

A Sociological Analysis of Citizen Journalism

PhD Thesis

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my partner Daniel, my parents Keith and Sandra Watson, and my sister Lauren for their continual patience, love and support throughout the completion of this thesis.

Abstract

The study of citizen journalism from a sociological perspective is a new and evolving area of research. Accordingly, with such a wide scope for research to be conducted, this thesis has opted to approach the study of citizen journalism from a social constructionist position; viewing those members of the public that choose to engage in the creation of news as active participants in the construction of news today. By focusing on the impact of citizen journalism on the nature of agenda-setting and claims-making, this thesis seeks to add to existing viewpoints of the construction of news by considering the impact of citizen journalism on these traditional processes.

In order to address citizen journalism, a case study of terrorism has been selected for analytical purposes; the 7th July 2005 London bombings. Using qualitative media analysis, this thesis assesses two distinct types of citizen journalism; those acts of public led journalism that involve citizen journalists relying on the news media for publication in acts of dependent citizen journalism, and alternatively acts of citizen journalism that involve citizen journalists' employing their own digital tools for the self-publication of news. By assessing citizen journalism in relation to terrorism, in addition to adding to our understanding of the social construction of news, this thesis has also been able to contribute to existing academic approaches to understanding the relationship between the media and terrorism.

This thesis aims to highlight the importance of a "sociology of the news" that recognises the involvement of the public in the production and distribution of information.

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1. Introduction

1.1. A Sociological Analysis of Citizen Journalism

Where does the news come from? This is a relevant sociological question that requires answering in relation to the operation of the production and distribution of news in Western society today. For a long time sociologists have been interested in the functioning and the impact of the media in society, as indicated by Max Weber's "survey of the press", announced in 1910. Upon completion of the survey, Weber (1998[1910]) argued that the survey would have to be analysed with regard to the "cultural problems of the present". Such cultural problems included the press as a way of bringing the "subjective" individual into conformity with the idea of the "modern man", with the view that the press could influence "man". In line with this, a sociological analysis of the press would have had to consider how the press influenced public opinion, with the view that the press played an important role in influencing modern culture.

If it had been carried out, Weber's survey would have included an assessment of the way in which the newspaper industry was run as well as an investigation of the "general characteristics" of the newspaper (Weber, 1998 [1910]: 112). Interestingly, an understanding of the "general characteristics" of the press would have included analysis of the various actors that would influence the press, such as shareholders. Weber gives the example of the "Catholic Press", which would have implied that the church had an influence on the operations of that particular press. Unfortunately, as explained by Hennis (1998), Weber's survey was not carried out, chiefly as a result of a lack of funding and Weber's acceptance that he would not be able to collaborate with the press in such an invasive investigation. As Hennis (1998: 190) claims, Weber soon had to accept that "journalists would not work with him". Consequently the project lost momentum and was never completed. Nonetheless, that Weber called for such a study over a century ago shows how important an understanding of the functioning and influence of the media is to the field of sociology. With vast transformations in the news media today, which are largely a result of the advances in the Internet, it is necessary for sociologists to continue

their efforts to understand the workings of the “press” in contemporary society.

The production of news is no longer a result of the traditional workings of the news media, which saw journalists gathering information about events, producing material and then passing it along to editors for approval. Although journalists interacted with a number of sources, the creation of news was a result of the actions of those professionals working in the news media. This is no longer the case. Advances in technology have resulted in an evolving news media, which has led to what this thesis refers to as “Citizen Journalism”: the increasing involvement of the public in the production and distribution of news. The press that was of concern to Weber has noticeably transformed, and we must understand how those now participating in the production and distribution of news – citizen journalists – can play a role in presenting the news to society. In addition to this, it is necessary to consider what citizen journalism means for the study of news from a sociological perspective.

We will first consider how the term citizen journalism has been defined and, consequently, how it will be investigated in this thesis.

1.2. Citizen Journalism: A Contested Term

From a sociological perspective, the problem that currently exists for studying the involvement of the public’s participation in journalism is the terms that should be used to describe this activity. Bowman and Willis (2003) argue that audience participation in the news process includes collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating. They refer to these public acts of journalism as participatory journalism, which they define as:

The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires. (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 9)

Important to Bowman and Willis's (2003) definition of "participatory journalism" is that they believe participatory journalism to involve very little editorial attention: additionally, they state that very little "formal journalism" takes place. In this way, Bowman and Willis (2003: 9) state that participatory journalism is a bottom-up phenomenon, which originates from "simultaneous, distributed conversations" that can either gain popularity or gain very little attention from Internet audiences.

The term "Participatory Journalism" is also utilised by Domingo et al. (2008) in their analysis of spaces created in online news websites for audiences to participate in the construction of news. Likewise, Paulussen and Ugille (2008) explored the reception of "participatory journalism" in newsrooms in Belgium.

In a piece titled "What is participatory journalism?" J.D. Lasica (2003) argues that there are a number of broad categories into which user generated content (otherwise known as participatory journalism) can fall. First is the category "audience participation at mainstream news outlets": types of user-generated content within this category include staff weblogs, public discussion forums, articles written by readers, and material such as photographs and videos submitted to the organisation for publication by audiences. The second category identified by Lasica is "Independent news and information Web sites". This category includes material that is produced by independent news sites such as the *Drudge Report* and *Poynter.org*. Writers within this category are very rarely paid for their contributions.

The third category outlined by Lasica is "Full-fledged participatory news sites". Within this category are news websites run entirely by members of the public to supply local, national and global news: an example cited by Lasica is South Korea's *OhMyNews*. The fourth category is "Collaborative and contributory media sites", which include those websites that combine weblogs with discussion boards and space for users to contribute editorial content in which users are able to rank the newsworthiness of content. An example is *Digital Journal* founded in 1998, this was originally a technology news site; as readers asked to be involved

in the production of news, *Digital Journal* in 2006 began to pay for news contributions from around the world.

The fifth category is what Lasica (2003) refers to as “other kinds of thin media”: this includes mailing lists, e-mail newsletters and other digital media, and Lasica supplies the example of “*Dave Farber Interesting People*”. The final category of user-generated content is “personal broadcast sites”, including video and audio broadcasting sites such as *KenRadio*, where the host (“Ken”) conducts interviews and reports daily tech news (Lasica, 2003).

Elsewhere, Hermida and Thurman (2008: 344) utilise the term “user generated content”, for them the term applies to “a process whereby ordinary people have an opportunity to participate with or contribute to professionally edited publications”. Bergstrom (2008) completed a questionnaire in Sweden on audience desire to participate in the practice of “user generated content” and discusses the idea of the “reluctant audience”¹.

We are also seeing the term “user generated content” in relation to the involvement of the public in contributing to the creation of “content” on the web (Van Dijk, 2009; Girardin et al., 2008; Nov, 2007; Daugherty et al., 2008; Snickars and Vonderau, 2009²). This is not always content of the news variety, but can also be used to discuss other forms of “user generated content” such as the creation of personal videos via the social network video sharing platform – *YouTube* (Cha et al., 2007) or the formulation of “street maps” (Haklay and Weber, 2008).

A collaborative study between the *BBC* and Cardiff University developed a wider understanding in the use of “user generated content” at the *BBC* and how it is perceived within the *BBC* (Wardle and Williams, 2008). The study highlighted the problematic use of the term “user generated content”, within the context of the *BBC*, the term is considered

¹ This is not an exhaustive list of studies on user-generated content but does provide examples of some of the more influential studies.

² This is not an exhaustive list of studies on user-generated content.

(by some) not to reflect the nature of the material that the *BBC* receives and subsequently uses. Rather than using the term “user generated content”, the study found that the term “audience material” was more appropriate and that it was necessary to consider the various types of audience material submitted to them as it is not as simple as physical material such as pictures and video’s that are submitted, but in addition includes audience content, collaborative content, networked journalism and non-news content (for further information see report by Wardle and Williams, 2008: 9-16).

Evidently, there does not seem to be consensus over the use of the term “user generated content”, it is therefore necessary to consider what other terms have been used to refer to acts of “participatory journalism”.

Nip (2006) argues that there are two types of journalism in which the public participate: citizen journalism and participatory journalism. Here, participatory journalism is used to imply something different to that to which Bowman and Willis (2003) and Lasica (2003) referred. For Nip (2006: 225), citizen journalism refers to those acts of journalism in which individuals are involved entirely in the practice of journalism. They are responsible for “gathering content, visioning, producing and publishing the news product”. The term “participatory journalism”, coined by mainstream journalists, relates to the practice of involving members of the public in mainstream acts of journalism. In this way members of the public are given the opportunity to express their views within the news-making process. To illustrate the difference between the two terms, Nip (2006) uses the example of acts of public journalism following the South Asian tsunami of 2004. Photographs and videos taken by tourists and local people would fall into the definition of citizen journalism if they were published by the people themselves. However, they would be classified as participatory journalism if the material was handed to mainstream news organisation for publication (Nip, 2006: 225). Nip claims that when discussing participatory and citizen journalism, the two terms are often used inconsistently.

This distinction between citizen journalism and participatory journalism by Nip (2006) has similarly been identified by Bakker and Paterson (2011). However, Bakker and Paterson (2011) use the umbrella term “citizen participation” to refer to citizens’ involvement in news production. They (2011: 187) define participatory journalism and citizen journalism in the following manner:

There is a central and coordinating role reserved for professional news organizations in the area of ‘participatory journalism’, a form of journalism that takes an open approach towards its audience and invites and facilitates its audience to contribute content (text, photos, videos) for their news outlets. ‘Citizen journalism’, on the other hand, refers to ‘journalistic’ acts that are performed by citizens themselves and where professionals have little or no influence on what gets published.

As with Nip (2006), Bakker and Paterson also acknowledge the interchangeable use of the two terms over the years. Bakker and Paterson seek to present a typology³ that shows the differences between participatory journalism and citizen journalism. This typology is divided by two axes: the vertical axis indicates the extent of editorial control between participatory and citizen journalism. The horizontal axis seeks to delineate between the nature of contributions by citizens. The differentiation between the two is similar to Nip (2006) however greater emphasis is placed on the importance of editorial control.

Elsewhere, Rosen (2008) emphasises the self-publication element of citizen journalism: “When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, *that’s* citizen journalism”. Allan (2007: 3), who specialises in studying citizen journalism in relation to extreme events such as terrorism and disasters, identifies acts of citizen journalism as spontaneous acts by individuals, in which an individual takes up the role of “journalist”, bearing witness to the occurrence of events. Allan (2007) refers to the 07/07

³ See Bakker and Paterson (2011) page 188, figure 11.1 for further information.

London attacks to illustrate the terms “citizen journalists” and “instant reporters”. For Allan (2007), these terms relate to those individuals that were directly involved in the London bombings, who were either directly caught up in the attacks or their aftermath. Individuals would adopt the role of journalists, and would later self-publish their own commentary of events via the creation and publication of a blog post (for example). Allan (2007: 10) points to an example of a blog post “*Surviving a Terrorist Attack*” by Justin Howard, posted just four hours after the attacks took place:

Travelling just past Edgware Road Station the train entered a tunnel. We shook like any usual tube train as it rattled down the tracks. It was then I heard a loud bang... I fell to the ground like most people, scrunched up in a ball in minimize injury. At this point I wondered if the train would ever stop, I thought ‘please make it stop’, but it kept going. In the end I just wished that it didn’t hit something and crush. It didn’t. When the train came to a standstill people were screaming, but mainly due to panic as the carriage was rapidly filling with smoke and the smell of burning motors was giving clear clues of fire. As little as 5 seconds later we were unable to see and had all hit the ground for the precious air that remaining. We were all literally choking to death. The carriage however was pretty sealed; no window could open, no door would slide and no hammers seemed to exist to grant exit. If there were instructions on how to act then they were impossible to see in the thick acrid black smoke.

Howard’s blog post can be perceived as an original piece of news relating to the London bombings. Howard begins his post by developing an understanding of the context of his whereabouts; on the tube travelling past Edgware Road Station, about to enter a tunnel. He then goes on to establish a personal narrative of the unfolding events on the train, providing rich descriptions such as “loud bang” and “thick acrid black smoke”. From an informative point of view, Howard is able to establish an in-depth account of what it felt like to be caught up in the London attacks.

Sambrook (2005) refers to audience contributions to news organisations as “citizen journalism”; he draws on a number of examples of instances of citizen journalism, one of which is the public’s contributions to the BBC following the 7th July 2005 London bombings. Thus, we see the term citizen journalism being employed in direct relation to citizen submissions to the media, in what others (Nip, 2006; Bakker and Paterson, 2011 for instance) call either participatory journalism or user-generated content. Additionally, Greer and McLaughlin (2010) also utilise the term “citizen journalism” in their study of public order policing and citizen journalism activities during public protests. Furthermore, they make reference to the audiences role of capturing footage of the London bombings and submitting the material to news organisations, as instances of “citizen journalism”.

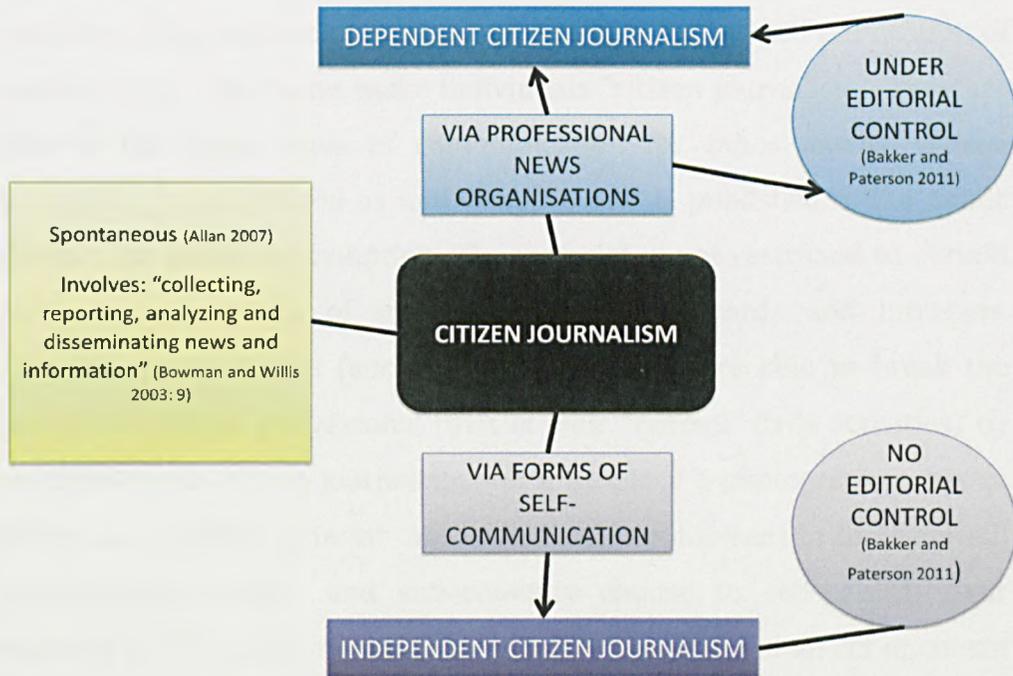
In their study on citizen journalism and gatekeeping Lewis et al. (2010: 166) acknowledge both the participatory and user-generated element of citizen journalism, but choose to utilise the term “citizen journalism” in reference. They too draw on Rosen’s (2008) conception of “citizen journalism” as discussed above.

For this thesis, the problem that exists is what terms should be used to discuss the public’s involvement in the production of news. This thesis is interested in developing a sociological analysis of the public’s involvement in journalism. To do so, it will employ a case study of an act of “terrorism” to help understand the nature of this inclusion of the public in the creation of news. First, however, it is necessary to clarify the terms that this thesis will employ.

This thesis will refer to the involvement of the public in the reporting of a terror attack as an act of **citizen journalism**, following leading scholars including Allan (2007) and Rosen (2008). However, in terms of analysing the impact of citizen journalism on the reporting of a terrorist attack, this thesis will make a distinction between those acts of citizen journalism that are published via the news media and those acts of citizen journalism that are self-published by the user. In this way, this thesis will address both **independent** and **dependent** forms of citizen

journalism, drawing on the distinctions made by Nip (2006) and Bakker and Paterson (2011). The following diagram seeks to show the difference between the two:

Figure 1: Forms of Citizen Journalism



As seen in figure 1 (above), our understanding of what constitutes citizen journalism has been influenced by exposure to other studies (Allan, 2007; Bowman and Willis, 2003). With such disagreements over the usage of the terms, it seemed suitable to keep the term “citizen journalism” but to make a distinction between different forms of citizen journalism within the news production process. Thus, as identified by Bakker and Paterson (2011) a key distinction between material that is published via news media organisations, and material that is self-published via the author (either via his/her own website, blog or social networking website) is the element of “editorial control”. As will be seen in this thesis, the influence of news professionals in managing and choosing what material is suitable (to them) is of extreme importance to our understanding of the way in which news is constructed today. Equally important is developing an understanding of how those not reliant on the news media choose to present their news. Likewise, this distinction between whether or not individuals are dependent on the news media for publication is key in this

study of citizen journalism. Accordingly terms have been developed to clearly reflect this distinction.

It is important to note, that within the different types of citizen journalism there are two factors to consider. First, the use of personal websites, blogs and social networking websites for the self-publication of material does not always make individuals “citizen journalists”. They are able to use these tools of communication for other means. Citizen journalism is understood as that material that is published in the public domain for public consumption. The material is not restricted to certain audiences via means of security such as passwords and Intranets. Secondly, professionals (such as photographers) are able to break the barrier of being a professional (that is their “normal” daily activities) by participating in citizen journalism. For example if a photographer was to record and publish material that is distinctively different to their normal professional pursuits, and subsequently choose to self-publish their material for the public to view, this would be considered an act of citizen journalism.

How then do we perform a sociological analysis of citizen journalism? First, this thesis will continue in the footsteps of many other social scientists by considering citizen journalism as an accomplishment of social construction. That is, this thesis will investigate the impact of citizen journalism upon the construction of news in contemporary society. As will be argued in chapter two, it is necessary to develop the traditional social constructionist perspective of the news so as to include the actions of the public in the news production process. This thesis will do this by focusing on two aspects within the social construction of news: agenda-setting and claims-making. Understanding the process of agenda-setting makes it possible to decipher how the agenda is set for those engaged in citizen journalism. The thesis will also assess the process of claims-making, using the argument that it is necessary to revise our understanding of the process of claims-making in the light of our current digital era. This study of citizen journalism will be completed using a case study, for analytical

purposes, of the emergence and activities of citizen journalists during the London bombings on 7th July 2005 (popularly known as “07/07”).

1.3. Why Citizen Journalism and Terrorism?

In order to understand the nature of citizen journalism and its impact upon the reporting process, we must study material created by citizen journalists. Terrorism serves as a useful case study for analysis, as instances of citizen journalism have not only been occurring following acts of terrorism, but the importance of the public in the reporting of terrorism has been noted by a number of leading scholars, such as Andrew Hoskins (2006), Dan Gillmor (2006) and Stuart Allan (2006; 2007; 2009). As will be explored in chapter four, there are numerous examples of citizen journalism following a terrorist attack. This wealth of examples not only allows for the identification of raw data for analytical purposes, but studying citizen journalism in relation to terrorism supplies a way of being able to understand the activities of citizen journalists in the context to a specific event that would also capture the attention of the mainstream news media. Thus we can provide an analysis, not just of citizen journalism, but of the relationship between citizen journalists and the news media, enabling an understanding of the impact of citizen journalism upon the reporting of news in society.

As highlighted by Furedi (2007a), there have been great difficulties in defining the politically loaded term “terrorism”. The problem of defining terrorism has been apparent “since the inception of terrorism studies in the 1970’s” (Crenshaw, 2000: 406). Crenshaw makes the argument that as an analytical tool, the use of the term terrorism has been problematic in making a distinction between “terrorism” and other violent acts. In addition, the use of the term “terror” is often politically loaded and highly subjective (Crenshaw, 2000). In 1973, Wilkinson argued that discourse surrounding “terrorism” is often erroneous and that in some cases the term “terrorism” can be unjustly applied. Accordingly with such difficulty in associating an act as “terrorism”, scholars of terrorism are in effect

making a “value judgement about the perpetrators of the alleged act, and about the circumstances of their actions” (Wilkinson, 1973: 293).

Recognising the difficulties in defining “terrorism”, in 1988 Schmid and Jongman offered a definition of terrorism that took into consideration, research conducted in 1984 that had involved an analysis of 109 definitions of terrorism. In 1985, Schmid and Jongman carried out further research that involved a questionnaire being sent out to over 200 researchers within the field of political terrorism, leading to a revision of their original definition. Since then, in yet another consultation with 90 experts, Schmid (2009) has again attempted to present a revised, academic consensus of terrorism:

Terrorism refers on the one hand to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties.

As will be seen in section 1.5, this thesis is particularly interested in the “propagandistic” effects of terrorism on “various audiences and conflict parties” (Schmid, 2009). For it is the idea of “propaganda” being central to terrorism that invites academic attention to be paid to the relationship between the news media and terrorism.

The difficulty over defining “terrorism” and using the terms “terror”, “terrorism” and “terrorist” is also negotiated within media organisations. The *BBC* for instance, includes a section within its editorial guidelines to specify how it should report “terrorism”:

We must report acts of terror quickly, accurately, fully and responsibly. Terrorism is a difficult and emotive subject with significant political overtones and care is required in the use of language that carries value judgements. We try to avoid the use of the term “terrorist” without attribution. When we do use the term

we should strive to do so with consistency in the stories we report across all our services and in a way that does not undermine our reputation for objectivity and accuracy. The word "terrorist" itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. We should convey to our audience the full consequences of the act by describing what happened. We should use words which specifically describe the perpetrator such as "bomber", "attacker", "gunman", "kidnapper", "insurgent", and "militant". We should not adopt other people's language as our own; our responsibility is to remain objective and report in ways that enable our audiences to make their own assessments about who is doing what to whom. (BBC War Terror and Emergencies, 2011)

As with Wilkinson's (1973) advice to scholars of terrorism studies, in the guidelines above, the *BBC* have acknowledged that reporting "terrorism" entails value judgements on part of journalists. Furthermore, the *BBC* have declared it necessary to supply contextual information to help explain its reports on violent activities, so as to not mislead audiences by using the term "terrorist" without including the background of the situation. As stated, it is necessary for the *BBC* to avoid creating a "barrier to understanding" on part of its audiences, by them simply using the term "terror" - rather further explanatory information is required to help aid understanding.

This thesis is also making a "value judgement" regarding "terrorism" as defined by Schmid (2009). It is placing confidence in academic experts and world renowned terrorism databases to define the cases investigated, as incidences of "terrorism", and the perpetrators of those events as "terrorists". As argued by Wilkinson (1973: 293), "carefully authenticated empirical evidence" should be utilised to support such claims of incidences of "terrorism" within scholarly work relating to "terrorism". As seen in table 1 (*below*), this thesis refers to six incidents of "terrorism".

Table 1: "Terror" Incidences

Date	Location	Included in the Global Terrorism Database ⁴ (GTD 2010)	Included in RAND (2011) Terrorism Incidents Database ⁵
11/09/2001	USA	Yes	Yes
12/10/2002	Bali, Indonesia	Yes	Yes
11/03/2004	Madrid, Spain	Yes	Yes
07/07/2005	London, UK	Yes	Yes
30/06/2007	Glasgow, UK	Yes	Yes
26/11/2008	Mumbai, India.	Yes	Yes

Empirical evidence to support the claim that these incidences are actually considered to be incidences of "terrorism" includes their identification in the terrorism databases as indicated in the table above. Furthermore, as will be alluded to throughout this thesis, there is other empirical evidence (cited throughout) that support the view of these incidences as acts of "terrorism" ranging from other academic studies/accounts to evidence from those responsible for the instances in the form of martyrdom video's, which go some way to claim responsibility for the acts in a manner that is defined by Schmid (2009).

What follows is a review of the literature discussing the relationship between citizen journalism and terrorism. Because there are very few studies of citizen journalism and terrorism from a sociological perspective, the literature reviewed will predominantly focus on that produced by those working in the field of media and journalism studies, which seeks to understand the nature of citizen journalism from a media perspective.

⁴ The Global Terrorism Database (2010) is open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2010. It is run by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism in conjunction with the University of Maryland and the US Department for Homeland Security. The GTD can be downloaded from the site (Global Terrorism Database 2010).

⁵ The RAND terrorism database (2011) is a US federal government sponsored database that was initiated in the 1980's and has since been developed by a number of RAND experts including Hoffman, Jenkins, Cragin and Wermuth.

Following this, we will present a review of literature that seeks to show how important the media is to an act of terrorism, which helps us understand the importance of considering the involvement of the public in relation to the reporting of specific events. Numerous studies have argued that the media is important to terrorists because, broadly speaking; the media assists terrorists with achieving their goal of inciting fear in the public at large. Accordingly, the analysis of citizen journalism in relation to the reporting of an act of terror will enable us to consider the impact of citizen journalism on the “love/hate” relationship between the news media and terrorism.

1.4. Digital Media and Terrorism: The Rise of the Citizen Journalist

Evidence suggests that, following an act of terrorism, it is not simply the professional news media that are involved in the reporting of an incident. We are also seeing a number of individuals participating in the production of news via acts of citizen journalism. A reoccurring theme within the literature points to the terror attacks in the USA in 2001 serving as a benchmark for considering instances of citizen journalism following a terrorist attack. Dan Gillmor (2006) argues that citizen journalism within the reporting of terrorism can be traced back to the attacks in the United States of America on September 11th 2001 (popularly known as “9/11”). A striking feature of the 9/11 attacks from a “news” perspective was the inclusion of the public in the reporting process:

But something else, something profound, was happening: news was being produced by regular people who had something to say and show, and not solely by the ‘official’ news organisations that had traditionally decided how the first draft of history would look. The first draft of history was being written, in part, by the former audience. It was possible – it was inevitable – because of the Internet. (Gillmor, 2006: xx)

The appearance of the public in reporting the 9/11 attacks has similarly been noticed by Allan (2006: 53), who discusses the immediacy of the

public reporting unfolding events: “less than ten minutes after the first passenger jet struck the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11 2001, eyewitness accounts began to appear on the web”. Allan (2006: 53) also discusses the failure of Internet news websites to handle audience traffic:

Online news managers, like their mainstream news counterparts, were caught completely off-guard by breaking developments of this speed and magnitude. Most of the sites were so besieged by user demand that they quickly became virtually inaccessible... Criticisms leveled by some non-web journalists were sharp and to the point. ‘At a time when information-starved Americans needed it as never before’ *Detroit Free Press* newspaper columnist Mike Wendland (2001) admonished, ‘the Internet failed miserably in the hours immediately following yesterday’s terrorist attacks’.

Following the 9/11 attacks, it is evident that some individuals had a desire to access the web for news. However, it seems that the news industry was unable to cope with such vast numbers of individuals attempting to access information. For some people, not being able to access online news organisations for information led them to look to other sources. As Allan (2006) explains, for some, this frustration of not being able to access information led them to create their own spaces on the Internet to share information for others to view and discuss.

