as their self-understanding, are guided by these principles. But commercial newspapers are also profit-driven businesses that operate in the free-enterprise economy, and the journalists’ code of ethics lacks an acknowledgment of how or whether their work should answer their employers’ capital demands (Weinhold 2008, p.476).

In the above sequence, participants are aware of newspaper agenda and, in this instance at least, ‘fight’ against it by reducing the newsworthiness ranking as a result of *The Australian* newspaper agenda of intrusively focusing on Jim Foo’s personal life. Such an occurrence indicates journalists’ pursuit of the ‘myth of objectivity’, in not ranking highly those stories that are perceived as superficial and not based on ‘fact’.

4.5 Constructing interpretive communities

Through the practice of discourse the participants were defining and constructing identities, building and reaffirming relationships, operating within the normative professional rules of journalism, coping with similarities and differences, and constructing shared knowledge. As reaffirmed by Kay (1979, p. 37), ‘one of the implicit cognitive schemata by which we structure, remember, and imagine acts of speaking assumes that there is a world independent of our talk and that our linguistic expressions can be more or less faithful to the non-linguistic facts they represent. Thus we can lie, innocently misrepresent, speak loosely, speak strictly, and so on’. According to Lakoff (1972), linguistically these objectives are realised as hedges - mostly verbal and adverbial expressions such as can, perhaps, may, suggest - which deal with degrees of probability. Lakoff (1972) defines hedges as words or phrases whose job it is to make things fuzzy or less fuzzy.

The role of participants was to facilitate the session in an attempt to understand each other's concerns, to develop dialogue that is respectful of all the participants in that context, and to reach consensus. A good example of this facilitative role can be seen in the discussion of which article should be ranked number 1 (galleries 2, 3, 4, 8, 13 and 14). While there was disagreement between the participants in relation to the perceived importance of suspected terrorist Willie Brigitte (Article 6), and how this compared to the perceived newsworthiness of the Fire Story (Article 1), all participants hedged their comments ('Yes, maybe if that had been used in the lead that may have persuaded me'; 'I don't know about the Willie Brigitte one'; 'The Brigitte one, yes, if it was rewritten in a different way, particularly with *The Australian's* pursuit of that agenda anyway, and support of those tough laws'; 'I can see them on the same page for example – which page it would be is the question'), thus not taking a hierarchical or privileged position. In fact, all turns of conversation in galleries 2, 3, 4, 8, 13 and 14 are consistent with that position.

From the interpretive communities position which the participants value, they are letting each other know through hedging - 'I think that probably' et cetera - that their responses are a construction and that no one has a privileged position of knowledge. Embedded in their hedging is the communication that they do not have the correct answers but only one way of viewing the multiplicity of realities that are co-constructed in any encounter. Hedging could then be defined as a way of imparting that view in journalism practice. Hedging could also be seen as an engagement and involvement strategy to engage journalists in co-creating new meanings for themselves and each other.

It should be noted that while galleries 2, 3, 4, 8, 13 and 14 are, in part, examples of non-collaborative talk, as a result of there being disagreement over the ranking of the Fire Story and the Willie Brigitte story, there was some evidence of a hierarchical stance demonstrated by David. This was evident in his pursuit of increasing the position of the Willie Brigitte story, despite Gemma and Carmen noting that they did not see the story's merits and, as a result, ranking it 8 and 6 respectively. However, after David's argument that the story was of crucial importance to Australia's national security, the group ranked the story overall at 2. This is a result of David's editing experience. This became evident when Carmen noted 'David spends some time in news conferences, we (herself and Gemma) do not'. This indicates that Carmen and Gemma both assume that David possesses increased hierarchical power, as a result of his editing experience. According to Donsbach (2004), news

conferences are accepted as a place for journalists to assess a shared reality, and when it comes to decision making, there is only one group that counts, other journalists. This example also demonstrates that hierarchy is inescapable, depending on the ebb and flow of the conversation (Goldner 1993).

Noteworthy is that the participants do not discuss verification in terms of access to refugees themselves, or refugee advocates, or even politicians – the most important people in determining what is true (facts), relevant (agenda) and acceptable (opinions), are other journalists. The sequence of interactions in galleries 1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15 reflect the harmony of the solo voices of the participants. Thus these sequences may be viewed as collaborative because all participants appear to be working on their own process rather than helping one another. That is, it appears that each participant is searching for his or her own clarity and autonomy within the process. This is particularly exemplified by each participant's effort to make his or her own sense of how they chose and ranked particular news factors. 'I'm not completely sure how I want to do it' — in saying this, the participant accepts both shifts in his/her frames and expands on them by saying 'The other thing I wanted to add was'...this occurred frequently with the participants. It could be suggested that this presents the participant as a team member while building a context of highly participatory talk.

The role of participants was to facilitate the session in an attempt to understand each other's concerns and to develop dialogue that is respectful of all the participants in that context and, as such, reach consensus. Zelizer (1993) suggests that a more productive approach is to look at how an 'interpretive community' is built and maintained among journalists through a shared discourse that sets out appropriate narratives for, and approaches to, the 'news.' She draws on Carey's (1989) definition of communication as ritual. He writes, 'communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed' (p. 23)." Journalistic norms and practices, like all communication, are the result of a process of continual negotiation. Somewhat contrary to ideas of professionalism, they are not dictated from above nor are they rigid and unchanging.

4.6 Textual Analysis

The first article presented to research participants, (Shine, McGarry, Morris & Stapleton 2003, 'Breakout foiled, fifth refugee centre burns'), was ranked by the group as being the most important, possessing the highest degree of 'newsworthiness'. Discussion of the 'Fire Story' consisted of a considerable amount of time amongst the participants, and comprised the first four galleries. Participants identified *conflict*, *drama*, and *crime* as the overriding news factors, possessing intensities of 4 and 5 on the newsworthy scale. Participants supported its number one ranking by identifying it within the professional frame of the 'police report' and, importantly, as a daily breaking news story which resulted in significant amounts of damage to buildings and attacks on officers. Further, all participants noted the overriding news factor of *conflict* as the most strong of news factors, thus, ensuring its position as the most important story overall. It is not a surprise this topic is noted in the group task as the most newsworthy, because it is perceived as a crime. Given refugees engaged in 'violent' behaviour through the 'riot', their actions make it immediately newsworthy.

There were 10 articles focusing on 'Fire Story' between January 2003 and November 2006 published in *The Australian*. The frames most evident in the reporting of this article are the professional frames of police reporting, and the *conflict* and *drama* frames. The first article (Shine et al. 2003) demonstrates how the apparent immediacy of the riots resulted in this initial story being chosen for publication. That is, the riots, at least in journalistic terms, would be classified as *immediate* and *unexpected* given that journalists had not reported any detainee unrest within Villawood since 6 August 2001 (Spencer 2001, 'Villawood detainee walks free'). The criteria governing 'newsworthiness', which journalism educators define as 'events that are immediate as more newsworthy than those that occurred some time ago' (White 1996, p. 16), sees the riots as not portrayed as the result of an issue that was on-going and that had taken considerable time to unfold, but as the unpredictable actions of outsiders who have no respect for Australian law and order.

Six buildings were burning at Sydney's Villawood Detention Centre last night after police foiled a major breakout attempt and inmates reportedly attacked guards and lit a number of fires (Shine et al. 2003, ¶ 1).

The next five paragraphs provide evidence to support the above lead by reporting the methods by which detainees caused damage, including the use of iron bars and the commandeering of vehicles which ‘rammed Villawood front gate’. The inclusion of this ‘non-controversial’ and easily verifiable information ensures at least in journalistic terms, that reporters provide a ‘factual’ and ‘objective’ account of the event.

The quantitative assessment evident in the reporting of the issue, such as the reporting of how many detainees were involved, the nature of the damage incurred, and the series of similar riots that have occurred at Woomera, Baxter, Port Hedland detention centres and on Christmas Island, dominates all but the last four paragraphs, identified by reporters as the most important aspect of the issue. In accordance with journalism training (White 1996), ‘contextual background’ is provided and evident in the follow-up story (*The Australian* 2 Jan. 2003, p. 2, ‘1960s hostel has turbulent past – ASYLUM RAGE’, Appendix E). This factual information, as expected, focuses primarily on how the trouble unfolded, reporting how up to three years prior, riots had broken out in the centre, and that over the previous two years there has been a total of 37 detainees escape from the facility.

However, this journalism commitment to ‘*conflict, tension and antagonism*’, resulted in *The Australian* ignoring the most important aspect of this issue – the complex and on-going processes surrounding the riots – which would not be uncovered by reporting the events three years leading up to the riot, but only by reporting the complex processes in the extended periods leading up to the riots. The only attention given in the initial story to ‘why’ refugees ‘rioted’ comes in the form of an incomplete and indirect quote from the generic and *lesser known* ‘refugee advocates’:

‘Refugee advocates yesterday denied the burnings were an orchestrated campaign by the asylum seekers’ (Shine et al. 2003, ¶ 21).

According to the Refugee Action Committee (2003), the fire and breakout at Villawood had nothing to do with the asylum seekers. It took place in the so-called ‘deportees’ compound. ‘Many of these are people who have done time in jail, which can be as little as three months, and are being punished twice. Many are long-term Australian residents, people with no lives in the country they’ll be deported to.’

However, it was the Federal Government speaking through then acting Immigration Minister Daryl Williams who was seen socially to be the authority on immigration issues and, as such, his comments were given systematic placement through both quote length and emphasis. Rather than the Acting Minister highlighting the Government's role in delegating detainees to a life of uncertainty in accordance with the Federal Government's agenda, he chose merely to reinforce the then Government's competence in reducing any 'threat' posed by detainees to the welfare of the Australian community:

There is a range of measures that can be taken, but you cannot supervise every individual in a detention centre on a 24 hour, seven-day-a week basis....The detainees at Baxter have been screened and their belongings screened and there has been a review of the policy in relation to cigarette and matches (¶20 & ¶21, Shine et al 2003).

Because refugee advocates do not possess the power to develop nor implement policy, it is not surprising that the then Acting Minister's opinions were given prominence and emphasis. In journalistic terms, the degree to which an individual's statement is given weight is in direct proportion to his or her title. Given that it was the then Acting Minister's role to oversee immigration policy, he was essentially defined by his professional position. This relates directly to the prominence criterion, which 'recognises that governments are in a position to act and therefore their words tend to be more reliable precursors to action' (White 1996, p. 167).

The majority of the remaining articles for this topic focus on quantitative assessment of the issue, including the types of injuries sustained by officers during the riot (Harris, Roberts & Gerard 2003, 'Officer attacked in Villawood rampage – ASYLUM RAGE'; Macfarlane, Gerard & Williams 2003, 'Man stabbed in detention centre attack'; MacFarlane et al. 2003, 'Detainees on rampage cut lights, cameras'). These reports consist of seemingly 'factual' descriptions of the unexpected actions of detainees in the previous 48 hours. This fits the easily discernible time frame of the print media, whereby new information can be accessed conveniently between edition times. This information could be easily accessed within the short time frame prior to the 'Fire Story' relinquishing its newsworthy status.

Not surprisingly, the legal reporting of the 'Fire Story' (Gerard & Williams 2003, 'Escape ringleader in court', and 'refugees charged over new year riots'), does not provide coverage

of the views of independent authorities on refugee issues nor investigate the relationship between the riots and the psychological distress of detainees. Following journalism training though, it is not uncommon that these complex processes are not investigated. As reaffirmed by journalism educator Sally White, ‘The reasons behind a protest are usually already visibly on the public agenda. To the reporter, the new element in a protest is what happens, not what motivated the protest’? (White 1996, p. 113).

Given that reporters from *The Australian* had not reported on any abuses occurring in the compound (see Keogh 2003; Refugee Action Committee 2003, for discussion of human rights violations at Villawood), with this being a result of their failure to both seek out the views of lesser-known sources and investigate the claims made by immigration officials, the legal reporting of the issues merely focuses on the appearance of the ‘ringleader’ in court. In the absence of any occurrence, at least in journalistic terms, ‘*unexpected and unusual*’ following the riots, *The Australian*’s reporting of the issue shifts focus to the exchange between the ‘ringleader’ and the officers during the attack.

The detainees allegedly laid the blankets on the ground and struck the fence before attempting to lift it. When guards approached, Mr McCreadie walked out of the dormitory waving a metal table leg over his head. “Stay back, don’t get involved,” he allegedly said. ‘Don’t get involved as we don’t want to hurt you officers’” (Gerard & Williams 2003, ¶ 8).

The reporting of this issue was police reporting in its narrowest sense. Given the ‘reliable’ and ‘verifiable’ nature of the ‘facts’, journalists reported nothing more than the injuries sustained by officers, the costs resulting from the damage caused, and the intention of the Federal government to punish those responsible. The result of the pursuit of ‘clarity and brevity’ then, sees the final story presented to readers in an ‘atmosphere of professionalism and breezy expertise with assuring official attribution’ (Koch 1990 p. 63) – ‘The Police responded to’, ‘An Immigration Department spokesperson said’ - should nervous readers be inclined to scepticism.

The second article presented to research participants (Wynhausen 2003e, ‘Sick and alone. Tragic end for a sex slave’), reports on the death of Puangthong Simpalee, a 27-year-old woman who died while detained in Villawood, after allegedly receiving improper medical care for heroin addiction. This story was ranked by the group as being the third most

important and, as such, possessing a considerable degree of newsworthiness. There was almost no discussion of this story in the transcript however, as it was grouped and discussed with the context of two other stories - the alleged abuse against two boys by fellow detainees, and a medical negligence claim against Villawood made by doctors. Participants noted *human interest* and *drama* as the overriding news factors, both ranked at 5. It is unsurprising this story was highly ranked by participants given its focus on the heartbreaking and personal story of Puangthong Simpalee who, at 27, had experienced a fractured background and a harrowing and degrading death. As reaffirmed by Scanlan (2000, p. 12), ‘News is the daily chronicle of the human race. People are the lifeblood of journalism. Not just names and titles and addresses but also details about what those in the news look and sound like, how they behave, what they dream for’.

