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What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited

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ABSTRACT *This study aims to shed light on the news selection process by examining the news values currently operational in British newspapers. The study takes as its starting point Galtung and Ruge's widely cited taxonomy of news values established in their 1965 study and puts these criteria to the test in an empirical analysis of news published in three national daily UK newspapers. A review of Galtung and Ruge's original study as well as a wider review of related literature is provided. The findings of the news content analysis are used to evaluate critically Galtung and Ruge's original criteria and to propose a contemporary set of news values.*

KEY WORDS: *Galtung and Ruge, News Selection, News Values, UK Newspapers, Content Analysis*

Introduction

"News is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read," explains Corker, the hard-bitten hack in *Scoop*, adding: "And it's only news until he's read it. After that it's dead" (Waugh, 1943, p. 66). This observation provides one answer to the apparently simple question, "What is news?"—a question that continues to exercise the minds of practitioners and students of journalism alike.

> Journalists speak of "the news" as if events select themselves. Further, they speak as if which is the "most significant" news story, and which "news angles" are most salient are divinely inspired. Yet of the millions of events which occur daily in the world, only a tiny proportion ever become visible as "potential news stories": and of this proportion, only a small fraction are actually produced as the day's news in the news media. (Hall, 1973, p. 181)

Our personal experience as working journalists on newspapers and magazines suggests that journalists have ground rules that inform their answers to the question "What is news?" Such ground rules may not be written down or codified by news organisations, but they exist in daily practice and in knowledge gained on the job, albeit mediated by subjectivity on the part of individual journalists. A more academic approach to understanding the process of news selection attempts to identify and define the news values informing the ground rules that come into operation when journalists select stories. Norwegians Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge went some way towards establishing these when they published their paper on "The structure of foreign news" in the *Journal of International*

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Peace Research in 1965. Extracts subsequently appeared in influential books on news production, such as Cohen and Young's *The Manufacture of News* (1973), and Galtung and Ruge's paper has long been regarded as a landmark study of news values and news selection (Watson, 1998, p. 117). The factors making up their news values continue to be cited as "prerequisites" of news selection at the beginning of the new century (Herbert, 2000, pp. 72–73).

The central question at the heart of their paper was how do events (specifically, foreign events in their case) become "news"? As academics with backgrounds in journalism as practitioners and trainers, we found ourselves asking how useful Galtung and Ruge's taxonomy of news values remains today, in both the domestic and international context. We noted that the news values put forward by Galtung and Ruge were hypothetical, were limited to the reporting of foreign news, and were primarily concerned with the reporting of events. Consequently, we were interested in how adequately their news values could be applied to foreign and domestic events, issues and other stories that become news. To that end, we analysed stories published in leading UK newspapers to establish which news values appeared to be operational, taking as a starting point those news factors identified by Galtung and Ruge. Nearly 40 years after their landmark study—within the context of an increasingly multimedia landscape and concerns about "dumbing down" of news—we were interested to see if any additional factors come into play, reflecting the climate in which the journalism of today is produced. But before presenting the findings from the analysis of newspaper content, we examine Galtung and Ruge's initial arguments alongside a review of subsequent literature discussing their study in particular and news values in general. We conclude by providing a contemporary set of news values based on the findings of our empirical research. While we cannot explain why so many events and issues are excluded from the news agenda (even when fulfilling some of the criteria we put forward), we believe we have gone some way to updating, defining and making more visible the news values currently used by journalists in the news selection process.

Galtung and Ruge

Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge's study began life as a paper presented at the First Nordic Conference on Peace Research, which took place in Oslo in January 1963. It was first published in 1965 and extracts have subsequently been printed in many edited collections on the media (Tunstall, 1970; Cohen and Young, 1973, 1981; Tumber, 1999).

The central question at the heart of their paper was: "How do 'events' become 'news'?" They were specifically concerned with how overseas events did or did not become foreign news in the Norwegian press. To explore this question, they presented a series of factors that "seem to be particularly important" in the selection of news, followed by the deduction of some hypotheses from their list of factors. However, Galtung and Ruge noted at the outset, "No claim is made for completeness in the list of factors or 'deductions'" (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, pp. 64–65).

Galtung and Ruge's 12 News Factors

F1. FREQUENCY. An event that unfolds at the same or similar frequency

as the news medium (such as a murder) is more likely to be selected as news than is a social trend that takes place over a long period of time.

F2. THRESHOLD. Events have to pass a threshold before being recorded at all. After that, the greater the intensity, the more gruesome the murder, and the more casualties in an accident—the greater the impact on the perception of those responsible for news selection.

F3. UNAMBIGUITY. The less ambiguity, the more likely the event is to become news. The more clearly an event can be understood, and interpreted without multiple meanings, the greater the chance of it being selected.

F4. MEANINGFULNESS. The culturally similar is likely to be selected because it fits into the news selector's frame of reference. Thus, the involvement of UK citizens will make an event in a remote country more meaningful to the UK media. Similarly, news from the USA is seen as more relevant to the UK than is news from countries that are less culturally familiar.

F5. CONSONANCE. The news selector may predict—or, indeed, want—something to happen, thus forming a mental "pre-image" of an event, which in turn increases its chances of becoming news.

F6. UNEXPECTEDNESS. The most unexpected or rare events—among those that are culturally familiar and/or consonant—will have the greatest chance of being selected as news.

F7. CONTINUITY. Once an event has become headline news it remains in the media spotlight for some time—even if its amplitude has been greatly reduced—because it has become familiar and easier to interpret. Continuing coverage also acts to justify the attention an event attracted in the first place.

F8. COMPOSITION. An event may be included as news less because of its intrinsic news value than because it fits into the overall composition or balance of a newspaper or news broadcast. This might not just mean light stories to balance heavy news; it could also mean that, in the context of newspaper reports on alleged institutional racism within the police, for example, positive initiatives to combat racism which would normally go unreported might make it onto the news pages.

F9. REFERENCE TO ELITE NATIONS. The actions of elite nations are seen as more consequential than the actions of other nations. Definitions of elite nations will be culturally, politically and economically determined and will vary from country to country, although there may be universal agreement about the inclusion of some nations (e.g. the USA) among the elite.

F10. REFERENCE TO ELITE PEOPLE. The actions of elite people, who will usually be famous, may be seen by news selectors as having more consequence than the actions of others. Also, readers may identify with them.