A second common theme found within the literature on citizen journalism and terrorism was the vast amount of citizen journalism following the London bombings of 7th July 2005. For Gillmor (2006), the 07/07 attacks marked the day that the “power” of citizen journalism was realised within the media industry. He identifies a series of examples of citizen journalism that occurred on the day of the attacks, including mobile phone pictures from the underground that later appeared in a range of different media, from newspaper and television to the Internet. These public acts were quickly picked up by “mass media organisations”: “There was a cliché that journalists write the first draft of history. Now I think these people are writing the first draft of history at some level, and that’s

an important shift" (Gillmor, 2006: xxi). Not only was citizen journalism taking place following 07/07, but the public's reporting capabilities were beginning to be realised by the media industry. However, Gillmor's (2006) account tells us very little of the nature of citizen journalism that emerged following 07/07.

Hoskins (2006: 465) discusses the nature of citizen journalism in relation to the interaction between the public and the "big media":

Despite the highly individual, random and non-journalistic sources of many of the sounds and images that comprised the news coverage of 7/7, it was nonetheless their selection, framing and repetition by 'Big Media' that dominated the public sphere. ('Citizen journalism', anyhow, is a label used by Big Media to disguise the fact that they ultimately remain Big Media.) What the introduction of mobile image and sound narratives into the media mix produces is a much more visually intimate and proximate, although nonetheless mass, experience, and ultimately mass record, of crisis, conflict and catastrophe.

As Hoskins notes, much of the material collected and produced by citizen journalists was selected and framed by the professional news media (the "Big Media"), upon which *some* citizen journalists, at their discretion, are reliant for the publication of material. The presentation of material produced by citizen journalists by professional news organisations supplies a more intimate and personal coverage of an incident. Hoskins' (2006) observations of the interactions between the news media, and their presentation of material by citizen journalists, are essential as they demonstrate the importance of considering "how" the media and the public work together to report and construct the news following an act of terrorism.

Allan (2006: 148) also discusses the exchange of information between citizen journalists and the news media: "In the hours to follow, the BBC received more than 1000 pictures, 20 pieces of amateur video, 4000 text messages and around 20,000 emails". This thesis aims to understand the extent to which the news media are reliant on citizen

journalists for material, asking the following questions. Who initiates the sharing of information – citizen journalists or the news media? If it is the news media, what information do they request? What does the use of material authored by citizen journalists mean for the gatekeeping role of the news media? Such enquiries make it possible to determine the impact of citizen journalists upon the news media's reporting of an act of terrorism.

Whilst Hoskins (2006) and Allan (2006) both refer to audience interaction with the news media, Allan also points to the creation of "spaces" on news sites for "first-hand accounts from eyewitnesses to the attacks" (Allan, 2006: 146). Allan (2006: 150) refers to the use of the blogosphere to report the London attacks:

Members of London's blogging community were mobilizing to provide whatever news and information they possessed, in the form of typed statements, photographs or video clips, as well as via survivor's diaries, roll-calls of possible victims, emergency-response instructions, safety advice, travel tips, links to maps pinpointing the reported blast locations and so forth.

Allan offers an important overview of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism - however, his focus is on the nature of "news", rather than any attempt to understand the nature of citizen journalism from the perspective of what this means for society. This is not a criticism of Allan's work, but an acknowledgement that his findings are specific to his field of study.

Liu et al. (2009) refer to incidences of citizen photojournalism following the 07/07 attacks. Citizen photojournalism consists of the use of citizen mobile phone technology to record video footage and images of the attacks. Liu et al. (2009: 45) argue that the London attacks led to the realisation of the possibilities of photojournalism. They conducted a

qualitative longitudinal study of crisis related *Flickr*⁶ activity during crises between December 2004 and November 2007, of which the London bombings was a major event. This study of citizen photojournalism is significant as it expands our understanding of citizen journalism - specifically, the occurrences of citizen journalism following crises events - providing evidence that citizen journalism does not solely occur following acts of terrorism, but also following other events. It seems that if the public are exposed to something they deem newsworthy, they make efforts to record and share their experiences. In relation to the London bombings, Liu et al. (2009: 46) identified four bomb-related *Flickr* groups with camera phone pictures. Their (2009: 53) findings suggest that images and videos taken of 07/07 supplied immediate evidence that the immediate reaction of witnesses to the attacks was to record information:

Many cameraphone photos were taken immediately after the 2005 London bombings and uploaded to photo-sharing websites. One of the most notable images that appeared across the internet and was broadcast by mainstream news is the cameraphone photo of people escaping a smoke-filled train, which has now received over 89,000 views on *Flickr*.

Liu et al. study provides a valuable insight into the nature of citizen photojournalism following the London attacks; however, as it focuses on a number of other "crisis events" it does not supply a full analysis of the nature of material produced by the public following the London attacks. Rather this study regards photojournalism from the perspective of technology, concluding with the argument that it is necessary to consider how to adapt technology to meet the requirements of the user. Thus for those of us who wish to understand citizen journalism from a social perspective, this study has its limitations.

⁶ Flickr is a social networking site that allows users to upload and share photographs with others in an online environment. For further information see chapter five - "Citizen Journalism: From Blogs to Twitter".

A review of existing literature, predominantly written by those interested in the journalism angle of citizen journalism, provides an important starting point for our sociological analysis. It gives us a clear indication of what the act of performing citizen journalism involves, and provides illustrative evidence of instances of citizen journalism following acts of terrorism that are both dependent upon, and independent from, the news media. However, this appears to leave a gap in our understanding of citizen journalism from a sociological perspective.

The emergence of citizen journalism needs to be understood from the perspective of what it means for society. Our analysis of citizen journalism concerns four areas of enquiry, which revolve around understanding citizen journalism from the perspective that news is a social construction. First we must identify what it is about society that has led to the emergence of citizen journalism. Second, it is necessary to consider how instances of citizen journalism have developed in relation to acts of terrorism over time, and what this means for the social construction of news about terrorism. Third, an analysis of dependent forms of citizen journalism will enable an understanding of how dependent citizen journalists add to the construction of news, an identification of the role of the dependent citizen journalist, and the implications of dependent citizen journalism for the news media. Finally, our analysis of citizen journalism will include an assessment of forms of independent citizen journalism following an act of terror. This analysis will assist us in understanding the role of independent citizen journalism in the construction of news and, once again, what this means for the news media. Broadly speaking, the analysis of citizen journalism presented in this thesis seeks to understand the impact of citizen journalism on the social construction of news, what it means for the audience of the news, and, finally, what it means for the news media industry.

Before developing a more specific understanding of the research questions that we seek to answer here, it is first necessary to consider how the relationship between the media and terrorism is considered. Understanding this relationship allows this thesis to add to our existing

knowledge of the affiliation between the media and terrorism by considering the nature of reporting in contemporary society: that is, the impact of citizen journalism for the reporting of a terrorist attack.

1.5. Tough Love: The News Media and Terrorism

It has already been explained that terrorism is a useful way for this thesis to explore citizen journalism. One of the reasons cited was that an analysis of citizen journalism in relation to terrorism would not only enable us to analyse specific instances of citizen journalism, but would also enable us to consider the impact of citizen journalism on the reporting of terrorism. Political and social scientists have for a long time assessed the relationship between the media and terrorism. For this reason, by considering the evolving media, our understanding of terrorism and its relationship with the media will be updated in the light of recent developments within the news media – particularly, the greater emergence of citizen journalism.

The relationship between the news media and terrorism is a complicated one, and can and has been described as “symbiotic”. Terrorists are reliant on the news media for the publicity they so desperately seek, and the news media are dependent on terrorists for their newsworthy events. There appears to be a conscious recognition of this symbiosis. Debates have occurred in the past over the impact of reporting terrorism: during her time in office as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), Margaret Thatcher wanted to “quell the oxygen of publicity” given to terrorists, yet critics argued that this would mean restricting freedom of speech, and that people would not be aware of the terrorist threat – information to which the public had a right to (Edgerton 1996). Schmid and De Graaf (1982) have argued that terrorism is important to the media for a number of reasons, including that terrorism news “sells” and is good for business, and that members of the public want to know about what is happening around them. From the perspective of the terrorist, publicity is seen to be important to achieving his goals.

A useful starting point for understanding terrorists' desire for publicity is provided by the work of Brigette Nacos. Nacos (2007: 20) identified four "media-centred" goals attributed to terrorism and publicity: 1) The attention awareness goal; 2) The recognition goal; 3) The respect and sympathy goal; 4) The quasi-legitimate status goal.

By gaining "attention" and "awareness", the terrorist is able to spread intimidation across a society. Nacos claims that terrorists yearn for recognition for their "part" in committing an act of terror: they want the media and the public to explore their reasons and motives for committing attacks. As a result, they are able to gain attention and consequently publicity for their wider political goals (Nacos 2007: 21).

In their third media-centred goal, terrorists want respect and sympathy of "those in whose interests they claim to act" (Nacos, 2007: 20). Following this, it seems likely that, in yearning for respect and sympathy, the terrorist can be seen to be looking for support and admiration for his/her actions. If we are to consider that act of terrorism as a form of claims-making, Nacos's assertions may be correct. Simply put,⁷ claims-making is a process whereby activists use a range of techniques to publicise their claims about the existence of a social problem (Best 2008). For some claims-makers the media is required to make their claims known to wider society, and eventually policy-makers, where action can be taken (Loseke 2008; Best 2008). Following the 07/07 attacks, two martyrdom video's were professional produced and released by Al Qaeda's communications department, Al Sahab, otherwise known as "the cloud" (Hoffman, 2006a). One of the video's included a statement by Mohammed Sidique Khan, the reported leader of the group where he outlined his reasoning for committing the suicide attacks (Khan 2005).

The final media-centred goal of the terrorist is the "quasi-legitimate status goal"; the terrorists desire the "same or similar media treatment that legitimate political actors receive" (Nacos 2007: 20). All four of these

⁷The theory of claims-making will be explored in chapter two.

goals may be seen as being correlated to the idea that publicity is fundamental to a terror attack.

A number of leading academics in the study of terrorism have considered publicity to be an essential component in the success of a terrorist attack. Martha Crenshaw argues that the most "basic" reason for terrorism is to gain recognition and attention for their cause, whereby publicity is the greatest goal of some groups (Crenshaw, 1981: 386). This argument is strikingly similar to Nacos's (2007) more recent work. Walter Laqueur (2006: 109) suggests that the success of a terrorist attack relies solely on the quantity of publicity it receives, rather than the magnitude of the attack. Such an argument supplies further evidence of the importance of publicity to terrorism. Louise Richardson (2006) describes terrorism as being "action-oriented". By this she considers terrorist action to take place via communication: action allows terrorists to demonstrate their existence and strength.

This process of action via communication relates to popular nineteenth-century notions of "Propaganda by Deed". As outlined by Laqueur (1987: 48), in the late nineteenth century the "phrase propaganda by deed" was a "powerful weapon to awaken the consciousness of the people". Similarly Jackson (2005: 93) argues that terrorist violence is directed at "symbolic targets", with the aim of capturing media attention to "communicate" a political message. For a successful case of propaganda by deed, Nacos (2007: 12) argues that in addition to extensive news coverage, there needs to be immediate public and governmental attention in both the targeted country and the rest of the world. These sentiments of "propaganda" and "deed" echo Schmid and de Graaf's (1982) view that via the act of violence, communication is taking place.

Schmid and de Graaf (1982) present findings from a twenty-month empirical study into the relationship between terrorism and the media, in which they identified the media as being a "weapon of mass communication" to terrorists:

The immediate victim is merely instrumental, the skin of a drum beaten to achieve a calculated impact on a wider audience. As such, an act of terrorism is in reality an act of communication. For the terrorist the message matters, not the victim. (Schmid and de Graaf, 1982: 14)

In the quote above, Schmid and De Graaf argue that terrorists view the media as one of their intended audiences. By gaining the attention of the media, terrorists are then able to access a wider audience via the release of “stories” by the media. Through the media, the terrorists are then able to influence the public at large, spreading fear into society. As such, the media matter to terrorists, as through the media the terrorists are able to influence a much larger audience. This is not a sentiment restricted to those studying terrorism in the 1980s: it has since been repeated by Schmid (2005: 139), and can therefore be seen as being relevant to our current understanding of terrorism in relation to the media: “Terrorism, then, must also and in many cases primarily—be seen as a form of violent communication”. Through the media, terrorists are able to use their violent actions to communicate to wider audiences.

Schmid and De Graaf (1982) not only consider the relationship between terrorism and the media from the perspective of the terrorist, but also take into consideration why terrorism is “good” for the news media. Terrorism sells: the media is a business and is reliant upon sensationalised news stories to make a profit. It is not just the media that are interested in violence: the audience are also interested in violence, with some wanting to know where they stand with threats to security, and others being simply fascinated. Those with an “alienated life”, inundated with routines of sleeping and working, turn to the media as a source of entertainment: “sex and violence in the media given them the thrill that is largely absent in their own adventureless lives” (Schmid and De Graaf, 1982: 69). Additionally, those members of the public that feel as though they are being suppressed by the state may feel “admiration” towards those that take action against the state, and support their actions. A final reason why terrorism is appealing to the media is because of its “visual attractiveness”,

which links to how important it is for terrorists to choreograph their attacks so as to gain publicity. Brian Jenkins (1975: 4) and others⁸ have all declared that terrorists put on a “theatre of terror” so as to gain maximum media exposure for their actions:

Terrorist attacks are carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press. Taking and holding hostages increases the drama. If certain demands are not satisfied, the hostages may be killed. The hostages themselves often mean nothing to the terrorists. Terrorism is aimed at the people watching, not at the actual victims. Terrorism is theatre.

The more theatrical the terror attack, the more newsworthy it is and the greater amount of publicity it will receive by the news media. For the news media, the greater the spectacle, the more newsworthy it is, and the more attention the media will receive from audiences.

Kellner (2005: 27) uses the 9/11 terrorist attacks as an example of the dramatic attention-grabbing tactics of terrorists: “In a global media world, sensationalist terror spectacles have been orchestrated in part to gain worldwide attention, dramatise the issues of the groups involved, and achieve specific political objectives”. He argues that the choice of targets for the 9/11 attacks were selected due to their significant symbolic meaning, thus giving the theatre of terror that much more grip: as a result, this makes the attacks extremely attractive to media coverage. Spectacles of terrorism use “dramatic images and montage” to gain attention, and

⁸ Bassiouni (1981) argues that terrorists seek to meet media expectations of a spectacle, concentrating their efforts of designing an attack, based upon stereotypes of ideal targets, time, manner and place. For Bassiouni, the media are able to create a “spectacle”. In this sense, the media may turn an act of terrorism into an “event”; large numbers of spectators are attracted to the scene (Bassiouni, 1981: 31). Furthermore, Weimann (1987: 27) argues that “the combination of violence or the threat of violence, emotional intensity, suspense, conflict, confrontation between clearly defined sides and heroism, offers all the dramatic ingredients of a ‘good story’”. Weimann is suggesting that terrorism is prepared; symptomatic of a “strategy” to gain the interest of the mass media by providing a spectacle.

consequently “spread further terror” to the public (Kellner, 2005: 27). Whether or not those involved in the 9/11 attacks intended for the twin towers to collapse is unknown. There is no direct evidence to suggest that efforts were made by those responsible for the attacks to purposefully capture footage of the attacks – however, some footage was captured on video. For example, French filmmakers Gédéon and Jules Naudet captured video of the attacks whilst filming a documentary on a rookie New York fire-fighter, the footage was later released in 2002 as part of a documentary on the 9/11 attacks (9/11, 2002). In some way, the coincidental video and photographic capturing of the attacks can be considered a result of Al-Qaeda’s careful choice of location and targets of the attacks which led to the attacks being captured and given greater publicity.

Relating to the idea that a terror attack is carefully staged, Richardson (2006) argues that the terrorism linked to Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden makes extensive use of manipulating the media for their purposes. Bin Laden has long acknowledged the “essential role of terrorism as communication” (Richardson, 2006: 20). Put simply, for Richardson (2006: 131), terrorists want “to elicit a reaction to their action”. Picard (2003) puts forward the argument that the mass media not only act as a form of communication for terrorists: the media are also considered to be “modern tools of terrorists”, magnifying the size of the terrorists’ audience. Accordingly, terrorists are able to spread their ideological messages far more widely – whether as a form of propaganda or in order to gain further publicity (Picard, 2003: 6). Many reasons exist to help explain how terrorism is “appealing” to the media and why the media are so important to the terrorists. Consequently, a symbiotic relationship can be seen to exist between the news media and terrorism.

Wilkinson has developed an understanding of what the term “Symbiotic Relationship” implies: “Relations of mutual dependence between different groups within a community when the groups are unlike each other and their relations are complementary” (Wilkinson, 1997: 52). Wilkinson argues that when “one says terrorism in a democratic society,

one also says 'media'. Terrorism by its very nature is a psychological weapon which depends upon communicating a threat to wider society" (Wilkinson, 1997: 54). In this sense, as Schmid and de Graaf (1982) similarly note, the media and terrorism are bound together; the media is a weapon of communication utilised by terrorists. Wilkinson claims that in an open society the media are bound to terrorists in a fierce audience-attracting market. They are under pressure from competitors to print a sensational story that will attract consumer attention (Wilkinson, 1997: 54).

Bassiouni (1981) has also claimed that a symbiotic relationship exists between the mass media and terrorists. He argues that those committing an act of terror rely on the media to "serve their terror-inspiring purposes" and the media use the incident as "rewarding news items" (Bassiouni, 1981: 14). Further supporters of the idea that a symbiotic relationship exists between the mass media and terrorism include Laqueur (1987), who argues: "There is a close symbiotic relationship between the two, because violence is news, and peace and harmony are not. The terrorists need the media and the media find in terrorism almost all the ingredients for an exciting story" (Laqueur, 1987: 121). Laqueur (1976: 104) goes a step further by declaring that the media are "the terrorist's best friend. The terrorist's act by itself is nothing, publicity is all". This is further supported by Hoffman (2006: 183), who states: "Clearly, terrorism and the media are bound together in an inherently symbiotic relationship, each feeding off and exploiting the other for its own purposes".

On the other hand, Wieviorka (2004 [1988]) argues that there is no symbiotic relationship between terrorists and the media. For Wieviorka, four relationships exist between terrorists and the media. First is a relationship of "Pure Indifference": terrorists do not intend to frighten a group beyond their intended victims, nor do they intend to develop propaganda (Wieviorka, 2004 [1988]: 43). Second is a relationship of "Relative Indifference": terrorists do not intend to gain headlines, as they have a pre-existing channel of communication - for example via churches,

universities or mosques. Violence therefore, is not media-orientated; media orientation commonly applies to pre-terrorist actors – who have begun their engagement but not taken action (Wieviorka, 2004 [1988]: 43). The third relationship is that of “Media-Orientated Strategy”: terrorists organise their attacks based upon their knowledge of the working media, allowing them to manipulate the media and provoke them into action. Here Wieviorka argues that this organisation is based on “tactics” rather than “strategy” (Wieviorka, 2004 [1988]: 44). The fourth relationship is “Total Break”: the media becomes a collaborator to the system which must be destroyed; in this sense journalists become enemies of terrorists (Wieviorka, 2004 [1988]: 45). Wieviorka points to evidence such as hostage-taking and kidnapping in Turkey and Argentina during the 1970s, in which reporters made “extraordinary hostages”. He claims that terrorists are not interested in developing a relationship with the media: instead they are more interested in spreading terror or broadcasting propaganda. The media, meanwhile, are simply doing their jobs: they do not produce terrorists; they just report terrorism.

Claims made by Wieviorka have since been criticised. Wilkinson (1997) argues that Wieviorka’s category of “Pure Indifference” is incorrect as, by its very nature, terrorism requires communication to relay a threat. Additionally, he argues that if there is no “aim” to instil fear into a population, then the nature of violence is not that of “terroristic nature” (Wilkinson, 1997: 53). Wilkinson criticises “Relative Indifference” from the point of view that these “alternative channels” of communication are in effect “alternative media”, and stresses this, by suggesting the addition of the Internet as an “alternative media” (Wilkinson, 1997: 53). Wieviorka’s third category of “Media-Orientated Strategy” is criticised by Wilkinson for being “self-explanatory”: no matter how one approaches this media strategy, it is necessary to view this as terrorists utilising the media to get their point across. Wilkinson criticises Wieviorka’s final category from the point of view that regardless of the hostility towards the media, terrorists still rely on them to transmit their messages. The media serve as a “channel” for propaganda for terrorists (Wilkinson, 1997: 54).

The idea that there exists a symbiotic relationship between the news media and terrorism appears to be bias, particularly in terms of how the media “benefit” from a terrorist attack. Regarding the media as, for example, financially benefiting from an act of terrorism seems to ignore the duty of the news media to report and inform the public, not to mention the importance of democracies upholding freedom of speech. The terms used to describe this “symbiotic relationship”, for example terms such as “benefit”, seem to be far too strong, describing the relationship between terrorism and the media as being consensual, almost “happy”. Further research into how the news media responds to the idea of a symbiotic relationship with terrorism seems necessary. In trying to understand this relationship between the news media and terrorism today, this thesis seeks to understand how the activities of citizen journalists influence the publicity given to a terrorist attack, and in turn to indicate the implications for terrorism of reporting by the public.

1.6. Research Questions and Thesis Structure:

The aim of this thesis is to supply a sociological analysis of citizen journalism in relation to an act of terrorism, by analysing how citizen journalism impacts the social construction of news. The following research questions intend to provide the foundation for this research and have been split into two areas of enquiry. The first area of enquiry seeks to establish how citizen journalism has emerged in society, and how it has developed between 2001 and 2008 in relation to the reporting of an act of terrorism. The following questions have been developed to focus the research.

- I. How can we account for the emergence of citizen journalism in contemporary society?
- II. How has citizen journalism evolved through its response to terrorism?

The second area of interest relates to how we can understand citizen journalism from a particular, social constructionist perspective. Much attention has historically been given to the way in which the news is

constructed in society. As will be discussed in chapter two, this thesis seeks to explore this view with regard to understanding how citizen journalists influence the construction of news. A number of further questions have been developed to help guide this sociological analysis:

- III. How does the construction of the news differ between the news media and citizen journalists?
- IV. How does citizen journalism influence the agenda-setting function of the news?
- V. How does the digital era influence the traditional model of claims-making?
- VI. Do citizen journalists participate in claims-making?

This thesis consists of eight chapters (including the introduction). Chapter two will outline the theoretical framework used to analyse the functioning of citizen journalism in contemporary society, focusing on one central theory – news as a social construct – and maintaining the argument that the way in which news is typically constructed today is different to that discussed in previous eras. Chapter two will also provide details of the two main concepts to which this thesis will seek to contribute: our understanding of the agenda-setting process within the current news media landscape, and the implications of the digital era for the social construction process of claims-making.

Further contextual information on the emergence of citizen journalism in society will be made in chapter three. Chapter three presents findings from an investigation that seeks to understand how we can account for the emergence of citizen journalism in society, citing four pre-conditions that are necessary for citizen journalism to occur.

Chapter four provides a thematic timeline to show how, following an act of terrorism, both independent and dependent forms of citizen journalism have expanded over time. It will do so by considering a number of terror attacks, including 9/11 (2001), the 2002 Bali bombing, the 2004 Madrid train attack, 07/07 (2005), the Glasgow airport attack (2007) and the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Chapter four also aims to show that the

evolution of the Internet has and the growth in popularity of social networking sites has significantly influenced the ease and extent of the public's engagement in citizen journalism. Finally, chapter four will consider the consequences of citizen journalism for society in relation to the reporting of terrorism, and will use these insights to develop our understanding of the impact of citizen journalism on digital claims-making.

Chapter five will outline the methodology used for the analysis of citizen journalism, which is a qualitative media analysis (QMA) of citizen journalism material. It will also discuss the limitations to the research and the ethical considerations for this project.

Having established an in-depth understanding of what citizen journalism is, and how it has emerged and expanded over time, this thesis will then turn its attention to presenting findings from two pieces of primary research. Chapter six presents primary analysis of citizen journalism that is classed as being dependent upon the news media for publication. Research will focus on the nature of dependent citizen journalism by assessing material submitted to the *BBC* for publication during the 07/07 attacks. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of results. Chapter seven explores independent forms of citizen journalism following the 07/07 attacks, by assessing the nature of citizen journalism within the blogosphere. Both chapters six and seven will present and discuss the results from each of the pieces of research.

Chapter eight will conclude the thesis by providing responses to the following research questions/themes, which stem from those questions identified above:

- 1) How is online interaction mediated through citizen journalism?
- 2) How does citizen journalism influence the publicity given to an act of "terrorism"?
- 3) What kind of narratives does citizen journalism construct in response to terrorism?

- 4) What does its construction of the news say about citizen journalism?

The conclusion will draw to a close with a series of thoughts relating to possible future research in this area.

As this thesis argues, exploring citizen journalism is a new area of research for sociology. This thesis seeks only to answer a number of preliminary questions, which help to clarify areas in which future research is required.

2. Citizen Journalism: News as a Social Construction

"News is what newspapermen make it." (Gieber, 1964: 180)

Approaching the study of citizen journalism from a sociological perspective entails the employment of a theoretical approach that seeks to understand the creation of news. In this thesis we use the social constructionist perspective. The concept of citizen journalism is addressed from the viewpoint that an act of citizen journalism means the public involving themselves in the production of news. This chapter will outline the social constructionist approach to the news that has been developed by social scientists to date. It will focus its efforts on understanding how the social construction of news is considered and how agenda-setting and claims-making can be understood to be part of this "construction" process. Once outlined, the chapter will argue that the traditional sociological understanding of the social construction of the news, in terms of both agenda-setting and claims-making, needs to engage with the impact of the public in the news creation cycle.

2.1. The Social Construction of News

Social construction is a theory that analyses society from the perspective that social life is socially constructed. More often than not, the public's understanding and knowledge of global news comes not from direct experience of an event, but by a portrayal of the news that is put together by individuals and then presented to the public for consumption. Traditionally, those individuals involved in the news production and dissemination process are professional journalists and editors, whose job is to supply and present the news to the public for consumption. It is these individuals who, historically, have been viewed as wielding the power to "construct" the news.

In their pioneering work *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1966) were interested in how knowledge was created in society.

Berger and Luckmann (1966: 3) contend that “the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality”. They argue that it is necessary to consider the “everyday” aspects of the construction of reality, for reality is not something that an individual experiences by themselves – rather, reality is a shared experience that individuals gain from interacting with others in society: “common knowledge is the knowledge that I share with others in the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 23). In relation to the formation of public understanding of the news, it is important to understand how members of the public come to understand what is presented to them as “news”.

Walter Lippmann (2008 [1922]) argues that individuals are presented with a “picture” of reality by the news media, which then goes on to influence public understanding of reality and subsequently assists in the formulation of public opinion. Very rarely is the “news” a product of direct experience: rather, journalists rely on numerous sources and in effect create a news story that is delivered to the public for consumption. In this sense, news involves second-hand versions of events that are created by those working within the news media.

As identified by Schudson (1997), the dominant approach to the study of news production in sociology lies with understanding the impact and structure of news organisations on the production of news. This approach will be extremely important in understanding the incorporation of dependent citizen journalism into the production of news.