There were 13 articles that focused on this issue in *The Australian* during the period under investigation, with all reporting primarily focusing on the event of Puangthong Simpalee’s death, followed by a series of ‘investigative’ articles into the sex trade industry, (Wynhausen, E 2003a ‘Arrested woman linked to sex slave’; Wynhausen & O’Brien 2003, ‘Death exposes agony of sex slaves’; *The Australian* 25 Apr., p. 3, ‘Sex slave’s drug mess’). Journalists Natalie O’Brien and Elizabeth Wynhausen received a Print Media award from the Australian Human Rights Commission for their series of articles into the sex trafficking trade industry (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003). According to interpretive community theorists such as Zelizer (1993), professional awards such as this reinforce the boundaries required for community solidarity.

Discourse is highly emulatory in cases of professional accomplishment. In a sense, reporters acquiesce to the critical incident making headlines. They discuss the incident in a variety of news formats, claim to copy the practice it embodies, and emulate the reporters responsible to publicising the practice. Awards and prizes abound (Zelizer 1993, p. 225).

Importantly though, *The Australian*’s self-described ‘revelations’ presented in the reports of the sex slave issue did not come from independent investigations, but from official reports and enquiries. If the media were truly investigative, and able to actively interpret and draw conclusions from the facts, it is contended that the sex trade problems in Australia would have been discussed in the public arena before the ‘event’ of Puangthong Simpalee’s death

occurred and, within this context, identified the role of the Government in failing to enact appropriate legislation in relation to the exploitation of women.

The Australian's reporting of the death of Puangthong Simpalee and subsequent focus on the sex trade industry, demonstrates the 'immigration as problem' frame. Closely connected to this frame, is the nationalism frame, whereby reporting of this issue demonstrates Australia's failure to fulfil its role as 'hero', that is, failure to fulfil its role in protecting the dispossessed. Within such a frame, there is the demonstration of what can happen when immigrants arrive in Australia illegally. The Immigration Department's argument, 'that women haven't been trafficked because they know they have been brought to Australia for prostitution' (One-way traffic for sex slave trade, Wynhausen and O'Brien 2003) places responsibility on the victims, rather than forcing the Government to look at their role in contributing to social and economic inequities that provide a foundation for the on-going growth of the sex slave industry. Reinforcing the 'immigration as problem' frame in this article is achieved by framing Puangthong Simpalee firstly as a victim, then providing dehumanising descriptions of a shocking and harrowing background:

In statements tendered to the coroner's court in March and reported by *The Australian*, two immigration officials said Simpalee told them her parents had sold her as a child. Immigration official Daniel Bell said Simpalee had told him: 'My parents sold me and I came on a fake Malaysian passport'. While elements of her story are in dispute, some facts stand out. Simpalee, a heroin addict, weighed 31kg when she died. Her wrists were covered in scars'. (Wynhausen 2003d, 'Parents deny selling daughter' ¶ 7-10).

Such accounts, which recurred in all reporting of the issue, raise the question of whether we 'want people like this' in Australia, who ultimately may pose threats to our way of life and sense of law and order. Such sentiments spring from border metaphors, whereby there is focus on 'ebbing the flow', 'tightening legislation', and 'imposing stricter laws'. Such solutions, however, do little or nothing to address the wider systemic problems, such as the inability of young girls to find work in their own countries (ActNow 2008), and who, as a result, are transported to a country that does nothing to protect their human rights. Framing this issue as a 'legal' and 'moral' one, makes the victims responsible and, as a result, reduces focus on the role of governments in contributing to the problem.

Victims of human trafficking generally originate in situations of extreme poverty. That is why they are susceptible to trafficking in the first place: a lack of other opportunity, and lack of knowledge about safe migration options (Dowling 2008). Each year about 900, 000 women and children are trafficked across international borders, many of them ending up as indentured slaves in the sex industry. An estimated 1000 of these women, mostly from Asia, are ‘sold’ into Australian brothels (Kalina 2003).

The framing of this story in *The Australian* as a ‘sex trade’ problem places it squarely into the realm of the immigration debate. Framing it as just an immigration problem prevents us from penetrating deeper into the issue – that of a humanitarian problem. Rather than *The Australian* defining the problem as a legal and moral one, the problem would be better understood as a humanitarian crisis. The last decade has seen enormous growth in the trafficking of people, mostly women, for the purposes of sexual exploitation. People trafficking is the second largest international crime with profits estimated to equal the trade in weapons. The United States Justice Department's senior special counsel for trafficking issues and civil rights has recently called it the number one human rights issue today (March Bell 2005). In order for *The Australian* to frame this in terms of the humanitarian crisis, input would be required from humanitarian bodies such as the United Nations and Amnesty International. But these bodies do not have a space in the professional frame of news values as they provide input on complex and ongoing processes that are not congruent with the media focus on the immediate and recent (Brooks et al. 2002). Further, such sources are lesser known and often do not fulfil the media’s preference for ‘prominent Government sources that are in a position to act’ (Scanlan 2000).

The third article presented to research participants (Perry 2003, ‘Detained children ‘scarred’’), reports on a medical negligence complaint lodged by three doctors against Australasian Correctional Management, claiming the mental health of children and adults in Australian detention centres was being severely damaged. This story was ranked by the group as being the third most important, equal to Article 2 (Puangthong Simpalee sex trafficking story), and considered to possess a significant degree of newsworthiness. There was only limited discussion of this story in the transcript, however, as it was grouped and discussed within the context of two other stories - the two boys who were allegedly sexually assaulted (Article 8), and the Naomi Leong story (Article 7) which depicts Virginia Leong

and daughter Naomi enjoying their day in a Sydney park after being released from Villawood Detention Centre.

There were eight articles published in *The Australian* that focused on this topic during the period under investigation, with all reporting mainly focusing on the alleged inhumane treatment of asylum seekers while in detention. Such reporting contrasts with other reporting during the same period, as it primarily frames refugees as ‘victims’ and not as those who are criminals or who cheat the system. Such a contrast seems to support research (Van Gorp 2005) which reveals that journalists’ subjective beliefs often see refugees as both ‘intruders’ and also as ‘innocent victims’ that should be protected.

This shift in reporting occurred when three doctors demanded that an extensive review of the standard of care of detainees was required. Such reporting combined official attribution with that of ‘outsider’ and lesser known sources. In its follow-up reporting of this issue, journalists discovered that it was difficult to determine how the detention centres were operated. In the absence of official information about the operation of the centre, reporters continued to access the views of minority or outsider perspectives in favour of its usual reliance on Government officials. This led to the reporting of alleged human rights abuses occurring inside the detention centres.

However, there was no independent investigation from *The Australian*, nor did they make any connection between the ‘facts’ as provided by attributed sources. Its reporting of possible government negligence merely ‘shifted the focus of the reportorial event from that of official statement’ (Koch 1990, p.121), such as immigration department officials, to *prominent* figures such as Dick Smith and detainee lawyers and members of the medical profession – who had now become official adversaries.

Entrepreneur Dick Smith, a supporter of Mr Qasim, said the detainee’s mental state had deteriorated sharply after being locked up for almost a quarter of his life. ‘He was locked up at 24 years of age, it’s just terrible’, Mr Smith said. The business man is keen to highlight Mr Qasim’s plight in newspaper advertisements but said he had been warned by some supporters that it might anger the Government and hurt his chances of freedom. (Maiden 2005)

However, *The Australian* did not seek the views of those organisations which had the power to place pressure on the government, such as Amnesty International and the Human Rights Commission. As reaffirmed by Sheikh, MacIntyre & Perera (2008), health professionals as individuals have a moral and ethical obligation to speak out and act against the abuses of detainees' human rights. In a range of refugee cases, assessments by medical professionals occurred during the course of events, but did not result in any change in outcome for the detainees. In this instance, the medical negligence complaints also did not result in any change to either the daily treatment of detainees nor government immigration policy (Keller et al. 2003; Murray & Skull 2005).

Keeping in mind the ideology of objectivity, this reporting of the on-going problems within detention only occurred because non-prominent sources, in accordance with their agenda of protecting the human rights of those detained, were able to discuss these issues. In the reporting prior to the medical negligence claim, the complex processes, including the violation of detainees, were not addressed because officials, who dominated coverage of reporting for that period in accordance with the Federal government's agenda, chose not to focus on these issues. Within this context then, by not focusing on the daily experiences of detainees, the government was able to frame the highly newsworthy events such as the 'riots' as the actions of a violent group of people, rather than the more accurate assessment of a group of people who were being treated in a manner that posed further threat to their mental well being.

As the treatment of detainees had not been subjected to critical analysis, *The Australian* gave readers no basis to change their opinion of the Government's handling of the refugee issues one way or the other. Put simply, there was no discussion prior to the medical negligence complaint of universal political principles and how they related to federal Government refugee policy, and the media was not in a position to discuss with any legitimacy the processes surrounding the treatment of asylum seekers. *The Australian* could only report with authority the attributed 'facts' as they related to human rights abuses within detention.

The fourth article presented to research participants (Haslem 2003, 'Russian fails in bid to stay with her baby'), reports on a Russian mother's bid to stay in the country with her Australian-born toddler. This story was ranked by the group as being the second most important and, as such, considered to possess a high degree of newsworthiness. There was

extensive discussion of this story in the transcript, with participants agreeing that its ability to ‘spark debate in the community’ contributed to its high ranking on the newsworthy scale. The group noted *human interest*, *emotion*, *drama* and *relevance* as the overriding news factors, with all these factors ranked as a five on the newsworthy intensity scale.

There were 16 articles published in *The Australian* that focused on litigation and visa issues during the period under investigation, with all reporting primarily focusing on court proceedings and official documents and transcripts. Within such a limited context *The Australian*, for the most part, gave weight to official spokespersons, with the Immigration Department the most frequently attributed source. The stories outlining visa issues accounted for the most significant amount of coverage relating to Villawood in the period analysed. They are all standard court reports, which only refer to official documents, and official Government spokespersons. Journalists covering these issues on some occasions noted that immigrants could not speak English (Roberts 2005, ‘Man held despite passport pleas’; Wynhausen 2004, ‘Massage women have visas returned’), but they did not highlight potential problems with this from a legal perspective. Importantly, journalists did not make any connection between this and claims by scholars (Betts 2003) that immigrants are not being fairly represented as a result of their lack of knowledge in both understanding English and being aware of the nuances of Australian immigration legislation.

Such a deficiency has been highlighted by scholars as evidence of the inability of the Government in failing to protect both the rights of immigrants and, importantly, its failure to fairly implement Australian law in these processes (Koutroulin 2003; McLoughlin & Warin 2007). According to Bessant (2002) there is evidence to indicate that Government functionaries can exceed their legal powers and, when challenged, typically respond by amending the relevant legislation. ‘It is political practices such as these that permit certain groups of asylum seekers to be completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives and to enable unjust and unlawful acts to not be considered harmful, abusive or criminal’ (p. 22).

The only way to effect real change for immigrants is through legislation (Betts 2003), however there was little or no discussion in *The Australian* of the problems with current legislation – nor investigation into why the Government has been accused of failing to honestly and ethically follow this legislation. *The Australian*, in its reporting of visa and immigration issues, worked to reinforce the ‘immigration problem’ frame. Central to this

frame, is the ‘state as person’ metaphor (Lakoff & Ferguson 2006) which is articulated through notions such as the costs immigrants incur to the community, and the relevance of tightening security to ensure that governments are vigilant in relation to who they let into the country. In many cases, in the story leads in the articles under investigation, refugees were contextualised in terms of the ‘immigration as problem’ frame. For example:

‘Cases of persecution almost identical in their detail have been presented to the Refugee Review Tribunal, raising concerns a migration agent is using the same story for multiple clients’ (Harris 2003, ‘Refugees’ identical tales raise suspicion’).

‘Four cleaners picked up this week in an immigration raid on a shopping centre in south western Sydney are Indian nationals who came to Australia on visas available only managers, professionals and tradespeople’ (Wynhausen 2004, ‘Illegal cleaning workers here on business visas’).

The immigration reform frame evokes an issue defining frame (Lakoff & Ferguson 2006). This definition of the problem focuses entirely on the immigrants and the administrative agencies charged with overseeing immigration law. The reason is that these are the only roles present in the Immigration Problem frame. The Government’s comprehensive solution only concerns the immigrants’ citizenship laws and border patrol. And, from the narrow problem identified by framing it as an immigration problem, the Government’s solution is comprehensive. He has at least addressed everything that counts as problems in the immigration frame. However, the real problem with the current situation runs broader and deeper (Lakoff & Ferguson 2006). For example, how has Australian foreign policy contributed to oppressive governments which people are forced to flee? And further, what impact has globalisation had in providing worsening economic hardship for those already most disadvantaged?

Recurring patterns of news that highlight certain kinds of criminals and victims, while downplaying others, transmit daily messages about what matters most in society. Such messages are not ideologically neutral. Over time, they create an interpretive framework for thinking about solutions to the social problem that favours certain kinds of social change (Van Dijk 1993 in Pritchard & Hughes 1997).

The fifth article presented to research participants (Karvelas & Warne-Smith 2003, ‘Foo detained but set to walk free’) reports on Jim Foo, the ‘controversial’ businessman who had alleged links with then Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock. This was ranked as the least newsworthy of all the articles. It also received the least coverage in *The Australian*, out of all the topics under investigation during the period (2003-2006).

Central to this story is the prominence frame whereby journalists at *The Australian* ‘worked up’ some type of unsubstantiated allegiance between Mr Foo and Mr Ruddock.

Jim Foo, the fugitive businessman who once dined with Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock, looks set to escape prosecution (Karvelas & Warne-Smith 2003, ¶ 1).

Interestingly, while the story did suggest some impropriety by Minister Ruddock, participants when discussing this article did not identify this as relevant. Given that there was no apparent conflict or tension in this story, both participants and journalists at *The Australian* did not give the story placement or emphasis. The central frame of prominence was clearly the news peg for journalists at *The Australian*, with this reinforced by Carmen who stated ‘all we have is his connection to Ruddock’.

The sixth article presented to research participants (Morris 2003, ‘A longer and tougher questioning in Paris’), reports on Willie Brigitte, the French tourist suspected of links to terrorism who could not have been detained under Australian laws. The five articles devoted to this story in *The Australian* focused on the views of the immigration department, with particular emphasis on the potential threat Willie Brigitte posed to Australian law and order.

‘We are seeking through our own inquiries what he was doing here, the nature of the contacts he had’, Mr Ruddock said last night. ‘We know some of his activities. It is said he married an Australian while he was here. We don’t know all the matters he may have been involved in.’