F11. REFERENCE TO PERSONS. News has a tendency to present events as the actions of named people rather than a result of social forces. This personification goes beyond "human interest" stories and could relate to "cultural idealism according to which man is the master of his own destiny and events can be seen as the outcome of an act of free will".

F12. REFERENCE TO SOMETHING NEGATIVE. Negative news could be seen as unambiguous and consensual, generally more likely to be unexpected

and to occur over a shorter period of time than positive news (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, pp. 65–71).

After presenting these factors, Galtung and Ruge put forward three hypotheses:

1. The more events satisfy the criteria mentioned, the more likely that they will be registered as news (selection).
2. Once a news item has been selected what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be accentuated (distortion).
3. Both the process of selection and the process of distortion will take place at all steps in the chain from event to reader (replication) (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, p. 71).

Following an examination of the coverage of three international crises in four Norwegian newspapers,[1] Galtung and Ruge discuss the extent to which their factors could be considered in combination—"the more distant an event, the less ambiguous will it have to be"—before leaving conclusions on such questions to future research. (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, pp. 80–83). Galtung and Ruge had an explicit agenda, urging journalists to "try and counteract all 12 factors", and they concluded their paper with the following health warning: "It should be emphasised … that the present article hypothesises rather than demonstrates the presence of these factors, and hypothesises rather than demonstrates that these factors, if present, have certain effects among the audience" (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, pp. 84–85).

After Galtung and Ruge: a review of the literature

Galtung and Ruge's paper has long been regarded as *the* study of news values. For Bell (1991, p. 155), Galtung and Ruge's paper formed "the foundation study of news values"; Palmer (1998, p. 378) described the study as the earliest attempt to provide a systematic definition of newsworthiness; and, according to Tunstall (1970, p. 20), the 1965 paper promised "to become a classic social science answer to the question 'what is news?'" Tumber (1999, p. 4) notes, "The relevance of Galtung and Ruge's model is its predictive quality in determining patterns of news." Not that there was anything new about such news values themselves. Indeed, it could be argued that they pre-date the mass media: "Many of the factors which Galtung and Ruge find as predisposing foreign events to become news—elite persons, negative events, unexpectedness-within-predictability, cultural proximity—are also to be found in Shakespeare's plays" (Tunstall, 1970, p. 21).

More than three decades after the publication of their paper, Galtung and Ruge's study remains the "most influential explanation" of news values (McQuail, 1994, p. 270). The names of the two Norwegians have become "as associated with news value analysis as Hoover with the vacuum cleaner", thanks to a study that was "a landmark" in the scholarship of the media (Watson, 1998, p. 117). Peterson, whose two studies on foreign news and international news selection (1979, 1981) looked at journalistic input, found much to support the hypotheses put forward by Galtung and Ruge. She conducted interviews with journalists on *The Times* and concluded, "the results suggest strongly that news criteria shape a picture of the world's events characterised by erratic, dramatic and uncomplicated surprise, by negative or conflictual events involving elite nations and persons" (Peterson, 1979, 1981, cited in McQuail, 1992, p. 217.)

However, a number of shortcomings have been identified in Galtung and Ruge's taxonomy of news values. As Tunstall points out, their paper concentrated on three major international crises, ignoring day-to-day coverage of "lesser" events; Galtung and Ruge looked only at content that was explicitly concerned with the selected crises; and their list of factors made no reference to how visual elements, such as dramatic photographs, could affect the content of written material (Tunstall, 1971, p. 21). An obvious difficulty with Galtung and Ruge's gatekeeping approach is that it appears to assume that there is a given reality "out there" which the news gatherers will either admit or exclude (McQuail, 1994, p. 270). As Seaton notes, such a focus on "events" only tells us part of the story: "Many items of news are not 'events' at all, that is in the sense of occurrences in the real world which take place independently of the media" (Curran and Seaton, 1997, p. 277). This point is taken further by Vasterman in the context of a study of media hypes such as the "flesh-eating virus" stories that swept the UK (and elsewhere) during 1994. For Vasterman, lists of selection criteria such as those discussed by Galtung and Ruge are flawed in their presumption that journalists actually report events: "But news is not out there, journalists do not report news, they produce news. They construct it, they construct facts, they construct statements and they construct a context in which these facts make sense. They reconstruct 'a' reality" (Vasterman, 1995).

Stuart Hall, applying a Marxist perspective informed by the analyses of Gramsci and Althusser, argues that while lists such as Galtung and Ruge's may help us to identify the formal elements within the construction of news, they do not explain the ideological meanings behind such "rules": "'News values' are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society … News values appear as a set of neutral, routine practices: but we need, also, to see formal news values as an ideological structure—to examine these rules as the formalisation and operationalisation of an ideology of news" (Hall, 1973, pp. 181, 235). Taken together, news values can be seen 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).

From a semiotic perspective, Hartley agrees with Hall that focusing on news values alone may disguise the ideological determinants of stories that appear in the media (Hartley, 1982, p. 80). He also points out that certain stories achieve copious coverage apparently without fulfilling any of Galtung and Ruge's news factors in any obvious way, an issue that we discuss further in our findings below. Commenting on the widespread reporting of a seemingly obscure academic dispute in the early 1980s, Hartley comments, "The way the dispute was reported did exploit a number of our news values (like personalisation, negativity, reference to elite persons and institutions), but the news values themselves give little clue as to *why the story was deemed newsworthy in the first place*" (Hartley, 1982, p. 79, our emphasis). In this sense, while the news factors identified by Galtung and Ruge may suggest a "predictive pattern" of which events will and will not be reported—and may inform us how stories may be treated—they do not provide a complete explanation of all the irregularities of news composition, including the influence of political and economic factors (McQuail, 1994, p. 271).

Alternative or Additional News Values

Following Galtung and Ruge's taxon-

omy, there have been a number of alternative but essentially similar lists of news values. In his study of US news media, Gans argues that domestic news stories become "important" by satisfying one or more of the following criteria: rank in government and other hierarchies; impact on the nation and the national interest; impact on large numbers of people; and significance for the past and future (Gans, 1980, pp. 147–52). Similarly, stories are deemed "interesting" if they conform to one or more types which Gans lists as: people stories; role reversals; human-interest stories; expose anecdotes; hero stories; and "gee whiz" stories (1980, pp. 155–57).