Tuchman (1980: 1) views the news media as constructing reality. She argues that the news is a “window to the world” that “aims to tell us what we want to know, need to know and should know”. It is interesting to understand the workings of the news media and the influences upon them that lead to such a construction of reality. Gieber (1964) argues that the “news does not have an independent existence; news is a product of men who are members of a news-gathering (or a news-originating) bureaucracy” – for him, “news is what newspapermen make it” (Gieber, 1964: 180). For Tuchman (1980: 2), news organisations are not restricted simply to creating knowledge: they can also be

seen to be promoting and “circulating” knowledge to society. In line with this view of the news as a means of creating and sharing knowledge, sociologists over time have made efforts to understand how the news media constructs reality; many of these studies will be considered here.

A number of studies identified news production as being conducted according to a “planning structure”, a routine process that those working within the news media customarily followed to produce news items. Schlesinger (1978) conducted an ethnographic study of the news, by conducting research in “Britain’s most prominent broadcasting organisation” – the British Broadcasting Corporation (*BBC*). Focusing his attention on the operation of the *BBC* in Britain, including interviews with over 95 staff members, Schlesinger asked how the news influenced a “version of reality” (Schlesinger, 1978: 11). He found that news construction was reliant on a planning structure, where production is routine and organised. Schlesinger argues that rather than journalists investigating to find news, they waited for news to come to them and reported accordingly: in this way, broadcasting news by the *BBC* was a form of “reactive” reporting (Schlesinger, 1978: 47). He found that news was controlled via the “daily editorial conferences”, where senior editors meet to discuss the previous day’s news coverage and then decide what should be included in the news for that day – in this way much of the news is prepared in advance (Schlesinger, 1978: 49). The decision of what should be included in the news is thus heavily influenced by the editorial structure of the newsroom.

The idea that news production is based on a planning structure has also been identified by Golding and Elliott (1979) and Tuchmann (1980). In terms of constructing the news, the *BBC* relies on a routine process of sorting through the news and relying on editors to decide what should be on the agenda for the day. We must therefore consider how editors decide what news should be published and what news should be left aside. As a result of this reasoning we will shortly be considering the importance of agenda-setting in the news cycle. Firstly though, let us consider how journalists find out about the news.

Rarely are professional journalists on the scene at the onset of a newsworthy event such as an act of terrorism. Rather, they must rely on their

news-gathering skills to interact with witnesses and officials and gradually “build” a version of events that is as close as possible to a portrayal of the reality of the given situation. Following an act of terrorism, unless they are at the scene of an attack, news professionals present a second-hand version of events rather than first-hand accounts. This second-hand version of events is passed along to gatekeepers within the news organisation, who then deem whether the piece of news is worthy of their attention.

Writing in the 1980s, Schudson (1989: 271) argued that “the story of journalism, on a day-to-day basis, is the story of the interaction of reporters and officials”. Importantly, as highlighted by Gans (1980), whilst sources can present their knowledge to journalists it is ultimately up to the journalist to decide whether the information is useful. Gans argues that sources are people who have a “chance to provide information that promotes their interest, to publicize their ideas, or in some cases just to get their names and faces into the news” (Gans, 1980: 116). It is not simply those working for the news media that influence the content of news, but also those interacting with journalists, who may also have a vested interest in placing their own “stamp” on the news.

For Ericson et al. (1989: 3), “authorised knowers” are central players in informing journalists of newsworthy information: “News is a representation of authority. In the contemporary knowledge society news represents who are the authorised knowers and what are their authoritative versions of reality”. In most cases, these authorised knowers are members of government. Schudson (2003: 137) identifies a series of “routine” government sources: “That is, most news come to the news media through ordinary, scheduled, government-initiated events such as press releases, public speeches, public legislative hearings or deliberations, press conferences and background briefings for the press”.

⁹ Over time social scientists have shown a keen interest in the bias role of the government in influencing the presentation of news. For example, Cohen and Young (1973) present two models of the social construction of the media, one of which points to the media being controlled by those in power, that is the ‘Mass Manipulative Model’: “The more left-wing adherents of the Mass Manipulative model would argue that news is not selected according to public interests but rather delivered in biased fashion supportive of the status quo of power and interest” (Cohen and Young, 1973: 16).

In 2003, Schudson built on this identification of sources by introducing the role of “parajournalists” in influencing the construction of the news process. Parajournalists are those individuals to whom journalists refer as their “sources” – they include “public relation firms, public information officers, political spin doctors and the publicity staffs of a wide variety of institutions, both corporate and nonprofit” (Schudson, 2003: 3). Also influencing a journalist’s formation of the news are those other individuals with whom the journalists interact: “editors and publishers, readers or viewers, and the complex set of institutions and presuppositions that make up the society and culture about which they report” (Schudson, 2003: 4). Evidently, a range of individuals play a role in the construction of a piece of news: it is not simply the author of the news that influences the construction process.

The production of news has also been regarded from a political economy framework. Political economy approaches to the construction of news view the production of news as being heavily influenced by the “ruling directorate of the capitalist class” (Schudson, 1997: 10). Murdoch and Golding (1973:205) argued that the mass media are extremely important in influencing the public’s understanding of “social and political processes”. For Murdoch and Golding (1973) the mass media are “industrial and commercial organisations” and need to be understood as “ideological apparatuses of the state” via the examination of how ideology is produced and legitimated through the mass media. For Herman and Chomsky (1988), this study of the political economical model of the mass media is best served by considering the media as a communicative tool for propaganda.

For Herman and Chomsky (1988) their “propaganda model” of the media draws on Walter Lippmann’s idea of the “manufacture of consent”, where for Herman and Chomsky the media is a powerful tool of propaganda, not just in countries where the media are in the direct hands of the state, but also in countries where the media is a private entity with no formal censorship. Their (1988: 2) model shows how “money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print” – influencing what appears to be newsworthy. They identify five filters:

“(1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) ‘flak’ as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) ‘anticommunism’ as a national religion and control mechanism.”
(Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 2)

In many ways, the media then are not simply independent from the government and businesses; rather, due to their reliance on them for money and “news”, the media are bound - having to serve those that provide for them. Accordingly, for Herman and Chomsky (1988: 31), the production of news is influenced by the political economy, with these five filters “narrow the range of news that passes through the gates, and even more sharply, limit what can become ‘big news,’ subject to sustained news campaigns”. As highlighted by Comeforo (2010: 220), “the propaganda role of the media does not emerge as a result of an active ‘conspiracy’ on the part of newsmakers, but rather naturally, as a result of market forces”.

In 2009 Mullen interviewed Herman and Chomsky to assess their thoughts on the propaganda model after 20 years. When asked whether or not all five filters were still relevant, Herman and Chomsky answered yes, that they were, only that the final filter “anticommunism” had changed with the end of the Cold War era, however, there is currently a substitute, where anticommunism has been replaced with a “free market”, where we are faced with a different enemy to the Soviet bloc, commonly in the form of the “war on terror” (Mullen, 2009: 15). When asked about the impact of the “Internet Age” on the propaganda model, Herman and Chomsky argued that as it stands, the hegemony of the traditional media still remains; they site four factors as to why this is the case: first, the traditional media still occupy the Internet; two, their “pre-existing” audience gives them an advantage over media “rivals”; three, alternative operators such as news aggregators – Google and Yahoo – are dependent on advertising revenue and will therefore not put “resources” into providing their

own news, and will therefore continue to rely on traditional sources; and four, new media focuses on social connections, they conduct critical analysis rather than make the news (Mullen, 2009: 20). Accordingly, for Herman and Chomsky: "As long as highly unequal and unfair economic and social orders persist, their dominant elites will have to justify themselves and they will continue to need supportive propaganda. The media structures that will help them will keep the Propaganda Model and its filters relevant" (Mullen, 2009: 20).

Criticisms of Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda model" have viewed the model as a "conspiracy theory" and "overly deterministic" in its view of media behaviour (Klaehn, 2002: 148). Over time Herman and Chomsky have defended these criticisms, stating for example that the model "assumes that patterns of media behaviour should be explained in structural terms, and not assume conspiracy" (Klaehn, 2002: 149). In a review of criticisms, Klaehn seeks to provide evidence as to why the propaganda model is relevant, and emphasises the importance of it being included in scholarly debates on media performance today¹⁰. For Comeforo (2010) it is difficult to understand how the propaganda model has not been included in scholarly debate. Comeforo provides an overview, as with Klaehn (2002) of the critical review of the propaganda model, and concluded by arguing that the propaganda model remains a critical theory of media performance, future studies must seek to take up Herman's challenge, that a new framework be created to help explain media performance today. Accordingly, the political economy model of the media production appears to continue to be relevant to understanding the production of news in contemporary society.

Further to these frameworks for understanding news production, it is necessary to note that news content is heavily influenced by yet another

¹⁰ Scholars interested in performing an analysis of news production from the perspective of the political economy should take further notice of this review of criticisms by Klaehn (2002) and Comeforo (2010). This thesis is not centred on this framework and therefore has chosen to briefly introduce the political economy framework, but will not to go into greater detail. Rather emphasis will be places on viewing news production from the perspective of news organisation structures and routines via the process of agenda-setting.

external, profit seeking agent; news agencies. News broadcasters such as the *BBC* are typically fed news information from news agencies. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998: 6) argue that news agencies represent a “journalism of information”, as opposed to more creative journalism that is laced with opinion. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen (1998: 6) consider news agencies as a form of wholesaler: “news agency news is considered ‘wholesale’ resource material, something that has to be worked upon, smelted, reconfigured, for conversion into a news report that is suitable for consumption by ordinary readers”. In this sense, material from news agencies serves as the basis of information for news organisations to build upon. Boyd-Barrett (1998: 19) discusses the importance of global news agencies, “whose main *raison d’être* is to gather and to-sell news throughout the world for the benefit of ‘retail’ media (newspapers, broadcasters, on-line suppliers) and other outlets (business, finance institutions, governments, private individuals)”. More recently, in a review of global news agencies, Boyd-Barrett (2011: 86) supports claims by Paterson (2010), that in light of the Internet, “news agencies and their clients still command a towering presence on the internet as sources of international news”. Understanding the flow of news in society is essential in our pursuit of knowledge regarding the various bodies that influence the news agenda.

In the present news context, as argued by Paterson (2007: 60), there is a great reliance on news agencies for news, particularly by two leading agencies: Associated Press (AP) and Reuters (now Thomson Reuters). For Paterson (2007: 61), news agencies are extremely powerful in their ability to “set the agenda for what international stories other media carry, through the choice of stories they distribute and the amount of visuals provided”. This perspective by Paterson is shared by Klinenberg (2005) and Quandt (2008). Quandt (2008: 89) for instance, completed an ethnographic study of five German online newsrooms and found that online journalism was “highly agency dependent and, to a certain extent, “secondhand” journalism”. In his review of journalism tasks, Quandt (2008: 90) found that emphasis was placed on “reading print material, looking through one’s own website, searching/selecting agency material (offered by the computer client of the news wire service), and surfing the net”.

Within news production, there is also evidence of inter-media agenda-setting, where Quandt (2008: 90) found that online journalism material comes from “competing news sites”. Klinenberg (2005: 52) refers to this mode of news production as “synergistic”, in that different media outlets use the products of others to help enhance the news that they are able to offer and to “cross promote its brands”. For Klinenberg (2005) synergy can lead to convergence within news production, where for instance, *Metro News*, is not simply a news broadcaster, but its content is delivered across a plethora of platforms including radio, television and the Internet. However, whilst convergence may be present in Klinenberg’s (2005) study of news production, it was not found by Quandt (2008). Rather Quandt found that the German online newsrooms that he had studied were independent from other media channels, and were therefore not incorporated into a multimedia newsroom as observed by Klinenberg. It is apparent that convergence is not necessarily the only means of news production in the digital news production process. One thing that has been agreed upon however, is the speed of news production.

The speed at which news is produced has dramatically altered. As observed by Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009: 569) there has been a noticeable increase in the speed of news production or what they refer to as “high-speed news”. For Klinenberg (2005: 54) this has led to a “radically different” time cycle within news production that is characterised as being “erratic” and “unending” – he calls this news cycle a “news cyclone”:

The advent of twenty-four-hour television news and the rapid emergence of instant Internet news sites have eliminated the temporal borders in the news day, creating an informational environment in which there is always breaking news to produce, consume, and – for reporters and their subjects – react against.

The social construction of news is no longer simply what “newspapermen make it” (Gieber, 1964: 180). As identified in this section, news is constant in contemporary society, and appears to be heavily influenced by external factors such as the structure and routines of the news organisation, political economy and news agencies. However, developments in technology, combined with the

audience's desire to be involved in the production of news, has led to news becoming increasingly created by members of the public, via acts of citizen journalism. Accordingly, it is necessary to understand how the news is constructed in the digital news environment, particularly with regards to the impact of citizen journalism on news production. It is first, necessary to consider the role of agenda-setting in the news production process.

2.2. Setting the News Agenda

There are two areas of interest within the concept of agenda-setting. First, we must understand what is meant by the concept of agenda-setting: how is the news agenda set, and how is it presented to audience? Second, we must understand the process of inter-media agenda-setting, which enables us to see how different news platforms influence each other. Both of these areas of interest will be discussed here, raising questions as to what this means for our understanding of the social construction of news today.

2.2.1. What is "Agenda-Setting"?

Agenda-setting theory originates with the pioneering work of McCombs and Shaw (1972) who argue that the news media set the agenda for what the public should think about and deem important in society:

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 176)

According to this insight, those working in the professional news media teach audiences about issues in society - but the way they present the issue can also tell audiences *how important* the issue is to society. Agenda-setting theory argues that the news media have a direct influence on their audience via their choice of what news items they decide are newsworthy and the resulting amount of space and prominence those newsworthy items are given. As argued by Ray

Funkhouser (1973), the mass media have a range of “tools” at their disposal for forming and influencing public opinion. In a content analysis of the news media’s attention to issues in the 1960s in the USA, Funkhouser (1973: 68) found that there was “a strong correlation between media attention to an issue and the appearance of that issue as ‘the most important problem’”. Via this agenda-setting process, the news media are able to control and construct the content of the news. In setting the news agenda, the news media are then able to influence the public’s choice of what the most important matters of news are in society. By setting the news agenda, the media thus play a significant role in constructing and influencing public opinion.

As argued by McCombs (2005), hundreds of studies worldwide have sought to understand the agenda-setting process, illustrating the ability of the news media to set the news agenda and influence public opinion. For instance, in one of the first studies of agenda-setting, McCombs and Shaw (1972) researched public voting behaviour in Chapel Hill during the 1968 US presidential campaign. The aim of the study was to examine what votes said were “key issues” of the campaign in relation to the key issues highlighted by the news media. Their findings provided preliminary confirmation that the agenda set by the news media did indeed influence audience opinion.

In a review of agenda-setting work, McCombs (2005) identifies five stages of the evolution of agenda-setting theory. First we have “basic agenda-setting theory”: the assessment of the impact of the news media on being able to influence the public agenda. Second is “attribute agenda-setting”, which concerns developing an understanding of the “attributes” within the presentation of the news by news organisations, and seeing whether these attributes are also picked up and utilised by the public in their discussions of the same topic. Under this premise is the powerful assertion that “the media not only can be successful in telling us what to think about, they also can be successful in telling us how to think about it”: thus by considering “attribute” agenda-setting, researchers are able to develop an understanding of the framing of the news (McCombs, 2005: 546). Third is the development of understanding the “psychology of agenda-setting effects”: work by researchers to understand the psychological impact of

agenda-setting. Fourth, researchers have also been interested in developing an understanding of “sources of the media agenda”: if we are to understand that the media influences the public agenda, who sets the media agenda? The final aspect of the development of agenda-setting theory is the consideration of the “consequences of agenda-setting effects”, where researchers have been predominantly interested in the impact of agenda-setting on the audience.

In relation to understanding the impact of social media on agenda-setting we are predominantly interested in points one, two and four: that is, what impact does social media have on the basic agenda-setting function of the media, how are agendas framed, and how is the agenda set for those interested in communicating the news to others. As stated by McCombs (2005), there is a belief that the Internet will lead to fragmented audiences, which will result in the demise of the news media’s ability to set the public agenda. As increasing numbers of people have access to the Internet, they will use more than one source for news - therefore, this “fragmented audience” will no longer focus its attention on the efforts of a small number of people, but instead on a wide range of issues (McCombs, 2005: 545). From a research perspective, if we are to understand the impact of the Internet on news consumption, McCombs (2005) argues that it is necessary to consider the “digital divide” between younger and older Internet audiences.

In this thesis it is necessary to consider what social media means for the agenda-setting function of the media. However, at this stage we will not be considering the impact of agenda-setting on public opinion at large: rather we will be predominantly focused on understanding the nature of inter-media agenda-setting. An important aspect of the basic agenda-setting function of the news that we must consider before continuing is the process of gatekeeping; the process in which, historically, some individuals wielded the power to decide what would be placed on the news agenda.

2.2.2. Gatekeepers: Setting the News Agenda

Our understanding of the news comes from a typically structured news process, whereby information is processed via a series of gatekeepers, all of whom have a

say in whether a piece of information is newsworthy - that is, "worthy" of attention from the media (Gieber, 1964). As noted by White (1964), the term "gatekeeper" originates with the work of Kurt Lewin (1947), who pointed out that news would have to pass through a series of communication channels otherwise known as "gates". These gates would be "powered by gatekeepers" who would ultimately decide whether or not news would be "in or out" (White, 1964: 162). In an interview with a gatekeeper of the news, 'Mr. Gates', White was able to explore the role further. He found that the gatekeeper passes along information that fits into his beliefs, which supported White's view that the gatekeeper is not objective in deciding what items of news "he" considers to be newsworthy.

Two studies on criteria for newsworthiness are presented here. In an American study, Warner (1968) conducted interviews with television news gatekeepers in New York, where he found that the criterion for news selection, as previously identified by White (1964), is largely subjective. Warner (1968: 162) claims that if a piece of news "excites" gatekeepers' "news senses", then it becomes news. When asked more specifically what criteria gatekeepers use for selecting the news, Warner (1968: 163-165) gave the first criterion as being that the news piece is of importance to the domestic public - the story must be relevant to Americans. Secondly, the story must affect a "lot" of people. The third criteria for gatekeepers was that the story should meet audience interests. However, whilst news media organisations claim to want to fit their material to what audiences are interested in, both Warner (1968) and Schlesinger (1978) acknowledge that newsmen know very little about what audiences want, and rather base their decisions about newsworthiness on what Tuchmann (1980: 25) refers to as three assumptions: "1. Readers are interested in the occurrences at specific locations. 2. They are concerned with the activities of specific organizations. 3. They are interested in specific topics". The fourth criterion identified by Warner is political balance - for decision-makers to try and "keep their personal views in the background". The final criterion for gatekeepers is that the piece must be dramatically appealing, which for some gatekeepers includes a "show biz angle".

Elsewhere, a study by Galtung and Ruge (1965) assessed the criteria by which a piece of news is considered newsworthy. Rather than developing a broad set of news values, as did Warner (1968), Galtung and Ruge developed a much more specific list of news values: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and lastly, reference to something negative. Galtung and Ruge (1965: 71) argue that these categories should not be treated as existing independently from each other, but that there are "inter-relations" between them.

A number of academics have made efforts to understand what "gatekeeping" means in relation to the impact of citizen participation within news production.

In a study of event-driven news and the gatekeeping process, Livingston and Bennett (2003) assessed international desk stories in CNN between 1994 and 2001. They found that event-driven news appeared to be taking over institutional news, however officials were still very much part of officiating and influencing the news. Accordingly, Livingston and Bennett (2003: 363) have confirmed their hypothesis that: "even if live event coverage is on the rise, journalists may quickly bring officials into the news frame, continuing the familiar gatekeeping practice of "officiating" (news management and cueing) those live events".

Elsewhere, Matheson (2004) aimed to investigate the relationship between weblogs and journalism, within a media weblog – that is Britain's, *Guardian Weblog*. Matheson argues that the *Guardian Weblog* renegotiates the use of a communicative space to enable discussion between journalists and users. Matheson (2004: 454) argues that interaction within the weblog is "limited in scope and carefully controlled", furthermore, in no way are audiences invited to interact with "content" other than by contacting professional journalists (via email) with their ideas. By limiting interaction, the *Guardian's Weblog* functions to enable the *Guardian* to function as gatekeepers on the news, as "the news institution still chooses what appears on the page" (Matheson, 2004: 455).

Additionally, a study involving the analysis of 16 international online news websites by Domingo et al. (2008) revealed that whilst some online news organisations provided opportunities for citizens to participate in the production of news, via what they refer to as “participatory journalism”, they did so in a way that was heavily restrictive on part of the audience. Their study identified that few websites invited participation; rather they enabled a way for audiences to contact them, but did not encourage audiences to submit “story ideas” (Domingo et al., 2008: 337). The most common form of interaction identified was spaces for audiences to participate in blogs or submit audio-visual material, this was commonly accompanied by labels emphasising that the material came from audiences. Overall, the study revealed that “Journalists are retaining the traditional gatekeeping role in adopting user content on their websites” (Domingo et al., 2008: 340).

This view of journalists retaining the role of gatekeeper was similarly identified by Hermida and Thurman (2008) in their study of UK newspaper websites incorporation of what they refer to as “user-generated content”. Their study involved a survey and in-depth interviews with news executives. The study revealed a “dramatic increase” in the opportunities available to members of the public for audience participation (Hermida and Thurman, 2008: 353). Furthermore, there seemed to be consensus over editors being doubtful of the “value” of contributions by the public. Hermida and Thurman (2008: 353) found that via moderation practices, news organisations were able to retain the role of gatekeeper, whilst opening the doors for audience participation and appear to be of the belief that this was essential for the future of news organisations to incorporate “user-generated content” into their presentation of the news.

As with Hermida and Thurman (2008), Lewis et al. (2010) focused their attention on news executives’ perceptions of citizen journalism. They conducted interviews with the top editors of 29 community newspapers around Texas. Opinions of citizen journalism fell within four approaches: “Some editors either favored or disfavored the use of citizen journalism primarily on theoretical (philosophical) grounds, whereas other editors favored or disfavored its use primarily on practical grounds” (Lewis et al., 2010: 168). At no time during the

interviews did the editors refer to the term “gatekeeping” but it was implicit in their reasoning, in that all editors felt that it was essential for professional news organisations to remain as “gatekeepers”. Those opposed to citizen journalism placed emphasis on “safeguarding” the integrity of the journalism they produced, whilst, those in favour of citizen journalism felt that “easing restrictions” would have practical benefits, and thus had an “open door” policy towards citizen contributions (Lewis et al., 2010: 175/175).

There is therefore evidence to support the idea that within citizen journalism material that is submitted to news organisations for publication, or what this thesis refers to as dependent citizen journalism, professional news organisations appear to be maintaining their “gatekeeping role”. But what does this imply for independent citizen journalism material?

As identified by Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2010: 571) a number of academics have challenged the very idea of whether or not the practice of gatekeeping, as an occupational jurisdiction is relevant. They draw on Boczkowski’s earlier work (2004) that investigated community connections by New Jersey Online in the late 1990’s. Boczkowski found that some news workers practiced what he referred to as “gate opening”, which involved New Jersey Online “fostering user participation rather than the kind of content selection associated with the traditional gate-keeping tasks” (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2010: 571). They also draw on the work of Wall (2005) which focused on the study of blogs by American military and citizens about the war in Iraq. Her study revealed that the blogs were a form of “postmodern journalism” that challenged the “elite control” of news by professional news organisations (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2010: 572).

Bowman and Willis (2003: 7) also consider the threat of new technologies and increasingly active audiences on the traditional model of gatekeeping:

“The venerable profession of journalism finds itself at a rare moment in history where, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors but, potentially, by the audience it serves. Armed with easy-to-use Web publishing tools, always-on connections and increasingly powerful mobile devices, the

online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information.” (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 7)

This position, of gatekeeping in trouble is further supported by Singer (2006) who argues that journalists may have to “reconceptualise” the idea of gatekeeping in their efforts to embrace opportunities for audiences to interact with media organisations. For Singer (2006), the Internet, puts into question the idea of the need for a gate, should certain groups have the power to decide what information should and should not be publicised. Singer’s study examines the role of news organisations in covering the 2004 campaign, questioning whether or not journalists are moving away from the role of gatekeeper. For Singer, this is not to say that gatekeeping is no longer necessary, just in need of reconfiguring: “If in fact these exploratory findings prove correct, they could signal steps toward a true integration of the traditional role of the journalist as a provider of credible, accurate information with the nature of an open, participatory medium” (Singer, 2006: 275).

Some commentators such as Lemann (2006) and Keen (2007) are critical of those that are optimistic about the future of news, from the perspective of favouring the involvement of the public. Lemann (2006) for instance argues that much of what citizen journalists cover is material covered by professional news organisations, and that rather than chasing new stories they are chasing news stories that come from the same “traditional sources”. In this way, professional journalists remain powerful in their ability to set the news agenda via gatekeeping. Critical commentator of “amateur” journalists, Andrew Keen (2007) argues that reliance on technology and amateurs to inform us of the news is extremely dangerous.

Keen (2007: 188-198¹¹) uses the example of Wikipedia, an online encyclopaedia to emphasise the notion that anyone, with “opposable thumbs and

¹¹ This is an e-book, Kindle reference, where there are no page numbers, rather there are locations.

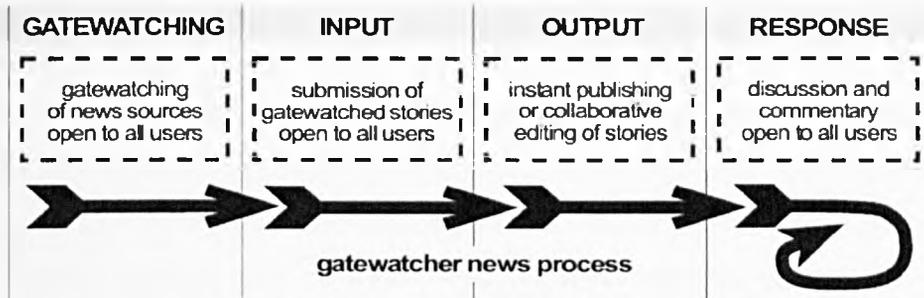
a fifth-grade education can publish anything on any topic”, but that is not to say that it is factual and/or real: “it is the blind leading the blind-infinite monkeys providing infinite information for infinite readers, perpetuating the cycle of misinformation and ignorance”. Accordingly, it would be dangerous for amateurs to take over the spread of information in society, for this would remove the “experts and cultural gatekeepers – our reporters, news anchors, editors...” (Keen, 2007: 252-261). For Keen (2007: 453), it would be the “monkeys running the show”, as more people seek to have their say, and publish their own information, this leads to a “decline in the quality and reliability of information”. With regards to citizen journalism, the greatest concern is that citizen journalists have no formal training or expertise – thus how are we to trust their information? Keen (2007: 699-707) argues that, owning a computer and an Internet connection, does not make people a journalist; they “don’t have the resources to bring us reliable news”. So what is the solution? For Keen (2007: 2510), there must be a continual editorial function in the creation of Internet content: “...let’s use technology in a way that encourages innovation, open communication, and progress, while simultaneously preserving professional standards of truth, decency, and creativity.”

Bruns (2008) has radically challenged the idea of “gatekeepers” being necessary. For Bruns (2008: 174) the idea of the professional journalist may be under threat as they face new competition from “collaborative, citizen journalism projects”. He argues that the news media are no longer restricted in carrying capacity for presenting news and audience feedback: the Internet provides news organisations with an unlimited capacity, and therefore such stringent decision making of what “should” be included is no longer necessary.