In all reporting of this issue, it was the then Federal Government, speaking through Minister Ruddock who was seen socially to be the authority on immigration issues:

‘We have, I think, in world terms, a very comprehensive alert system, but it is always limited by the extent to which you are able to obtain timely and accurate information,’ Mr Ruddock said. (Chulov, Perry & Higgins 2003, ¶17)

While no evidence had been presented to back the most extravagant claims by *The Australian* — that he established terrorist cells in Sydney’s southwest; that he was an al Qaeda ‘ sleeper agent ’; that he was recruiting members for terrorist groups and training them in bomb-making; that he was planning a terrorist attack on ‘ Australian soil ’; and that he has been involved in terrorist plots around the world (Dixon 2003) — then minister Ruddock’s opinions were given prominence and emphasis. In journalistic terms, the degree to which an individual’s statement is given weight is in direct proportion to his or her title. Given that it was then Minister Ruddock’s role to implement and oversee immigration policy, he was essentially defined by his professional position. This relates directly to the prominence criterion, which ‘ recognises that governments are in a position to act and therefore their words tend to be more reliable precursors to action ’ (White 1996, p. 167).

In the Willie Brigitte story, the prominence criterion both preceded and informed the state-of-person metaphor. Such a frame sees the world as a dangerous place and one whereby people should be suspicious of foreigners: a nation is a social group; a citizen is a member of the group. This nationalist frame demonstrates anger when foreigners appear suspicious or in any way potentially threaten the ‘ in-group ’ (Lakoff 2001).

As a result of the Willie Brigitte issue, new terror laws were introduced to give increased police powers to both interrogate and detain suspected terrorists. Media scholars have noted that this is a result of the media’s handling of the issue, which served to reinforce fear and hysteria against those of a different race and ethnicity (Dixon 2003). As reaffirmed by Sheikh, MacIntyre & Perera (2008), Australia today has a well-established detention infrastructure of over 10 years standing. This, in the context of Australia lacking a bill of rights, but with an increasingly racially and religiously polarised society, a culture of fear and a leadership willing to exploit this fear, is the first step in allowing the system of preventative detention in the country to be expanded unopposed.

Given the seamless transition of Guantanamo Bay from immigration detention centre to a detention centre for suspected terrorists, it is quite plausible that the large network of detention centres in Australia

could also function as political detention centres. How they evolve or devolve in the future is difficult to predict. However, a former Australian opposition leader publicly advocated ‘locking down entire suburbs’ in the event of a terror threat. (p. 482)

In the case of refugees currently being held in detention centres, there are two dominant metaphors used by politicians and the media to talk about this issue - the ‘wave’ metaphor and the ‘war’ metaphor. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) believe that any given metaphor may be the only way for one to coherently organise exactly those aspects of our experience. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980) then, metaphors create realities, especially social realities. As such, a metaphor may be the guide for future action, with the actions fitting the metaphor. This, in turn, will reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent.

The deployment of the war metaphor, for example, is evident in the characterisation of refugees by the media and politicians as ‘threat to national security’ (Chulov 2003, ‘The ‘stupid’ man who fooled us all’; Chulov 2004, ‘Brigitte stonewalls AFP investigators’; Chulov, Perry & Higgins 2003, ‘Terror suspect a ‘sleeper agent’). According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), metaphors generate a network of entailments whereby the metaphor is not merely a way of viewing reality, but constitutes a license for policy change and political and economic action.

With ‘illegal immigrants’, the war metaphor has generated a network of entailments. For example, there is the ‘risk to the safety and well-being of the nation’, which has seen Immigration Department representatives ‘stem the flow’ and ‘contain the revolt’ through ‘getting tougher on illegals’ by actions such as ‘stricter security measures’, ‘developing tougher strategies’, ‘refusing amnesties totally’, ‘increasing penalties for people trafficking’, and ‘taking action against those responsible’. It could be argued that this metaphor *may appear* to some as plausible, as refugees have, and continue to, protest in relation to their experiences of inhumane treatment.

Again, this highlights the potential for bias resulting from the pursuit of journalistic ‘news values’. In an attempt to seek out ‘conflict, tension and antagonism’ (White 1996, p. 17), reporters will present disturbances in detention centres as the actions of criminals who pose significant threat to Australian law and order, while ignoring the complex processes which

sparked the unrest, which specifically relate to extended periods of detention and inhumane treatment.

However, the illusion perpetuated by this metaphor is that if security measures are tightened in detention centres, refugees will not protest and thus law-abiding citizens will be protected. ‘The acceptance of a metaphor forces us to focus *only* on those aspects of our experience that it highlights, leads us to view the entailments of the metaphor as being *true*’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p.157). Yet, what is hidden by this metaphor is that while the Government continues to take extended periods in processing applications, the morale inside detention centres will continue to decrease. The Immigration Department’s characterisation of refugees as a threat to law and order also suggests that the problems occurring within detention centres are purely external and can be simply ‘fixed’ by increased security and the enforcement of additional punitive measures.

This metaphor hides the cause of the problem which is, according to Amnesty International and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the violation of human rights, not only occurring from mandatory and extended detention, but from the material conditions inside the detention centres (Amnesty International 2007; Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000, ‘Immigration Detention Centre Guidelines’). For the Government though, it is easier to gain support for the war metaphor as it conceptualises refugees as enemies of society, rather than identifying the internal problems within the system. By defining refugees as the ‘enemy’, society can feel secure in the knowledge that the Government will ultimately gain victory by quelling the threat posed by ‘illegal immigrants’ through whatever measures are required. Within this context, society is not the victim, rather it remains healthy and strong as it has the capacity to defend itself against ‘external threats’.

Acceptance of this metaphor, then, involves increased surveillance of Australia’s coast lines, stricter security within detention centres, the introduction of tighter legislation designed to remove the occurrence of onshore visa applications, and even harsher penalties for those who offer resistance. ‘In most cases, what is at issue is not the truth or falsity of a metaphor but the perceptions and inferences that follow from it and the actions that are sanctioned by it’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p.157). However, while advocates of refugees are in constant conflict with Federal Governments (Crosweller 2000, ‘Ruddock accused of neglect over

refugees’; Schubert & Wynhausen 2000, ‘Ruddock rejects call to free young detainees’) over its treatment of refugees and, as such, do not accept the metaphor and thus do not see the entailments as fitting reality, the power of metaphor in shaping the public’s understanding of the issue is significant.

Also, advocates are disadvantaged, given that ‘people in power get to impose their metaphors’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 157). Therefore, the media and politicians, through deployment of the ‘war’ metaphor only highlight *certain* aspects of experience. For the reader, they may ‘recognise the legitimacy of power; and hence fail to see that the hierarchy is after all, an arbitrary social construction which serves the interests of some groups over others’ (Bourdieu 1991, p.23).

The ‘war’ metaphor has also been used in conjunction with the ‘wave’ metaphor, which is articulated by both the media and politicians, who regularly identify ‘illegal immigrants’ as a huge mass of humanity coming in waves, with terms such as ‘boatloads’, ‘flood tide’, ‘overflow’, ‘more waves’ and ‘swamped’ used to describe their arrival (Saunders 2000, ‘\$117m to staunch overflow of illegals’; Tanner & Saunders 1999, ‘Amnesty rumours behind refugee flood, says Ruddock’). The wave metaphor gains plausibility by implying that refugees will undoubtedly contribute to unemployment, resulting in the taking of a share of Australia’s already ‘overburdened’ welfare system. The result: large segments of the public being persuaded that refugees will take a share of ‘our’ resources, leaving *real Australians* to go without. Despite evidence to suggest the positive contribution immigrants have made to Australia, both economically and socially, what is really a *humanitarian* issue becomes a political and ethnic ‘*problem*’.

In addition, the wave metaphor calls for us to turn people away, no matter what their suffering, in an effort to ‘*literally*’ protect our own survival. The perception of increasing numbers as a *deluge* of poor Third World peoples arriving on our doorstep, gives legitimacy to the strengthening of external forces: ‘We can’t take everyone’. What is hidden by this metaphor is that increased security and legislative measures to protect Australia’s shores will not solve the problem, as the situation stems from events occurring abroad, which has in the past, and continues to do so, resulted in an increasing number of refugees seeking sanctuary in Australia, regardless of their treatment on arrival.

The real issue for refugees then, (which is consistently overlooked in the dominant media) is the ramifications resulting from global gender inequality, the increasing gap between rich and poor, a significant decline in world living standards and the continual threat from oppressive regimes. It could be argued that the acceptance of both the ‘wave’ and ‘war’ metaphors gives increasing power to the Government who continue to seek solutions to the problem through the escalating deployment of force and punishment.

Identifying the significant power the Government possesses in this way raises the question as to what extent current immigration legislation represents the particular values and interests of dominant groups in society, as opposed to reflecting the views of the general public. One method by which the Government rallies public support is by the assumption of consensus. Following Lakoff’s (1987) prototype theory, the scenarios put forward by the Government, which focus on *negative* and *threatening* activities, will reinforce the perception of an ‘illegal immigrant’ as one who is a threat to law and order.

The seventh article presented to participants (Carson 2005, ‘Little Naomi’s first taste of freedom’), reports on the release from Villawood Detention Centre of Virginia Leong and her three-year-old daughter Naomi. The four articles devoted to this story in *The Australian* focused on the psychiatric problems Naomi suffered as a result of being in detention.

The damage done by her stay at Villawood, in Sydney’s west, seems to be fading. ‘The nightmares are almost over now, but in the beginning she would wet the bed a couple of times a night,’ Naomi’s mother, Virginia Leong, told *The Australian* yesterday. (Gosch 2006, ¶3)

According to scholars such as Mencher (1997), to make certain the story is read, the journalist must recount events in ways that substitute for the drama of the personal encounter. One of the ways journalists do this is to tell the story in human terms, personalising and dramatising the news by seeking out the people involved in the event -human interest is an essential ingredient of news.

The Naomi Leong story reflects the human interest criterion and, as an adjunct to that, the media’s efforts to ‘personalise’ the news. The issues such as the on-going anxiety and depression as described by Virginia Leong, which do not involve action and movement, are

usually not easily included in these categories. ‘Unfortunately it is easier to report action than ideas because actions can be pinned down and verified’ (White 1996, p. 113). In this instance however, *The Australian’s* accompanying photograph of mother and child enjoying a day out in a Sydney park provided tangible evidence that an event did occur.

The eighth article presented to participants (Robinson 2005b, ‘Cover-up claim over detainee ‘child abuse’’), reports on allegations made against the immigration department that sexual assault in detention of two young boys was covered up.

The Australian’s focus on ‘deviance’ in the form of sexual abuse allegations relates directly to the media preference for event reporting, particularly those containing ‘*conflict and drama*’ (Scanlan 2000). Throughout the reporting of the sexual abuse issue, beginning on July 9 2005 and finishing on June 23 2006, *The Australian*, for the most part, framed the issue of sexual abuse as the overriding news peg, with only very minimal reference to non-prominent sources who would have had the charter and capacity to highlight the more critical issues encompassing inadequate and discriminatory refugee policy. It is contended that the Federal Government’s violation of international law in compulsory detention of refugees is at the centre of all the ‘events’ during the period of this issue (Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission 2007). As stated by Amnesty International Refugee Case Worker Garry Wotherspoon, ‘Allegations of sexual abuse highlight the dangers of detaining children in cramped and stressful conditions with adults – many of whom may be suffering depression and post-traumatic stress disorder themselves’ (Amnesty International 2009).

During the reporting of this issue, *The Australian* focused on the specific nature of the allegations and the Immigration Department’s response to those accused of the abuse. This focus on negativity undoubtedly framed refugees as ‘maladjusted outsiders’ with no regard for Australian law and order. This reduced the weight of any reporting of government wrongdoing, and gave readers no legitimate or compelling reason to pressure the government into reassessing its current policies for dealing with refugees. *The Australian’s* account offered no reason to change the predominant view in the Australian community – that refugees were not wanted in Australia anyway and, within this context, could await any decision by bureaucracies regarding their visa applications (MacCallum 2002).

The Australian's preoccupation with 'conflict' was most evident in headlines with assertions of shock, cover-ups and deviance. In all reporting of this issue (see Appendix E), 'conflict' featured in the headline: 'Cover-up claim over detainee "child abuse" '; 'Detainee child abuse claim'; 'Sex-charge detainee given option of court or quit country'; 'Villawood sex claims sent to Police', no doubt significantly reducing the ability of the average reader to suspect Government wrongdoing. Given *The Australian's* preoccupation with conflict, bias is already immediately introduced in the headline through unwarranted focus on 'deviance' and 'drama'. This follows with attribution from the 'prominent' Immigration Department whose role it is to convince the media and the Australian public that they are handling refugee issues with competence. The result – the story faithfully supporting the headline with the Government quoted in a consistent and smooth manner that would lead only an informed reader to question the media's presentation of the event.

In such instances, it appears as if nothing is amiss, because refugees always seem to be breaking the law, and the Government is merely fulfilling its institutional role. In accordance with the canons of objectivity, the Government's response is not questioned and everything appears as it should be – everyone is safe and the Government is looking after us!

As mandatory detention policy had not been subjected to critical analysis, *The Australian* gave readers no basis to change their opinion of the Government's handling of refugee issues one way or another. That is, when the Federal Government first announced the use of Villawood as a detention facility, *The Australian* did not investigate this choice of accommodation or even question the Government's punitive response to the global issue of increasing numbers of refugees. Drawing on the predictable angle of wave metaphors, *The Australian* identified more 'news value' in how the Government was going to accommodate yet another 'influx of boatpeople'.

The Australian did not critically question the Government's choice of accommodation for asylum seekers, so it is not surprising that *The Australian* did not investigate alternative models to detention or even seek to determine whether Australia's response was in line with that of other countries. Put simply, as there was no discussion prior to the sexual abuse issue of universal political principles and how they related to Federal Government refugee policy, the media was not in a position to discuss with any legitimacy the processes surrounding mandatory detention. *The Australian* could only report with authority the attributed 'facts'

as they related to sexual abuse allegation within Villawood. This further relates to notions of journalistic ‘objectivity’ which results in any form of investigative or in-depth reporting still beholden to only sources for ‘facts’. Following journalism training though, this reliance on only ‘factual’ reporting is always combined with reliance on the views of those, in journalistic terms, considered ‘prominent’.

The last article presented to participants (AAP 2005, ‘Refugees doing detention work’), discusses how staff at Villawood Detention Centre gave a detainee cigarettes and a telephone card in exchange for carrying out the work of the staff concerned. There were three articles in *The Australian* that focused on this topic, which concentrated for the most part on allegations made against the Immigration Department by unions that detainees were being used for ‘slave labour’.