While acknowledging that the instinctual news value of most journalists is simply "Does it interest me?", former *Guardian* editor Alastair Hetherington nonetheless drew up his own list of news values during a study of the UK media. He argued that journalists look for stories involving one or more of the following: significance; drama; surprise; personalities; sex, scandal and crime; numbers; and proximity (Hetherington, 1985, pp. 8–9). Herbert comes up with the following list: prominence; proximity; timeliness; action; novelty; human interest; sex; humour (Herbert, 2000, p. 318).

Bell, preferring not to construct an alternative list, notes that Galtung and Ruge's news factors have been found both valid and enlightening in a number of different countries. However, he augments their dozen factors with four more, all of which are (like continuity and composition) concerned with news gathering and news processing rather than with the events and actors featured in the news. Bell argues for the importance to story selection of competition, the desire for a scoop; cooption, whereby a story that is only tangentially related can be presented in terms of a high-profile continuing story; predictability, that is, events that can be prescheduled for journalists are more likely to be covered than events that turn up unheralded; and prefabrication, meaning that the existence of ready-made texts (press releases, cuttings, agency copy) that journalists can process rapidly will greatly increase the likelihood of something appearing in the news (Gans, 1980, pp. 158–60).

Galtung and Ruge Revisited: methodology

In the decades since the publication of their paper, Galtung and Ruge's tentative answers to the question "How do events become news?" have become widely cited and, indeed, often accepted with little further attempt at empirical research. We set ourselves the task of devising a content analysis to help investigate just how useful Galtung and Ruge's factors are in analysing the news selection process today. In other words, what is the relationship, if any, between the news that actually appears in the press and the selection criteria discussed by Galtung and Ruge? To this end we read and considered a total of 1276 news articles published as page leads in UK national newspapers in March 1999,[2] attempting to identify which if any of Galtung and Ruge's factors appeared to be present in each story. Content analysis—defined by Berelson (1971, p. 18) as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication"—is of course itself a problematic area. We must therefore follow McQuail (1977, p. 2) in prefacing our findings with the health warning that reminds that "there is no objective or neutral way of deciding which categories should be used".

Whereas Galtung and Ruge began by suggesting a list of factors and then put forward hypotheses—rather than beginning with an empirical study of what actually appeared in newspapers—our exploration approached the issue from an altogether different angle. Their concern was with events and how they did or did not become news. Our concern has been with published news items and what may or may not have led to their selection. When we discuss our findings below, it is evident that many news items appear to have little if any relation to actual events (as the term "event" is commonly understood). Indeed, there are considerable difficulties in defining an event—when journalists may identify a series of what may be termed "mini-events" within a larger story; or when so many stories are based on issues, trends and even speculation rather than any identifiable event.

The Newspapers

Three UK national daily newspapers were selected for analysis which are the market leaders in terms of circulation in their respective sectors.[3] The broadsheet *Daily Telegraph*, owned by Conrad Black's Hollinger Group, has an average daily sale of 1,022,937 (*Press Gazette*, 2000). It has been described as having a "safely conservative politics and approach to journalism", although by the 1990s it had "modernised itself stealthily and rather cleverly" (Engel, 1997, pp. 248, 306).

The tabloid *Sun*, part of Rupert Murdoch's News International empire, sells 3,395,273 copies a day and has been the biggest-selling UK daily newspaper for more than 20 years (*Press Gazette*, 2000). As James Curran notes, *The Sun* was reoriented towards a mass working-class readership following its purchase by Murdoch in 1969: "It greatly increased its entertainment coverage, in particular human interest reporting of show business and TV stars, developed a more explicit style of soft porn, and shrank its coverage of public affairs. It evolved a complex editorial formula … which was both hedonistic and moralistic, iconoclastic and authoritarian" (Curran and Seaton, 1997, p. 93.)

The third title considered was the middlebrow *Daily Mail*, owned by Associated Newspapers and boasting an average daily circulation of 2,310,781 (*Press Gazette*, 2000). It has been described by Engel as "successful, professional, respected, competitive, forceful, well-written and, in extremis, particularly during elections, thoroughly mendacious" (Engel, 1997, p. 306.) It has also long been identified with a successful strategy of targeting female readers (Holland, 1998, p. 21).

At an overt party-political level, both the *Telegraph* and the *Mail* have traditionally been pro-Conservative newspapers, while the Sun switched from being a pro-Labour title before Murdoch bought it in 1969 to become a champion of Thatcherism before turning on the Tories after the 1992 general election and backing Tony Blair's Labour Party shortly before Labour won a landslide victory in the 1997 election.

Since the concern was to explore news values we focused on news items to the exclusion of other content that Galtung and Ruge included in their sampling: editorials, features and readers' letters.[4] We decided to examine all news, rather than restricting the study to foreign news, since, notwithstanding the narrow focus of their paper, Galtung and Ruge's study has become part of the canon of news values in general. For each news page in each issue of the newspapers

under consideration, we analysed the content of the page lead; that is, the most prominent news story.[5]

Problematic Areas

Given that we were approaching Galtung and Ruge's criteria from the perspective of media texts rather than events, we recognised that there would be methodological problems to be addressed. For example, when piloting our content analysis by scouring news items for signs of Galtung and Ruge's 12 factors, it quickly became apparent that their factors could be identified on actual newspaper pages only with the use of copious amounts of necessarily subjective interpretation on the part of the researchers. To minimise unreliability, we began by coding newspapers together, reading and discussing each news story and agreeing which (if any) of Galtung and Ruge's factors were evident. But we were frequently faced with questions such as: "What is an unambiguous event?" and "Reference to something negative for whom?" When dealing with something as "opaque" as news values (to use Hall's term), it appears there can be little escape from subjective interpretation. This, taken with McQuail's warning cited above, means that the figures included in this article must be considered as only broadly indicative findings of fallible human beings. Furthermore, assuming that it might be possible to identify correctly and objectively the factors within a news item, this would not necessarily explain why that story was selected above other potential stories containing similar elements. Nor could it shed much light on whether factors such as unambiguity or personification were intrinsic to the subject matter or simply how the newspaper chose to write about it on that occasion. Indeed, when applied in practice, each of Galtung and Ruge's 12 news factors become problematic, as is indicated by the following examples of questions raised during our research:

F1. FREQUENCY. How does this relate to stories that are not about events at all, but about trends, speculation, or even the absence of events?

F2. THRESHOLD. Isn't this still open to subjective interpretation? Which is bigger—20 deaths in ten road accidents or five deaths in one rail crash?