For Bruns, embracing the contributions of the public and creating a space for this content is the first step in enabling “produsage” (audience involvement in the production and use of news) to occur. With such an abundance of news available on the web, it is now the duty of all individuals interacting and creating news content, to act as “guide dogs”: they must keep watch on the news, identify newsworthy material that they “find” from outside sources, and highlight it for others. In this way individuals will act as “gatewatchers” of the news, a role that for Bruns, is no longer restricted to those professionals working within the news

industry (Bruns, 2008: 177). Bruns has created the following figure (2), which illustrates the four stages of gatewatching:

Figure 2: Four stages of Gatewatching (Bruns 2008: 179)



As depicted above, in the gatewatching model, the entire news process is open to all. The decision about what makes the news and how audience members are able to interact with it is no longer restricted to those working in the mainstream news media. What appears to be missing from Bruns optimistic view of the involvement of the public in – produsage – is the dangers associated with relying and trusting information from citizen journalists (as identified by Keen (2007) above). His “output” stage of news production may need to be reconsidered, so as to place greater emphasis on “expert” editing of user content. As identified in other studies mentioned above, there appears to be a need for professional journalists to maintain editorial control over user content, so as to ensure reliable reporting. Just because technology has increased the carrying capacity of news, it does not mean we should empower everyone to comment on, and edit the news, rather, caution is needed.

It is evident that news editors have held a powerful position in deciding what should be included in the news and what should not. The theoretical position of gatekeeping practice within the production of news is necessary, and could be reconfigured, as argued by Singer (2006) to complement audience interaction. However, even before gatekeeping can take place, there is the question of who influences the media agenda, which is particularly important for our understanding of the impact of both forms of citizen journalism - dependent and independent - on the traditional gatekeeping process. Here we must consider the process of inter-media agenda-setting.

2.2.3. *Inter-Media Agenda-Setting*

The question of “who sets the media agenda”, that is the news media, began to be asked in the 1980s (McCombs, 2004). McCombs (2004) points to a number of influences on the news agenda: the most appropriate way of understanding these influences is by using the metaphor of “peeling an onion”, where “the concentric layers of the onion represent the numerous influences at play in the shaping of the media agenda, which is the core of the onion” (McCombs, 2004: 98). In relation to US news, McCombs points to the impact of the president and “his” national agenda, and a range of bodies that subsidise the media agenda, including public relations officers (otherwise referred to as “communication professionals”) within the government, private and non-profit sectors. McCombs also points to the impact of experts: for example in the reporting of health issues, journalists rely on gaining information from relevant experts in the field, giving them an opportunity to express their opinions. In this way we may see experts being given the opportunity to function as claims-makers, using journalists to present their claims of health problems (for example) to wider audiences¹². In addition to outsiders influencing the media agenda, it is also possible to see various parts of the media influencing each other, via what has been labelled “inter-media agenda-setting”. Media here, relates to what McCombs (2004: 113/116) refers to as the “elite media” and various other “news outlets”.

In 1955 Breed made efforts to understand how media organisations influence each other via what he referred to as “standardization”, where much of the news consumed in society is a result of uniformity between papers. Breed (1955: 277) argues that there are two key features of standardization between newspapers: first that different newspapers contain “the same or similar items”, and second that the arrangement and style of presentation of items is similar or the same. Breed conducted approximately 120 interviews with news staff. One question of particular interest to Breed was whether or not “the play of other papers helped him decide which stories were worth page one” (Breed, 1955: 278). One commentator replied:

¹² Claims-makers play an important role in influencing the news agenda. The process of claims-making will be discussed in the next section.

"I look at the *New York Times* and the *Herald Times*, too, to see how they handle the news. Fortunately, the interviewer asked 'Does this help you in playing your news?' Yes. (Pause) But we don't necessarily ape them; we always give a local story the biggest play..." (Breed, 1955: 278)

Breed argued that editors then spent time developing an understanding as to what other newspapers focused their attention on: thus their opinions would in some cases be informed by others in the news industry. Results from his interviews suggested that on a regular basis those interviewed would agree with the question posed, but would quickly try to back out – trying to make it clear that emulation was not in process. As Breed (1955: 278) observed, "two forces seemed to be at work upon the editor: he wanted to acknowledge the aid from other papers, yet as a professional, he wanted to maintain his autonomy".

McCombs (2004) argues that inter-media agenda-setting occurs on a daily basis. For example, he points to local news organisations in the US being reliant upon news wires sent to them by the Associated Press, assisting them in their construction of relevant news. McCombs (2004: 114) points to an example of inter-media agenda-setting at work by considering the impact of the news media upon presenting information about the threat of global warming between 1985 and 1992. Mainstream newspapers in the US, including *the New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*, heavily influence the national television agenda. Interestingly, reports by journalists were heavily influenced by experts, providing evidence of claims-making at work; a process that we will discuss shortly. McCombs argues that inter-media agenda-setting is a form of validation: "journalists validate their sense of news by observing the work of their colleagues" (McCombs, 2004: 116). In terms of the media's norms and habits, routinely keeping watch of what other colleagues are doing ensures reliability within their presentation of the news: "the norms of journalism exert a powerful pressure towards homogeneity in telling the news of the day" (McCombs, 2004: 117). It is therefore interesting to see how the Internet will impact upon homogeneity within the news. As McCombs argues: "While some speculate that the internet will be the source of a plethora of independent and divergent agendas, others argue that the high level of redundancy found in the current

media system is likely to persist on account of the strength of journalistic norms and habits" (McCombs, 2004: 117).

The nature of inter-media agenda-setting on the Internet is complex. Numerous studies have confirmed that agenda-setting is taking place online (Roberts et al., 2002; Ku et al., 2003; Haas, 2005; Wallsten, 2007; Song, 2007; Messner and Distaso, 2008). An earlier study by Roberts et al. (2002) found that the news media were able to initiate discussion on electronic bulletin boards, showing that as the news media set the agenda, this agenda then influences the public agenda, which we are able to see occurring within discussions taking place on the web. Elsewhere, Ku et al. (2003) were able to identify a relationship whereby campaign websites were able to initiate the news agenda. Thus, as Wallsten (2007) states, there is a "bidirectional relationship" between the news media and blog users. Haas (2005) also found that inter-media agenda-setting was occurring within the blogosphere, with a small number of weblogs setting the agenda for less visible blogs.

Song's (2007) study assessed the role of alternative media as an inter-media agenda initiator. Song found that alternative media such as *OhMyNews* in Korea does play a role in assisting with the process of inter-media agenda-setting: however, she argued that it would be unwise to simply conclude that alternative news agencies set the agenda for the conservative mainstream newspapers. Throughout her research, Song found that in a number of instances significant news events may have been stronger in triggering the news agenda than the influence of an alternative news source (Song 2007: 88). A key study by Messner and Distaso (2008) attempted to understand the relationship between news media and bloggers. They identified a "source cycle", whereby both the news media and bloggers rely upon each other to be sources of information, which enables them both to influence the news agenda.

Whilst there is evidence of inter-media-agenda setting occurring on the web, with bloggers influencing each other, and a relationship existing between the news media and bloggers, we must also understand another important "source" in the agenda setting process: the activities of claims-makers.

2.3. Claims-making: Setting the Public Agenda

In order to assess citizen journalism in practice, it could have been possible to use theoretical frameworks associated with discourse or rhetoric. As discussed by Gee (1999: 2) understanding the use of language is a central area of study, as language is not just a means of communicating information, but “language allows us to do things. It allows us to engage in actions and activities”. In essence, the nature of language enables meaning to be constructed. Furthermore, for Gee (1999: 3) the study of discourse enables researchers to understand how individuals “say things, do things, and be things”. As argued by Fairclough (1992: 67) approaching the study of society from the perspective of discourse can also contribute to explaining how social change can be associated with language. For Fairclough the study of discourse in relation to communication is essential in our efforts to understand how discourse is used to shape and control social life. Fairclough (1992: 4) contributed to the approach of critical discourse analysis by combining language analysis with social theory, seeking to show the three dimensions of discourse:

“Any discursive ‘event’ (i.e. any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice. The ‘text’ dimension attends to language analysis of texts. The ‘discursive practice’ dimension, like ‘interaction’ in the ‘text-and-interaction’ view of discourse, specifies the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation, for example which types of discourse (including ‘discourses’ in the more social-theoretical sense) are drawn upon and how they are combined. The ‘social practice’ dimension attends to issues of concern in social analysis such as institutional and organisational circumstances of the discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice, and the constitutive/constructive effects of discourse referred to above.”
(Fairclough, 1992: 4)

Thus if this thesis had been interested in understanding how social problems come to be defined through language and discursive practice, discourse, as discussed here, is a relevant theoretical framework. However, for this thesis

rather than focusing on discourse, the aim is to regard text as claims, with the goal of gaining a greater insight into the relationship between how claims are constructed and subsequently how problems are posed and placed on the public agenda for attention. Thus, we are not interested in understanding the nature and content of claims, rather how claims come to be on the public agenda. This entails not solely looking at the text of a claim, but by assessing the process whereby claims are presented to society, with the view that citizen journalism, is able to influence that process of participating in claims-making, thereby enabling this thesis to contribute to our understanding of claims-making in the digital era.

This thesis is predominantly interested in exploring how groups in society use the Internet for communication purposes, in the form of accessing the news media agenda to influence the public agenda. Understanding the process of claims-making is a useful way of understanding how, people both with and without close ties to the media can influence the creation of material to be placed upon the public agenda in society. By using the model of claims-making it is possible to assess agenda-setting and inter-media agenda-setting on the Internet in terms of the people's attempts to influence the media agenda. By investigating claims-making activities in light of the digital era, it is possible to add to our understanding of the impact of citizen journalism on the claims-making process. By combining the two frameworks – agenda setting and claims-making it will be possible to see how these processes interact, and how citizen journalism can impede on each of them. Accordingly, the frameworks fit well together in our pursuit of understanding citizen journalism as a form of interaction whilst also assessing the impact of citizen journalism on the news media. The process of claims-making and how the news media is central to claims-making will be discussed here.

Claims-making is the process by which claims-makers are able to make a claim about a particular social issue and gain attention for their claim from audiences via the news media, who then assist to make the claims known to larger audiences, which could result in the issue being recognised as "social problem" (Best, 2008). Once sufficiently on the public agenda, a claim can then be given attention within policy. A central aspect of claims-making is the

involvement of the news media in publicising claims. It is the understanding of this small, but highly significant, aspect of claims-making that this thesis aims to contribute. The thesis recognises that the news media as we know it has undergone significant changes: as a result, we must consider how the media aspect of claims-making works in the digital era. This section on claims-making will first discuss the concept of claims-making in greater detail and will then go on to suggest how the digital era can impact upon the media's role in the dissemination of claims.

In the 1970s, Blumer (1971) and Spector and Kitsuse (1973) encouraged academics working within the field of the social sciences to widen their understanding of how social problems both appear and evolve in society. For instance, Blumer (1971: 301-302) argues that social problems are not "objective conditions": rather, social problems are a process of "collective definition":

Social problems are not the result of an intrinsic malfunctioning of a society but are the result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem. A social problem does not exist for a society unless it is recognised by the society to exist...It is necessary, consequently, to consider the question of how social problems arise. Despite its crucial importance this question has been essentially ignored by sociologists.

In a review of past approaches to the study of social problems, Spector and Kitsuse (1973) follow Blumer's (1971) assertion that it is necessary for sociologists to understand the "emergence" of social problems. By comparing the functionalist approach - the study of "objective conditions" - to the value-conflict approach, which involved the study of both the objective and subjective conditions of social problems, Spector and Kitsuse (1973) came to the conclusion that it was necessary to focus exclusively on the "subjective elements" of social problems. They argued that Fuller and Myers' (1938) "value conflict" approach was insufficient, as by isolating the objective elements of social problems they were in effect following the route of the functionalist approach.

Spector and Kitsuse (1973: 415) define a social problem as "the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect

to some putative conditions". In order to understand the emergence of social problems, for Spector and Kitsuse (1973; 1977) it is necessary for sociologists to utilise a theory that seeks to understand the nature of claims-making, whereby groups make a claim about a problem and then seek to do "something" about it. What then is meant by the process of claims-making?

2.3.1. *What is "Claims-Making"?*

Best (2008) defines claims-making at its simplest level as "the process of making claims, of bringing a troubling condition to the attention of others". Spector and Kitsuse (1977) believe that claims-making is a process; it does not necessarily have a rigid order, but a series of steps must occur whereby attention to a problem is highlighted by individuals, and eventually this "problem" is received and accepted by institutions, at which point action is taken accordingly.

Back in 1977, Spector and Kitsuse developed a "natural history" process of claim-making that involved four stages. The first involves: "The attempts by some group(s) to assert the existence of some condition, define it as offensive, harmful, and otherwise undesirable, to publicize the assertions and stimulate controversy and to create a public or political issue over the matter" (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 147). Under this first stage, Spector and Kitsuse were primarily interested in the way that claims are raised and received. They argue that claims-making is an everyday occurrence, but only a handful of claims actually become recognised as social problems. Successful claims are a result of "the power of the group", "the nature and variety of claims", "the mechanisms for pressing claims" and lastly, "assertions of claims and social controversy" (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977). Put another way, successful claims are dependent on the power of the group to establish a claim, and present the claim in such a way that it is satisfactorily received by audience. In addition, successful claims-making involves requiring groups to be able to publicise the claim: important here is the way that the news industry handles and treats the claim. Finally, the way the claim is subsequently treated by others makes a difference to the future and life history of the claim, which leads us on to the second stage of claims-making.

Spector and Kitsuse (1977: 147) describe stage two of claims-making as: "The recognition by some official organization, agency, or institution of the group(s) legitimate standing. This may lead to an official investigation of the matter, proposals for reform, and the establishment of an agency to respond to those claims and demands". Within stage two, a response from officials is likely to cause a transformation within the claims-making process. This transformation is dependent on the nature of the response: the claim can be taken seriously and acted upon, for example with the creation of an official agency to deal with the issue, or it can be dismissed. At this stage, if the claim is taken seriously, claims-makers may be invited to take part in discussion where they are able to act as "spokesman"; however there is also the possibility that groups will lose control over the claim upon its receipt by officials (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 152).

The third stage of claims-making is: "The re-emergence of claims and demands by the group(s), expressing dissatisfaction with the established procedures for dealing with the imputed conditions, the bureaucratic handling of complaints, and the failure to generate a condition of trust and confidence in the procedures as sympathetic to the complaints, etc" (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 147). Stage three is dependent on the outcome of stage two. How officials respond to the claim triggers the subsequent decision-making process of claims-making groups: if the claim is perceived to be handled in an inappropriate manner, claims-makers may decide to re-engage with claims-making, during which claims-makers become "watchdogs", monitoring the processing movements of organisations responsible for responding to their claims (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 156).

The final stage of claims-making involves: "The rejection by complainant group(s) of the response or lack of response of the agency or institution to their claims and demands, and the development of activities to create alternative, parallel, or counter-institutions as responses to the established procedures" (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 147). This stage involves a decision to be made by the original claims-makers, who may be unhappy with official responses and dealings with their claims and feel that it is "no longer possible to work within the system" (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 156). At this stage, claims-makers may

decide to take action to encourage an “alternative institution” to deal with the claim and/or work outside of the institution (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 157).

Over time, as sociologists have made efforts to understand the work of claims-makers in constructing social problems, this intricate process of claims-making has been developed. For instance Best (2008: 19), supported by Lowney (2007), argues that there are six key steps in the basic model of the process of claims-making: (1) claims-makers make their claims that a social problem exists; (2) the claim is aired by the media for dissemination to the wider public; (3) the public reacts to the dissemination of the claim, regarding the issue as a social problem; (4) policy makers respond to the threat, identifying various approaches to responding to the problem; (5) policy is implemented by agencies, at which stage there may be further calls for changes; (6) various outcomes are identified in response to the new arrangements.

This process of claims-making is strikingly similar to that first outlined by Spector and Kitsuse (1977), the primary difference being the emphasis on also understanding how the public responds to the claim, whereby claims-makers may rely on feedback to gauge whether or not their activities are working and subsequently modify their claims (Best, 2008: 164). Public opinion is also deemed important by claims-makers as it may influence policy makers, who can often be seen to respond to public views: therefore it is necessary for claims-makers to keep track of public opinion and respond accordingly, so as to be more successful in their claims-making attempts (Best, 2008: 171).

To further our understanding of the concept of claims-making it is necessary to consider three key aspects. First, what are the “types” of claims? Second, who are the various types of claims-makers? Third, what is the role of the news media in claims-making? These questions will help us to consider how the digital era and citizen journalism can influence this process of claims-making.

2.3.2. *Types of Claims*

Loseke and Best (2003: 39) argue that a claim consists of:

A claim is any verbal, visual, or behavioural statement that tries to persuade audience members to take a condition seriously and respond to it as a social problem, claims-makers are the people who make claims, and audiences are the people who evaluate the believability and importance of claims.

Loseke and Best (2003) state that there are three main types of claims: verbal, visual and behavioural claims. To illustrate, let us consider the claims-making process in relation to a series of studies that have sought to understand the “creation” of various social problems. When making a verbal claim, use of rhetoric is an essential component of claims-making. Best’s (1987) study of claims-making activities framing the “missing children problem reflects the importance of rhetoric. “Missing children” were framed as a social problem in the United States in the early 1980s, with claims-makers being successful in gaining publicity about the threat of missing children and gained attention from US congress. As Best (1987: 105) discusses, by focusing on the “danger” element of missing children, claims-makers were able to use a particular definition of missing children that lead individuals to perceive this as a problem; in addition, claims-makers were able to use examples of missing children cases to help support their claims (Best, 1987: 105). In this regard, rhetoric influenced both the nature of the claim and the receivership of a claim: “Rhetoric reflects both the nature of the interaction between particular claims-makers and their audience, and the larger cultural context within which claims-making occurs. In turn, rhetorical choices affect the success or failure of specific claims” (Best, 1987: 117). Best (2008: 31) argues that the three components of rhetorical claims are grounds, warrants and conclusions: “grounds are statements about the nature of the problem, warrants justify taking action, and conclusions explain what the action should be”. For a verbal claim to be persuasive, it must share this rhetorical structure of containing grounds, warrants and conclusions.

The second way in which a claim is articulated to the public is via its visual representation (Loseke and Best, 2003). The use of images in the claims-

making process is a necessary means to accessing individuals' emotions, triggering a response to the claim being presented: "a picture can be worth a thousand verbal claims...claims using visual images can be very powerful because they put these pictures directly into our head" (Loseke, 2008: 26). In an assessment of the impact of the mass media on claims-making activities relating to the creation of the "missing children problem", Fritz and Altheide (1987: 478) discuss the importance of visual claims in contextualising a social problem:

Mass media audiences throughout the United States, particularly television viewers, have been barraged by entertainment shows, "docudramas," and news reports of "missing" and killed children. While TV portrayals of the missing children issue focused on tragedy and horrific features of the "problem," it is also clear that print media accounts tended to follow suit.

Whilst Fritz and Altheide (1987) argue that the mass media are not solely responsible for the creation of the "missing children" problem, they do believe that the mass media play a key role in communicating the problem to audiences, assisting claims-makers in their efforts of highlighting missing children as a problem. Thus, in the case of television viewing, visual claims are powerful means of presenting claims.

Lowney (2007) argues that claims-makers must utilise images carefully in the framing of a claim. She argues that culture can be "condensed" into a symbol, and that it is necessary for audiences to "read" and "decode" a symbol in order to accept and respond to a claim. Lowney (2007: 339) draws upon the example given by Heilbronn (1994) and Tuleja (1994), that ribbon colours can represent a cause: "Color, we know, is often symbolic and claims-makers often portray colors as emblematic of their cause; we understand that red ribbons stand for AIDS prevention, purple ribbons represent domestic violence prevention, while pink ribbons symbolize the campaign against breast cancer, and so on". Visual claims, then, can be an effective way of presenting claims to audiences.

The final way in which a claim is issued to society is via behaviour. As argued by Loseke (2008: 26), through a behavioural claim, claims-makers must involve themselves in "doing something rather than saying something or

creating a visual picture of something". Mulcahy's (1995) study of the press coverage of the 1981 Northern Ireland hunger strike emphasises the importance of behavioural claims. In 1981 a group of Irish prisoners went on a hunger strike, with the goal of achieving the status of political prisoners rather than terrorists. The prisoners claimed that their offences were conducted to achieve a political goal: the unification of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The action of performing a hunger strike can be considered a behavioural claim that subsequently received vast attention from the news media. This study provides valuable insights into the role of the news media in the claims-making process, and we will return to this study shortly.

Elsewhere, Loseke (2008: 26) refers to the example of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s as examples of behavioural claims – where African-Americans sat in the front of buses, directly challenging their segregation. Loseke (2008: 26) also points to examples of environmental activists performing behavioural claims by chaining themselves to trees in their efforts to emphasise the importance of sustaining and preserving forests. The act of demonstrating a claim through behaviour can be a powerful means of attracting attention.

As argued by Schneider (1985: 224), "researchers should consider as data, all verbal and nonverbal behaviour that conveys meaning about the problematic condition or object of attention". It seems fitting, then, that when researching the activities of claims-makers, sociologists should take into consideration the various ways that claims-makers can communicate with audiences. Regardless of whether a claim is verbal, visual or behavioural, if successful in their pursuits, claims-makers will be able to persuade audiences to "think and feel" a certain way about something (Loseke, 2008: 27).

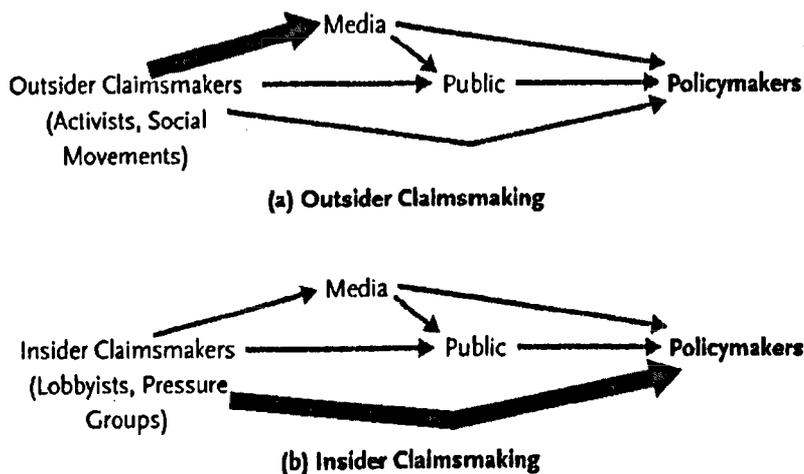
2.3.3. Types of Claims-Makers

As time has progressed and scholarly understanding of claims-making has evolved, a number of types of claims-maker have been identified. However, the various players involved in the claims-making process can interact with one

another to reach their goals (Loseke, 2003). Let us then explore the various types of claims-maker that have been identified.

Best (2008) makes a distinction between insider claims-makers and outsider claims-makers. The difference between the two is primarily down to the ease with which they are able to access policy makers. Insider claims-making, such as that conducted by lobbyists and pressure groups, involves those claims-makers who have 'easier' access to policy makers, but can still have their claims processed and promoted to society and policy makers via the media. Alternatively, outsider claims-making, such as that conducted by activists and social movements, do not have direct access to policy makers. Instead, they have to work to get their claims accepted into the news media and accessed by the public: once accepted, claims then have the potential to reach policymakers. Best (2008: 65) created a graphic (Figure 3, below) to highlight the differences between the two types of claims-maker.

Figure 3: Claims-making by Outsider and Insider Claims-makers (Best, 2008: 65)



This diagram illustrates the importance of access to policy makers in the claims-making process. Direct access by insider claims-makers makes it much easier for action to be taken on a claim; outsider claims-makers have to make additional efforts to access policy makers through other channels, such as the media and members of the public. Who are “outsider” claims-makers? First let us consider outsider claims-makers, such as activists and social movements. Activists must take action to “grab” the attention of the media, who may give their claims

publicity, which may lead to the claims being picked up by policy makers. For Best (2008: 65), the media are the most important audience for activists' claims: however, they may have a connection to policy makers through insider claim-makers such as lobbyists and pressure groups, in which case they are not entirely dependent on the media for a successful campaign. If we are to consider terrorists as activists, it is possible to see how they present their arguments via a combination of verbal, visual and behavioural claims.

Though they may reject the label of "terrorist", those associating themselves with social movement groups like Al Qaeda have used suicide bombings to capture media attention: such as those witnessed on September 11th 2001 in USA (9/11) and the 7th July 2005 (07/07) in the UK. A video message recorded by Mohammed Sidique Khan, which was released by Al Jazeera following the 07/07 attacks in the UK, contained echoes of claims by Osama bin Laden shortly after 9/11, Khan argued that the war against the West would continue until security and peace in Palestine was established.

Osama Bin Laden claim following 9/11: "There is America, hit by God in one of its softest spots. Its greatest buildings were destroyed, thank God for that. There is America, full of fear from its north to its south, from its west to its east. Thank God for that...To America, I say only a few words to it and its people. I swear by God, who has elevated the skies without pillars, neither America nor the people who live in it will dream of security before we live it in Palestine, and not before all the infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad, peace be upon him." (September 11 News 2001)

Mohammed Sidique Khan claim following 07/07: "Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation." (BBC 2005, September).

The act of carrying out a suicide bombing provides a behavioural claim that supports verbal claims. Additionally, the behavioural claim becomes visual via its presentation in the news by the news media, as indicated by Figure 4.

Figure 4: Activists Conducting Behavioural and Visual Claims in the News Media



Outsider claims-makers are not restricted to being reliant on the news media: depending on their connections, they may be able to access insider claims-makers. Accessing policy makers through their connections - or forming what Best (2008: 65) refers to as a “polity”, where activists work with insider claims-makers such as lobbyists or pressure groups, who are able routinely to present their claims to policy makers - enables claims to be presented without the “glare” of attention from the media and the public.

Social movement organisations are also classified as a form of outsider claims-makers (Best 2008) Within a social movement there may be several organisations, but as Best (2008) argues, even if they are fighting for the same cause these organisations may consider each other as rivals. The framing of a movement - that is how activists choose to construct their claims - can be different based on the desires and goals of the organisation involved. Being an activist is dependent on possessing and developing a set of skills, “organizing, fundraising, media relations, lobbying and the like” (Best, 2008: 77). Participating in claims-making takes time, the mobilisation of resources, and patience on the part of activists involved.

For Loseke (2008: 31), there is an entire “social problems industry”, which she defines as “a segment of the social world that produces, manages, and attempts to resolve social problems”. In many ways, we are all part of this industry: for instance, when we give our opinions on something, we are in effect

making claims. Other ways in which we end up being involved in this social problems industry include: “when we write letters to editors, sign petitions or wear T-shirts or display bumper stickers on our cars that make claims about social problems” (Loseke, 2008: 31). However, there are people who more consciously play a part in claims-making.

More direct forms of claims-making involve the activities of governments for example, which include insider claims-makers such as lobbyists. Loseke (2008: 31) points to an example of lobbyists from the American Association for Retired People (AARP). AARP may make claims aimed at Congress, arguing that elderly people are unable to afford their medical insurance. We must therefore not simply assume that claims-making is taking place by activists outside the government: insider claims-makers also play a role in claims-making, and are therefore part of the social problems industry (Best, 2008; Loseke, 2008).