“Mr Hussein alleges that contractors GSL (Global Solutions Limited) and DNCA (Delaware North Companies Australia) are using detainees to meet their contracts with the Department of Immigration, including food preparation, cleaning and the library,” he said (AAP 2005, ¶5)

In their reporting of this issue, *The Australian* did not focus on the wider complex economic processes concerning detainees, notably allegations by special interest groups that charities and state governments do not offer clothing, housing or other essential assistance to any successful refugee application once released from the Federal Government’s detention centres (Head 2000). Noteworthy, though, in accordance with objectivity, there was a distinct absence of journalistic investigation, which resulted in the predictable journalistic practice of pitting the government against adversaries (in this instance, unions). Rather than this pursuit of balance lending itself to highlighting the larger cultural and economic struggle experienced by those detained, this journalistic ‘detachment’ served more to encourage depoliticisation than to convey to readers the political philosophies that were responsible for the current economic conditions of detainees. As reaffirmed by Kimmins (1989, p. 167):

Objectivity is ultimately unacceptable because it does not take adequate account of the limited and distorted knowledge that members of dominant social groups tend to possess about the oppression experienced by members of subordinate and marginalised groups. As a result, the conception of objectivity wrongly deems the demands for justice voiced by members of subordinate and marginalised groups to

be subjective simply because they seem unreasonable from the limited and distorting standpoint of dominant social groups.

4.7 Summary of chapter

Chapter 4, Results and Discussion has presented key findings to the research, within the framework of ‘objectivity’ and news factors. Further, data derived from the recursive frame analysis was divided into ‘galleries’, for the purpose of demonstrating how the study’s participants were mutually shaping the meaning of ‘newsworthiness’ through their discourse. The findings were concluded with a textual analysis of key articles, as they appeared in *The Australian*.

The following chapter, *Chapter 5, the Conclusion*, will discuss whether the research orientation has proved beneficial in answering key research questions. Further, it will discuss the relevance of using interpretive community theory and recursive framing analysis to provide insight into how journalists’ interpretations are applied to refugee understanding and representation.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings

This study administered a news factor selection test to three journalists which focused on nine refugee-related topics as published in *The Australian* between January 2003 and November 2006. The results showed that overall *follow-up* was the most commonly identified news factor, followed by: *relevance*; *conflict*; *emotion*; *drama* and *crime and scandal*, respectively. Generally, there was no real evidence to support any significant difference between individual notions of newsworthiness and how these are amended or modified when discussed in the context of a group. The only general area where a difference was found was with domestic news related to *national security* and *litigation and visa news*.

A range of journalism domains both preceded and informed focus on the above news values. In this study, these domains are defined as *professionalism*, *nationalism and key events*, *journalists' subjective beliefs* and *institutional objectives*. They centre on the status of journalism as a prime institution in democratic Australia and, in addition, relate to the journalistic requirement to satisfy and serve its audiences.

The framing evident in *The Australian's* reporting of the issues was presented most frequently in terms of the '*immigration as problem*' frame, through its central characteristics of story framing, drawing from government immigration officials and invoking negative public opinion, served to make adversarial viewpoints salient, and served to delegitimise and marginalise those detained. Over 80% of the reporting for this period framed refugees in terms of deviance or increasing costs to the community.

5.2 The data on the points of consensus

5.2.1 The importance of geographical and cultural proximity

The study's results on news coverage of refugee issues support the conclusion that geographical proximity plays a pivotal role in journalistic notions of newsworthiness. In almost all discussion by participants, and also refugee coverage as it appeared in *The Australian*, issues were covered in terms of a national, and not international context. The importance of geographical proximity is powerful but mostly within the national and local

borders. That is, participants placed focus on the relevance of ‘riots’ to people who lived in the local community, rather than complex processes internationally that have impacted the reported ‘event’.

Such a conceptualisation was most evident in this study, where participants appealed to the news factors of *human interest*, *relevance* and *drama* frames. Within such a context, participants searched for the ‘*local angle*’ in the story and how it relates to ‘*everyday*’ Australians. Such news factors are manifested in notions of how meaningful the event will appear to receivers of the news (Scanlan 2000). Such frames are not concerned with possible conditions overseas that contributed to refugees seeking asylum in Australia, but rather focus entirely on the immigrants and the Government agencies charged with implementing immigration laws and processes. This is the result, as these are the only roles present in the immigration as problem frame. In contrast, if the issues were defined in terms of the long-term problems immigrants will experience as a result of their treatment in Australia, then the problem would have been discussed in terms of viable long-term solutions.

5.2.2 The importance of *follow-up* as a news factor

Follow-up covers story future time – any action subsequent to the main action of an event. It can include verbal reaction by other parties or non-verbal consequences. Because it covers action which occurred after what a story has treated as the main action, *follow-up* is a prime source of subsequent updating stories – which are themselves called ‘*follow ups*’ by journalists (Bell 1995, pp. 316-7). The identification of follow-up as the most commonly identified news factor can be explained in terms of the nature of the exercise. That is, participants were making newsworthiness decisions on stories that had occurred in past time therefore, as a result, they would have been aware that the stories had received significant media attention and as such received significant follow-up coverage.

5.2.3 The importance of *human interest* as a news factor

Human interest was noted as possessing the highest intensity of all cited news factors by both participants individually and the group. This news factor was cited as being an overriding frame in Article 2 (Sex Slave Story), Article 4 (Russian Mother Story) and Article 7 (Naomi Leong Story). With the exception of the Naomi Leong Story, there is no important difference in the classifications of these news items in accordance with this news factor. That is, while the Sex Slave Story and the Russian Mother Story centred on ‘personalisation’ of the issue,

the stories focused on increasing audience interest through sordid content rather than discussion of the complications surrounding mandatory detention legislation.

5.2.4 Introduction of (new) news factors

There were five news factors identified by participants that did not appear on the provided list. These news factors are *health, affects families, children, treatment of children* and finally, *national security*. Gemma's introduction of the news factors of '*health, affects families, children* and *treatment of children*' may indicate the scale of newsworthiness beginning to change as a result of the increasing influence of women in the Australian media community.

5.3 Data on points of contention

All participants identified Article 1 (Fire Story) as one of the most important stories, with Gemma and Carmen ranking it as the most important and David ranking it as the second most important. Such an outcome is unsurprising given Article 1 (Fire Story) involved significant injuries to staff and damage to buildings at Villawood detention centre. One of the most significant differences between an individual ranking and the group ranking was for Article 4 (Russian Mother Story) whereby Carmen individually ranked it at 8 but the group ranked it as the overall second most important story. Such a disparity could be defined in terms of Carmen's subjective beliefs concerning 'illegal' immigrants (See gallery 7, line 1 in Appendix G).

The significant deviation between participants in relation to Article 6 (Willie Brigitte Story) resulted in significant discussion concerning both perceived newsworthiness in relation to domestic terrorism laws, and also the professional frame of perceived newsworthiness in relation to whether the story was written in a manner that would impact the audience (See gallery 8, line 1 in Appendix G). David's convincing argument that the story was of crucial importance to Australia's national security resulted in the group ranking the story as the second most important (See gallery 2, line 3 in Appendix G).

While participants identified this story as possessing a high degree of newsworthiness, there were only five articles devoted to the Willie Brigitte issue published in *The Australian*. This was the only example whereby there were notable disparities between participants' notions of

newsworthiness and the views of the interpretive community of journalists at *The Australian*. This may be explained in terms of the patriotism frame, and David's symbolic authority as possessing editing experience to convince the other participants on the merits of the Willie Brigitte story.

5.4 General features of findings

5.4.1. 'Public' as target market in journalism

Participants indicated how news is competition, through a race to get their stories on the front page. This competition ethos is part of journalism as an interpretive community, that is, a community that defines itself through a common set of discourses that follow journalists from one organisation to another (Carey 2000; Zelizer 1993).

An important notion revealed in this study is the extent the concept of 'public' has become reconfigured as target 'market' in Australian journalism. When analysing the discourse exchanged between participants using recursive frame analysis, coupled with theories of news values, it is confirmed that the market-driven formulation of audience, combined with the subjective beliefs of journalists themselves, plays a significant role in journalistic decision-making concerning newsworthiness.

This research has uncovered a relationship between the institutional objective of 'appealing to the widest possible audience' and the subjective beliefs of editors on the issue of race and ethnicity. This, and the resistance of audiences towards the traditional forms of citizenship belonging to it, has put enormous pressures on the institutional goal in journalism to 'sell out' – as it is often perceived – to audience concerns and needs. As reaffirmed by van Zoonen, such an orientation towards audiences produces a frame of reference for journalists that is said to be characterised by interesting (as opposed to 'important') issues, convenient and practical information, committed and emotional (rather than objective and rational), and a mode of address that assumes audiences as consumers (van Zoonen 1998, p. 126).

5.4.2 The relevance of the pursuit of journalistic 'objectivity'

The first domain uncovered in this study, was 'journalistic professionalism', which centres on universal practices within the field of journalism such as the pursuit of objectivity. In this study, the ideology of journalistic 'objectivity' was structured by participants focus on

accuracy, clarity and brevity in news writing. The participants reliance on '*in the moment*' news events placed focus on the relevance of gaining an *exclusive*, which in this instance, may have prevented a discussion of the issues contributing to an increased number of refugees in Australia.

Importantly, participants constructed specific 'facts' in their discussions, which were influential in terms of the ideologies and practices of the marginalising of refugees in society. In this study, the value given to 'objectivity' was identified by participants search for the 'verification of truth'. Such a focus resulted in participant's reliance on institutional sources, and favoured elite definition of events, rather than the views of less formal groups. Given the tenets governing 'objectivity', to seek comment from less 'reliable' and authoritative sources would require journalists, in the pursuit of 'objectivity', extra time in double checking facts and so on, which may leave open the possibility of 'inaccurate' reporting.

5.4.3 Social validation of judgements: the function of shared reality

This project supports the work of Wolfgang Donsbach (2004) that posits the view that news factors can be better explained if looking at the cognitive and emotional needs of journalists. This study interpreted 'shared reality' or reality perception as a means by which what is true, relevant and acceptable, is validated by the help of others. This validation was crucial in both negotiating meaning among the group, and reaching consensus. Particularly noticeable was the way in which participants used fundamental practices and norms to deal with each other, make sense of things and put their ideas and feelings into action. Notably, there were recurring themes that enabled them to interact and to reach agreement about the ranking of the order of importance of stories, and the level of intensity of each of the identified news factors.

In this study, instances where journalists consciously made news decisions against the overall judgment of the group were the exception rather than the rule. In most cases, there was consensus in relation to their professional decision-making and, importantly, any difference of opinion was manifested in persuasive processes, rather than forced compliance.

5.5 Conclusion

This study analysed how the pursuit of journalistic ‘objectivity’ and news values results in *The Australian* demonstrating negative bias in its reporting of refugee issues. It presented the theoretical structure of frame analysis and interpretive community theory, and applied it to the representation of refugees in the Press, with in- depth focus on reporting of Villawood Detention Centre. It conducted structured observation of journalists undertaking a news factor selection test, in order to determine how journalists develop and apply professional norms when engaged in news work.

Central to the aim of this study, was to examine journalistic practice within the context of a range of key research questions:

- s) By what means did the speakers negotiate and construct meaning?
- t) Did they draw on other texts and discourses to construct meaning?
- u) Did they draw on journalism training and norms to construct meaning?
- v) To what extent do values such as *conflict* and *consequence* emerge in the framing of refugee news?
- w) To what extent did participants ‘fall back on’ external pressures such as institutional factors to justify their decisions?
- x) Was there evidence of personal opinion/subjective beliefs in relation to immigration issues?
- y) Do differing beliefs/schemata about refugees still result in support of the same values?
- z) To what extent do news values, when applied to the same issue, alter the discourse of participants?
- aa) What differences will alternative news values hold, not only for cognitive activities on the part of participants, but also for the kind of affective reactions they experience, and evaluations they form, in connection to the reporting of the issue?

The above research questions were investigated and the following results were uncovered: Delegitimising language was constant over all reporting of refugee issues in *The Australian*, evoking the ‘immigration as problem’ frame, with focus on the potential threat refugees pose to Australia’s law and order and way of life. In the structured observation component of this study, there was evidence of frame dynamism (Goffman 1974), which suggested sympathy from research participants, when discussing refugee issues. Such emotion, however, was

most evident when it was supportive of fulfilling ‘newsworthy’ criterion and, within such a framework, worked to give weight to the development of narratives which assisted reporters in getting their issues across to the public. Notably, participants promoted, legitimised, and secured their authority to control the process of reporting and retelling events by presenting sequences of facts and their meaning as if they had a pre-established order, setting them into the context of ‘generally acknowledged truths’ and by assuming a role in which they speak for society as a whole (Riegert & Olsson 2007).

Participants used different news factors to explain the same thing. Within such a framework, they shared the same or similar views on many of the presented issues, however used various news factors to explain them. Such a finding goes a long way in showing the problems with current approaches to news value research (Cottle 2000, for discussion of deficiencies in current news value studies). Importantly, the pursuit of news values still supported journalist’s competing frames. For example, even though participants disagreed about the relevance of the ‘nationality’ of the Russian mother (Article 4), they all agreed on the importance of the debate in arousing public interest. Such an outcome was also evident in almost all discussions of the issues, whereby strongly-held cultural models and alternative models that are more weakly held but promise better outcome for refugees, did not hold up well to group critique. Such outcomes were a result of the overriding agreement by participants in relation to what was deemed ‘newsworthy’ and, within such a framework, arouse public interest and attention. In such instances, such agreement centred on conflict and consequence, which served to further articulate the ‘immigration as problem’ frame.

This study revealed that examining news factors in isolation, as is the case with traditional approaches to media research (Chaudhary 2001; Galtung & Ruge 1965; Harcup & O’Neill 2001), does little if anything to determine why the story was newsworthy in the first place. For example, in the case of the Naomi Leong story (Article 7), all participants noted *human interest* as the overriding news factor, with this story representing refugees in a positive frame. In contrast, the Puangthong Simpalee Story (Article 4) was also identified by participants as possessing the *human interest* news factor – yet in both instances, the demonstration of *human interest* resulted in different framing of both issues. In the Puangthong Simpalee story, the ‘immigration as problem’ frame was articulated, while in the Leong story, the ‘refugee as victim’ frame was most evident. While both stories did exploit a number of news factors such as *emotion*, *human interest* and *relevance*, the news factors

themselves gave little or no indication as to why the stories were deemed newsworthy in the first instance.