F3. UNAMBIGUITY. Is the ambiguity in the subject or in the journalist's interpretation?

F4. MEANINGFULNESS. This is a slippery concept that changes over time and relies on subjective interpretation.

F5. UNEXPECTEDNESS. How can we tell if the journalist is simply taking an unexpected angle on a predictable event?

F6. CONSONANCE. How useful is this category if it is possible only to guess if and when it has applied?

F7. CONTINUITY. Something may be in the news today because it was in the news yesterday, but what does that actually reveal about why it was news in the first place?

F8. COMPOSITION. How is it possible to know what was in the selector's mind when making a particular decision?

F9. ELITE NATIONS. The dearth of foreign news in UK tabloid newspapers renders this a relatively infrequently identified factor; does that mean it does not apply?

Table 1. Galtung and Ruge's news factors in *The Sun*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*—March 1999

Newspaper	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	Stories
The Sun	108	42	176	35	32	78	87	31	37	178	135	116	344
Daily Mail	195	70	249	70	37	128	131	35	59	201	173	204	537
Daily Telegraph	169	61	164	115	40	70	136	40	117	209	109	134	395
Totals	472	173	589	220	109	276	354	106	213	588	417	454	1276

F10. ELITE PEOPLE. How useful is a category that does not distinguish between the Spice Girls and the President of the USA?

F11. REFERENCE TO PERSONS. Is this intrinsic to the subject or the journalist's technique?

F12. REFERENCE TO SOMETHING NEGATIVE. Negative for whom? Bad news for some might be good news for others.

Of course, by its very nature, no content analysis—whether used to identify Galtung and Ruge's factors or any other formulations—can show us which possible news items were rejected or not even noticed by the news selectors. Furthermore, as our findings below suggest, there appear to be many stories published which feature news factors not included in Galtung and Ruge's list. But these limitations do not suggest that Galtung and Ruge's study is of no value today. Rather, the conceptual and methodological issues we have identified signal that empirical research into news selection prompts at least as many questions as it answers. These are valid questions and they need to be addressed—along with the tentative findings of ourselves and others—rather than ignored in the belief that Galtung and Ruge have devised a comprehensive set of news values.

Findings

The number of stories analysed in *The Sun* (344), the *Daily Mail* (537) and the *Daily Telegraph* (395) provide an overall data set of 1276 published items. Table 1 details the frequency with which Galtung and Ruge's 12 news factors appeared in the lead news stories analysed in each of the three newspapers. Table 2 ranks Galtung and Ruge's 12 news factors according to the aggregated frequency with which they were identified in lead news stories across the three papers. Tables 3, 4 and 5 detail the frequencies with which Galtung and Ruge's news factors were evident in page leads in *The Sun*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*, respectively, during March 1999.

While these data may be regarded as only broadly indicative, they nevertheless merit discussion, since they in-

Table 2. Galtung and Ruge's news factors in rank order across all newspapers

F3	Unambiguity	589
F10	Reference to elite people	588
F1	Frequency	472
F12	Reference to something negative	454
F11	Reference to persons	417
F7	Continuity	354
F6	Unexpectedness	276
F4	Meaningfulness: cultural proximity	220
F9	Reference to elite nations	213
F2	Threshold	173
F5	Consonance	109
F8	Composition	106

Table 3. Galtung and Ruge's news factors in lead stories in *The Sun* during March 1999

Date	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	Stories
1 March	3	2	10	1	2	5	2	2	1	4	2	5	10
2 March	3	3	7	0	2	3	5	1	2	6	3	8	12
3 March	3	4	5	3	1	3	4	0	3	9	5	5	10
4 March	2	1	9	2	2	3	6	2	1	10	4	8	15
5 March	7	3	14	3	2	5	6	0	3	6	8	9	16
6 March	4	4	12	1	3	4	3	2	0	7	4	4	13
8 March	5	1	11	0	0	3	1	0	0	6	5	6	12
9 March	3	0	10	1	0	1	1	0	0	9	5	1	12
10 March	10	3	10	0	0	4	1	3	0	6	4	5	11
11 March	11	1	14	3	2	7	3	3	2	8	12	6	16
12 March	7	1	9	3	3	2	4	3	3	10	9	5	18
13 March	3	0	10	0	0	2	2	0	1	10	7	5	18
15 March	2	2	6	0	1	3	0	2	4	7	4	5	15
16 March	3	1	6	5	2	2	3	3	1	8	4	3	10
17 March	0	0	5	0	2	2	4	0	1	5	5	3	9
18 March	0	3	0	0	0	2	4	0	1	6	3	3	13
19 March	4	2	4	4	3	6	3	2	3	7	8	5	15
20 March	7	3	12	1	2	5	3	1	0	10	8	15	19
22 March	2	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	5	5	3	11
23 March	1	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	7	2	0	11
24 March	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	4	3	8
25 March	6	3	3	3	3	2	5	2	3	5	2	0	14
26 March	4	0	4	1	0	2	5	3	3	7	2	0	13
27 March	6	3	11	4	2	5	4	2	5	3	9	8	14
29 March	3	1	2	0	0	1	5	0	0	4	3	0	11
30 March	4	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	4	0	8
31 March	3	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	6	4	1	10
Total	108	42	176	35	32	78	87	31	37	178	135	116	344

dicate possible trends within journalism as well as raising further questions concerning the applicability of the factors that make up Galtung and Ruge's news values.

Galtung and Ruge's News Factors Explored

F3. UNAMBIGUITY. It was perhaps no surprise to find that "unambiguity" was identified most frequently, since it was texts—the news product—rather than events themselves which were being analysed. Given that journalists are trained to write the "intros" to their news stories in an unambiguous way, with a clear news angle in the first couple of sentences, it is perhaps inevitable that so many news stories should appear unambiguous. As Table 1 suggests, the *Daily Mail* particularly favours an unambiguous approach. Interestingly, we noted many news stories that were written unambiguously about events and issues that were likely to have been highly ambiguous; NATO's bombing of Serbia, for example, or the implications of the UK government's budget for the following year.