In addition to insider claims-makers, Loseke (2008) points to other individuals involved in creating social problems, including lawyers, organisation sponsors, teachers, those working in the media, activists and, importantly, experts. Best (2008) also identifies experts as claims-makers. For Best (2008), experts include physicians, scientists,¹³ lawyers and officials. Best argues that experts are important claims-makers as they are able to speak with authority as a result of having specialised knowledge of any given topic. For example, following the 07/07 London terror attacks the *Daily Mail* acted as an outlet for the dissemination of claims, attributing Britain’s involvement in the Iraq war as a central factor in the rise of Islamic extremism in the UK. An article in the *Daily Mail* on the 18th July 2005 points to a report by Chatham House¹⁴ in which the authors, including the University of Aberdeen’s terrorism specialist Paul Wilkinson, support the claim that such a causal relationship exists:

The authors, Frank Gregory of the University of Southampton and terrorism expert Paul Wilkinson, of St Andrews University, say Mr Blair's

¹³ Loseke (2008) also considers ‘scientists’ as claims-makers.

¹⁴ Chatham House is the UK’s Royal Institute of International Affairs promoting free speech and debate on international issues.

decision to help depose Saddam Hussein has proved costly in terms of British lives, military expenditure and the terror threat faced by this country... 'There is no doubt that the situation over Iraq has imposed particular difficulties for the UK, and for the wider coalition against terrorism'. It gave a boost to the Al Qaeda network's propaganda, recruitment and fundraising.... (Brogan, 2005)

The final type of claims-maker for us to consider is the mass media, which Loseke (2008) and Best (2008) argue function as claims-makers in their own right. Loseke (2008) argues that the mass media are able to function as either primary or secondary claims-makers. Reporters are able to act as primary claims-makers when they construct a story, using sources, to present evidence of a social problem to audiences. Reporters are also able to perform the role of secondary claims-makers, where they re-package claims made by other claims-makers and feed these claims to audiences for consumption. This view of the media acting as either primary or secondary claims-makers has been supported by Best (2008: 130).

As an example of the media acting as claims-makers, Lowney (2003) argues that American talk show hosts function as claims-makers in their preaching of morality. She points to the example of Jerry Springer: on the surface the show appears to discuss topics presenting the decline of American morality. However, the actions of the host, and the addition of experts such as psychologists, put forth a number of claims contesting the lack of morals exhibited by the show's guests and making claims as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour. This presents a clear example of how those working in the media can act as claims-makers:

On the surface, this show could be an excellent typifying example of what critics mean when they say that talk shows are destroying America's moral fabric...But there was more to the show. The host, Jerry Springer, played a significant role. He was constantly interrupting the guests...Jerry definitely was grounding his remarks in a moral code: children should not be having sex and parents should protect their children, even if it means

putting the needs of children above the needs of the parents... (Lowney, 2003: 67)

Loseke (2008) argues that there are three main reasons why the mass media are important claims-makers. First, whilst audience segmentation is a problem for the media in contemporary society, the mass media are still able to reach the largest possible audiences. Second, the mass media are important as they supply individuals with information about the world around them, encouraging people as to what they “can think about” (Loseke, 2008: 41). Third, whilst we should not think of the mass media audience as passive consumers, there is evidence to suggest that presenting claims through them media encourages audiences to think about certain issues, and is therefore a powerful vehicle for the transmission of claims.

Via the mass media, individuals and experts are able to come together in both the formulation and dissemination of claims, revealing the mass media as an important player in the social problems industry. This leads us to our final area of consideration within the process of claims-making, which is possibly the most important aspect for us to consider in relation to citizen journalism: the role of the media in the claims-making process.

2.3.4. Claims-making and the Role of the News Media

Since Spector and Kitsuse (1973; 1977) presented claims-making as an essential component in the creation of social problems, we know that the media play an important role in spreading claims. As early as 1971, Blumer argued that claims must be recognised by society, and one of the ways in which this recognition can occur is via the activities of the mass media. We have learnt, via the work of Loseke (2008) and Best (2008), that the media are able to participate in the construction process by presenting both their own claims (via primary claims-making) and presenting other claims-makers' claims (via secondary claims-making). Accordingly, Loseke (2008) argues that there is evidence of a relationship between the mass media and other claims-makers.

Loseke (2008) argues that it is necessary to consider relationships between activists, the mass media and scientists (otherwise referred to as experts). As an example, Loseke (2008: 45-46) points to social change groups such as the Federation of American Scientists, who believe that it is necessary to solve social problems with science: in this case scientists can be seen to be activists. Alternatively, scientists can be extremely useful to activists, by supporting their causes, assisting them in gaining support from audiences. Claims made by scientists are often heard via the news media, thus we are able to take note of a relationship existing between different claims-makers, whereby they are able to support and assist claims-making activities.

A number of studies have been conducted that have sought to develop a greater understanding of the impact of the media on claims-making. For example a study of the 1981 Northern Ireland hunger strike by Mulcahy (1995) assessed the press coverage of the hunger strike in three newspapers - *The Irish Times* (IT), the *London Times* (LT) and the *New York Times* (NYT) - providing a local, national and international perspective. Mulcahy (1995: 454) used “ethnographic content analysis”¹⁵, which involved the “reflexive analysis of documents” and the “constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, meanings and nuances within texts”. This constant discovery involves interaction on part of the researcher to be reflexive and flexible in developing an understanding of the communication of meaning (Altheide, 1987). Mulcahy’s findings suggest that whilst all three papers gave attention to the hunger strikes, there was no evidence of direct support of the strike. Additionally, Mulcahy found that whilst some papers may have provided more individual and sympathetic human interest stories of the strikes, this did not detract attention from the reason why the individuals were in prison in the first place: that is, their involvement in violent acts of “terrorism”. Mulcahy (1995) points to evidence of the positive consequences of the hunger strike for Republicanism in Northern Ireland - the behavioural claim of a hunger strike was in some way effective in promoting the original cause of the claims-makers. From a media perspective,

¹⁵ For further information on ethnographic content analysis see chapter 5 section 5.3.

whilst the NYT and IT were found to be more sympathetic to the cause, there was no evidence of the papers supporting the claims; rather the papers used the hunger strikes as a means to explore the policy of criminalization (Mulcahy, 1995: 463). With regard to claims-making, Mulcahy (1995: 464) found that “negative coverage need not signal the demise of a group’s claims-making process”.

Best’s (1987) study found that the problem of missing children was also communicated to audiences via the media, who would use examples of cases of missing children to show audiences that it was a problem worthy of attention. The use of examples of missing children by the media sees journalists using what Best (1987: 106) describes as an emotional “grabber” that functions to attract and maintain the attention of viewing audiences. In this case, the media was used to raise public awareness of the problem (Best, 1987: 112). Best highlights that claims-makers will not simply have their way in using the media for raising awareness: they must proceed carefully with the media if they want to gain their attention.

It is evident that the media are a useful tool for secondary claims-making; however there are restrictions that may cause difficulties to claims-makers competing to gain the attention of the media for the publication of their claims. Outsider claims-makers must compete with other claims-makers for media attention. As highlighted by Fritz and Altheide (1987) in their study of the media construction of the missing children problem, a claim must go through the process of agenda-setting, whereby gatekeepers of the news decide whether a particular claim is worthy of attention by the media. Therefore, as also argued by Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), claims must go through a selection process, which essentially means that the claim must meet the selection criteria put in place by the organisation. Thus just because claims-makers might be able to gain access to the news media, their claim will not automatically receive attention – claims-making is dependent on the organisational process of the functioning of the news media.

A second problem relating to whether a claim will make it on to the news agenda is linked to the problem of carrying capacity: organisations that choose to

publish claims are limited in the amount of space they have to offer them, consequently claims-makers are forced to compete for media attention to bring their claims to the attention of larger audiences (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988). Hilgartner and Bosk attempt to supply a breakdown of carrying capacity for a range of organisations upon which claims-makers might draw for the publication of claims, including space in newspapers/bulletins and time segments within radio and television news broadcasts. Due to the limited carrying capacity of the news media, Best (2008) argues that claims-makers must “tailor” their claims making them appealing to the media in order to compete for attention on the media agenda. Importantly, Hilgartner and Bosk (1988: 59-60) argue that carrying capacity does not solely affect organisations but also audiences: “Members of the public are limited not only by the amount of time and money they can devote to social issues, but also by the amount of ‘surplus compassion’ they can muster for causes beyond the usual immediate concerns of persons of their social status”. Thus limitations in carrying space affect both the media and the media’s audience; claims-makers are not only fighting for the attention of the media, but also compete for attention from audiences. For Hilgartner and Bosk (1988: 70), this is an ongoing process that claims-makers must go through both to establish their claim on the public agenda and to ensure their claim remains on the public agenda.

A third problem worthy of our consideration is the issue of audience segmentation. For Best (2008), audience segmentation is currently occurring in society. Due to the vast array of media now available for audiences to consume, media organisations are forced (and find it more profitable) to tailor their output so as to attract and maintain the attention of specific group. Accordingly, claims-makers will have to be increasingly careful in how they pitch their claims so as to gain the attention from the most appropriate media. One of the greatest impacts on audience segmentation is the developments in technology that have led to the widespread use of the Internet.

As technology has evolved, so too has the news media. Best (2008: 141) argues that advances in technology, namely the Internet, have given a “boon” to claims-making, in that the Internet enables claims-makers to participate directly

in claims-making and can therefore strive to attract their own audiences. As the media changes it is necessary for us to consider the future of claims-making in the digital era.

2.4. Claims-making in the Digital Era

Contemporary media is not restricted to newspapers and television, but has greatly evolved as a result of the Internet. In line with this, the relationship between the media and the audience has also changed. Some individuals are actively involved in the reporting process themselves, in what has been referred to as citizen journalism. It is therefore essential to understand how the news media becomes a way of disseminating claims, for digital technology and the possibility of performing an act of citizen journalism can alter the way in which claims are made and presented to audiences.

With the advent of citizen journalism, individuals no longer have to rely upon the traditional news media for dissemination: they can self-publish their own claims via platforms available to them online, such as discussion boards and blogs (Best 2008). Acknowledgement of this change to the process of claims-making has been discussed by Lowney (2007), who argues that in the light of the evolving media, further research is required into the area of claims-making. Maratea (2008) draws attention to the role of the blogosphere in the claims-making process, with the view that the blogosphere serves as a new arena in which claims-making can take place, the blogosphere serves as a vehicle for the carrying and sharing of claims. The potential for blogs to enable citizens to express their views and influence policy makers' decisions has been noted elsewhere by Drezner and Farrell (2004):

Under specific circumstances -- when key weblogs focus on a new or neglected issue -- blogs can act as a focal point for the mainstream media and exert formidable agenda-setting power... blogs increasingly serve as a conduit through which ordinary and not-so-ordinary citizens express their views on international relations and influence a policymaker's decision making. (Drezner and Farrell, 2004)

Blogs, then, have the potential not only to influence policy makers' decision-making, but they may also be able to affect the media agenda. With this in mind, blogging appears to have great potential for those wanting to highlight social problems via claims-making. As stated by Drezner and Farrell (2004), it is important to note that only a minority of blogs serve as a "focal" point - thus claims-making in the blogosphere is not necessarily as "easy" as creating a blog and publishing claims.

Maratea (2008) uses the example of two case studies to help explain how claims-making can both fail and succeed as a result of the blogosphere. The Rathergate Scandal in 2004 saw the then US President George W. Bush's military service being questioned on the CBS show *60 Minutes*. Questions were raised following the "acquisition of four memos" by CBS (Maratea, 2008: 149). This scandal took place in the midst of the 2004 Presidential election. Conservative bloggers challenged the authenticity of the memos - this only reached the mainstream news after the memos were unable to be validated. What is significant here is the ability of bloggers to function as "watchdogs" (Maratea 2008: 150). Bloggers were successful in having their claims regarding the questioning of the authenticity of the memos placed onto the media agenda.

In Maratea's (2008: 152) second case study, bloggers failed to gain attention outside of the blogosphere by the mainstream media. The second case study concerns The Schiavo 'Talking Points'. Schiavo was a severely brain-damaged woman, whose husband and parents fought against each other in a highly-publicised legal battle for the removal of a feeding tube. As discussed by Maratea (2008), the case was used to bring further attention to the bigger social problem of euthanasia. During the case, right-wing bloggers sought to show media bias, which presented the case as a political battle between Republicans and Democrats. Maratea (2008) found that, in contrast to the first case study, the claims that bloggers attempted to highlight were not picked up by the news media, largely a result of the lack of investigative nature of blogging and the inability of bloggers to have their claims validated by experts.

Maratea (2008) argues that those interested in the construction of social problems must take efforts to address the role of the Internet in the practice of

claims-making. With regard to the evolving news media, it is necessary for us to consider what these new forms of media have to offer claims-makers. It must be remembered that new forms of media such as blogs, and social media sites such as *Twitter*, allow anybody with access to the Internet and a desire to self-publish their own material. The news media has therefore transcended the traditional model of claims-making. There appear to be three defining features that new forms of media can offer to those interested in participating in the process of claims-making.

First, claims-makers are able to approach a wider array of media for the dissemination of claims (Maratea, 2008). The spreading of claims is no longer restricted to newspapers, television programmes or radio broadcasts, but can take place via a whole range of traditional online websites (such as the *BBC* and *The Guardian*) as well as other new media projects such as citizen-journalism based websites (such as *DigitalJournal*) and aggregated blogs (such as *Huffington Post*, now an extremely popular American based news site that has also spawned more localised news sites such as *Huffington Post Los Angeles*). This wider array of media in theory can reduce the amount of competition involved in the process of accomplishing the task of being broadcast: however, for claims-makers to receive an audience, and gain publicity for claims, their claims must fall in line with the agenda set within the news media (as highlighted in previous studies of claims-making such as Fritz and Altheide (1987) and Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), or they must take efforts to attract and maintain their own audiences so as to establish their own agenda. As seen with the study carried out by Maratea (2008), under the right conditions, bloggers are more than capable of establishing their own agenda. This view is further supported by Drezner and Farrell (2004), who hold the view that blogs are becoming more influential and are able to affect international media.

The second distinguishing feature of what new forms of media have to offer claims-makers relates to the self-publication of claims and the utilisation of new forms of media, such as Internet news sites, citizen journalism sites and aggregated blogs. As argued by Maratea (2008: 155), such public spaces online offer unlimited carrying spaces for the display of claims:

Unlike traditional arenas where carrying capacity is more static, blogs can be expanded beyond their actual Web space. Bloggers can effectively utilize the entire scope of cyberspace to support their claims. Hence, a blog's carrying capacity theoretically extends as far as the extensive network of hyperlinks that readers choose to follow.

Unlike a newspaper, with a limited number of pages, an online news site such as the *BBC* is not restricted in the amount of space it has to offer for the dissemination of claims. A website (and blog) is essentially unbounded; an infinite number of web pages can be accessed and utilised for the displaying of information. Blog hosting sites such as *WordPress* and *Google Blogger* enable individuals to create their own blogs without having to have any extensive understanding of computer programming languages, plus no additional software is needed to run a blog. A blog post can contain text and images as well as a number of other useful tools for the circulation of information. In this sense, claims-makers, including activists, are able to directly participate in claims-making. Whether or not they attract audiences is another matter and one that will be discussed shortly.

The third defining feature that new forms of media have to offer claims-makers is the opportunity to establish their own news agenda. Rather than attempting to get their claim on the news agenda, participating in digital claims-making enables claims-makers to formulate their own agenda. This was seen in each of Maratea's (2008) two case studies, one of which went so far as to influence the mainstream news media. The Internet also enables claims-makers to attempt to maintain control over the original content of claims. Lowney (2007) argued that via the traditional media, claims-makers lose control of the nature of their claims, as the media are able to manipulate the claims as they see fit. She speaks of her own personal experience of having the media manipulate her work:

I found that out the hard way in 1988. NBC had been running ads for a two-hour primetime special by Geraldo Rivera on Satanism to be aired the next week. The local NBC station contacted me, as an "expert" on adolescent Satanism, and asked to conduct an interview with me to be

aired on the 6 p.m. local news the night the special would air...I agreed to take the camera crew to one of the sites where local teens practiced Satanism – that was my first mistake. When I watched the interview later that night, I was appalled. The reporter had not edited my words, thank goodness, but instead had paired my words with visual pictures that seemed to directly contradict them. So while I was saying off camera, “there has been no animal sacrifice,” the decaying, partially skeletonized carcass of a dead dog was on screen for nearly thirty seconds, in a quite dramatic closeup shot. (Lowney, 2007: 345)

In Lowney’s example, her role and standing as an expert on the topic of Satanism was misconstrued when her words were combined with powerful imagery that contradicted what she was claiming. In this sense, the media were able to manipulate her claims. If a claims-maker utilises new forms of media this problem is effectively negated, as the claims-maker is able to maintain control over the production of content, its nature, and the intended “message” of a claim.

In the digital era, new forms of media enable claims-makers to self-publicise their own claims. In effect, there is the potential for claims-makers to disseminate claims without the assistance of the news media. Fittingly, this leads us to the final distinguishing feature of claims-making in the digital era: if inside claims-makers and the media are not necessary for the dissemination of claims, it opens up the channels to members of the public to participate in claims-making, if they choose to do so. However, this may have a number of negative consequences, as discussed below.

2.4.1. Digital Claims-making: Some Problems to Consider

Participating in claims-making on the Internet may make it easier for claims-makers to publicise their claims, but it is not without its problems. Best (2008) highlights the problem of audience segmentation. Claims-makers attempt to influence everybody, yet with such an enormous variety of media available to audiences, the complex task of claims-making becomes even more complicated, as a single audience is replaced by a wide range of “segmented audiences” (Best 2003, 2008). The “mass” media implies that audiences were subjected to

common experiences of media, and theorists historically worried about the damage caused by presenting audiences with the same message: Turrow (1997), for instance, has argued that the mass media would “turn society into an undifferentiated mass receiving the same media messages” (cited in Best, 2008: 140). This has now vastly changed. There is no longer a “mass media”, but a vast number of individual medias competing for public attention by attracting different audiences. Audience segmentation makes it easier for claims-makers to gain media attention, as they have a wider stage from which to gain attention. However, they must tailor their claims towards a particular type of audience in order for it to be consumed (Best, 2008: 141). Arguably, this is even more of a pressing issue with regard to the potential future of claims-making in light of the Internet. As Maratea (2008) notes, just because there is a greater carrying capacity of claims on the Web does not mean that audiences will be able to internalise all of the claims being made.

Whilst the Internet potentially makes it easier for claims-makers to disseminate their claims, which is not to say that the claim will automatically receive an audience. Claims-makers will have to compete with one another to gain attention from audiences, for audiences may not come across claims that are being publicised by claims-makers via their own means such as presenting claims on blogs. In addition, bloggers wanting to publicise their claims to larger audiences will have to fight for the attention of the news media to get their claim accepted and publicised (Maratea, 2008). The blogosphere is a vast space and does not automatically capture audiences. The claims-maker will have to submit a claim in such a way as to gain the attention of audiences and encourage audience participation in the discussion of a claim. This may also mean that in order to gain the attention of wider audiences, claims-makers will have to make use of more than one type of media for the self-dissemination of claims. Once discussion is established, there is a greater possibility for the claim to be more widely received. As a result of audience segmentation, the digital era may make the task of gaining an audience far more difficult than the task of gaining receivership of a claim by the news media.

Another problem for claims-making in the digital era is the issue of trust and the possibility of the dissemination of rumours and conspiracy theories. As highlighted by Maratea (2008: 145), those wishing to gain status in the blogosphere and receive attention for their claims will have to fight for “external validation”, possibly from experts. Without validation, claims may not be believed; instead they may be viewed as rumours simply circulating around the Web. On the other hand, it is also necessary to consider how the Internet functions as a breeding ground for the circulation of rumours and conspiracy theories of any given problem.

Following the 9/11 attacks, countless rumours and conspiracy theories emerged, with some individuals claiming that there was more to the attacks than hijackings of planes by terrorists. For example, a popular conspiracy theory claimed that the World Trade Center buildings collapsed not just because of the force of the aircraft crashing into the towers, but also due to the use of “pre-positioned explosives” (Jones 2003). This claim was published on a website called Physics911, claiming to be a scientific panel investigating the 9/11 attacks. In relation to claims-making, the Internet may provide a number of difficulties in terms of individuals believing and trusting the legitimacy of claims. From this perspective, it may be that anyone can participate in claims-making via acts of citizen journalism; however that is not to say that the claim will be legitimate. If a claim receives “external validation”, for example from a trusted source such as a professional organisation, this may go some way to helping support the legitimacy of the claim, which may then strengthen the claim and see it gaining attention from mainstream news organisations, enabling the claim to be broadcast to wider audiences.

The second defining feature of claims-making in the digital era is crucial to answering the question of how citizen journalism influences claims-making. In theory anybody can participate in claims-making: likewise, in theory anybody can participate in citizen journalism. However, citizen journalism and claims-making in the digital era is restricted in two significant ways. First, it is restricted to those who can access new forms of technology, particularly the Internet, to self-publicise their assertions. Secondly, digital claims-making is restricted to

those who have a desire to actively participate in the dissemination of their claims. The argument, then, is that *anybody choosing to participate in citizen journalism with the means to access the Internet* can participate in claims-making. For those who decide to participate via citizen journalism, we are left with a distinctively new breed of claims-makers, to whom this thesis refers as “digital claims-makers”.

Digital claims-makers are those who create and maintain their own platforms for the self-dissemination of claims. By using public platforms of communication, the claims-maker is able to create and present his/her own perspective directly to society, making use of an unlimited carrying space for the presentation of claims. Furthermore, citizen journalism-based platforms such as blogs also functions as arenas in which, once a claim is made, public discussion is possible via the utilisation of the comments function, which can encourage the wider dissemination of a claim.

Citizen journalists are not only able to disseminate their own claims - they can act as vehicles for the promotion of arguments by other claims-makers. Citizen journalists are able to practice their own editorial judgments in deeming what they believe is worthy of further publicity to his/her audience. In this sense, a citizen journalist is able to determine his/her own agenda. However, there is also the distinct possibility that a citizen journalist may be influenced by the agenda set by the news media, thereby reinforcing the claims that are already present. Citizen journalism is therefore able to influence claims-making in two main ways: first via the self-creation and dissemination of claims, and second, by serving as drivers for the wider dissemination of claims to which they are subjected. In this way citizen journalists can assist in keeping a claim alive, by continuing to give the claim attention and publish it to wider audiences. This raises questions as to what type of claims-maker a citizen journalist would be. Would they be primary claims-makers? Would they be informants, such as those who are at the scene of a terrorist attacks and supplying information regarding a piece of news? Or would they be activists, where the citizen journalist actively utilises his own system of communication to promote his own claims? Citizen journalists could even function as secondary claims-makers.

Evidently, there is much to consider in terms of claims-making in the digital era. From a methodological perspective, those wishing to investigate claims-making must begin to venture away from relying on sources such as newspapers for the analysis of claims-making, and turn to enhancing their investigation of claims-making by also considering the use of the Internet by claims-makers. Only then will sociologists be able to explore fully the process involved in claims-making in contemporary society. The digital era provides the ability for a far greater number of individuals and organisation to exercise the ability to formulate and present claims to society. As such, the concept of citizen journalism provides a unique approach to viewing the way in which claims can be disseminated in contemporary society.

2.5. The Social Construction of News in the Digital Era

Sociologists have for a long time been interested in the social construction of news in society. Within the social sciences, the concept of “gatekeeping” is essential in our efforts to understand the way in which a story becomes a piece of news. Gatekeeping is defined as the process of “selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating and otherwise massaging information to become news” (Shoemaker et al., 2008: 73). In the past, the production and distribution of news is largely a strict routine process whereby a series of gatekeepers decide whether (or not) a piece of news, given to them by journalists who interact with sources, is newsworthy and is subsequently published for audiences to consume. In this way, the news media are able to practice what sociologists refer to as “agenda-setting”, where setting the news agenda enables them to influence the public agenda. Within the process of agenda-setting is inter-media agenda-setting, whereby the media’s agenda is influenced by other media organisations: thus we see that news organisations influence each other in deciding what is newsworthy and, therefore, worthy of public attention. What is also important to consider within the construction of news is the activities of claims-makers, who compete with one another to gain attention from the news media, forcing their claim onto the news agenda.

However, the impact of the digital era on the social construction of the news is a necessary area for future research.

Recent studies of the impact of the Internet on the social construction of news have given us some valuable insights. For instance, we have learnt that the traditional role of gatekeeping in the news may no longer apply; both the news media and those interacting with the news media to create material may be able to act as *gatewatchers* of the news. Gatewatchers monitor the global circulation of news, and highlight news that is gaining attention to their audiences. The process of “gatewatching” forces us to consider the nature of inter-media agenda-setting in the contemporary news environment, whilst also paying attention to the impact of the activities of citizen journalists on mainstream news organisations: do citizen journalists reinforce or undermine the news media? Social scientists have begun to pay attention to inter-media agenda-setting on the Internet; however, our knowledge of the nature of inter-media agenda-setting in relation to citizen journalism is in need of further enquiry. In addition, we know that the news media appears to be significant in the process of claims-making, and whilst it has been possible to discuss the impact of the digital era on claims-making, our knowledge remains incomplete.

Numerous scholars have observed that citizen journalists are playing a role in the production and distribution of news; accordingly, it seems fitting to develop our understanding of the role of citizen journalism in society by conducting research that involves understanding the way in which citizen journalists choose to construct the news. First, however, it is necessary to develop our understanding of how we can account for the emergence of citizen journalism in society.

3. The Emergence of Citizen Journalism in Contemporary Society

Recent academic interest in citizen journalism invites the question as to what is distinctive about the public's involvement in the news process today. History suggests that the public have always been involved in the news process in one way or another, and Gillmor (2006) argues that the personal journalism we are witnessing with citizen journalism can be traced back to the 19th Century. Gillmor discusses the early pamphleteers in the United States of America, who before the passage of the First Amendment, took risks to ensure a free press and published their own writings. He refers to Thomas Paine, who "inspired many with his powerful writings about rebellion, liberty and government in the late 18th century" (Gillmor, 2006: 2). In England, journalism that involved the public can be dated back to the 17th Century (at least) when news in the form on pamphlets was banned by the Star Chamber in London in October 1632, newsbooks began to be circulated through informal networks such as coffee houses (McNair, 1994). Paulussen et al. (2007) talk of forms of participatory media in the 20th Century – examples include (but are not restricted to) local talk radio and pirate radio. As noted by Habermas (1989), this informal network for the discussion and publication of news took place within the "public sphere",¹⁶ a place where citizens could come together as one group to discuss, in an unrestricted manner, matters of general interest.

The public have, then, been part of the news production process for centuries. We must therefore take steps to understand what about society today has led to the deeper immersion of the public in the news production and distribution process. Is it a change in the public's interaction with the news, or perhaps a change in the tools it has at its disposal to record and discuss the news? It has been possible to identify four preconditions for the emergence of

¹⁶ A number of academics have pointed to the Internet being a "new" public sphere, going so far as to say that it is an international public sphere (Dakroury and Birdsall, 2008). Elsewhere, Youngs (2009) has argued that there is a blurring between the private and public sphere on the Internet.

what has become known as “citizen journalism” on the Internet. The preconditions consist of: advanced technology, an “active audience”, a “lived” experience within digital culture, and an organisational change within the news media. These preconditions and their implications for citizen journalism will be discussed here.