When examining institutional pressures, the research participants indicated that they were against institutional coercion and domination, yet their discourse clearly indicates they are compliant in the process. Such findings highlight the deficiencies in survey-based news bias research which focuses on journalists' attitudes and opinions (Arant & Meyer 1998). Such research generally reveals journalists' self-proclaimed role as independent investigators, however the research findings from this study, seem to indicate that journalists are not only under increasing institutional domination, yet function to anticipate the wants and needs of editors. Such a finding is in opposition to research which reveals that journalists do not usually make professional choices according to their notion of what their employers or assumed audiences would like to see or read (Donsbach 2004).

Participants stated direct coercion from editors in relation to story development and placement. Most significantly, they were also aware of the subjective beliefs of editors in determining how they would 'frame' particular refugee issues. In this instance there was awareness that such issues would be congruent with the 'illegal' frame and, as such, define refugees in terms of increasing costs to the Australian community. Such observations dispute research which states that only a minimal number of journalists (6%) have admitted to having copy changes (Donsbach 2004).

Thus, this anticipation of editor's needs by participants appears to be in opposition to research which suggests that journalists are relatively free agents, and experience only minimal pressure from editors to change newspaper copy (Esser 1999; Patterson and Donsbach 1996). Such pressure is related to both the subjective beliefs of editors in relation to ethnicity and also their desire to increase audience interest. According to Weinhold (2008, p. 478), journalism's charter, or professional code, lacks an acknowledgment of how or whether journalists' work should answer their employers' capital demands. In turn, the principles encourage journalists to sublimate their values and accept their roles as commercial newspaper employees.

The results from this study appear to indicate that a small set of rules, which centre for the most part on the pursuit of the 'newsworthiness', account for a large share of content in the news. Within such a frame, the gathering and packaging of the news reflects the application

of creative decision rules based on, and rationalised by, these norms. In the case of refugees, such rules and values provide little foundation for independent investigation and interpretation; but operate to merely transmit the agenda of the seemingly ‘authoritative’ and ‘prominent’. Determining the answer to the journalistic ‘what’ only ever occurred within the limited parameters of an immediate event occurring within the boundaries of the immediate circulation district, with the ‘why’ it happened reserved only for the opinions of those who in journalistic terms are identified as ‘authoritative’ and unproblematically ‘verifiable’. It is argued here that the pursuit of newsworthiness in relation to refugee issues works to oversimplify and trivialise issues and, importantly, function to allow the Federal Government’s failure to protect the human rights of those detained to be minimised and, in many cases, omitted from legitimate public discourse.

‘Interpretive community’ theory has not previously been used to investigate the impact of news factors on media content, although there is research to show that emphasis on news factors varies across publications (Nasser 1983; Roser and Brown 1986). The findings from this research seem to indicate that quantitative methodologies have failed to identify the relationship between these differences and the ‘composition of people engaged in common activities and common purposes who employ a common frame of reference for interpreting their social settings’ (Berkowitz & TerKeurst 1999 p.127)

As stated by interpretive community theorists such as Barbie Zelizer, journalists ‘as professionals’ is the dominant frame in journalistic practice. Such a frame provides a body of knowledge that instructs individuals what to do and what to avoid in any given circumstance (Larson 1977 in Zelizer 1993). ‘Being professional has not only generated an aura of authoritativeness based on a specific attitude toward accomplishing work, but has suggested that reporters ought to approach reporting in certain ways – as objective, neutral, balanced chroniclers’ (Schiller 1979, 1981 in Zelizer 1993). The findings presented in this thesis indicate that such a frame may be at risk, or at the very least under threat, as a result of the inability of reporters to reconcile institutional pressures with journalists’ self-proclaimed role as independent scribes. The results in this study seem to indicate that journalists are aware of the potential for media bias resulting from pressure from editors et-cetera, but are unable to reduce its impact at the micro level of journalistic narrative. Coupled with this notion is the stated goal of journalists, at least in this study, to anticipate the needs of editors in relation to what type of stories to produce.

The impact of such findings on notions of ‘interpretive community’ is difficult to qualify at this preliminary stage. It may be possible that journalists as an ‘interpretive community’ may inevitably break down due to an inability to offset the dangers inherent in institutional pressures. Alternatively, it is more likely that journalists will continue to adopt the attitude of being relatively free agents with the on-going charter to struggle against institutional authority. It is expected that in these explanations journalists will cling to the language of professionalism which has traditionally served as their guide and, in doing so, they will limit their ability to renegotiate the norms and values of journalists in light of the new media environment (Fakazis & Russell 1998). However, it should be noted that the admission of participants in this study of direct coercion from editors in relation to story topic and emphasis suggests that contemporary journalism studies would be considerably deficient if continuing to study the media through only the frame of the ‘profession’.

Within this study’s framework of interpretive community theory, the notion of frame space provides an excellent conceptualisation of how norms unfold. Frame space offers a more precise perspective on the nature of norms in interaction. In this view, norms are not learned rules which speakers carry around in their heads, they are ways in which situations unfold, so that participants feel they have to behave in a particular way, or make amends for doing so (Collins 1988, p.57).

According to Entman (1993), to frame is to select some aspect of a perceived reality and make it more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or recommendation for treatment for the item described. A range of scholars have noted that the mainstream media supported the government agenda to propagate anti- immigration sentiment during the Howard years. Scholars (Dixon 2002; Gale 2004; Mares 2002) have noted that the media, notably *The Australian*, promoted stable and homogenous news frames that focused on ‘immigration as problem’, with the solutions framed in terms of ‘securing’ our borders, ‘tightening’ immigration laws, and ‘increasing’ detention centre infrastructure. Such entailments allowed no attention to non-prominent organisations such as the Human Rights Commission or the Refugee Council of Australia, who work to protect the rights of those detained and also to develop regional solutions to the on-going displacement of people worldwide.

5.6 Summary of chapter

This study has shown that it is not just news values in isolation that make refugee issues newsworthy. Rather, the four domains of journalism as put forward in this study (see Figure 15, p. 114) seek to demonstrate the multifaceted processes that make up journalists' decision-making process. My results show that such decisions go significantly beyond standard notions of '*conflict*' and '*controversy*', and rather go to the heart of how journalists, the public and even media editors, feel about refugees.

This study has operated from the frame that it is the factors themselves, which function at the micro level of journalism as 'practice', that provide a limited scope for comprehensive and balanced representation of refugee and related issues. It has demonstrated through an overview of its research data that an alternative approach to analysing news work is required – one that does not operate from a position of purely hierarchical forces dominating journalism output, rather from the collective intelligence and knowledge of journalism communities who function to filter the news flow and to highlight and debate salient topics relevant to refugee and related issues.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A – NEWS FACTOR SELECTION TEST

PARTICIPANT

Mary Anne Hall
Structured observation project
University of Southern Queensland
October 11 2008

SECTION ONE: 5 minutes

A. Personal data

Sex: _____

Age: _____

Education: _____

Journalism training: (Eg. cadet, university trained)

Country of origin: _____

Family status: _____

B. Professional attributes

Position within organisation: _____

Length of tenure in current position: _____

Weekly frequency of writing/editing news pages: _____

Professional affiliations/memberships: _____

Satisfaction with place of employment: _____

Previous employment roles and length of tenure: _____

Promotion History: _____

PARTICIPANT**SECTION TWO: 20 minutes (10 mins reading time and 10 mins to rank articles)****Prioritising topics and news factor intensities****NEWS FACTOR SELECTION TEST INSTRUCTION SHEET**

As a news editor you have to prepare an edition of The Australian. Please read the nine articles provided and complete the following tasks.

TASK 1.

Rank all nine articles in order of importance, from most important to least important. Rank in order of importance of publication on a scale of 1 (most important) up to 9 (least important). If you believe some articles are of equal importance, rank them with the same number.

Article (number/date)	Rank
1. January 1 2003	
2. March 13 2003	
3. May 14 2003	
4. July 30 2003	
5. August 1 2003	
6. October 28 2003	
7. May 25 2005	
8. July 9 2005	
9. September 8 2005	

PARTICIPANT

SECTION 3

TASK 2: 15 minutes

Identify the news factors you identify as making each article newsworthy under the 'news factor' column.

TASK 3: 15 minutes

For each article, circle on a scale of 1 -5, the intensity of each of the news factors.

Five means the highest intensity, one point the lowest possible intensity. For example, if you think the news factor of timeliness is strongly present, you would note the news factor 'timeliness' and circle 5. If you believe that the news factor 'human interest' is present, but to only a minimal degree, you would note 'human interest' under the news factor column and circle 1. If you think some of the terms *mean the same thing*, such as conflict and aggression, *choose the term that you prefer*.

There are no maximum or minimum number of news factors you are required to list for each article.

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)		
1.January 1 2003		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	

PARTICIPANT

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
2. March 13 2003		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
3. May 14 2003		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

PARTICIPANT

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity			(High)
4. July 30 2003		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity			(High)
5. August 1 2003		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

PARTICIPANT

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)		
6. October 28 2003		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)		
7. May 25 2005		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

PARTICIPANT

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
8. July 9 2005		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
9. September 8 2005		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

GROUP TASK**SECTION 4****Task 4: 10 minutes**

As a group, discuss each of the nine articles, and negotiate and reach consensus on the importance of each article. Rank all nine articles in order of importance, from most important to least important. Rank in order of importance of publication on a scale of 1 (most important) to 9 (least important). If you believe some articles are of equal importance, rank them with the same number.

Article	Rank
1. January 1 2003	
2. March 13 2003	
3. May 14 2003	
4. July 30 2003	
5. August 1 2003	
6. October 28 2003	
7. May 25 2005	
8. July 9 2005	
9. September 8 2005	

GROUP TASK

SECTION 5

Task 5: 20 minutes

As a group, discuss, negotiate and reach a consensus on the news factors you identify as making each article newsworthy.

Task 6: 20 Minutes

Next, reach a consensus on the intensity¹⁵ of the agreed news factors on a five point scale of 1 – 5. Circle the intensity in the corresponding column. Five points represents the highest, one point the lowest possible intensity.

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)		
1. January 1 2003		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	

¹⁵ 'Intensity as characterised in Task 3.

GROUP TASK

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
2. March 13 2003		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
3. May 14 2003		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

GROUP TASK

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
4. July 30 2003		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
5. August 1 2003		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

GROUP TASK

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
6. October 28 2003		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
7. May 25 2005		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

GROUP TASK

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
8. July 9 2005		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

Article	News factors	(Low)	Intensity	(High)
9. September 8 2005		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	
		1	2 3 4 5	

APPENDIX B – ARTICLES CODED BY PARTICIPANTS

ARTICLE 1

1 January 2003

SIX buildings were burning at Sydney's Villawood detention centre last night after police foiled a major breakout attempt and inmates reportedly attacked guards and lit a number of fires.

Villawood became the fifth detention facility to be set ablaze by asylum-seekers within four days - and the third yesterday - as the total damages bill climbed well beyond \$8 million.

NSW police said 20 inmates attempted to escape about 10.30pm by ramming Villawood's front gate with a commandeered vehicle.

A police vehicle was parked across the gateway to thwart the escape bid.

In another maximum-security area of the Villawood centre, guards were attacked with iron bars and at least three buildings were set ablaze. Police said 60 to 80 inmates had rioted.

By midnight, eight ambulances were standing outside waiting for the centre to be secured. A number of guards and inmates were believed to have been injured.

Earlier yesterday evening rejected asylum-seekers on Christmas Island set their quarters alight, and another fire was started at South Australia's Woomera detention centre.

The Villawood and Christmas Island arsons were the latest in a sequence that started on Saturday night when detainees set fire to the Baxter facility, at Port Augusta in South Australia. Blazes followed at Woomera and Port Hedland in Western Australia.

Last night a fresh fire was reported at Woomera. Smoke was rising from the centre and water cannons were deployed as guards conducted perimeter patrols, but the blaze was quickly brought under control.

The Christmas Island fire started late yesterday afternoon. Detainees, reportedly armed with poles and sticks, ended a stand-off with guards after fire gutted the dining hall of the processing centre.

The island detainees had been accommodated in the dining hall since deliberate fires destroyed their sleeping quarters in November.

Forty-six people are held at the island processing centre. All have had their visa applications rejected.

The new fires yesterday came less than 12 hours after firefighters at Woomera contained blazes that damaged or destroyed 33 accommodation units, eight shower blocks and two mess halls, causing an estimated \$2.5 million damage.

A Department of Immigration spokeswoman said heightened security at Woomera - which yesterday included security officers in riot gear in one compound - had not stopped what appeared to be co-ordinated protest action.

"The additional measures were not enough to counteract the carefully orchestrated plan by people to sabotage the facility," she said.

About 20 male detainees tried to stop firefighters from putting out the Woomera blaze, and attacked guards who were trying to help.

Continued - Page 5 More reports - Page 5 From Page 1 "As fires were being put out, others were being lit," said Country Fire Services commander Kevin May.

The Woomera disturbances - in which detainees reportedly pelted guards with stones and threatened them with metal bars - came after a security upgrade at centres around Australia. Damage at Baxter and Port Hedland is estimated at \$5million. The Villawood and Christmas Island damage has not yet been quantified.

Australian Federal Police are investigating the arson at Woomera, Baxter and Port Hedland. Any detainees convicted over the offences will be jailed before being deported.

Attorney-General and Acting Immigration Minister Daryl Williams said the Woomera detainees' actions in hindering firefighters were unacceptable.

"There were reviews of security at detention centres where there hadn't been fires but this still occurred," he said.

"There is a range of measures that can be taken, but you cannot supervise every individual in a detention centre on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis."

Mr Williams said South Australian police were yesterday called in to patrol the perimeters at the Baxter and Woomera centres. "The detainees at Baxter have been screened and their belongings screened and there has been a review of the policy in relation to cigarette lighters and matches."

Refugee advocates yesterday denied the burnings were an orchestrated campaign by the asylum-seekers.

Australian Greens member Pamela Curr claimed detention centre management had not acted diligently in extinguishing the fires.

"There's no doubt that these fires have not been diligently extinguished by the guards," she said.