F10. REFERENCE TO ELITE PEOPLE. This scored highly but the "elite people" noted in this study were not necessarily the elite people that Galtung and Ruge had in mind. The UK press seems obsessed with celebrities such as TV soap stars, sports stars, film stars and, of course, royalty. In contrast, the "elite people" identified by

Table 4. Galtung and Ruge's news factors in lead stories in the *Daily Mail* during March 1999

Date	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	Stories
1 March	4	4	12	1	0	5	6	0	2	6	4	11	20
2 March	12	7	19	4	2	10	6	1	2	10	8	12	25
3 March	11	7	17	9	4	11	11	3	9	10	12	19	25
4 March	3	5	14	5	3	6	5	2	3	8	9	15	22
5 March	9	2	16	3	2	9	6	1	3	12	5	13	20
6 March	2	2	8	1	0	5	6	1	1	7	5	3	17
8 March	11	0	22	1	1	5	2	1	3	6	8	14	23
9 March	14	1	15	1	1	5	4	2	1	10	5	10	22
10 March	8	2	3	0	1	1	0	9	0	6	1	1	9
11 March	15	1	20	4	3	8	7	1	2	8	5	10	25
12 March	11	4	14	4	4	6	8	1	2	9	12	14	24
13 March	6	2	8	0	0	6	4	0	2	5	5	8	18
15 March	10	4	19	4	0	5	3	1	4	12	4	13	21
16 March	4	1	5	5	2	4	4	5	3	5	9	7	18
17 March	5	0	3	1	3	0	7	0	1	8	6	3	18
18 March	4	4	7	1	0	6	5	1	2	6	12	6	21
19 March	4	3	4	2	4	3	6	1	2	7	8	5	21
20 March	5	7	10	4	2	6	0	0	2	5	6	10	16
22 March	3	2	4	6	0	3	6	0	3	9	4	2	20
23 March	5	1	1	1	0	3	3	0	0	6	8	4	20
24 March	5	0	2	1	0	3	4	0	0	9	10	4	25
25 March	6	2	4	2	3	2	6	0	2	6	4	2	18
26 March	6	1	6	4	0	2	4	2	4	6	6	2	19
27 March	15	8	16	5	2	6	6	3	6	10	6	13	17
29 March	4	0	0	1	0	2	5	0	0	7	2	0	18
30 March	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	4	0	18
31 March	8	0	0	0	0	6	2	0	0	3	5	3	17
Total	195	70	249	70	37	128	131	35	59	201	173	204	537

Galtung and Ruge were the politically powerful, people in positions of authority. As it stands, "elite people" is too broad a category to shed much light on what makes news in our current cultural climate. It should also be noted there were many references to elite organisations or institutions, such as the United Nations, the Vatican, Oxbridge, Eton and NATO and that this factor could help make a story as newsworthy as could references to elite individuals.

F1 FREQUENCE. A common-sense notion of news as information that is new would lead one to expect this factor to score highly, and indeed frequency appears to be particularly significant for the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph*. It is perhaps surprising that this factor did not constitute a higher proportion of the total number of stories examined. In contrast to the suggestion of Galtung and Ruge, many events became news even when, on the face of it, they did not unfold at a frequency suited to newspaper production. There were a number of stories that provided no clear timescale of when the event/issue unfolded. This may have been deliberately obscured because the news was not particularly contemporary, possibly due to the parasitic nature of the media, with national papers picking up stories already published in local newspapers some time ago. This was particularly true of *The Sun*, which seemed to rate stories

Table 5. Galtung and Ruge's news factors in lead stories in the *Daily Telegraph* during March 1999

Date	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	Stories
1 March	4	2	9	3	1	4	5	1	5	4	8	7	13
2 March	11	4	12	6	1	9	9	1	4	8	5	6	15
3 March	9	5	8	7	1	9	8	2	6	5	6	8	12
4 March	8	4	11	6	5	3	5	2	6	7	6	10	15
5 March	11	7	13	10	2	4	7	1	8	12	5	12	18
6 March	6	2	8	3	4	2	3	1	1	9	3	7	14
8 March	8	1	12	2	1	3	3	0	3	7	1	6	13
9 March	8	1	11	8	1	3	0	0	6	13	4	4	16
10 March	6	1	9	3	2	3	0	1	1	7	4	10	13
11 March	9	3	17	7	4	6	4	4	5	12	6	10	23
12 March	12	1	9	6	2	3	3	2	7	13	6	3	17
13 March	5	0	5	3	1	4	2	0	3	7	3	5	13
15 March	4	1	4	3	3	3	2	2	4	7	4	6	11
16 March	5	3	5	11	4	2	3	3	7	9	5	6	17
17 March	2	1	0	12	1	1	4	0	2	7	3	2	11
18 March	2	1	1	2	1	1	6	2	5	10	3	2	18
19 March	4	1	2	1	2	1	11	0	5	10	5	3	18
20 March	8	7	8	9	2	1	6	3	8	8	4	9	16
22 March	0	1	2	0	0	1	4	0	2	5	1	0	11
23 March	3	1	0	2	0	0	6	1	3	11	3	1	16
24 March	3	1	2	1	0	0	5	1	3	5	4	2	15
25 March	8	3	3	6	0	0	8	3	6	9	5	2	19
26 March	7	3	0	2	0	1	7	4	3	2	0	1	12
27 March	10	5	12	8	2	5	4	1	8	8	5	7	13
29 March	2	1	0	1	0	0	5	3	1	2	2	0	7
30 March	9	1	1	1	0	0	9	0	3	5	6	3	16
31 March	5	0	0	2	0	1	7	2	2	7	2	2	13
Total	169	61	164	115	40	70	136	40	117	209	109	134	395

more on their entertainment value than on their freshness.

F12. REFERENCE TO SOMETHING NEGATIVE. The old adage that "the only good news is bad news" may not be literally true, but references to something negative were identified in more than one-third of the stories analysed. The *Daily Mail* appears to be particularly keen on negative or "bad news" stories. But this finding should be considered alongside the surprising amount of "good news" that all three newspapers reported. Positive stories included acts of heroism, resourceful children, miracle recoveries, lucky escapes, happy anniversaries, prize winning, and triumphs over adversity. On some days, the number of positive stories was almost equal to the number of negative stories: for example, *The Sun* on 10 March 1999 carried four generally positive page leads, mostly welcoming budget proposals, as opposed to five page leads about something negative. It is possible that "good news" items might feature even more prominently if all stories, rather than page leads, were examined. However, there is a larger question here: bad news for whom? The *Daily Mail* ran a number of stories presenting things as bad news which might be seen by others as good news: the UK government's introduction of a statutory minimum wage, for example, was presented as bad news for employers and employees alike, when it could equally have been presented as good news for

one or both sides of industry. Similarly, aspects of the budget were presented in one paper as good news and in another as bad news. A story may be presented as bad news simply because this angle reflects that paper's political stance or the perceived views of its readers.