3.1. Precondition 1: Advanced Technology

The first precondition for the emergence of citizen journalism in society is “advanced technology”, in particular “digital technology”. In what has been describes as “technological determinist” perspectives of online journalism, emphasis tend to focus their attention on change within newsrooms as being technologically driven. As argued by Miller (2011: 3), Wilson (1990) defines “technological determinism” as “suggesting that new technologies set the conditions for social change”. Rather constructionist approaches such as those that will be highlighted in this chapter (for instance Boczkowski, 2010; Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida and Thurman, 2008 and Singer, 2006) believe that changes within online journalism are a result of “complex interaction between professional, organisational, economic and social factors” (Paulussen and Ugille, 2008: 28).

As argued by Domingo (2008: 19) proponents who view technology as a catalyst for change in society place too much emphasis on the importance of technology, instead technology should be viewed as a “product of society”. With a technological determinist perspective, as argued by Miller (2011: 3), implicit in their view of the role of technology, is that “technology is something separate and independent of society”. This thesis, takes the perspective of the former attitude. It views technology in the same manner as articulated by Carey (1989: 140), as a means of communication. Whilst this section is predominantly concerned with identifying the importance of technology as an enabler for citizen journalism, it is necessary to note, that technology alone is not viewed as being solely responsible for the emergence of citizen journalism in society, and as will be established, other preconditions are also required.

Digital technology saturates contemporary society (Gere, 2002), and has played an important role in the way in which news is constructed and produced in society. In relation to the construction of news, developments in technology have previously pushed the news media away from print-based production in the form of newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, and forced the media into what Campbell and Park (2008) refer to as the “virtual age”, which made mass consumption of the media feasible via television, radio and film. Today, the construction of news in society has in part, once again been influenced by developments in technology: for Campbell and Park (2008), this means that we have now entered a new age that revolves around personal communication, or what Castells (2001) refers to as the “information society”.

Among other factors, developments in technology in the past have led to the expansion of news to global “mass” audiences on part of those professionally working in the news media industry. Ordinarily, in terms of production and distribution, developments in technology have benefited those working within the news media industry. Now however, as a result of digital technology that enables personal communication, we are witnessing an expansion of the news that enables members of the public, not professionally trained in creating news, to participate in the production and distribution of news online. This form of expanded news production is partly a result of particular forms of digital technology that Castells (2007: 247) has labelled forms of “mass self-communication”:

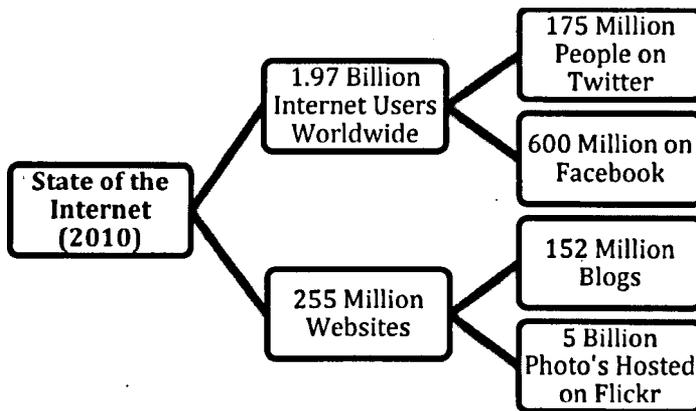
Appropriating the new forms of communication, people have built their own system of mass communication, via SMS, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, and the like...As of October 2006, Technorati was tracking 57.3 million blogs, up from 26 million in January. On average 75,000 new blogs are created every day. There are about 1.2 million posts daily, or about 50,000 blog updates an hour.

Mass self-communication is a product of improvements in technology that have expanded individuals’ ability to communicate. For example, by using the Internet, people are able to create their own blogs, enabling them to compile their own interpretation of what they deem to be newsworthy events; in effect

they are able to set their own news agenda. Improvements in technology such as mobile phones and digital cameras permit individuals to upload their own photographs and video recordings of events, leading to the expansion in the uploading of online material recorded and published by the public. However, as will be seen in chapter four, it is necessary to note, that developments in technology do not automatically imply that the public will make use of technology, rather, it takes time for users to interact with different forms of media. This has similarly been identified by Domingo (2008) and Boczkowski (2010) (*for instance*) in their analysis of the adoption of technological resources for news production by professional news organisations. Thus technology alone, cannot be seen a catalyst for the emergence of citizen journalism. Rather, we should view technology as assisting in enabling the public with the means to perform citizen journalism.

If technology, particularly the Internet, is a precondition for citizen journalism, just how widespread is Internet usage? A survey of the state of the Internet in 2010 (Pingdom,¹⁷ 2011) reveals just how much the Internet, and with it users' interactions on social networking websites and blogs, have grown:

Figure 5: State of the Internet (Pingdom, 2011)



Furthermore, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the UK provides vital information on Britain's use of the Internet. Figures from August 2010 suggest that 30.1 million (60%) adults in the UK accessed the Internet on a daily basis. This compares to figures from 2006, in which only 16.5 million (35%) adults

¹⁷ Pingdom is an Internet monitoring company.

accessed the Internet on a daily basis. Additionally, 19.2 million (73%) households in the UK now have an Internet connection: an increase of five million from 2006 (Office for National Statistics, 2010). Further statistics from the ONS (2010: 13) suggest that online activities include (among others): sending and receiving emails (90%), reading or downloading online news, newspapers or magazines (51%), listening to radio or watching web television (45%), posting messages to chat sites, social networking sites and blogs (43%), and uploading self-created content to any website to be shared (38%). Amongst a host of other activities, people in Britain can be seen to utilise the Internet to access information and to connect with other Internet users.

With what appears to be a social habit that involves accessing and using the Internet on a daily basis, we must consider what online platforms people are able to access for communication purposes. The focus here will be on the use of blogs and social networking websites, which are freely available to independent citizen journalists who want to publish their material without the assistance of the news media.

The blogosphere is a key arena in which citizen journalists are able to self-publish their own version of news stories. For Cowling (2005), the weblog introduces a range of new technological functions for the production, management and consumption of news. This is similarly supported by Lasica (2003: 71), who argues that blogging allows for individuals to play an "active role" in the process of "collecting, reporting, sorting, analysing and disseminating news": a function that was once retained solely and "exclusively" by the news media. Whilst blogging may be a useful form of self-publication for the citizen journalist, it is necessary for us to consider exactly what a blog is, how popular the activity of blogging is, and why it is particularly useful for citizen journalism.

First let us consider what the concept "blogging" refers to. Blood (2003: 61) argues that a blog is essentially "a frequently updated web site, with posts arranged in reverse chronological order, so new entries are always on top". In support of this definition, Quiggin (2006) elaborates on how a blog functions:

[A] blog is simply a personal webpage in a journal format, using software that automatically puts new entries ('posts') at the top of the page, and

shifts old entries to archives after a specified time, or when the number of posts becomes too large for convenient scrolling. (Quiggin 2006: 482)

A blog can therefore be considered as a form of personal, individual publication, created by ordinary citizens using software available on the Internet. Individuals create “posts” which are organised in terms of what they have written and published most recently. These blogs are then published and available to other Internet users worldwide.

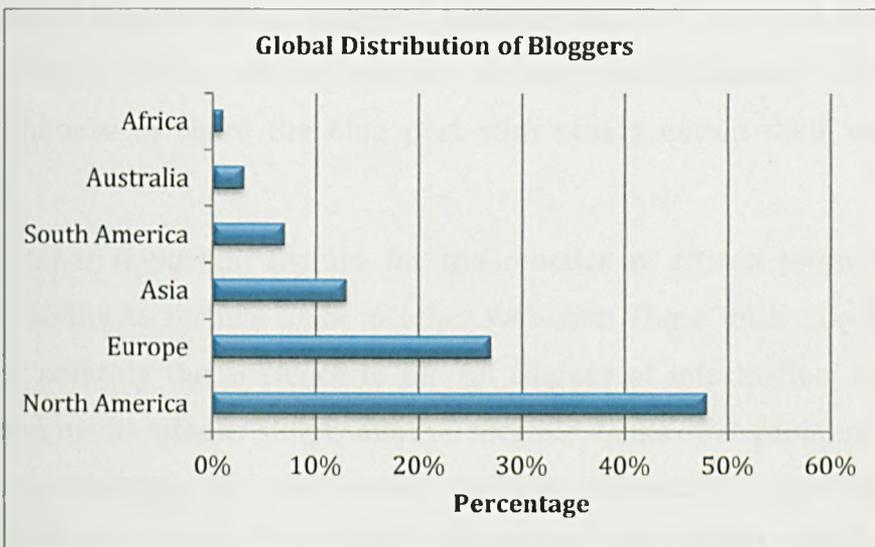
A factor worthy of consideration in the use of the blogosphere is that users do not have to purchase blog pages to input their own content. Nor do individuals have to be aware of any particular programming language to compile and upload a blog post. Rather, users can upload and create their own blog via free blog hosting sites, such as *Google’s Blogger* and *WordPress*. The simplicity of creating and using a blog makes the practice of blogging much more practical for Internet users without the knowledge and finance to set up their own webpages and therefore, from a technological perspective, blogging serves as a useful form of personal communication.

There has been a significant increase in the number of blogs created and indeed, the number of blog posts that are published across the Internet. It is worth noting that this expansion in blogging has been highlighted by a number of academics. Quiggin (2006: 482) discusses the blogging monitor service Technorati:¹⁸ in September 2003 Technorati claimed to watch almost four million blogs, and by October 2005 this had increased to 21 million, suggesting an increase by a factor of 4.25 over two years. Alternatively, McKenna and Pole (2008) point to statistics from their study “Measuring the Blogosphere” (2005). They argue that in 2005 there were seven million “active” blogs, and almost 80,000 new blogs were created each day. Let us consider, then, the size of the blogosphere today.

¹⁸ Technorati was set up to assist bloggers in “blogging” online and contributing to global discussion. Technorati also functions as a blog search engine and claims to supply the “most comprehensive source of information on the blogosphere” (Technorati Media, 2009).

Technorati (2008) suggests that 133 million blogs have been created since 2002. A total of 7.4 million blogs had been created in the 120 days prior to the survey; 1.5 million of these blogs had been posted in the seven days prior to the survey; 900,000 blogs posts had been posted in the 24 hours prior to the survey. The random sample of 1.2 million blogs from over 66 countries worldwide, suggesting that blogging is gaining prominence on a global stage. This was an English-speaking survey only; unfortunately the sample is therefore not representative of the global blogging population. However, whilst caution must be taken, at a period in time where blogging is greatly under-researched, this is the most “accurate” statistical data currently available. The following geographic distribution of bloggers has been identified, with the majority of bloggers found in North America and Europe, and the least amount of blogging occurring in Africa.

Graph 1: Technorati - Global Distribution of Bloggers (2008)



The size of the blogosphere is undeniably and rapidly expanding. Lasica (2003) argues that the explosion in the popularity of blogging is a result of the ease of access to blogging, in terms of bandwidth, cost and free software – thus, the popularity of blogging is not simply a result of the technological feature of “blogging” but also an economical benefit, of a blog being free and accessible to those who can afford to utilise this technology. But what features make blogs particularly useful for encouraging individuals to participate in citizen journalism?

An important feature of a blog is the two functions it has of comments and links. The comments submitted to a blog post are found at the end of the post and allow the blogger's audience to contribute to the discussion of his/her blog post, thus allowing social interaction to take place. A comment has been found to have a number of uses. From a "filtering" perspective, the use of a comment can give a sense of whether a blog is considered to be worthy: as Lasica (2003: 73) explains, "if the blogs are trustworthy and have something valuable to contribute, people will return". Another way of considering the function of a comment is in terms of allowing for audience participation: providing a sense of discussion and debate surrounding a given post (Gillmor, 2006: 9). Quiggin (2006: 483) holds a slightly more direct view of the function of a comment, in that if a blog does not contain a comment it is not a blog: "in the absence of comments, as it is not really, or not fully, a blog...the majority of visitors to a blog site never comment, and are thus viewers rather than participants". However, just because a member of the blogger's audience does not leave a comment, that is not to say that they will not discuss the blog post elsewhere - they might instead choose to share the blog post with others within their own social network.

Another important feature for the practice of citizen journalism is a blogger's ability to include links to other websites. These links may be in the format of pointing the audience to official sources of information, other blog posts, news media sites or simply another website. Links offer guidance from the author's perspective of what other Internet content is important to be considered by the viewer. Blood (2002, Afterword¹⁹) argues that a link "ensures a level of accountability not found in traditional media".²⁰ In addition, links can be seen to supply different blog users with interactions with other Internet surfers. A link allows for news readers to choose from a range of sources to shape their opinion of events, rather than a single article.

¹⁹ This reference is a Kindle eBook and therefore does not have a page number - the quote can be found at location 1663.

²⁰ However, we are now increasingly witnessing the use of links within the presentation of the news, for example - the BBC.

Concerns over the use of links within a blog post can be seen to be related to what has been referred to as the “echo chamber” effect. As argued by Sunstein (2001), the Internet may be considered an extension of the public forum, however, the danger lies with an echo chamber effect occurring. This means that the Internet enables like-minded people to engage in discussion with one another and make their line of thinking more extreme. For Sunstein (2001) this form of “group polarisation” is dangerous as it can lead to problems for democracy and social peace. In an updated account of Republic.com (2001), for Sunstein (2007: 13) there is a risk in people bypassing “general-interest intermediaries, and restrict themselves to opinions and topics of their own choosing”, the danger being that people may be listening to “echoes of their own voices”. As argued by Sunstein (2007: 49) the Internet is extremely useful for “like-minded” people to “congregate to discuss and focus” on a particular issue – leading to polarisation. Within a blog post, use of links can be used to confirm what the original author is saying, or to “show how dangerous, or how contemptible, competing views really are” (Sunstein, 2007: 51).

In his study of Internet sites in 2000, Sunstein (2007: 54) was able to confirm this; “only 9, or 15 percent, provide links to sites of those with opposing views, whereas 35, or almost 60 percent, provided links to like-minded sites”. These findings were confirmed in a follow-up study in 2006, where the number of links to like-minded sites was calculated at almost 82 percent. For Sunstein, the problem does not simply lie with producers of information, but in how consumers choose to self-filter and expose themselves to particular voices of information. By limiting exposure to one type of opinion via the web, for Sunstein (2007: xi) this goes against the premise of democracy where “people do not live in echo chambers or information cocoons. They see and hear a wide range of topics and ideas” (Sunstein, 2007: xi).

For Miller (2011: 146) notions of an “echo chamber” effect may imply that if no real discussion is actually taking place on the web, we may be witnessing the creation of many “publics that have little engagement with, or exposure to, each other, as opposed to creating constructive debate”. Let us then, consider

whether or not there appears to be an “echo-chamber” effect within the blogosphere.

In their study of the blogosphere, Reese et al. (2008) found that there was evidence of an “echo chamber” effect taking place, however this was not to a great extent. Rather, bloggers can be seen to be supplying links to the “traditional” media as well as other bloggers. For Reese et al. (2008: 258) this “ideological affinity of bloggers for their own kind is clear and is consistent with the polarization observed in the mass market for books and increasingly on the Foxification of 24-hour news channels”. This was similarly identified by a study by Adamic and Glance (2005) which assessed the 2004 US election in the political blogosphere found little evidence of conservative bloggers acting as “echo chambers”. Accordingly, Reese et al. (2008) hold the position that the blogosphere challenges the traditional tithold of the professional news media in managing the public sphere, by “weaving together citizen and professional voices in a way that extends the public sphere beyond the boundaries policed by the traditional news media”. Thus for Reese et al. (2008) the blogosphere can be seen as an extension of the public sphere.

Alternatively, a study on the “echo chamber” effect of the blogosphere by Gilbert et al. (2009) reveals that there is evidence of an “echo chamber” within the blogosphere. Their study assessed evidence of an “echo chamber” effect by focusing on the extent of agreement and disagreement within comments to a blog post and that 77% of the commentators agreed with the opinion of the blogger; suggesting an “echo chamber” effect.

Wallsten (2005: 22) also found evidence of an “echo chamber” effect taking place. However, he found that “the echo chamber hypothesis is accurate for some issues but not for others and, more importantly, that there is considerable variation in the propensity of individual political bloggers to act as echo chambers on certain issues”. Thus whether or not a “echo chamber” may occur, appears to be dependent on the issue, that is, the creation of an echo chamber appears to be context specific and does not necessarily always occur within the blogosphere.

For this thesis, the use of links between blogs can also be seen as being an important indicator of inter-media agenda setting, where some blogs are influencing the reporting of other blogs. But between blogs or the news media, who can we say sets the agenda?

Reese et al. (2007) study of 410 blog posts across 6 blogs show the extent of dependency of links within a blog post. In terms of links to other sites, the authors found that 33.5% of references are to other blogs and 47.6% are to the professional news media, and argue that the use of links to other blogs “promotes the circulation of public dialogue” (Reese et al., 2007: 249, 257). Thus we see that a central feature of blogging appears to be the endorsement and encouragement of discussion by members of the public.

A second platform for the self-publication of citizen journalism is the use of social networking websites. Beer and Burrows (2007) argue that this rise of participatory culture is in part, a result of the development of Web 2.0. Simply put, Web 2.0 refers to the increase in applications on the Internet that allow for the public collaboration and the sharing of information. For Beer and Burrows this expansion of public involvement in Web 2.0 is largely linked to the development and global popularity of social networking sites such as *Facebook*, *Flickr* and *Twitter*. Boyd and Ellison (2007) define a social networking website as:

[W]eb-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (Boyd and Ellison, 2007: 1).

Social networking sites function as online platforms that individuals are able to sign up to and personalise, enabling global social interaction, sharing and communication in an online environment. The popularity of particular social networking websites may seem to be a technological craze: discussions about *MySpace* infiltrated society first, quickly followed by other social networking sites such as *Flickr*, *Facebook*, *bebo*, *digg* and, most recently, *Twitter*. Following the terror attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, global issues such as the 2009

swine flu epidemic, the 2009 protests in Iran²¹, and the 2011 protests in Tunisia and Egypt have received a great deal of “publicity” by social networking sites, and have even been declared as promoting social movements. – For example one activist used *Twitter* to report activities in the Ramsis area of Cairo:

Figure 6: Ramy Raoof (2011)

now in Ramsis area, Cairo- security use tear gas against
demonstrators and police use batons to intimidate people. #Jan25
#Egypt
4.03 PM Jan 26th via web

Protests in Egypt in January/February 2011 resulted in Egyptian authorities shutting off the Internet to stop protestors communicating with one another and from promoting news of the protests to the rest of the world (Al Jazeera, 2011). Digital technology cannot alone be seen as being responsible for the protests; as argued by Alexander (2011) the protests did not seize as a result of the clampdown on the Internet: “Firstly, the fact that an internet and mobile phone blockade failed shows clearly that this movement is not based on the web.”

The public’s involvement in journalism surrounding an event is not necessarily restricted to participating in the media or writing on blogs, from a technological perspective we must also consider the use of social networking websites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*. A study by Global Web Index (2011) revealed that 47.1% of Internet users in the UK manage a social network profile (15.89 million users). The popularity of social networking sites is confirmed by other studies. A 2008 study by Ofcom revealed that in the UK 53% of adults have access to the Internet in their homes. Their study revealed that 39% of the population who have Internet access at home are signed up to a social networking website. This is larger than other European countries such as Italy (22%), France (17%) and Germany (12%) (Ofcom, 2008: 21). Elsewhere a report

²¹ Update: It has since been noted by Golnaz Esfandiari (2010), writing for *Foreign Policy* magazine, that the protests that occurred in Iran in June 2009 were not so readily co-ordinated by Twitter users in Iran as was first thought, but instead were fuelled by Twitter users outside of Iran. Whilst the use of Twitter did serve to heighten awareness of the protests, the degree to which it was used as a means of organising a social movement is currently being debated.

by comScore (2007) revealed that in the UK, Internet users that own profiles on social networking websites spend up-to 5.8 hours per month of the sites, whilst “heavy” users spend up-to 22 hours per month on social networking websites.

Facebook was set up in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University, originally a private project marketed as “The Facebook” to student and staff at Harvard. The site was launched to the wider world in September 2006 (Phillips, 2007) and has since become a global success – enabling people and organisations across the globe to connect and share with others. Statistics from *Facebook* suggest that the site has over 500 million active users, 70% of whom are from outside the USA, and 50% of whom log in to *Facebook* on a daily basis and on average. People spend approximately 700 billion minutes per month on the site (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Smith (2009) found that social networking sites such as *Facebook* not only attract members from the younger generations, but have older audiences too. Statistics reported in February 2009 suggested that 55 - 65 year olds made three percent of *Facebook* users, followed by 13-17 year olds (12% of users), and 35-44 year olds (14%). The second largest group were 26-34 year olds (23%) and the greatest population consisted of 18-25 year olds (43%). From a gender perspective, women make up the greatest proportion of *Facebook* users, comprising of 56.2%. The study also found that the fastest-growing *Facebook* population were women over the age of 55, showing the growth of older generations online (Smith, 2009).

Twitter (2009) was originally a privately-funded organisation, and started as a side project in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey. Fully established in May 2007, *Twitter* is now a real-time, short messaging service that functions over “multiple networks and devices”. It is used by individuals, organisations, businesses and political organisations worldwide. A tweet - a form of micro blogging - is comprised of no more than 140 characters and can be uploaded via instant messaging services, the World Wide Web and mobile phone technology (via an SMS text message). A report by the social media analytical company Sysomos (Cheng et al., 2009) indicates that as of June 2009, of the 11.5 million *Twitter* accounts surveyed, 85.3% of *Twitter* users post a tweet less than once per day. The vast majority (93.6%) of users have less than 100 followers, whilst 92.4%

follow fewer than 100 people (Cheng et al., 2009). Analysis suggests that only 5% of *Twitter* users account for 75% of all activity (Cheng et al., 2009). In terms of geographic distribution, the USA has the largest number of *Twitter* users (62.14%), followed by the UK (7.87%), Canada (5.69%) and Australia (2.80%).

Developments in technology, such as blogs and social networking sites, are extremely important for citizen journalism. Adrian Monck argues that “new technology has enabled individuals to answer back, quickly and publicly” (Monck 2008: 23). For the most part, these developments have enabled individuals to communicate with one another on a global scale, without any specialist knowledge of Internet languages such as HTML, and are freely accessible for individuals to use so long as they have access to a computer or hand-held device (such as a smart phone) with a means of connecting to the Internet. However, technology alone is not responsible for the emergence of citizen journalism on the Internet – it is simply an “enabler”, a means of performing citizen journalism. It is necessary to consider a second precondition for the emergence of citizen journalism, which is a desire on part of the audience to want to participate in the construction of the news.

3.2. Precondition 2: An Active and Engaged Audience

Members of the public have historically been conceptualised by some as “passive consumers” of the mass media. C. Wright Mills (1958) argued that the demise of the role of the public in American society was a consequence of this: rather than freely thinking and participating in the wider discussions surrounding civic life, members of the public were left to await and rely upon the appointment of a topic to discuss by the mass media. For Mills, in 1958, central organisations such as the mass media yielded a great social power - governing the public domain.

In a review of audience studies, Webster (1998: 194) refers to mass-communication scholars regarding the audience as active “agents”: thus, rather than seeing people as being mere consumers of the media, scholars within this field approach the study of the audience by asking the question “What do people do with the media?” Webster points to an observation by Bryant and Street (1988: 162) to support the idea of the “active” audience:

The notion of the “active communicator” is rapidly achieving preeminent status in the communication discipline. In the mass and interpersonal literatures alike, we read statement after statement claiming that today’s message receivers have abundant message options and actively select from and act on these messages. (Webster, 1998: 195)

Proponents of the view of audiences as “agents” consider audiences to be able to formulate their own meaning of what they are exposed to. Some academics presenting this view are proponents of the “uses and gratifications model”, where individuals’ needs are the “driving force” behind consumption of the media (Webster, 1998: 195). Katz et al. (1974: 510) argue that the uses and gratification theory “represents an attempt to explain something of the way in which individuals use communications, among other resources in their environment, to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals, and to do so by simply asking them”. Accordingly, two studies of uses and gratification on the Internet can be cited here, where the authors used questionnaires to ask individuals why they used a particular form of media on the web.

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) conducted a study to understand the uses and gratification of two social networking websites: *MySpace* and *Facebook*. The study involved questionnaires, or what they refer to as a “packet”, to be completed by 116 university students (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008: 170). Results suggest that uses and gratification of *MySpace* and *Facebook* range from keeping in touch with friends to using the sites for academic purposes:

Very popular uses and gratification for having either account included “to keep in touch with old friends” (96.0%), “to keep in touch with current friends” (91.1%), “to post/look at pictures” (57.4%), “to make new friends” (56.4%), and “to locate old friends” (54.5%). Less commonly reported uses and gratifications included “to learn about events” (33.7%), “to post social functions” (21.8%), “to feel connected” (19.8%), “to share information about yourself” (13.9%), “for academic purposes” (10.9%), and “for dating purposes” (7.9%). (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008: 171)

The study also involved asking students why they felt others did not have an account on one of these websites. Explanations point to conscious decision-making on part of the individuals:

“They just have no desire to have an account” (70.3%), “they are too busy” (63.4%), “they think it is a waste of time” (60.4%), “they think it is stupid” (55.4%), “they have no Internet access at home” (51.5%), and “they are not good at using technology” (34.7%). Less commonly reported failed uses and gratifications included “they have not heard of these Web sites” (17.8%), “they do not want to keep in touch” (15.8%), “they are loners” (10.9%), “they do not want to conform” (7.9%), “they are not cool” (7.9%), “they do not have any friends” (7.9%), “they feel intimidated” (5.9%), and “they think others would not be interested in their accounts” (5.0%). (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008: 171)

A study by Kinally et al. (2008) similarly sought to identify the uses and gratification associated with the downloading of music, finding that this practice was a result of convenience and entertainment. Thus in both studies cited here, we see evidence of individuals actively utilising the Internet, and media on the Internet, for personal gratification.

Evidence of individuals actively engaging with the media force us to question what precisely it means to be “active”. One approach is by considering activity as a form of interaction. Rafaeli (1988) defines interactivity as follows:

Interactivity is generally assumed to be a natural attribute of face-to-face conversation, but it has been proposed to occur in mediated communication settings as well. For example, interactivity is also one of the defining characteristics of two-way cable systems, electronic text systems, and some programming work, as in interactive video games. Interactivity is present in the operation of traditional media, too. The phenomenon of operation of letters to the editor, talk shows on radio and television, listener participation in programs and in programming are all characterised by interactivity. (Rafaeli, 1988: 10)

In this view, communication online via blogs and social networking websites can be considered a valid form of interaction by individuals. Furthermore, Rafaeli (1988) comments on the importance of interactivity in society also occurring between the media and his/her audience: dependent citizen journalism can be considered an extension of this interactivity. A key point for our observation of the presence of the active audience is that Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1994: 3) go so far as to argue that interactivity is a form of social engagement that “merges speaking with listening”. By posting information online, independent citizen journalists offer others the opportunity to engage with their material and interact with them if they choose to do so. The listening aspect of Rafaeli and Sudweeks’ understanding of interactivity on the Internet, now also involves “reading”.