Ms Curr said she heard reports the Port Hedland fire started in a building detainees did not have access to and guards had "sat on their hands and watched them burn".

"I'm alleging there are questions about who started it (the fire)."

ARTICLE 2

13 March 2003

THE last time anyone saw her alive, 27-year-old Puangthong Simaplee was in Bed 9B in the observation room in Lima Compound at Villawood detention centre, one leg twitching slightly.

Thirty-five minutes later detention centre officer Laura O'Halloran walked past the young woman's room and saw her lying on her side, head down. There was a pool of vomit around the white plastic bucket next to the bed, Ms O'Halloran told Westmead Coroner's Court in Sydney yesterday.

"I carried my meal to my office," Ms O'Halloran said.

It was only then that it struck her something was wrong. She returned to find the young woman was dead.

"I turned her over, but (she) was like a rag doll."

In her subsequent statement to police, Ms O'Halloran said: "The room smelt of vomit but it was the same smell that has been in the room the other two nights."

Simaplee had died after 65 hours in Villawood, her death the final indignity of her short and terrible life. Taken from her parents in the north of Thailand at a tender age, she was brought to Australia by a trafficker to be a child prostitute. She was 10, 11 or 12. She didn't know exactly how old, she told the Department of Immigration.

She was in the sex industry for what remained of her life. Perhaps understandably, she was a heroin addict.

Picked up in a raid on a brothel at 359 Riley Street, Surry Hills, Simaplee was taken to Villawood on September 23, 2001. Regarded as at risk because of heroin withdrawal, she was put into the observation room so someone could check on her every half hour.

Yet by the time she died, three days later, Simaplee, malnourished and emaciated to start with, had dropped from 38kg to 31kg.

She had been throwing up for three days and for those three days she was in a room that smelled so strongly of vomit that Lurette Morgan, another detention centre officer, told the coroner that she couldn't bear to go into it.

Simaplee was treated for heroin withdrawal but the brief tendered in court yesterday reveals that controversy surrounds both the medications that were prescribed and administered and the monitoring of her physical condition.

She was tiny and unformed, conceivably because her childhood experiences meant she had never fully developed.

Although Australasian Correctional Management staff "confirmed her sexuality", according to statements in court, they did not treat her for pneumonia or malnutrition.

Although she kept throwing up the medicines, she was not put on a drip, a simple, standard procedure that would have allowed her both medicine and nourishment. Instead she was given red cordial when she looked a little dehydrated.

"Her death was unnecessary and is a result of the government policy of detaining and deporting women who are victims of a shocking crime," said Kathleen Maltzahn of Project Respect, an organisation that works on behalf of women brought to Australia for sexual slavery.

"She is one of many women picked up in brothels and deported without ever being given a chance to testify against the traffickers."

The inquest continues today.

ARTICLE 3

14 May 2003

THREE doctors have lodged a medical negligence complaint against Australasian Correctional Management, claiming the mental health of children and adults in Australian detention centres is being severely damaged.

Psychiatrist Louise Newman said the complaint, which she lodged with another psychiatrist and a pediatrician, was based on two cases of apparent negligence at Sydney's Villawood detention centre last year.

One resulted in the death of a young Thai woman from heroin withdrawal; the other led to an older woman being hospitalised for five months after centre management failed to treat post-natal depression and severe abscesses on her breasts.

"Serious questions need to be raised about ACM's capacity to act as a healthcare provider," Dr Newman said.

"There needs to be an extensive review of the standards of care of inmates in these detention centres, which are all run on the penal model."

Dr Newman said recent research carried out at various detention centres in regional Australia found all of the children interviewed had mental problems.

"Their environment is very damaging," she said.

"They are generally already traumatised. They are then re-traumatised by being detained and then they experience some terrible things inside the detention centres."

Dr Newman said the complaint, filed in the Health Care Complaints Commission, called for an urgent and independent review of the mental healthcare in detention centres, rather than a review conducted "by the minister's employees".

ARTICLE 4

30 July 2003

A RUSSIAN mother's bid to stay in the country to be with her Australian-born toddler has failed after the Full Family Court yesterday ruled the Migration Act overrides the rights of children to have contact with a parent.

The woman, 30, detained at Sydney's Villawood detention centre, now faces imminent deportation to Russia from where she fled in 1997 on a fake passport.

However, her lawyers will this morning ask the full court to extend its temporary injunction barring her deportation pending an application to appeal the unanimous decision in the High Court.

The woman, who cannot be identified, sought a permanent injunction before Chief Justice Alastair Nicholson and justices John Ellis and Stephen O'Ryan, arguing her deportation was not in the "paramount" interests of her 18-month-old son.

The woman said she witnessed a murder in Russia, was raped and threatened with death.

The woman, in court to hear the decision, said she was devastated.

In their joint judgment yesterday, Chief Justice Nicholson and Justice O'Ryan said the fundamental rights outlined in the Family Law Act "concern those of the children, not parents".

"It is apparent that the effect is to override the rights of an Australian child to know and have contact with one of his parents who entered Australia on a false passport."

The judges said the woman could seek asylum in a nearby country, such as New Zealand, and apply to the Family Court of Australia for a residence or contact order in respect of the boy.

ARTICLE 5

1 August 2003

JIM Foo, the fugitive businessman who once dined with Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock, looks set to escape prosecution.

The Australian Federal Police said last night an investigation of Mr Foo had been completed and no charges had been laid against him.

An AFP spokeswoman said no foreign government had made inquiries about him, despite Mr Foo reportedly being wanted in Singapore over an \$800,000 property scam.

"As a result, the AFP's investigation about Mr Foo is complete at this time," she said.

Mr Foo was in Sydney's Villawood detention centre last night after surrendering to immigration authorities in Canberra on Wednesday.

He spent Wednesday night in a watchhouse before being transferred to Villawood yesterday.

Mr Ruddock said that if Mr Foo was as important a criminal overseas as had been suggested, "my expectations would be that extradition approaches would be made quickly".

A spokesman for Mr Ruddock said a decision on whether Mr Foo would be given a bridging visa would be made today.

A bridging visa could allow Mr Foo to stay in Australia for up to a month.

Mr Ruddock denied that Mr Foo obtaining a bridging visa would amount to favouritism.

"They (bridging visas) are the norm for people who are making arrangements to leave," he said.

The Australian has learned that Mr Foo has a de facto partner and a one-year-old son who live in Sydney. He is also understood to still be married to a woman in Singapore.

Mr Foo has links with the Christian group Cornerstone Community at Dubbo in the central west of NSW and a number of its members invested heavily in Mr Foo's \$55 million Pioneer development, which was to be a five-star resort in Dubbo that would transform the town's economy.

Pioneer now owes money to several of those people and the future of the project is in doubt.

While the AFP confirmed the investigation specifically into Mr Foo had been wound up, the investigation into allegations against Lebanese businessman Karim Kisrwani that involved Mr Foo was continuing.

ARTICLE 6**28 October 2003**

THE French tourist now suspected of links to terrorism could not have been detained under Australian laws, according to the federal Government, but could be held for up to four years under France's much tougher regime.

Willie Virgile Brigitte, 35, has been detained outside Paris for questioning about his alleged links to al-Qa'ida since being deported from Australia on October 17.

The Caribbean-born man had been in Australia for almost five months before ASIO became aware of his presence and the allegations against him.

Even after French intelligence agents told Australian counterparts on September 22 that Mr Brigitte could be here, it was left to Immigration authorities, rather than police or ASIO, to find him.

Once he had been tracked down and watched for some days, Immigration officers took him to Villawood detention centre on October 9 for working in breach of his visa.

Two days earlier, France had provided further information that Mr Brigitte's activities in Australia could be related to terrorism. French radio Europe 1 says his role was to shelter an explosives expert while in Sydney.

But according to Attorney-General Philip Ruddock, Australian agencies did not have enough evidence for him to be questioned under the ASIO Act.

"The nature of our society is one in which our agencies do not have the power and it's quite clear the French do," Mr Ruddock said.

There were "quite significant limitations" on ASIO's counter-terrorism powers.

Under changes to the ASIO Act passed this year, people who could have information about terrorism can be held for up to seven days and questioned for a total of 24 hours over that time.

To use these powers, ASIO must convince a federal judge or magistrate there is evidence that a warrant should be issued. Questioning is supervised by a retired judge.

In France, terror suspects can be brought in for four days' questioning without a lawyer. Once charged, a suspect can be held for up to four years before trial.

ARTICLE 7

25 May 2005

LESS than 24 hours after their release from Villawood Detention Centre, Virginia Leong and her three-year-old daughter Naomi were enjoying the unbounded freedom of a Sydney park.

"It's a dream come true," Ms Leong, 31, said yesterday after the federal Government's surprise decision on Monday night to grant her and Naomi bridging visas, allowing them to live in the community.

For Virginia, the decision ended four years behind the locked gates of Villawood, where she gave birth to Naomi in May 2002.

Malaysian-born Ms Leong was detained after attempting to leave Australia for Hong Kong on a false passport after overstaying her visa. She was two months' pregnant with Naomi at the time.

Following their release, they are staying with a former Russian detainee in a small flat in Parramatta in Sydney's west until Ms Leong finds more permanent accommodation. She must report to immigration authorities once a fortnight.

Mother and daughter spent their first day of freedom at Parramatta Park. They also made a brief return visit to Villawood to farewell friends and to collect personal possessions left behind in their hasty departure on Monday night.

Most cherished were the only photographs ever taken of Naomi prior to her release -- a set of three prints taken by an immigration official on her third birthday this month.

"It's very hard in there. I can't explain it to you unless you're in there," Ms Leong told reporters.

She said she was most looking forward to introducing Naomi to her seven-year-old step-brother, Griffith Yan, for the first time.

"I will try to get to my son as soon as I can, try to have a relationship to him," she said.

Ms Leong said she had not seen Griffith, a child from her previous marriage, since she was detained 4 1/2 years ago.

Ms Leong said she wasn't sure how damaged her daughter would be from her time in detention. "She wasn't very happy for a while, she wasn't eating, didn't want to hang out with no one and would just lie there in the room watching TV by herself."

Louise Newman, a psychiatrist who has conducted research into the mental health effects of long-term detention, and assessed Naomi in Villawood, said the little girl would need long-term psychiatric care.

"The sad and tragic thing of this case, I think, is this child has already suffered," Dr Newman said. "She's had considerable emotional distress and certainly has developed mental problems."

ARTICLE 8

9 July 2005

THE family of two young boys allegedly sexually assaulted in detention has accused the Immigration Department of covering up multiple incidents of abuse against the brothers.

The boys' 23-year-old sister, who spoke to The Weekend Australian on condition of anonymity, said her brothers were abused by fellow detainees at two detention centres.

The first incident occurred in late 2001, in which a guard allegedly saw an adult male detainee masturbating in front of the two brothers, aged 12 and six, and touching the older boy's genitals. The guard reported the incident and the mother was informed of the abuse via a counsellor.

The man appeared in court, but the family said they had no idea a case was being pursued until the man's third court appearance. Before the mother could give evidence, the offender was deported, the family said.

The Immigration Department last night blamed police for not ensuring the man stayed in the country to be prosecuted. "Whether a person is prosecuted is a matter for the DPP and it is the responsibility of law enforcement authorities to ensure that an unlawful non-citizen remains in Australia until the criminal matter is resolved," a spokesman said.

But the family's ordeal was not over. When a second incident of alleged abuse occurred against the youngest brother, this time in Sydney's Villawood detention centre, the sister said she was determined not to let the matter rest. Her brother had an intellectual disability so she demanded he be interviewed immediately by police.

The sister said when she managed to speak to police about four days later, they said they went to the centre but were not allowed access to the family.

She said the second incident occurred on October 29, 2003, in the recreation room of the Villawood centre.

"We were in the room, me and my mum, and my brother, he came crying," the sister said. "He said to us 'that man hit me', and he pointed to his personal part.

"The man was coming to us with a box of chocolates and he said to me and my mum 'I'm sorry, I touched him accidentally'. But how can you touch somebody accidentally in that part?" Police said after interviewing the child, "there was no requirement for further investigation" because the police believed the incident was "accidental contact".

ARTICLE 9

8 September 2005

STAFF at Villawood detention centre gave a detainee cigarettes and telephone cards to carry out their work, a peak union body has claimed.

Unions NSW yesterday called for a full review of working conditions at Villawood, in Sydney, following claims from detainee Motahar Hussein that the detention centre was profiting from those held there.

Unions NSW deputy assistant secretary Chris Christodoulou said he had written to Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone.

"Mr Hussein alleges that contractors GSL (Global Solutions Limited) and DNCA (Delaware North Companies Australia) are using detainees to meet their contracts with the Department of Immigration, including in food preparation, cleaning and the library," he said.

"Unions NSW is seeking clarification from the minister on whether this is true and, if so, whether they are being paid in cigarettes and phone cards, a breach of the Migration Act."

Mr Christodoulou said the detainees seemed to be treated worse than convicted criminals. "In NSW we have a set of standards for prison labour and a monitoring committee that ensures everything is above board," he said.

"Of equal concern is the prospect that DIMIA is awarding contracts to companies who are using detainees in a way that may be in breach of its own Migration Act.

"Either way, the minister has some questions to answer."

APPENDIX C – PROJECT PROPOSAL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Dear xx xxx xxx

I am a PhD student at the University of Southern Queensland, and I am currently in the process of recruiting journalists to participate in a brief research study, in Brisbane, in September 2008.

I am undertaking research into the role of news values in the representation of refugees in the media. If you agree to participate in the study, the information you will provide will be used in the analysis of the journalistic framing of the refugee debate, and the discursive construction of journalists' professional judgements about news values. If you participate, you will be required to take part in a structured observation study, which will involve you undertaking a news factor selection test, while being videotaped by the researcher. You will be provided with a range of newspaper articles, and with two other participants, will be required to make judgements in relation to newsworthiness and associated intensities. This process will be videotaped for later recursive frame analyses by the researcher. The participant observation will take approximately one to two hours. I have not chosen a specific date in September, as that will depend on what day is convenient for participants. You will be compensated for your participation at a rate of \$100 per hour. The only requirement to participate in the study, is that you have had practical experience in the newsroom. I have not yet secured a venue to undertake the study however, do intend to choose a location that is the most convenient for all participants.