F11. REFERENCE TO PERSONS. It might be anticipated that this factor would be prominent because journalistic training and professional practice demand that the reporter seeks out the individual people involved in events, either to provide human interest or to obtain quotes from all sides involved (to present the story as an objective account). This factor was ranked as the third most important for *The Sun*, the fifth for the *Daily Mail*, but only the eighth for the *Daily Telegraph*, indicating that tabloid newspapers generally carry more human interest stories and a great deal of their news is personalised.

F7. CONTINUITY. This factor was not always easy to identify over a relatively short period and this may explain why this is not higher, given that the media use other media as news sources and competing media feel obliged to cover the same stories and issues. Continuity may well have figured as a more important factor if features, editorials and letters had been studied in addition to news stories.

F6. UNEXPECTEDNESS. The rare event is rarer than might have been expected, possibly reflecting the fact that much news gathering is routine, dominated by the news diary and by prearranged events or "pseudo-events", as more organisations become adept at the skills of news management. The figures show a significantly greater number of unexpected stories in the *Daily Mail* than in the other two titles.

F4. MEANINGFULNESS (cultural proximity). F9. REFERENCE TO ELITE NATIONS. The distinct lack of overseas news in the tabloids (on most days, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* carried little or no foreign news) means that neither of these factors figured prominently in the findings. As might have been expected, both factors were considerably higher in the Daily Telegraph.

F2. THRESHOLD. The relatively low position of this factor is surprising and reveals that newspapers do not necessarily cover stories for the reasons that those outside the industry might expect: because it affects large numbers of people or is considered "important" in some other way. We frequently found ourselves asking: "What is this story doing here?" To some extent, this might reflect a shift away from hard news. Certainly, all three titles carried many stories of little apparent significance or amplitude, presumably because such stories were seen as entertaining or relating to the perceived lifestyle of readers.

F5. CONSONANCE. F8. COMPOSITION. These two factors do not score highly, which is probably an indication that they have less to do with events and more to do with news as process; therefore we were largely left to speculate on the reasons behind the decisions of news selectors.

Those Parts of the News that Galtung and Ruge Did Not Uncover

Exploring the news almost four decades after Galtung and Ruge, and with a focus on domestic as well as foreign news, was perhaps bound to reveal a number of important news

values that were not discussed by Galtung and Ruge. Furthermore, in contrast to Galtung and Ruge's starting point, this study has suggested that many news stories are not related to *events* at all. We now turn to discuss these points of difference before going on to draw up our own taxonomy of contemporary news values.

Entertainment

Many stories were included not because they provided serious information for the reader, but apparently merely to entertain the reader. This proved to be a major factor, particularly for *The Sun* (for example: "I had a beany baby: non-stop Heinz got me pregnant, says mum Vicky", 16 March 1999). It should be noted that humorous and entertaining articles, stories about sex, celebrities and royalty—or stories that were dramatic but of no apparent widespread social significance—were not confined to the tabloids but were also prominent in the *Daily Telegraph*. This seems to offer some support for Franklin's contention that broadsheet newspapers have an increasingly tabloid agenda (Franklin, 1997, pp. 7–10). As Bourdieu notes, the focus of such a tabloid agenda is on "those things which are apt to arouse curiosity but require no analysis" (1998, p. 51). It must be noted, however, that the range of news in the *Daily Telegraph* was far greater than in the middlebrow or tabloid papers, and that light-hearted stories were not necessarily excluding hard news on its pages.

The following subcategories help make up the entertainment package that now forms a large part of news coverage.

1. PICTURE OPPORTUNITIES. If a story provided a good picture opportunity then it was often included even when there was little obvious intrinsic newsworthiness. When combined with a top celebrity or a royal, the combination seemed to almost guarantee inclusion (for example: "A love tonic for Anthea", *Daily Mail*, 26 March 1999). Closely connected to picture opportunities were stories featuring attractive women (often crime stories), which frequently appeared complete with pictures (for example: "Jealous lover who killed film starlet is jailed for life", *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March 1999, which included a large semi-naked photograph of the victim). This prompted us to speculate about the number of stories concerning other female victims of crime which had been ignored because the individuals were not deemed attractive enough. And it would seem to support the findings of a study published by the Women in Journalism group which suggested that the criteria used to select pictures of women are different from those applied to men. Mary Ann Sieghart, assistant editor of *The Times*, said she often heard the newsroom question, "Is she photogenic?" (Carter et al., 1999).[6]

2. REFERENCE TO SEX. Continuing this theme, a large number of stories referred to sex (for example: "Twin-city slicker and a tale of two blondes", *Daily Mail*, 16 March 1999; and "Wren 'humiliated' by superior's sex banter", *Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 1999). Such stories often also provide good picture opportunities. While sex may have been tangential to a story, this angle was often emphasised and the story presented as one about sex, making sex an important factor in contemporary news values.

3. REFERENCE TO ANIMALS. Animals also featured prominently, particularly in the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* (though are by no means shunned by the *Daily Telegraph*). This often had

the added advantage of providing an appealing picture opportunity (for example: "Left behind with love, a dying man's best friend", *Daily Mail*, 18 March 1999; "Yappy landings: pup Annie falls 120ft off cliff and trots away", *The Sun*, 18 March 1999; and "Spaniel has a spring in its step after 250ft plunge", *Daily Mail*, 29 March 1999).

4. HUMOUR. Humorous stories were popular with news selectors (for example: "Nutty Nick pays £7,000 for gold gnashers", *The Sun*, 1 March 1999). Very often these stories appear to have little intrinsic newsworthiness in any conventional sense, and may not even be particularly funny on the face of it, but they are written in a humorous style and usually provide an opportunity for a subeditor to produce a punning headline (for example: "Keep you hands off our Willey", *The Sun*, 12 March 1999; "Fast Food: two wives take a Damon Hill cardboard cut-out to dinner", *The Sun*, 3 March 1999; "A game of chew scarves: Andy nibbles souvenir to bring his footie team luck", *The Sun*, 17 March 1999). In this sense, "headline opportunity" might be said to be a factor in selecting a story for the tabloids.