McMillan (2002: 163) argues that interactivity is not unique to new media, but that new media can “facilitate” new environments for interactivity. Interactivity can be understood from a range of perspectives, either from the features in the medium of communication that enable interactivity, to how users perceive their own interactivity. McMillan (2002: 171) argues that a key theme emerging from a number of studies is that “users” interaction with content is reliant on audiences being “active” in their interaction with media - being active means being an “active co-creator”. There appears to have been a problem of the media engaging with audience interaction, offering very little time for the audience to interact with the creator (McMillan, 2002: 171).

Schultz’s (1999) study supports this point. He notes that news organisations in the past have offered individuals the opportunity to interact with them, commonly in the form of Letters to the Editor, where readers would write in response to a story to which they had been exposed. However, as Schultz argues, this attempt at interaction by the audience would remain reactive unless those working within the newspaper responded, and such interaction was largely one-way. Back in 1999, Schultz argued that the Internet could be seen as a means of improving interaction between news organisations and the audience, but critics have argued that news organisations only offer the “illusion” of interaction. In light of this, Schultz conducted a study of 100 online newspapers

to investigate their abilities to offer the opportunity for interaction, by providing email addresses (for example). Results suggested that the study of online newspapers “revealed generally few and token interactive options”: there appeared to be reluctance on the part of news organisations to encourage and engage with interaction.

More contemporary studies that assess opportunities for audience interaction within the news can be cited here. Domingo et al. (2008) completed a study of 16 online newspapers and sought to show how online news organisations were enabling audiences to participate within the news. Results revealed that the most common feature enabling audience participation was the option to comment or rank journalistic comment (Domingo et al., 2008: 334). Other options for audience participation included: “most popular were invitations to submit audio-visual materials (mainly photos) and story ideas, links to social networking sites and space for citizen blogs” (Domingo et al., 2008: 334). Geographically, they found that news organisations choice of presenting audiences with options to participate varied not just nationally but also locally. Their study also revealed that at no point in any of the online news organisations under inspection did news organisations enable audiences to manage or select/filter information – in this way news organisations upheld their power of gatekeeping.

Similarly in their study of the *BBC's* engagement with audiences, Hermida and Thurman (2008) found that news professionals were still trying to find ways of managing “user-generated content” and that for many news professionals, moderation was a way of retaining their traditional gatekeeping role.

In trying to understand whether or not audiences are active, Hermida et al. (2011) appear to have come to a crossroad in their decision. They argue that audiences are “active recipients” of news, which places them somewhere between being passive receivers and active creators of content:

“Users are expected to act when an event happens, by sending in eyewitness reports, photos and video. Once a professional has shepherded the information through the news production stages of filtering, processing and distributing the news, users are expected to

react, adding their interpretation of the news. As “active recipients”, audiences are framed as idea generators and observers of newsworthy events at the start of the journalistic process, and then in an interpretive role as commentators who reflect upon the material that has been produced”. (Hermida et al., 2011: 17)

Alternatively, Bergstrom (2008) conducted quantitative analysis of a survey in Sweden that sought to understand audiences desire to participate in the news. She found that the majority of audiences had little interest in participation, and that those that had expressed a desire were higher educated. Similarly, Bakker and Paterson (2011: 196) conclude their review of “citizen content” by stating “... most people do not seem actively to seek to be citizen journalists, and most tend to display the same news consumption patterns as before the Internet era.” Thus, whilst news organisations may be creating spaces for citizen contributions, this does not automatically imply that audiences have a desire to participate; without desire, participation will not take place. Accordingly, if we were to return to the “technological determinist” position of online news, unless technology is sought out and utilised by individuals that have a desire to be involved in the production of news “change” will not occur.

Elsewhere, evidence points towards news consumers being more active in their search and consumption habits of the news. Audiences are utilising more than one source of news rather than relying upon a single news source: they are ‘grazing’ multiple news services (Rantanen 2009: 114). In the UK, Rantanen (2009: 115) cites that the proportion of individuals using the Internet as their main source of news has trebled to 6%. Similarly, Beckett (2008) believes that there has been a significant shift in audience behaviour – but here, Beckett focuses on differences in younger audiences and their consumption habits. He argues that younger audiences are utilising social websites to gain information regarding the news rather than relying on traditional sources such as newspapers and radio (Beckett, 2008: 32). This relates to the growth in popularity of social networking websites such as *Twitter* and *Facebook*, but it may also be a result of what some have argued to be a significant difference in

the way in which young people today have different “literacy” about technology than do older generations.

The Internet has played an important role in enabling audiences to be more “active” and has brought with it what Jenkins et al. (2006) refer to as a rise in “participatory culture”, where individuals are not only involved in the consumption of culture online, but are taking part in the production of culture as well. The term “participation” invites the assumption that participation involves some form of activity. “Participation” has been defined by the Oxford English dictionary as “the action of taking part in an activity or event” (Soanes, 2002: 610). In this case, “action” is required on part of the individual – this is not simply a given, but something that the individual must have some kind of desire to be motivated to involve him/herself in. Emphasis on the Internet as a force behind a move towards active audiences has also been supported by Clay Shirky (2000), who argues that the Internet in the twentieth century brought with it the decline of the “supposed” passive audience: for Shirky, we are now all “producers”. This is further supported by Rettberg (2008) who argues that blogging is a fundamental part of the shift in communication in contemporary society. The public are participating in a new form of communication, resulting in a move from passive to active audiences:

Blogs are part of a fundamental shift in how we communicate. Just a few decades ago, our media culture was dominated by a small number of media producers who distributed their publications and broadcasts to large, relatively passive audiences. Today, newspapers and television stations have to adapt to a new reality, where ordinary people create media and share their creations online. We have moved from a culture dominated by mass media, using one-to-many communication, to one where participatory media, using many-to-many communication, is becoming the norm. (Rettberg, 2008: 31)

This shift in communication is a result of the first precondition identified for citizen journalism: access to developed technology. Advanced technology, combined with an active audience, enables citizen journalism to occur online. Citizen journalism implies that audiences are interacting. Interaction may take

place in many forms: with the news media, with other blogs and websites, and/or with other people. Downes and McMillan (2000: 174) argue that cyberspace offers “opportunities” for what they suggest are “new” forms of interactivity. They suggest that interaction that occurs online has a number of distinguishing features: “Communication is two way, timing of communication is flexible, the common communication environment creates a sense of place, participants have control over their communication experience, communication is responsive, and the purpose of the site seems to focus on information exchange” (Downes and McMillan, 2000: 174). Take a social networking site such as *Facebook* as an example - it allows individuals to create their own space for communication and networking purposes. The individual has control over who can communicate with them, what they can share and, importantly, when they choose to interact. Prior to the Internet, the process of interactivity and communication was far more rigid and less unpredictable in terms of where/when interaction would take place. Whilst the Internet might enable interaction, there has been great debate over what the Internet means for social interaction in the “offline” world. Some argue that the Internet increases social interactions, whilst others argue that the Internet has a detrimental effect on social interaction offline.

In an attempt to understand social interaction on the Internet, Katz et al. (2001) studied the impact of Internet use on community engagement. In brief, they wanted to identify whether or not usage of the Internet resulted in a loss of sociability; that is, whether use of the Internet caused people to interact with others less frequently. Results from their nationally-representative telephone survey suggested that rather than reducing sociability, long-term use of the Internet propelled individuals to engage in “frequent sociability” (Katz et al., 2001: 413). Overall, they found that the Internet had a positive rather than a negative impact on society: “we find that Internet usage (a) is becoming more equally accessible and widely used and, controlling statistically for demographic differences, is associated with (b) increased community and political involvement and (c) significant and increased online and offline social interactions” (Katz et al., 2001: 416).

Similarly, in his ground breaking book *The Virtual Community*, writer and critic Howard Rheingold (2000) argues that online communities are “real”, and that people do in fact engage in what he refers to as “virtual communities”. He defines virtual communities as “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold, 2000: xx). Thus, virtual communities are social groups that emerge from individuals spending time online and forming relationships with other Internet users. Furthermore, Rheingold (2000: xvii) states that individuals in the virtual world do just as much as individuals operating in the real world, only that their “bodies” are absent:

People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries.

Rheingold can be seen as holding an optimistic view of social interaction in cyberspace. He argues that whilst “socializing” on the Internet may be a “shallow experience” for some, for others it offers a space where they are able to “share their most intimate feelings and seek support from invisible strangers” (Rheingold, 2000: 328). Importantly for Rheingold (2000), relationships that are formed in cyberspace can lead to a continuation of these relationships in physical space: just because a relationship has been formed online it is no less meaningful or “real”.

Wellman et al. (2001) also hold a positive view of the effect of the Internet on social interaction, and state that the Internet offers a range of social interaction based opportunities to meet people. Such opportunities include the enhancement of both face-to-face and telephone communication, being more aware of other's needs, making online arrangements to meet outside of

cyberspace, and that the Internet offers a “plethora” of information to be accessed online which can enable individuals to “find, join and get involved in kindred organisations” (Wellman et al., 2001: 438).

In an attempt to understand the impact of the Internet on social capital, Wellman et al. (2001) analysed results from a large-scale Internet survey conducted in 1998, which assessed individuals visiting the *National Geographic Society* website. The aim of the study was to identify whether Internet use increases, decreases or supplements social capital. Results from their analysis suggested that the Internet supplemented what they referred to as “network capital” (Wellman et al., 2001:450). Network capital consists of “relationships with friends, neighbours, relatives, and workmates that significantly provide companionship, emotional aid, goods and services, information and a sense of belonging” (Wellman et al., 2001: 437). For Wellman et al. the Internet supplemented this type of social capital, largely as a result of the Internet encouraging and therefore extending existing usage of face-to-face and telephone contact. They found that in particular, the Internet greatly encouraged and benefited relationships between friends. In addition to supplementing network capital, results from their study also suggests that the Internet increases participatory capital (Wellman et al., 2001:450). Participatory capital consists of individuals’ “involvement in politics and voluntary organisations that affords opportunities for people to bond, create joint accomplishments, and aggregate and articulate their demands and desires” (Wellman et al., 2001: 437). Wellman et al. found that greater use of the Internet led to individuals involving themselves in both online and offline organisations and political activity: “People already participating offline will use the Internet to augment and extend their participation. People already participating online will get more involved in person with organizations and politics” (Wellman et al., 2001: 450).

The only negative impact of the Internet on social capital that this study identified was that greater use of the Internet led to a decreased “commitments” to online communities (Wellman et al., 2001: 450). Whilst they have identified a number of useful and insightful understandings of the impact of the Internet on social capital, it is necessary to point out (as these authors have), that there are

no “single” Internet effects (Wellman et al., 2001: 451). Rather, with such a dispersed community, it is necessary to continue to understand the impact of the Internet. Every day, the Internet is changing: it is a fluid world that must be continually studied.

The positive perspectives on online social interaction discussed above are challenged by Kraut et al. (1998), who identified the Internet as having a negative impact on social interaction. Kraut et al. conducted a longitudinal study in the USA by tracing the Internet use of 169 participants over a period of one to two years. Overall they found that “greater use of the Internet was associated with small, but statistically significant declines in social involvement as measured by communication within the family and the size of people’s local social networks and with increases in loneliness, a psychological state associated with social involvement. Greater use of the Internet was also associated with increases in depression.” (Kraut et al., 1998: 1028).

Elsewhere, Nie (2001) comments on the results of studies that have investigated whether or not use of the Internet results in greater isolation and therefore less sociability and communication. Results from a study by the Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society (SIQSS) with which Nie had been involved in February 2000, suggest that Americans were spending more time working from home (as a result of the Internet and access to work) and therefore less time “shopping in stores, watching television, and spending time with friends and family” (Nie 2001: 421). Similarly, Nie comments on studies²² by other groups during that time, which also found that spending more time online meant spending less time socialising in “real time”.

We lean towards the position that via acts of citizen journalism the Internet does indeed have a positive impact on social interaction. However it is not possible at this time to ascertain how citizen journalism can impede or contribute to interaction offline. The vast developments in technology and the widespread adaptation of the Internet to communicate enable individuals not

²² Other studies include: NKK (National Public Radio, Kaiser Family Foundation and Kennedy School of Government), PEW (Internet and American Life Project) and UCLA Center for Communication Policy (Nie 2001: 422).

only to communicate with people they already know, but also to interact with others. However, whilst the Internet might be seen as an enabler of communication, it is useless unless the public choose to utilise it for their own specific purposes. To give an example, following the London bombings, Dave Goodman created a post on Flickr to inform his friends and family that he was safe. The post was received by what appear to be Goodman's acquaintances, but also by strangers who also felt it necessary to interact with him (see figure 7 below). In this instance, citizen journalism, that is the activities of the public, can be seen to enable and encourage social interaction on the web:

Figure 7: Comments Received - Goodman (2005)



bunchofpants [pro](#) (58 months ago)

Good to hear it—when I heard about the bombings this am I immediately wondered about the safety of my Flickr acquaintances.



StarrGazr [pro](#) (58 months ago)

Glad to hear you are alright Dave! :)



teclo [pro](#) (58 months ago)

Don't know you but glad to hear. Hope you manage to get out ok.

In effect, what we are witnessing is the existence of a continuum within the media's audience. Within contemporary society, there appears to be a shift from a passive audience towards a more engaged active audience, whereby *some* media consumers are actively participating in the news process on the Internet. Importantly, they are participating because they want to, regardless of whether organisations respond to interactions by the public. Perhaps audiences are happy enough to be acknowledged from the perspective that they are allowed to have a say.

This move from a passive to an active audience is a necessary precondition for citizen journalism to occur online. However, in order for citizen journalism to emerge, both precondition one (the utilisation of digital technology) and precondition two (an active and engaged audience) must come together online in what can be described as a third precondition for citizen journalism: a "lived" experience in digital culture.

3.3. Precondition 3: A "Lived" Experience in Digital Culture

In order for the public to participate in the practice of online citizen journalism, individuals must meet the precondition that they participate in digital culture, a "lived" experience of cyberspace. This thesis will employ the terms digital culture and cyberculture²³ interchangeably to refer to the "lived" culture of cyberspace that lends itself to embracing online participation. Cyberculture is a complex concept deriving from cultural studies, with no fixed definition.

David Bell (2001) develops an understanding of the term by focusing on a number of key elements. First, he argues that the term cyberculture forces us to take note of what takes place when the terms "cyber" and "culture" are conjoined. Bell (2001: 2) argues that the term "cyberspace" implies a combination of three dimensions: material, symbolic and experiential. These dimensions are "material" in that cyberspace requires physical elements such as wires, machines, screens and so forth; "symbolic" in that cyberspace also exists in "images and ideas" - individuals do not simply have physical interaction with cyberspace but also see cyberspace employed in the media, for example through films such as *The Matrix* (1999); and "experiential" in that we experience cyberspace in all its forms by "mediating the material and symbolic" (Bell, 2001: 2). The second component of cyberculture is the notion of "culture". Bell argues that cyberspace is cultural as it is lived and "made by people", and thus is logically cultural. Bell (2001: 3) also argues that it is necessary to consider cyberspace as both "a product of and a producer of" culture.

Prerequisites for digital culture are the preconditions discussed above: digital technology and an active audience. Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) argue that digital culture is in many ways expressed via digital media. Participating in digital culture has extended our abilities to communicate; members of the public are now both able to and capable of participating in the production and sharing of information online.²⁴ Not only have developments in

²³ Deuze (2006: 63) notes that a range of other terms are also used: information culture (Manovich 2001), interface culture (Johnson 1997), Internet culture (Castells 2001), virtual culture in cybersociety (Jones 1998).

²⁴ This has similarly been expressed by Dan Gillmor (2006).

technology enabled a digital culture to emerge, but importantly, this digital culture is global.

Anthony Giddens (2001) argues that globalisation is defined as the “processes which are intensifying worldwide social relations and interdependence” (Giddens, 2001: 51). Such processes that bring the world closer together include advances in science and technology such as communication and transportation. As argued by McNair (1998), the twenty-first century will become known for its ability to produce both global news and global audiences. McNair (1998: 126) argues that technology, a driving force behind globalisation, has greatly expanded the ability of individuals to communicate effectively, reducing “time-space barriers”. Giddens (2001) argues that globalisation influences our daily lives, for example through the rise of individualism, and that it has forced people to actively “constitute themselves and construct their identities”, implying that individuals must “live in a more open, reflexive way” (Giddens, 2001: 61). Thus individuals are constantly required to respond to changing social environments. Digital culture forces individuals to open up their lives: to participate, they must engage with others in an environment saturated with technology. Citizen journalism gives individuals the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions: once a citizen journalist has published his/her information for others to see, it more often than not also opens up a space for global discussion and wider communication. Others, not simply the author, are able to participate in citizen journalism.

Deuze (2006) argues that cyberculture is a feature of globalisation. Cyberculture is not restricted to the developed world, nor is it restricted by geographical boundaries: it is a global entity that stretches across space and time. Citizen journalism, a product of cyberculture, is also then a feature of globalisation.²⁵ Cyberculture is driven, not solely by organisations that seek out amateur journalists, but also by the will of the individual. It takes effort on part of the individual to engage with events and make something out of them.

²⁵ This will be fully shown in chapter 4.

Deuze (2006) has developed three components of digital culture which provide a key way of understanding how a “lived” experience of digital culture can be used to respond to an event using citizen journalism. These three components are: participation, remediation and bricolage.

Participation is a key component of cyberculture as it allows for individuals to involve themselves actively in culture on the Internet. Relevant to this thesis is what Deuze (2006: 67) refers to as a “gradual increase” of audience participation with the news media. Deuze (2006: 68) describes this as a rise of “Do It Yourself” citizenship, in which individuals want to be heard and listened to rather than simply being spoken to. He argues that the Internet functions as an “amplifier” of participation and has created a culture of “participatory authorship” (Deuze, 2006: 68). This amplification of participation can be seen in the audience’s ability to participate with the news media, in terms of the submission of information by individuals and the subsequent publication of that “selected” information. This will be seen throughout the case studies explored in chapter five via acts of citizen journalism. It is necessary to point out that participation in cyberculture is not restricted to participating with the news media: members of the public are also able to utilise the Internet to participate independently from the news media in the production and distribution of information.

Deuze’s second component of cyberculture is “remediation”. Remediation refers to the correction of information, whereby individuals are able to actively engage with old forms of media and critique its content by utilising new media. For Deuze (2006: 68), remediation is combined with “distantiation”, which is:

...a manipulation of the dominant way of doing or understanding things in order to juxtapose, challenge, or even subvert the mainstream. In the context of my argument here it is important to critique the supposed deliberate nature of distantiation; what people do or expect from each other as they engage with digital media is primarily inspired by private interests, and not necessarily an expression of radical, alternative, critical, or activist sentiments.

In relation to citizen journalism, members of the public can access the Internet and new forms of media to challenge the mainstream media: this may not, as Deuze states, be a deliberate act, but rather a result of individuals engaging with digital media and responding to a given situation.

Relating to this is the third concept of digital culture – bricolage. Bricolage is defined as “the creation of objects with materials to hand, re-using existing artefacts and incorporating bits and pieces” (Deuze, 2006: 70). The concept of bricolage is central to our understanding and future analysis of citizen journalism. Individuals refer to blogs to collate and publish information online. This information may not be first hand, but is a product of engagement with online sources by individuals. Deuze (2006: 71) argues that bricolage is an emergent practice and a distinctive feature of digital culture.

Digital culture is not just a product of an increase in participation online; it is also a useful tool for responding to events. Fishman (1980: 3), taking a constructionist stance towards the news industry, argues that people do not simply “do things” - by human nature, they create accounts of what they do. In order to make sense of situations, individuals interact with the meaning-making process – via the creation of stories, they are then able to make sense of the world they live in:

Rather than an aberration, the construction of social reality is inherent in the very nature of interaction. Not only is the social world known to its members through their accounts of it to one another, but these accounts are part of the very social world they describe and make intelligible. (Fishman, 1980: 3-4)

In order to respond to and understand an event it is therefore necessary that individuals interact online with material and one another.

The precondition of a “lived” experience in cyberspace requires precondition one and two to be brought together, where both the availability and desire to utilise digital technology are essential if people are to participate in citizen journalism. However, whilst these three preconditions enable us to understand the emergence of a form of citizen journalism that is largely

independent, one final precondition is necessary if we are to also understand the emergence of dependent forms of citizen journalism. This is an organisational change within the news media that enables dependent (online) citizen journalism to occur.

3.4. Precondition 4: Organisational Transition within the News Media

The fourth, and final, precondition for citizen journalism is related directly to acts of dependent citizen journalism, by those who rely on the news media for publication. There must be a space for these individuals to publish their accounts within the presentation of the news by news media organisations on the Internet. There has been significant changes occurring within the functioning of the news media in society, in a process that can be described as an “organisational transition”. Prior to outlining this organisational transition within the news media, which has enabled citizen journalism to emerge let us consider how the news media responded to advances in technology.

The development of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s led to the growth in the use of the Internet as a news medium (Rantanen, 2009: 116). For Adrian Monck (2008), the last decade (from 1999 onwards) has witnessed a “digital revolution” in which the media has come to dominate society. As previously discussed, forms of news media such as newspapers, magazines and radio have re-established themselves on the Internet, and in doing so have been able to increase their audience size. Furthermore, online news media organisations are able to expand the capacity and speed at which they are able to publish information. As a result, the Internet has allowed for a greater salience of news to be broadcast than ever before. Audiences are able to access vast

amounts of material online at no cost²⁶, even if this material not necessarily diverse (Paterson, 2007). Additionally, audiences are able to access material from a wide range of media: they are no longer restricted to local/national news, but can access a global forum of news via the Internet.

However, just because technology was available to news organisations, does not mean that news organisations automatically began to use them and that as some studies have shown, there is a hesitancy on part of journalists to incorporate material from the public into their presentation of the news (*for instance*: Hermida and Thurman, 2008; Paulussen and Ugille, 2008; Singer and Ashman, 2009; Boczkowski, 2010). However, as argued by Deuze (2007: 153), technology has been part of journalism, but should not be regarded as being independent from other factors:

“The success of journalism in reporting news across all media has always been influenced if not determined by technological advances...However, technology is not an independent factor influencing journalistic work from outside, but must be seen in terms of implementation, and how it extends and amplifies previous ways of doing things.”

Accordingly, rather than emphasis placed on the importance of technology, there are a number of contextual explanations which prove to be crucial in the adoption of dependent citizen journalism by news organisations.²⁷

For instance, Paulussen and Ugille (2008) conducted a qualitative study of four online newsrooms in Belgium and their adoption on of “user-generated content”. They (2008: 37) found that in relation to the Belgium news context, participatory journalism within the production of news is “developing rather

²⁶ Until recently, with media organisations such as Rupert Murdoch’s *The Times* charging for audience access to online content. Charging audiences to view online content is not taking place within all media organisations, but rather is at what could be described as a trial phase (as of 14th July 2010). Recent figures from the *Times* suggest that forcing individuals to pay for online news has not been an obvious success. As of the 20th July 2010, audience statistics state that 15,000 people have paid for subscriptions to the *Times*, with the *Times* seeing a 90% reduction in audience figures.

²⁷ For a review of studies on this area see Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009).

sluggishly". For Paulussen and Ugille (2008: 37), adoption of "user-generated content" is reliant on more than technology; they point to several contextual factors relating to the profession of journalism and the structure of the newsroom:

First, on an organisational level, we found that collaboration is not fostered by the present newsroom structure...Secondly, the lack of negotiations within the newsroom is also illustrated by the opposite opinions of IT staffers and editors regarding the implementation of the content management system...Thirdly, we found evidence that, especially in a context of high workload and lack of time and resources, journalists tend to fall back on the routines and sources they are most familiar with.

As illustrated by Paulussen and Ugille (2008), adoption of user-generated content is highly dependent of decisions within the news room environment.

For Allan (2008: 15), the Oklahoma City Bombing on the 19th April 1995 represented the "tipping point", where online news organisations realised the potential for news sites to publish breaking news. The use of the Internet as a forum for the communication of news was underway by the mid 1990s (Rantanen, 2009). Rantanen (2009: 116) argues that it is necessary to note that the Internet is not a news producer; rather it is a "vehicle for news" allowing for the transmission and reception of news. Rantanen points to Best et al. (2005), who argue that traditional media such as newspapers were quick to utilise the Internet. For example, by 2001 consumers could access approximately more than 15,000 newspapers from outside the US online. This was also met with the desire to access media online by audiences: the World Association of Newspapers argued that the Internet's audience for online newspapers has increased by 350% in recent years (Rantanen, 2009: 117). Statistics from the UK in 2008 (see Table 2 below) suggest that British online readership has significantly increased (Kiss 2008, in Rantanen 2009: 117):

Table 2: UK Online News Readership

Online Newspaper	Percentage Increase	Audience Figures
Mail Online	165%	17,903,172
Telegraph.co.uk	65%	12,384,706
Sun Online	40%	13,322,535
Times Online	39%	15,087,130
Guardian.co.uk	26%	19,708,711

It is evident that the use of the Internet by both audiences and news media organisations has been quickly accepted as a forum for the communication of the news. As argued by Reese et al. (2007: 236), the Internet has greatly increased the “speed, reach, and comprehensiveness of journalism available to the public and lowered the cost of entry to anyone seeking to participate”. Allan (2006) points to Katz (1997), who argues that the news media had to take note of the potential and capabilities that the new media had to offer: in particular, the new media’s ability to stop the stagnation of news through using the Internet to publicise up-to-date “breaking” news:

Newspapers have clung beyond all reason to a pretence that they are still in the breaking news business they dominated for so long, even though most breaking stories are seen live on TV or mentioned online hours, sometimes days, before they appear on newspaper front pages. (Katz 1997, in Allan, 2006: 24)

The realisation of the potential for enhancing the distribution of news forced a key organisational transition to occur within the news industry, and it is this transition that is a necessary precondition for acts of dependent citizen journalism.

The concept of “organisational transition” was developed by Beckhard and Harris in 1987, and is useful way of identifying the possible reasons for changes within the operation of news organisations in society. They define organisations as “social systems”, and state that “a social system is one in which the subsystems each have their own identities and purposes, but their activities must be coordinated or the parent system cannot function” (Beckhard and Harris, 1987: 24).

Within the wide range of news organisations in society, each individual system has its own identity which editors and journalists strive to maintain. For example, *The Daily Star*, a tabloid newspaper in the UK, maintains its efforts to report on news, celebrities and sport, whereas a broadsheet newspaper such as *The Financial Times* focuses on supplying international business, financial, economic and political news. Change within the news media today is noticeable. As identified by Beckhard and Harris (1987: 30), change within organisations is often instigated “outside” the organisation:

Changes in legislation, market demand resulting from worldwide competition, availability of resources, development of new technology, and social priorities frequently necessitate that organization managers redesign the organizational structures and procedures, redefine their priorities, and redeploy their resources. (Beckhard and Harris, 1987: 30)

In terms of the news media, new technologies such as the Internet have forced competition within the news industry, with greater numbers of people spending their time online it was only a matter of time before news organisations began to establish an online presence. However, the speed with which news organisations choose to move to an online presence is not entirely attributed to advances in technology, but as expressed by Pavlik (2001) “A set of economic, regulatory and cultural forces, driven by technological change, are converging to bring about a massive shift in the nature of journalism” (Domingo, 2008: 16).