Should you agree to participate, you will be forwarded the participant information statement and consent form, as approved by the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Committee. All answers will be kept strictly confidential, and participant's names will not be attached to any research results and findings. The study is relatively simple, and really just involves participants reading a range of articles, and commenting on the presence of journalistic news values, such as prominence, proximity and so on. There are no right or wrong answers, and the study is really designed to examine journalistic judgement.

As you would understand, it is necessary to secure the participation of subjects as soon as possible, therefore I would appreciate a response at your earliest convenience. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

With thanks
Best wishes
Mary Anne Hall
PH: (07) 46395584
Email: hallm@usq.edu.au

APPENDIX D – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Mary Anne Hall
163 Long Street
Toowoomba QLD 4350

PhD Research Project
Consent Form

Dear Mr xx

I am a doctoral student at the University of Southern Queensland undertaking research into the role of news values in the representation of refugees in the media. You are invited to participate in the study, and if you agree, the responses you give during your participation will be used in the analysis of the journalistic framing of the refugee debate, and the discursive construction of journalists' professional judgements about news values. For the purpose of this project, you are defined as a 'journalist' with practical background/experience in the newsroom'.

If you decide to participate, you will be required to take part in a structured observation study, which will involve you undertaking a news factor selection test, while being videotaped by the researcher. You will be provided with a range of newspaper articles, and with two other participants, will be required to make judgements in relation to newsworthiness and associated intensities. This process will be videotaped, for later recursive frame analyses by the researcher. The participant observation will take approximately two hours. The research will be undertaken at *The Courier Mail*, Bowen Hills. This research is defined as low risk, and it is not envisaged that the experiment will result in any distress to participants. The results of the study will be of interest to journalists, by exploring any potential impact of the normative rules governing journalistic practice.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Your anonymity will be ensured by using a generic coding system in the compilation of the recursive frame analysis of observed data, and in the use of this data in any publication or thesis. Confidentiality is guaranteed by the researcher, by ensuring that you cannot be identified by any variable, including any current or former places of employment. In the writing up of the study, you will be defined as a '*journalist with a practical background/experience in the field of journalism*' - rather than defined in any way that may indicate that participants are employed as journalists at any particular organisation. The videotape of you and other participants undertaking the news factor selection test will be only used by the researcher for the purpose of fulfilling the aims of the research. The videotape will be securely stored in a cabinet at all times, in the home office of the researcher, and a copy will also be securely stored at the University of Southern Queensland. There will be permanent disposal of the videotape five years after the date of the structured observation. This is in accordance with the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice, Section 2.

Monetary remuneration for your time is to be provided. This will equate to \$100 per hour, equal to the time participating in the structured observation/news factor selection experiment. Should you have any complaints during the research process, these may be directed to: Secretary, USQ Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland, West St, Toowoomba, QLD 4350. E-Mail: ethics@usq.edu.au. PH: (07)

46311576. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. A revocation of consent form is provided with this letter.

Thank you for your attention to this proposal. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on (07) 46395584. Please return the below portion of this letter as soon as possible, with your signed approval, in the enclosed envelope should you agree to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely

Ms Mary Anne Hall

Title of Project: Interpretive communities and the legitimization of news values: A recursive framing analysis of the representation of refugees in the Press

Your signature below indicates that, having read the information provided above, you have decided to participate. If you sign this form, you give permission to be videotaped undertaking a news factor selection test, and to have your responses used in the report of the research. You also understand that confidentiality will be maintained in connection to these responses.

..... (Please PRINT name)

..... Signature of Research Participant

.....Date

The recursive frame analysis of the observed data will be available for access by participants. If you would like access to this data, please mark box ☐

REVOCATION OF CONSENT

Title of Project: Interpretive communities and the legitimization of news values: A recursive framing analysis of the representation of refugees in the Press

I hereby wish to **WITHDRAW** my consent to participate in the research proposal described above and understand that such withdrawal **WILL NOT** jeopardise any treatment or my relationship with The University of Southern Queensland.

Signature.....

Date.....

.....
Please PRINT Name

The section for Revocation of Consent should be forwarded to Mary Anne Hall, 163 Long St, Toowoomba QLD 4350.

APPENDIX E – FULL SAMPLE OF ARTICLES UTILISED IN STUDY

TABLE E.1

‘Riots’ and Protests Issues

News reports with primary focus on the demonstration of ‘riots’ and protests by detainees. These headlines also include reports which focus on the government’s deployment of preventative measures designed to reduce the occurrence of protests and other disturbances.

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Breakout foiled, fifth refugee centre burns’	January 1 2003	1
‘1960s hostel has turbulent past – ASYLUM RAGE’	January 2 2003	2
‘Officer attacked in Villawood rampage – ASYLUM RAGE’	January 2 2003	2
‘Escape ringleader in court’	January 4 2003	7
‘Detainees on rampage cut lights, cameras’	January 6 2003	5
‘Man stabbed in detention centre attack’	January 6 2003	5
‘Refugees charged over new year riots’	January 17 2003	6
‘Detainees protest in blood after department’s “betrayal” ’	June 20 2005	2
‘Detainees in hunger strikes, suicide bid’	September 12 2005	6
‘Detainees in disturbance’	November 28 2006	3

Table E.2**‘Sex slave’ issue**

News reports which focus on the death of 27 year old Villawood detainee Puangthong Simpalee and the legal/visa issues associated with the ‘sex slave’ trade

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Sick and alone...tragic end for a sex slave’	March 13 2003	3
‘Drug could have contributed to sex slave’s death’	March 14 2003	3
‘Centre “failed to care” for Thai detainee’	March 15 2003	5
‘Death exposes agony of sex slaves’	March 15 2003	5
‘One-way traffic of sex slave trade’	March 22 2003	13
‘Bureaucrats ignored sex slave sting’	April 5 2003	19
‘Political outcry over deportation of prostitutes “liberator” ’	April 19 2003	3
‘No visa for sex slave whistleblower’	April 21 2003	3
‘Tragic sex slave finds peace’	April 26 2003	4
‘Sex slave’s drug mess’	April 25 2003	3
‘Parents deny selling daughter’	June 7 2003	9
‘Arrested woman linked to sex slave’	June 20 2003	3
‘Human rights award for our journalists’	December 11 2003	2

Table E.3**‘Human Rights Issues’**

News reports which highlight the human rights of refugees, including the potential for mental illness resulting from detention

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Detained children “scarred” ’	May 14 2003	19
‘Boy’s horror at detention life’	September 15 2003	4
‘Child’s horror at detention’	September 15 2003	3
‘French fury over detainee’s death’	September 9 2004	3
‘Doctors’ wives to cut loose – Election 2004’	September 24 2004	7
‘Asylum of sorts for seven –year detainee’	June 10 2005	2
‘Iranian boy “traumatised” by life in detention’	August 30 2005	6
‘Iranian boy sues over detention’	August 30 2005	6
‘Mentally ill citizen held for 253 days’	March 24 2006	2

Table E.4
‘Litigation issues’

News reports relating directly to visa issues which are being dealt with in the Australian Courts

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Russian fails in bid to stay with her baby’	July 30 2003	6
‘Refugees’ identical tales raise suspicion’	November 24 2003	12
‘Illegal cleaning workers here on business visas’	April 10 2004	3
‘Masseuses get visas returned’	June 14 2004	4
‘Indonesian families caught in visa raids’	August 26 2004	4
‘Family torn apart by a sea of rules’	October 21 2004	2
‘Aussie children may be deported’	November 2 2004	3
‘Classmates plead against kids’ deportation’	November 3 2004	5
‘Deported mother to lose her children’	November 4 2004	5
‘Reprieve for Fijian mum’	November 10 2004	3
‘Class’s Christmas card blitz pleads for mum to be released’	December 20 2004	2
‘Man held despite plea to check passport at home’	May 18 2005	4
‘Student accused over refugee passport racket’	June 10 2005	2
‘Detention for visa offences’	August 3 2005	23
‘Visa case mother fears leaving son’	November 29 2005	4
‘Overstaying their visas but work ethic welcome’	December 27 2005	2

Table E.5**‘The Jim Foo issue’**

**News reports which focus on the detainment in Villawood of fugitive
businessman Jim Foo**

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Foo detained but set to walk free’	August 1 2003	3
‘Detained Foo files appeal’	August 2 2003	5
‘Ruddock fails to send Foo packing’	August 7 2003	2
‘Foo stays locked up as visa bid fails’	August 14 2003	6

Table E.6

News reports which focus on suspected terrorist French tourist Willie Brigitte

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘A longer and tougher questioning in Paris’	October 28 2003	2
‘Terror suspect a “sleeper agent” ’	October 28 2003	1
‘The “stupid” man who fooled us all’	November 15 2003	3
‘Brigitte stonewalls AFP investigators’	April 10 2004	3

Table E.7**‘The Naomi Leong issue’**

**News reports which focus on the release of Virginia and Naomi Leong from
Villawood Detention Centre**

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Little Naomi’s first taste of freedom’	May 25 2005	4
‘ “Compassionate” PM softens on detention’	May 26 2005	1
‘Changed Naomi enjoys freedom’	April 18 2006	2

Table E.8**‘Sexual abuse issue’**

News reports which focus on allegations of the sexual abuse of children and detainees by other detainees, allegedly occurring at Villawood Detention Centre.

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Cover-up claim over detainee “child abuse” ’	July 9 2005	7
‘Accused detainee deported’	July 28 2005	2
‘Sex-charge detainee given option of court or quit country’	July 28 2005	2
‘Villawood sex abuse claims sent to police’	June 23 2006	4

Table E.9**‘Slave labour issue’**

News reports which highlight allegations of slave labour at Villawood Detention Centre

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Refugees doing detention work’	September 8 2005	7
‘Employment of detainees “slave labour” ’	December 6 2005	5
‘Detainee arguing “slave labour” case’	December 6 2005	3

Table E.10**‘Other’**

News reports which do not fit unproblematically into one of the previous nine categories

Headlines	Date of publication	Page
‘Brothel raid over bin body’	January 8 2004	5
‘Mystery last hours of body-in-bin man’	January 10 2004	1
‘Asbestos exposure probe at Villawood’	December 27 2005	4
‘Jakarta man returns in time for migration vote’	June 13 2006	4
‘Villawood workers face years of asbestos tests’	August 26 2006	7

APPENDIX F – NEWS FACTOR LIST PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

Identified in studies by: Galtung & Ruge (1965); Schultz (1976); Staab (1990); Eilders (1997); Ruhrmann et al (2003); Masterson (1985); Harcup & O'Neill (2001)

This list is provided as an example of the sorts of factors the literature has described as news factors. You can choose whether or not to use news factors from this list, or you can use whatever other news factors you think are relevant.

If you think some terms mean the same thing, choose the term you prefer.

Aggression	Economic proximity	Importance	Surprise
Astonishment	Elite location	Influence	Potential damage/failure
Australian involvement	Elite nation	Institutional influence	Power elite
Bad news	Elite region	Magnitude	Reach
Benefit/Success	Emotions	Negativism	Reference to issue
Celebrity	Entertainment	Newspaper agenda	Regional Centricity
Conflict	Ethnocentricity	Novelty	Relevance
Consequence	Facticity	Numbers	Scandal and crime
Continuity	Follow-up	Personal influence	Sex
Controversy	Frequency	Personalities	Sexuality/Eroticism
Cultural proximity	Geographical proximity	Personification	Significance
Damage	Good news	Political proximity	Success
Delinquency	Human Interest	Potential benefit/success	Timeliness
Demonstration	Humour	Prominence	Uncommonness
Drama	Illustration of emotions	Proximity	Unexpectedness

APPENDIX G – TRANSCRIPT AS DIVIDED INTO GALLERIES

Table G.1: Legend of Codes of Categories

Category	Code
Professionalism	(Pr)
Nationalism & Key Events	(NKE)
Institutional Objectives	(IO)
Journalists' Subjective Beliefs	(JSB)
Evidence of Journalistic Shared Perception	<u>underlined</u>

Table G.2: Gallery 1

Gemma	L1	I ranked the September 2003 as number 1
David	L2	Which one's that?
Gemma	L3	The fire article 1.
David	L4	Yes. I ranked that as 2
David	L6	<u>I originally had it at 1</u> , then I re-evaluated a few things - What I thought brought relevance to it was a straight basic police report it didn't get into the background of why they're protesting - I'd be desperate to know why they're protesting - In isolation, I don't think that particular article gives you context, but it is a massive (hand signal indicating enormity) (Pr)
Gemma	L7	<u>I agree with that because I noticed that as well</u> – but I would think that would be a front page (Pr) – let's presume we don't have a web site back in 2003 – I don't know I wasn't here then, but it would be at least one of the front articles personally.
David	L8	(Indicating through body language not sure)
Gemma	L9	That's presuming nothing else exciting happened on that day (Pr)
Carmen	L10	<u>I thought that this wouldn't have come out of the blue. There would have been articles preceding about...</u>
Carmen	L12	<u>About protests that were occurring on a smaller scale</u> (Pr)
David	L13	<u>Yes I agree</u> (Pr)

Carmen	L14	Now we've got one where there are six buildings, so <u>I imagine previously protests and maybe demonstrations inside the detention centre on a smaller scale, may have been on the inside of the paper previously.</u>
Gemma	L15	<u>That's my thought too. I would have also assumed that there would have been other reporters working on this, and this would be other stories inside the paper on this.</u> (Pr)
Carmen	L16	<u>Yes</u>
David	L17	<u>Umm...it's obviously a capitulation as to what was happening in that week.</u> (Pr)

Table G.3: Gallery 2

David	L1	The only story I ranked above that one [Article one, the 'fire' story] and the reason was that it was the Willie Brigitte story.
Gemma	L2	Which one was that?
David	L3	Willie, the French terrorist. I ranked it above only because I think every other story relating to the detention centres, obviously article 1 about the buildings on fire – but in time we're looking at in 2003 (NKE), terrorism would be a strong factor to consider (NKE) and this was the first story to come out to say that we had quite significant limitations around our terrorism process (Pr)
Carmen	L4	Umm.
David	L5	So up to that time we would have been saying, 'what are we doing in relation to counter terrorism', and this was the first instance where it was shown that we couldn't detain this guy on our soil. So if we look at the potential, we have a terrorist on our soil. <u>I don't know what facts were brought out afterwards</u> , but if we looked at the fact we have a potential terrorist on our soil, but we couldn't have detained him (NKE). I know this gets away from the detention centre/KE. <u>I'd be interested to know where you guys ranked this?</u>
Carmen	L6	I ranked that quite far back
Gemma	L7	I ranked it further back also
David	L8	<u>I originally did too</u> , but when I started looking at the relevance of getting away from this issue (points to article 1), I think this story has a relevance of its own. (Pr)
Carmen	L9	I guess why I didn't rank that particularly highly. <u>I mean I</u>