5. SHOWBIZ/TV. Stories about TV stars, particularly those featured in soap operas and docusoaps, and other celebrities were rife in *The Sun*, but all the papers carried more than their fair share of stories about what can be described as showbiz (for example: "My new boy and gel, by quiffmaster Beckham", concerning footballer David Beckham's latest haircut, *Daily Mail*, 29 March 1999; "Posh Spice gives birth to a baby boy", *Daily Telegraph*, 5 March 1999, the same day as the *Telegraph* covered the marriage breakdown of former Olympic swimmer and TV host Sharon Davies). These stories, and countless others like them, were covered on prime news pages; our study did not consider features, TV sections or showbiz gossip pages. Related to this area is the emergence of stories openly based on fiction, but presented as real life, for example news stories based on TV characters (not the actors) or on soap scenarios. For example, *The Sun* carried a page on how the budget would affect characters from *Coronation Street* (10 March 1999) and a story on what happens on the wedding day of another character from the same soap (6 March 1999). It is also worth noting that *The Sun* often carried stories about TV which either explicitly or implicitly attacked or undermined the BBC (for example: "BBC Nuked at Ten: ITV score huge hit as millions tune in to new evening line-up", *The Sun*, 15 March 1999). The same issue included a story attacking a BBC docusoap, *Jailbirds*, and an editorial supporting this line and urging readers to stick to ITV's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*

In addition to the above elements, which have been grouped under the broad heading "Entertainment", there are two news factors discussed earlier.

Reference to Something Positive

Examples of this "good news" factor include: "My £10 lifesaver: trainers' rubber soles kept electric shock boy alive", *The Sun*, 30 March 1999; and "£3.8m win lets father fulfil a pledge of love", *Daily Mail*, 31 March 1999.

Reference to Elite Organisations or Institutions

As previously noted, the involvement of an elite organisation may generate news coverage of an event that may have been ignored had it involved a non-elite organisation (for example: "Eton's killer game craze", *The Sun*, 17 March 1999).

Agendas, Promotions and Campaigns

A final category of news not considered by Galtung and Ruge, but which this study suggests is significant, is a newspaper's own agenda. This could include *The Sun*'s anti-BBC knocking stories cited above (which could be said to serve the commercial interests of Rupert Murdoch). During the period under consideration, *The Sun* also ran a prominent "Save our truckers" campaign (complete with logo), featuring many populist stories related to increases in the price of road tax and diesel (for example, see the front page splash: "White van jam: tax demo to cripple capital", *The Sun*, 18 March 1999). Promotions also play a part here, for example *The Sun* had regular items based on its own promotions such as "Free Books for Schools", featuring news stories about particular schools. Such stories appeared less because of any intrinsic news value than because they served to promote commercial interests and/or reader loyalty and identification. For its part, the *Daily Mail* featured a page lead with two photographs plugging the Ideal Home Show, sponsored by none other than the *Daily Mail* ("Millennium dreams", 18 March 1999). At the same time, the *Daily Mail* was running a "Free Private Lee Clegg" campaign, aimed at overturning the murder conviction of a British soldier who shot dead a teenage girl in Northern Ireland. Thus, the Clegg story was given greater coverage in the *Daily Mail* (in terms of column inches, prominence and continuity) than in other newspapers.

A Hierarchy of Values?

While it is not possible unequivocally to demonstrate empirically a clear hierarchy of news values (for the reasons discussed in the section on methodology), our findings do suggest that certain combinations of news values appear almost to guarantee coverage in the press. For example, a story with a good picture or picture opportunity combined with any reference to an A-list celebrity, royalty, sex, TV or a cuddly animal appears to make a heady brew that news editors find almost impossible to resist. This would perhaps support the contention of Franklin (1997), Langer (1998), Bourdieu (1998), Barnett and Seymour (2000) and others that "tabloid news values" are increasingly found in traditionally non-tabloid media, i.e. broadsheet newspapers and television news. But, while our study may tend to support anecdotal evidence of such claims, we can make no statistical claims for this, since it was not the focus of our study and we did not explore changes over time.

Conclusion: towards a contemporary set of news values

Our findings underline Tunstall's concern that, by focusing on coverage of three major international crises, Galtung and Ruge ignored day-to-day coverage of lesser, domestic and bread-and-butter news (Tunstall, 1971, p. 21). In short, despite the way it has been so widely cited, Galtung and Ruge's taxonomy of news factors appears to ignore the majority of news stories. Further, while the figures given above suggest that news stories do frequently contain the factors identified by Galtung and Ruge, our study adds weight to Seaton's contention that many items of news are not reports of events at all, but "pseudo-events", free advertising or public relations spin. But whereas Seaton is concerned about

"the growth of organisations, professions and skills aimed at manipulating the media" (Curran and Seaton, 1997, pp. 277–78), our study suggests that the media themselves may also be responsible for the prominence of many apparently manufactured stories that have little relation to actual events. We find ourselves agreeing with Hartley that, in contrast to some of the more mechanistic analyses of newspaper content, we should be constantly aware that identifying news factors or news values may tell us more about how stories are covered than why they were chosen in the first place (Hartley, 1982, p. 79). The same point may be made about the useful additional factors suggested by Bell and discussed above: competition, cooption, predictability and prefabrication (Bell, 1991, pp. 159–60).

For these reasons, and because of the problematic issues intrinsic to Galtung and Ruge's factors discussed above, it must be concluded that the much-cited Galtung and Ruge list of news values should be regarded as open to question rather than recited as if written on a tablet of stone: the same critical scepticism should also be applied, of course, to the set of contemporary news values we propose after a final consideration of the individual factors discussed above.

A number of Galtung and Ruge's factors appear to be problematic to identify while others may be identifiable but less in any intrinsic properties of a potential news story and more in the process of how a story has been constructed or written up. Examples of the latter are "frequency" and "unambiguity". Frequency of an event is often artificial today, reflecting how news can be created or managed by the public relations industry. "Newness", which is related to "frequency", appears to be more important for hard news than for softer stories. It should also be remembered that journalists are adept at selecting a particular issue or subevent from an event as it unfolds, even when it may unfold at an overall pace that does not coincide with newspaper production. Similarly, most journalists are trained to write unambiguous angles to stories that may be ambiguous, complex or unclear. It could be that "frequency" has become less important for newspapers as they are increasingly outpaced by electronic media (McNair, 1998, p. 179). If so, newspapers may increasingly be left to provide background or analytical copy about a news event that has broken previously on television, radio or the web. Newspapers may not attempt to compete with broadcasting, preferring entertainment above hard news. For all these reasons, we would not include either "frequency" or "unambiguity" in a contemporary set of news values.

Certainly, "entertainment" proved to be pervasive in all newspapers, though particularly in *The Sun*, where it was often dominant. This reinforces Franklin's description of a prosaic perception of journalism which stresses the need for journalists to entertain as well as inform: "The history of the British press, since the emergence of popular journalism," he argues "has been a history of newspapers increasingly shifting its [*sic*] editorial emphasis towards entertainment" (Franklin, 1997, p. 72). Therefore, no contemporary set of news values is complete without an "entertainment" factor.

Some of Galtung and Ruge's factors remain resonant today and can usefully be incorporated, if worded slightly differently. "Meaningfulness" and "reference to elite nations" might be better subsumed into the wider category of "relevance to readers". This would include reference to culturally familiar countries that are not necessarily elite nations (such as

popular holiday destinations, Commonwealth countries or the countries of significant immigrant groups in Britain) and deal with the stories perceived as being of interest and value to particular readership profiles (such as parents, motorists, people with mortgages, etc.).

"Consonance" and "composition" could be incorporated into the category of the "newspaper agenda". The news selector may indeed be predicting or wanting something to happen, but we would argue that this is related to the cultural, commercial or political climate of their particular newsroom. The news selector will be only too fully aware of a paper's political stance and the perception of what regular readers want from their newspaper. In some cases, the news selector may well be required to go further and actively "manufacture" the news stories that appear as part of a paper's campaign or promotion (stories that would not ordinarily be sought out or noticed). Journalists may also be encouraged to write stories that undermine or attack an employer's economic rival while promoting a proprietor's economic interests, such as anti-BBC stories in Murdoch's *Sun*. "Composition", as defined by Galtung and Ruge, is related to their notion of "continuity". We prefer the category of "follow-up"—a term commonly used by journalists—which is more clearly defined as being the latest development in or somehow related to a previous newsworthy story.

Galtung and Ruge's category of "reference to elite people" is not particularly useful as it stands, since it is taken to include everyone from prime ministers to B-movie actors and Second Division footballers. We propose separate categories referring to the "power elite", which should include elite organisations and institutions as well as people, and "celebrity", referring to people who are already famous whether or not they are powerful.

Galtung and Ruge included "reference to persons", since they believed that many news stories were "personified". Indeed, as Schudson (1996, p. 153) points out, they suggested that reporters write of persons and not structures, individuals and not social forces, because Western culture views individuals as "masters of their own destiny" and that storytelling demands "identification" among readers. But, while our study of the UK press threw up plenty of "human interest" stories that might satisfy this need for identification, we did not find that most stories were personified in this way. News stories often revolved around key organisations, issues and institutions. The conventional journalistic practice of obtaining quotes meant that representatives of such organisations would be quoted, but many stories were nevertheless not personified in any meaningful sense. The categories of the "power elite" and "celebrity" satisfactorily cover many of those stories that do revolve around individuals, and we would include "human interest" as a more precise subcategory of "entertainment" stories that have no great social import but which are entertaining to read.

Galtung and Ruge's concepts of "threshold" and "unexpectedness" remain useful categories but could be better described as "magnitude" and "surprise", the latter category expanded to include unexpected contrasts.

News Values: a contemporary set

Informed by our sampling of the UK press, by a review of the relevant literature, and by our own practice as journalists, readers and academics, we tentatively propose the following list of news values. Although there are exceptions to every rule, we have found that news stories must generally satisfy

one or more of the following requirements to be selected:

1. THE POWER ELITE. Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations or institutions.

2. CELEBRITY. Stories concerning people who are already famous.

3. ENTERTAINMENT. Stories concerning sex, showbusiness, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines.

4. SURPRISE. Stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast.

5. BAD NEWS.[7] Stories with particularly negative overtones, such as conflict or tragedy.

6. GOOD NEWS. Stories with particularly positive overtones such as rescues and cures.

7. MAGNITUDE. Stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers of people involved or in potential impact.

8. RELEVANCE. Stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the audience.

9. FOLLOW-UP. Stories about subjects already in the news.

10. NEWSPAPER AGENDA. Stories that set or fit the news organisation's own agenda.

The news values in daily application by tens of thousands of journalists may indeed be opaque, as suggested by Hall (1973, p. 181). We offer this study, and our proposed contemporary set of news values, as a contribution to the process of making news values more transparent and our understanding of them more up to date. Future research may help shed more light on how effective our list of news values is in rendering news selection a more transparent and better-understood process.[8]

Notes

[1] Galtung and Ruge looked at 1262 press cuttings—including news items, features, editorials and raders letters—concerning the crises in the Congo (1960), Cuba (1960) and Cyprus (1964).

[2] We considered every issue of the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* published during the randomly selected month of March 1999.

[3] We excluded Sunday newspapers, since, in the UK at least, they generally have a less news-driven agenda than do the dailies.

[4] We did, however, find some blurring of the lines between news, features and comment pieces, particularly in *The Sun* and *Daily Mail*.

[5] It should be pointed out that broadsheet newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph* have more stories to the page, including very prominent stories that do not feature in our study because they are not page leads. Therefore, its page leads form a lower proportion of its overall news content. However, we decided to focus on page leads because their prominent positioning in the hierarchy of news can be taken as reflecting the news values of the journalists involved in selecting, subediting and editing stories on newspapers.

[6] Future research exploring a gendered critique of journalistic news values—and perhaps even a gendered critique of the academic study of news values—may provide further insights not discussed in this paper. The women's editor of *The Guardian* claims, "News values are still male values" (Brooks, 1999).

[7] It might be thought that the categories "bad news" and "good news" would include everything, but that is not the case, since there are stories that have neither a particularly negative or positive basis. Other stories may, of course, be given negative or positive slants by journalists. The reason for including numbers 5 and 6 in our contemporary set of news values is that the presence or pretence of particularly good or bad news—triumph or tragedy—increases the likelihood of something being covered by the news media.

[8] Although this study has focused on the UK national press, it would be illuminating to compare our findings with the categorisation of news values operating at local, regional and international levels; in broadcasting and online media as well as print; to explore changes over time; and to take the process further through interviews with working journalists.

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