		<u>understand what you're saying about the importance of it....</u>
David	L10	<u>Yes</u>
Carmen	L11	...in that time frame (NKE), but it's actually quite a weak lead that story's got, so it didn't grip me. (Pr)
David	L12	I would have actually asked for it to be rewritten (Pr)
Carmen	L13	<u>Yes</u>
David	L14	That was the thing down there (pointing to last par of article) (Pr)...quite significant limitations on (NKE)
Carmen	L15	Yes, maybe if that had been used in the lead that may have persuaded me
David	L16	How much do we take into account how it was written? Or what was behind the story?
Carmen	L17	Yes, umm. So if the story was that 'Australia lacks the legislative power to prosecute suspected terrorists like Willie Brigitte..Bugg a luggs Ruddock said yesterday that' (Pr)... <u>That may have impacted on my decision</u> , but I certainly didn't rate that, that high (Looks to Gemma and David looks to Gemma also)

Table G.4: Gallery 3

Gemma	L1	I didn't rank it high. This other story is a daily breaking news story, buildings are burning (Pr)....but I might be biased (Begins to giggle).
David	L2	<u>I understand that, within the context of this issue (pointing to all articles), it probably falls to a lower ranking.</u>
Gemma	L3	That said when was the Bali bombing? (NKE) Was that October 2002? (Pr)
David	L4	Yes
Gemma	L5	That was around about the anniversary (JSB) so that could have given it prominence (Pr)
David	L6	Yes, around October 2003, that would still be really high profile on the newspaper agenda (IO). Umm, and I think that that's the scare factor of terrorism would affect more readers than the detention centre incident (IO). The extrapolation of this story, the buildings are on fire to the issues of detention and how__. So that's where we differ. <u>But I'm quite prepared to go back to ranking this (pointing to article 1) more relevant than the Brigitte story.</u>

Table G.5: Gallery 4

Carmen	L1	Would you still put it above article 1?
David	L2	Not if we're looking at detention and this story is looking at how we can detain people and for how long. (NKE)
Carmen	L3	<u>And it's a massive conflict story and that's a really strong news value.</u> (Pr)
David	L4	<u>Yes</u>
Gemma	L5	I look at this as a straight daily breaking news story – burning buildings, it's a Police report (Pr). I mean people living in that area that's very real (Pr). Not everybody really cares about this story (pointing to Brigitte story) (JSB)
Carmen	L6	<u>Can you live with that being one?</u> (Looking to David).
David	L7	Yes, because I can see a news conference situation that would be discussing this, and someone would be saying 'there's a terrorism angle to this (he points to Brigitte story), against the other story (points to article one). It would be a hard call _____ I'll defer back for that reason.
Gemma	L8	(ALL LAUGHING) – THIS COULD TAKE A WHILE!
Carmen	L9	I'll note it as one, so what about 2 and 3 then? (looking at David). Because you obviously still have your Willie Brigitte one up there.
David	L10	Yes, I still do.

Table G.6: Gallery 5

Gemma	L1	(Looking at David) What did you have for three and two?
David	L2	Well two, the Russian's mother's bid
Gemma	L3	I had that at either two or three
Carmen	L4	Did you? See I put that last, oh no, second last.
David	L5	I think that went to the very core of the detention centre situation (Pr). I mean she's split from the child and our laws say (pointing to paragraph in story) that "it's apparent that these laws override the rights of an Australian child to know

		and have contact with one of his parents who entered Australia on a false passport”...
Gemma	L6	Umm
David	L7	This is about splitting up families and that whole situation, and whether our laws need to be changed (Pr). I imagine this would be one of the issues behind....
Carmen	L8	But you still have your Willie Brigitte up there are well?
David	L9	Yes
Carmen	L10	(Looking to Gemma) What did you have?
Gemma	L11	I had the Russian’s mother as two or three because of similar reasons
Carmen	L12	What was your third then?
Gemma	L13	(looking at articles). Short term memory loss..Sorry! I chose the Russian one because of family stuff, and this happens to other people. This can happen to families in other situations. It can affect anyone.

Table G.7: Gallery 6

Gemma	L1	I had the three doctors as number 2.
Carmen	L2	<u>I had that as number two as well</u>
David	L3	<u>I had that as number 4, so that’s basically your number 3</u> – the three doctors lodged the complaint ties with article number two which was the ...
Carmen	L4	“Last time anyone saw here alive”. I had that as number 3 also.
Gemma	L5	I had that as 3 as well, and had the Russian as number 4.
Carmen	L6	So all three of us then have ranked the three doctors and the death of the 12 year old
David	L7	Yes

Table G.8: Gallery 7

Carmen	L1	I didn't rank the Russian mother but (Looking at Russian story), I think I had an empathy lapse for the Russian mother (JSB). ALL GIGGLING
David	L2	I don't know if I was considering if she was Russian or not. It was more the children. Everyone loves a story like that. (JSB)
Carmen	L3	<u>Well yes!</u>
Gemma	L4	Especially with a lot of foreigners in the country. (JSB) & (NKE)
Carmen	L5	Don't forget though, we're editing <i>The Australian</i> here. Would Chris Mitchell (editor of <i>The Australian</i>) have a great deal of empathy for a woman that came here under a false passport? (IO)
Gemma	L6	They are the sort of things I see as very tabloidally and they hate tabloids even though they're apparently not 'tabloid'. (IO)
Carmen	L7	I am mindful of the news value of 'newspaper agenda' because <i>The Australian</i> is very big on that... Umm, I can picture Chris Mitchell going 'I've got no sympathy for her because she came here under a false passport, you know. She thinks having a baby is going to make it OK for her to stay here, well not necessarily'. (IO)
Gemma	L8	See, I thought that too, because I went through a lot of crap to get my husband here legally, so anything that is illegal makes me mad. ALL GIGGLING. But thinking of the children... (JSB)
David	L9	I think that while debate of if what she's doing is right that's why its ranked there. (Pr)
Carmen	L10	(looking to Gemma). But you still rate it highly?
Gemma	L11	Number 4, not number 3.

Table G.9: Gallery 8

Carmen	L1	The Willie Brigitte thing worries me because you know I was swayed because I felt that it was poorly written....like the major point of the story didn't feature up high and therefore didn't..so I don't know about the Willie Brigitte one (looking to Gemma)..But <u>you also ranked it quite low</u> ?
Gemma	L2	Yes, the French guy?

Table G.10: Gallery 9

David	L1	Where did you guys rank Jimmy Foo?
Carmen	L2	I rated that as five. I actually moved it up. I had it lower. I had it as 7 then I thought about it, that it was a much more important story because of his links with Philip Ruddock. (Pr)
Gemma	L3	I had an equal five with that, with the staff at Villawood giving cigarettes and cards to carry out their work.
Carmen	L4	I swapped that. I had Brigitte as 6
David	L5	See I moved Foo to 9 because A) It's a follow up story and we haven't got much out of it. It looks like he is going to escape prosecution. It is not a huge deal, we don't even know what he has done...all we've got is his connection to Ruddock. (Pr)
Carmen	L6	<u>That's a good point</u>
David	L7	I looked that that Brigitte story in similar ways and this goes (points to Foo story) to something that Foo has allegedly done that we don't really have the details for – whereas Brigitte goes to terrorism, whereas Foo goes to his connections to Ruddock.
Carmen	L8	<u>Yes, that's true</u>
David	L9	I think the extent its' been done, we know – (pointing to article and below phrase): <i>"The Australian</i> has learned that Mr Foo has a de-facto partner and a one year old son who live n Sydney". There is obviously a newspaper agenda.
Carmen	L10	<u>I'd be happy to drop that back on that basis</u>
Gemma	L11	<u>Ye, me too!</u>

Table G.11: Gallery 10

David	L1	Then we come to these other three articles which is 7, 8 and 9, which are all allegations of what's happening in the detention centres. We've got two boys allegedly sexually assaulted, we've got the human interest of the mother and baby coming out enjoying their day in the park, then we've got actual staff at Villawood doing something wrong. The allegations against the boys are to do with other detainees and not actual staff members. I didn't rank that as highly for that reason. If it had been staff members allegedly assaulting the boys it would have been stronger. I mean staff are in a position of trust, whereas other detainees are under pressure in that situation and there isn't that argy bargy about_____ (Pr)
Gemma	L2	But then the staff should have been able to protect the children, the other prisoners. (Pr)
Carmen	L3	I think <u>that points to a good illustration of the consequence</u> of having children in detention and given that there was a growing body of, a growing chorus if you like, criticising the detention of children because of mental health issues. I gave that one as my 4 th ranking. So the three doctors, medical negligence talking about mental health of children, then the death of the young girl, and the family of two boys....I thought that would be logical.
David	L4	<u>I did the same.</u> I and the three doctors, as a background story to that, and a profile to that, and then the boys, then I ran the boys, than I ran the mother and baby going to the Park, and then the detention centre workers. So similar to yours?

Table G.12: Gallery 11

Carmen	L1	It still does not get over the Brigitte one. Brigitte and the Russian one warrant bumping the three doctors lodging the medical negligence complaint against ACM.\
David	L2	With against the three doctors, its actually two cases
Carmen	L3	<u>It's gotta start somewhere</u>
David	L4	It's gotta start somewhere. <u>I know.</u> It's not a massive case though in terms of... (Pr)
Carmen	L5	True.
David	L6	The numbers we have detained, I wonder what sort of ratio it is? (Pr)
Carmen	L7	Would you bump the death of that child?

Gemma	L8	Death of the 27 year old?
Carmen	L9	The 12 year old, oh, I mean the 27 year old.
Gemma	L10	That's one of the cases as well that they're lodging the complaint over. We know the background of the story is quite sordid. (Pr)

Table G.13: Gallery 12

David	L1	I think we're pretty right, it's just those ones – where does the French Brigitte fit in, and where does the Russian fit it, they're a bit contentious.
Carmen	L2	Umm
David	L3	I've ranked Foo pretty well down the chain.
Carmen	L4	<u>I'm happy to do that. I'm willing to bump him to the bottom in light of what you said.</u>
Gemma	L5	<u>Me too!</u>
David	L6	Foo's number 9. So number 5 is 9.

Table G.14: Gallery 13

Carmen	L1	I'm not that keen on the Russian mother one, but because like I say, I suffered an empathy lapse for her....she did come here as an illegal immigrant (NKE). But maybe that's just me taking an uncharacteristic hard line (JSB), you know. ALL LAUGHING
David	L2	Uncharacteristic? (All Giggling).
Carmen	L3	I don't what it is, but I'm just not keen on her, but you two both ranked it high, so (weighing gesture). The Brigitte one, yes, if it was rewritten in a different way (Pr), particularly with <i>The Australian's</i> pursuit of that agenda anyway (IO), <u>and support of those tough laws than...yes...it probably should come up in ranking.</u> (looking to Gemma) What do you think?
Gemma	L4	I agree with you both.
David	L5	It's interesting with the Russian one is that you did feel quite strongly about it didn't you? Like you said, she's an illegal immigrant, so bugger her.
Carmen	L6	I know.. it's weird isn't it?

David	L7	That's quite strong emotions isn't it?
Carmen	L8	Yes
David	L9	So that story did you relevance to you – so its reasonable we say 'bugger her'.?
Carmen	L10	Yes, so it's the sort of story that would spark quite a bit of debate (Pr)
David	L11	Depending on what side you come down on, it would be quite a strong debate. (Pr)
Carmen	L12	Yes, Umm
David	L13	Because it is one of those ones that goes to how we feel about foreigners, how we feel about the detention of foreigners (NKE), how we feel about breaking up families (JSB).
Gemma	L14	She supposedly witnessed a murder and is a victim of rape, so that will get empathy from people! (JSB) & (Pr)
David	L15	That's right, but is she trying to cheat our system, do we let her come here and tell all these stories to cheat our system? (NKE) & (Pr)
Carmen	L16	<u>Yes, I'm persuaded on that too</u> – So do we bump up the Russian and the Brigitte story? (Looks to Gemma).

Table G.15: Gallery 14

Carmen	L1	Do you agree that if it was written with a different side, that brought out the efforts with terrorism laws, that that would have given it a higher ranking?
Gemma	L2	(Looking to Mary Anne) Can we rank them the same - of equal importance?
MA	L3	Yes you can rank them the same - of equal importance.
Gemma	L4	I can see them on the same page for example – which page it would be is the question. (Pr)
Carmen	L5	(Looking to David) Would you go with that?
David	L6	<u>Oh yes.</u>
Gemma	L7	Because David is _____

Carmen	L8	Articles 4 and 6 are both ranked 2 then
David	L9	Articles 3 and 2 would be both ranked 4 because you don't have a 3?
Carmen	L10	Sorry, that should be 3 then.
David	L11	No, we do not have a 3, you have a got two 2's.
MA	L12	You can still have a 3
Gemma	L13	Yes, do it like that.
Camden	L14	So we can do this?
MA	L15	Yes
Carmen	L16	So the three doctors
Gemma	L17	<u>I agree</u>
Carmen	L18	And then the death of the 27 year old?
David	L19	<u>Yes</u>
Carmen	L20	So run them together?
David	L21	I ranked them as together because I could see those stories on the same page, but I would say that's _____ the lead, so 3, 4.

Table G.16: Gallery 15

Carmen	L1	And that leaves us with the sexual assaults and 'Little Naomi's first taste of freedom'!, which I did rank last myself, but...
Gemma	L2	So did I!
Carmen	L3	It's a nice story and it's a logical follow-up but... (Pr)
Gemma	L4	It's two years later after... (Pr)
David	L5	The other interesting thing is that it would also go on photo value

		too! (Pr)
Carmen	L6	Yes, that could be a page 3 pic or page 5. But I like the sexual assault one. I would have thought that an allegation would... (Pr)
David	L7	I still rank that as the most important of those three
Gemma	L8	<u>So do I!</u>
David	L9	.. <u>And I'm prepared to go either way of these two</u> , this also goes to staff so...I'd have to go 9, then 7.
Gemma	L10	<u>Me too!</u>
Carmen	L11	David spends some time in news conferences, we don't!