As identified by Gere (2002), the majority of media can be seen to have converged online by establishing themselves and participating in the production, publication and distribution of media on the World Wide Web. When an organisation changes the way it operates, in essence it changes not only the way in which it chooses to conduct business, but also the “culture” of an organisation. Beckhard and Harris (1987: 7) state that culture “is the set of artefacts, beliefs, values, norms, and ground rules that defines and significantly influences how the organisation operates”. For example, by recognising the desire of some within the audience to participate in the discussion of news, news organisations also have to change how they perceive that interaction takes place: for example, by adopting strategies that allow news organisations to dedicate space for the

public to “have their say”. News organisations have indeed changed, largely as a result of advances in technology that have enabled them to adopt an online presence, which in turn has allowed for greater audience interaction with the news – a key precondition for dependent citizen journalism.

An example of a media organisation realising the importance of changing to meet the demands of publishing citizen journalist’s material is provided by the *BBC*:

But for Newsgathering, what happened on 7 July three years ago marked a watershed: the point at which the BBC knew that newsgathering had changed forever. In one sense it was just an example of what might be called “accidental journalism”. No one who set off for work that fateful morning had any idea that their mobile phones would capture such dramatic images...Within 24 hours, the BBC had received 1,000 stills and videos, 3,000 texts and 20,000 e-mails. What an incredible resource. Twenty-four hour television was sustained as never before by contributions from the audience; one piece on the Six O'clock News was produced entirely from pieces of user-generated content. At the BBC, we knew then that we had to change. We would need to review our ability to ingest this kind of material and our editorial policies to take account of these new forms of output. (Boaden, 2008)

A distinctive feature of the news media operating on the Internet today is the use of social media tools such as blogs and *Twitter*. A study conducted by Singer in 2004 revealed that professional news organisations, including television networks and other national news outlets, were creating blogs as part of their communication strategy. Singer points out that the first use of a blog to break a national news story was in 1998, in which the *Charlotte Observer* reported the unfolding events of Hurricane Bonnie (Singer, 2005: 176). In the US, Singer reports that according to the *American Press Institute*, over 400 blogs were owned and published by journalists, suggesting the acceptance and utilisation of the blogosphere within the mainstream media (Singer, 2005: 176). This is supported by Rantanen (2009) who argues that in the US in March 2007, 95% of the top 100 newspapers included blogs from reporters: this figure had increased

by 80% since 2006. Evidence suggests that in the US, the news media continue to incorporate the use of new forms for media such as blogs into their production and presentation of the news. However, in England, national newspapers are also utilising new forms of social media. Table 3 (below) shows that nine daily national newspapers all have accounts on *Twitter* that are used to update audiences about breaking news.

Table 3: Twitter use in England National Newspapers Online

News Organisation	Twitter Account	Website
The Sun	Yes	
The Daily Mail	Yes	
The Guardian	Yes	
The Independent	Yes	
The Daily Telegraph	Yes	
The Financial Times	Yes	
The Times	Yes	
Daily Express	Yes	
The Daily Mirror	Yes	

If news media organisations are using social media tools to present the news, it is also of interest to identify how organisations responded to the emergence of citizen journalists' desire to publish their information through the news media.

A recent study by Hermida and Thurman (2008) reveals how British news organisations responded to the rise of what they refer to as "user-generated content". The study was conducted in November 2006 with the use of an online survey and in-depth interviews, and was a follow-up study to Thurman's research in 2005. Their sample consisted of twelve²⁸ leading national newspapers (Hermida and Thurman, 2008: 344). Results suggest that there exist nine formats to encourage audience participation: polls, message boards, have your says, comments on stories, Q&A's²⁹, blogs, reader blogs, your media and your story. Of the twelve newspapers assessed, only one – *The Independent* - did not have a space that allowed audiences to participate in the wider discussion of news. Three of the newspaper websites sampled – *The Guardian*, *The Sun* and

²⁸ UK National Newspapers included in the study: *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Star*, *Financial Times*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Mirror*, *Telegraph*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, *This is London* and *The Scotsman* (Hermida and Thurman, 2008: 346).

²⁹ Q&As: Questions and Answers

The Scotsman - forced audiences to register if they wanted to participate. It is therefore possible to note that as of 2006, not all (mainstream) newspaper websites in the UK encouraged audience participation³⁰. Similarly, a study by Domingo et al. (2008: 334) also revealed a number of platforms that enable audiences to participate in the production of news:

“The most common features offered by the studied cases enabled users to act upon journalistic content, such as by ranking or commenting on it. Features that let citizens produce content themselves were developed in relatively few websites; most popular were invitations to submit audio-visual materials (mainly photos) and story ideas, links to social networking sites and space for citizen blogs.”

Thus whilst news organisations can be seen to be creating spaces for the publication of material created by the public, as argued by Domingo et al. (2008), Boczkowski (2010) and Hermida et al. (2011) this is conducted in such a way that enables news organisations to maintain decision making processes at each stage of news production: access/observation, selection/filtering, process/editing, distribution and interpretation.

In their study, via interviews with news executives in the *BBC*, Hermida and Thurman (2008) found that news executives were concerned about a number of “potential” consequences of the increase in user-generated content. Examples included fear of marginalisation by user media, and concern over retaining staff: for many this led to professional journalists being given “space” for their own blogs, so as to allow them to “target a different audience”. As a news executive from *The Mirror* stated: “Our science editor is keen to take a blog because he can address an audience in a way which he feels more comfortable with rather than having to dress everything up as a tabloid idea” (Hermida and Thurman, 2008: 349). A further explanation as to why news organisations may have felt reluctant to encourage audiences to interact with their newspapers and therefore may have been “struggling” to know how to allow user-generated

³⁰ An enquiry into whether or not the *Independent* ‘now’ allows and makes space for audience interaction revealed that, in October 2010, this was the case, with the public now being ‘allowed’ to submit comments to articles – although registration is required.

content may be their desire to “protect the brand”, and not wanting their identity to change as a result of what audiences might “say”. In this way, news media organisations are forced to remain as “gatekeepers” by maintaining editorial control over the submission of comments. This suggests, as previously mentioned, that within the process of organisational change, the “culture” of news organisations has also had to be reconsidered, so as to incorporate the audience, whilst maintaining control over the identity of the news organisation as well as the content and quality of news.

The presence of “spaces” for members of the public to have a voice in news organisations is a central precondition for dependent forms of citizen journalism. The transition of the news media to online presentations of the news, and creating space for the public to participate in the construction of news, can be considered a sign that the media landscape is adhering to the demand for audience interaction whilst maintain control over the production of information.

3.5. Citizen Journalism – Not New, Just Distinctive

It is evident that the public’s involvement in the news process is not an entirely new form of journalism. However, in present society, via citizen journalism or by acting as what Bruns (2008) calls “producers”, members of the public are able to participate in both the production and usage of news in two distinct ways: through the self-publication of news online and via the publication of their material through the professional news media. Technology combined with a desire to participate enables individuals to interact with others in a digital culture that allows individuals to participate in forms of independent citizen journalism, where they use their own systems of communication to post their accounts of the news for audiences to view. For citizens to contribute to the news via the news media, it is necessary for them to send their information to news organisations that have gone through a process of transition, whereby the news organisation has an online platform that includes a space for citizen contributions.

Whilst the public’s involvement in the journalism process is not new, the emergence of citizen journalism online is a technology-driven mass

phenomenon. Without the Internet and a public that is interested in sharing their experiences and accounts, forms of online citizen journalism would not be possible. To understand further the emergence of citizen journalism, let us consider citizen journalism in relation to a number of case studies of terrorism, enabling us to see how citizen journalism has developed and become more prominent in the reporting process between 2001 and 2008.

4. Citizen Journalism and Terrorism: from Blogs to Twitter

Less than 10 minutes after the first passenger jet struck the World Trade Centre, eyewitness accounts began to appear on the web. People were desperate to put into words what they had seen, to share their experiences, even when they defied comprehension. (Allan, 2009:23)

Experience shows that, during an act of terrorism, it is apparent that *some* members of the public feel compelled to record and share evidence of the event. Capturing of information may be in the form of taking a photograph, recording a video, or simply using prose to recount experiences. If their observations are published, either via the news media or by their own digital means, some members of the public are directly participating in the news production process in what has been referred to as citizen journalism. Individuals are not simply assisting in the production of news, but from a constructionist perspective they can be seen to be assisting in the “social construction of news”.³¹ By focusing on the reporting of terrorism it is possible to provide evidence of how the public are playing a crucial role in the reporting process and, accordingly, the construction of a piece of news, placing pressure on the “traditional” conceptualisation of the construction of news in society.

The purpose of this chapter is to supply a thematic timeline, providing evidence to suggest how instances of citizen journalism in relation to terrorism have evolved between 2001 and 2008. In order to analyse the difference between citizen journalism efforts published by the news media and those that were self-published, a distinction will be made between forms of citizen journalism that were self-published by the author in acts of independent citizen journalism, and those that were published via the author’s interaction with the

31 Examples of early studies that viewed the news as a social construct include: Gieber (1964); Schlesinger (1978); Golding and Elliot (1979); Tuchman (1980); Schudson (1989) – see chapter two for further information.

news media, via acts of dependent citizen journalism. This chapter will utilise terrorist attacks that received vast amounts of attention from the *BBC* between the time period of 2001 and 2008, including: the 2001 attacks in the USA, the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2003 Madrid attacks, the 2005 London attacks, the 2007 Glasgow attacks and the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

By looking at a significant sample of terrorist attacks between 2001 and 2008 that received substantial media coverage, it is possible to take note of the advancement of the public's increasing presence in the production of news. The 9/11 attacks marked both the pitfalls of the news industry online and the potential of the Internet for audience interaction, creativity and ultimately citizen journalism. As Allan (2009) argues, eyewitness accounts began to appear online less than ten minutes after the first plane hit the World Trade Center. Whilst ordinary members of the public were utilising the Internet for the wider discussion and dissemination of news surrounding the attacks, in what this thesis refers to as citizen journalism, news sites were also exploring options that enabled them to present citizen news coverage. For Allan (2009), the 9/11 attacks proved problematic for the news organisations that published their news on the Internet, as their websites were unable to withstand unprecedented amounts of audience traffic. The number of people trying to access online news sites for updated information on the attacks caused website servers to crash. Individuals then needed to seek alternative ways of finding information, and also the frustration of not being able to access information led some members of the public to create their own spaces on the Internet to share the information that they were able to access (Allan, 2006).

The 9/11 attacks clarified that individuals demand up-to-date information from Internet sites, causing the potential of the Internet for reporting the news to be realised and subsequently acted upon (Allan, 2009). With news organisations unable to respond effectively to audience demands, individuals sought their own means of sharing and discussing the news, with *some* individuals making use of personal websites, chat rooms and email mailing lists to discuss news of the events (Gillmor, 2006). As Allan argues:

Elsewhere on the web, however, hundreds of refashioned personal websites began to appear over the course of the day, making available eyewitness accounts, personal photographs, and, in some cases, video footage of the unfolding crisis. Taken together, these websites resembled something of a first-person news network, a collective form of collaborative news-gathering. Ordinary people were transforming into “amateur newsies”, to use a term frequently heard at the time, or instant reporters, photojournalists and opinion columnists. (Allan, 2009: 24)

Accordingly, with individuals using their own systems of communication to create their own accounts of the news via acts of citizen journalism, we must question what we can learn, post-9/11, about the way in which citizen journalists participate in the construction of news following an act of terrorism. What follows is an analytical presentation of instances of citizen journalism following acts of terrorism. Following this analysis a discussion will be developed to help assess some of the problems identified in the assessment of citizen journalism during these attacks. This knowledge of some of the consequences of citizen journalism reporting enables us to widen our understanding of the implications of citizen journalism for those wishing to participate in digital claims-making; accordingly, we will discuss the consequences of citizen journalism for digital claims-making.

4.1. The Surge of Citizen Journalism within the News Media

This section is concerned with providing evidence of acts of dependent citizen journalism, which were reliant upon the *BBC* for publication throughout a series of attacks after 9/11. Following these attacks, a vast amount of material was forwarded to the news media for publication. The *BBC's* annual report notes over 15 million page impressions (visits to website pages) on the day of the attacks, 23 million page impressions the following day, and over 750,000 emails received from members of the public expressing thoughts and reactions to the attacks (BBC, 2001a). This data is useful in informing us of the extent of audience interaction with the *BBC* following the attacks, where some individuals can be seen actively to seek information about the attacks, using the *BBC* news website

as a source of information. Furthermore, the number of emails sent to the *BBC* following the attacks illustrates the efforts made by individuals attempting to make contact with a news organisation following an event to share their thoughts and reactions.

In more direct forms of dependent citizen journalism, the *BBC* also received emails that contained eyewitness accounts from people who had personally experienced the attacks. On its website, the *BBC* (2001b) claimed to receive “thousands” of emails from members of the public, providing detailed stories of their experiences of the attacks. The *BBC* published nine of these accounts. The following quote is taken from one such account, which the *BBC* subsequently published on its website:

A second jolt hit as I was standing on the ramp leading down to the reception area. Again, the building leaned one way and sprang back the next. This was also accompanied by the sound of an explosion. Burning metal pieces and tons of paper were flying outside the south windows and falling to the ground below. Several people just stared out the windows, completely shocked at what they were seeing. I really thought the building was going to fall down right then and there. (BBC, 2001b)

The above excerpt is a statement by Brendan MacWade who worked on the fortieth floor of the north tower, containing an in-depth account of what it felt like to be in the twin towers when the plane hit. MacWade describes the “jolt” and “leaning” of the building and the sight of “metal” and “paper” out of the windows. Furthermore, MacWade gives an indication of his interpretation of others’ reactions at the time: “complete shock”. A second example of a member of the public choosing to submit her account to the *BBC* for publication comes from Sue Frederick:

My company was close to ground zero. When the plane struck the building it felt exactly like an earthquake. The only advanced sound was a large windful swoosh. At first we had no idea if it was a bomb or the building had been struck. Our personnel immediately headed for the stairs as smoke began filtering quickly down...We got our first glimpse of what looked like a war zone. We walked through ankle deep dust and out

through a doorway to the outside plaza in front of the US Customs building. As we were led to a stairwell to street level we climbed over girders and moved around office furniture and layers of office papers, twisted metal, broken glass and other debris... (BBC, 2001c)

Here, as with the account told by MacWade, Frederick provides a detailed explanation of her experience. Having also been in the north tower at the time of the attacks, Frederick explains how it felt when the plane struck the towers - "like an earthquake". Her account goes on to supply further exhaustive details of her evacuation of the tower, describing obstacles they were met with as well as other people's reactions. In both examples cited here, we see that dependent citizen journalists are able to provide rich details of their experiences: unless directly involved, a professional journalist would not be able to provide such a personal account of being caught up in a terrorist attack.

In some ways, September 11th helped news organisations to realise the potential of public news-gathering efforts, causing a number of news organisations to create spaces for material produced by citizen journalists. The American news organisation *MSNBC* established an online bulletin board that enabled members of the public to submit their experiences of the attacks online, and *Washington Post* created a "Reporters Query" page for requesting information from the public, encouraging individuals to contact *Washington Post* via email (Allan, 2006: 62). Additionally, Allan (2006: 63) points out that news organisations not only made space for citizen reports on their websites, but that professional journalists actively participated in chat rooms to request "contact from people with eyewitness accounts or those willing to discuss efforts to reach relatives in New York City or at the Pentagon". It is possible to see changes within news organisation being made in order to adapt to the demands and expectations of the audience: that is, to publish their own accounts of the news on news websites. Such organisational changes made by the news media make it clear that news media organisations appeared to welcome input from members of the public involved in the attacks, thereby forming a working partnership between the news media and the public, with each benefiting from the actions of the other. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, this welcoming of

material has not been automatic, nor has it been without caution and in some cases sceptic on part of news organisations. Rather it has taken time for news organisations to begin to open spaces up for members of the public to contribute to the production of news; when space is opened up it is heavily controlled by news organisations.

Citizen journalism in the media was again present in both the Bali (2002) nightclub attacks and the 2004 Madrid train bombings. By this point in time, further changes within media organisations had begun to take place. The *BBC*, for example, had set aside a section of its website to include input from the public – between 2002 and 2004 this section transformed from “Bali Terror: Were you there?” to the now permanent public opinion/comment page – “Have Your Say”. As seen in Figure 8 (below), the *BBC* actively encourage audiences to submit videos, pictures and stories to the website using a range of digital tools, including SMS (text messages), MMS (media messages) and email. In addition to encouraging individuals to participate in sending news into the *BBC*, audiences are also encouraged to follow the “Have Your Say” - page on the social networking website *Twitter*.

Figure 8: BBC’s “Have Your Say” (BBC, 2011)



Following both the Bali (2002) and Madrid (2004) attacks, comments submitted to the *BBC* consisted of personal accounts as well as the sharing of information. For example one personal account submitted following the Bali attacks stated:

On the Saturday night that the bomb went off we were sitting in bar called Tubes about 100 metres from the explosion. There were was a loud bang and then a few seconds later an even bigger explosion. Everyone stood up and started running, with screams coming from all directions. Me, my sister and my boyfriend headed straight up to Legian Street to see if we

could help. It was amazing to see how people were working together to help all the victims... *Naidi, Ireland. (BBC, 2002)*

This comment gives a detailed, personal account of an individual's experience of the Bali bombings – as was identified following the 9/11 attacks in 2001. The author, Naidi, provides context of her location at the time of the attacks – in a bar called “Tubes” approximately “100 metres” from the explosion. She then goes on to give a detailed account of the situation following the blasts - people running away, the sound of screams. Not only does Naidi give a description as to the movements of other people, indicating public response to the attacks, but she also supplies an account of her own movements – going towards the attacks with her companions to see if they could offer support. Information from the public, although subjective, can supply evidence of the variations in public responses that can occur when the public are subjected to an act of terrorism, from running away from danger to running *towards* danger to be of assistance.

Comments submitted to the *BBC* following the Madrid attacks in 2004 were also in the form of personal accounts, and also provided information that would help in the quest for identifying an individual's safety:

To Ginny, San Diego: At 2100 hours I saw the official list of the wounded given by the Ministerio de Interior. Your son and his friend don't figure in this list. You can see the list via this link: [List of victims from Spain's Ministry of Interior](#) And you can also visit the Ministry of the Interior website via this link [Ministry of the Interior](#). *Oscar, Badalona, Spain. (BBC 2004a)*

To everyone: there's a list of people who have been identified at www.thejakartapost.com. *Alice, USA. (BBC, 2002)*

In addition to providing information and accounts, some individuals utilise these public spaces of communication on news websites to share their thoughts and emotions with other people. For example, following the Madrid train attacks in 2004, the following comments were submitted to the *BBC* to be shared with other viewers:

Now I am afraid to take the metro: I always look around me, I have my heart beating faster every time I see a bag on its own, even if its owner is nearby. Thank you Mister Aznar for your imperialist dreams. *Alexander, Barcelona, Spain.* (BBC, 2004b)

My condolences to the family of the officer who lost his life, and to the injured. The Spanish have shown courage in pursuing the individuals responsible for the attack on their people, while still opting for peace. *Katrina, USA.* (BBC, 2004b)

When London fell victim to four acts of terrorism during rush hour on the morning of the 7th July 2005, resulting in 52 deaths and approximately 770 injuries (BBC - What Happened, 2005k), individuals at the scene of the attacks, equipped with camera phones, utilised their own personal forms of technology to record the events. Vast quantities of photographs and videos were uploaded to the Internet and submitted to the news media for publication. In their annual report, the BBC reported that on the day of the attacks, they received “about a thousand images and clips emailed in by members of the public (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2005/2006, 2006b: 48). Of this material received, the BBC published 15 images in the section “London Explosions: Your Photos”, ranging from photographs taken walking up Tube tunnels to photographic evidence of the bomb blasts. Figure 9 (below) provides examples of these images:

Figure 9: BBC - Your Photos - 07/07 (BBC, 2005L)



Accompanying Text: An office worker took these photographs from the safety of her workplace...



Accompanying Text: Passengers are led through the tunnels to safety.

These images provide firsthand accounts of the scene of the attacks, both in the Underground and above ground. As with the comments of survival stories, the pictures submitted to the *BBC* also supply evidence of public response. For example, figure 9 (above) provides evidence of what appears to be an orderly evacuation out of the tunnels to safety, with no sign of panic or disarray. In a world where visual evidence is a must-see, photographic material from members of the public following an act of terror is growing, as will be discussed further when considering the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Visual representations of the terror attacks in London were not restricted to photographic still images: citizen journalists uploaded and submitted mobile phone video footage from the attacks and their aftermath, and the *BBC* aired one minute and eight seconds' worth of footage in total. At times the visual clarity of the video was certainly not one hundred percent, but the video footage, taken inside the Underground for example, does offer an insight into what it felt like to be involved in the attacks.³² As Allan (2006) notes, the striking visual images captured by members of the public on the day of the attacks became extremely newsworthy, and were accessible to members of the public as a result of the advances in technology.

Importantly, the 07/07 attacks also marked a point in time when the news media noticed and commented upon the importance of the contributions from members of the public to help present news of terror attacks. The *BBC's* director of new Helen Boaden (2008) writes:

[F]or newsgathering, what happened on 7 July three years ago marked a watershed: the point at which the BBC knew that newsgathering had changed forever. In one sense it was just an example of what might be called "accidental journalism". No one who set off for work that fateful morning had any idea that their mobile phones would capture such dramatic images...Within 24 hours, the BBC had received 1,000 stills and videos, 3,000 texts and 20,000 e-mails. What an incredible resource. Twenty-four hour television was sustained as never before by

³² See Video at:

contributions from the audience; one piece on the Six O'clock News was produced entirely from pieces of user-generated content. At the *BBC*, we knew then that we had to change. We would need to review our ability to ingest this kind of material and our editorial policies to take account of these new forms of output. (Boaden, 2008)

From the perspective of the news media, news contributions by members of the public during the 07/07 attacks were an important "resource" to the *BBC*, helping them to supply continuous, 24-hour news coverage of the attacks.

The continuing presence of citizen journalism within the news media following an act of terrorism was also seen in the UK following the attempted suicide (car) bomb at Glasgow Airport in 2007. The attack at Glasgow airport took place at 15:15pm when a Jeep Cherokee drove into the front doors of the airport, trapping itself in the automatic doors. After numerous attempts to get the car to move further into the building, two "would-be" suicide bombers tried to flee from the scene, but were quickly tackled by members of the public. From the perspective of citizen journalists, once again members of the public had the tools at their disposal to record unfolding events.

Videos uploaded to *YouTube* of news media organisations reporting the Glasgow attacks reveal that there is a reliance on contributions from citizen journalists to help them present such news visually. The video of the *BBC*'s report of the attacks was three minutes and forty seconds long, and had (so far – 19 February 2011) been viewed 26,077 times – showing that the material was receiving an audience. The video includes an interview with an eyewitness, John Smeaton, who assisted the police in tackling one of the men responsible for the attack. Alongside video footage of the interview with Smeaton are a series of photographs of the attacks were presented (see figure 10 below). In the video uploaded to *YouTube* we are witnessing two instances of citizen journalism: the first is of the images by members of the public at the scene of the attacks utilised by the *BBC* in its report, and the second is the act of recording *BBC* footage and sharing it with others on the video sharing website *YouTube* (dstpfw, 2007).

Figure 10: Glasgow Airport Attacks – BBC Footage



A video by *Sky News* (Figure 11 below) was also uploaded to *YouTube* for viewers to see. The video was substantially longer than the *BBC* video and lasted six minutes and forty-one seconds; receiving 129,557 viewings. The video includes two instances of journalists from *Sky News* interviewing members of the public who had witnessed the attacks. The video also contains footage that appears to have been recorded by a member of the public at the scene of the attack. Strikingly, the video contains evidence of other members of the public attempting to record images of the Jeep Cherokee on fire (Jasper10623, 2007):

Figure 11: Glasgow Attacks – Sky News Footage



In the image on the right (above), the woman in blue appears to be attempting to take video/photographs of the fire. Other useful information identified from the *Sky News* video is of a member of the public providing an eyewitness account of

the attacks, which includes reference to his brother-in-law having submitted video footage to *Sky News* for publication and the speaker also acknowledges his own recording habits, admitting to recording pictures on his mobile telephone:

Yeh, I mean my brother in law sent the first picture into yourselves. I've actually got some more on my phone, that's looking directly onto the scene. (Jasper10623, 2007)

The attacks were reported to be part of a larger scheme by individuals associated with Al Qaeda, who also failed to set off a number of other car bombs in London on the previous day (*BBC*, 2007). Hermida (2007) discusses the presence of citizen journalism following the Glasgow attacks in the UK: once again the *BBC* was inundated with footage of the attacks, with over 70 images and videos sent in by members of the public. Hermida (2007) argues that it is "the public, rather than professional journalists" who are "increasingly recording the first draft of history".

In contrast to the other terrorist attacks discussed here, the 2008 Mumbai attacks saw the media confronted with the dangers of relying on the public for information. On the 26th November 2008, Mumbai became the victim of multiple terror attacks, the worst it had ever experienced. A series of attacks perpetrated by Muslim terrorists from Pakistan occurred within minutes of each other. In the first attack, gunmen targeted the Chhatrapati Shivaji railway station; in the second, gunmen opened fire on a popular café (Café Leopold); in the third, gunmen seized Nariman House, a business complex housing a Jewish outreach centre. The fourth attack was targeted at Cama and Albles hospital for women and children; the fifth and sixth attacks involved gunfire and the seizure of two luxury hotels, Oberoi-Trident and the Taj Mahal Palace. Gunfire was also widely reported throughout the city (*BBC*, 2008). The attacks resulted in 165 fatalities and approximately 304 injuries (Indian Ministry of External Affairs Dossier, 2009).

As identified in the other attacks discussed in this chapter, the Mumbai attacks were also accompanied by eyewitness statements to media organisations such as the *BBC*, where those involved in the attacks directly contributed to the reporting. In the quote below, Farhang Farzad Jehani spoke of incidents in the

café that he owned, in which a number of his customers and employees were killed by terrorists. As seen with other eyewitness statements, a member of the public involved in a terror attack is able to offer a sense of “reality” by telling his/her story to the news media. In his account, Jehani provides context through rich descriptions of sounds and imagery, and presents claims about the continuing movements of the terrorists:

On the night of the attack, I was watching the cricket match between India and England on TV in the bar upstairs with my brother...I suddenly heard a big blast. It sounded like a grenade. I peered down and spotted two young boys standing outside the cafe with automatic weapons who were firing indiscriminately...The firing continued for some four to five minutes. I crouched on the floor upstairs...After that, the guns stopped. Then the two men continued walking down a by-lane, firing from their guns. They were on the way to the Taj hotel. By the time I came down to the cafe, two of my employees and six customers, including three foreigners, lay dead on the floor. (*BBC, 2008*)

The *BBC* was criticised for its “heavy” reliance on *Twitter* as a tool for information during the Mumbai attacks, raising questions as to the amount of trust and reliability we can place on citizen journalist-based information. In responding to the criticisms, one of the *BBC*’s editors Steve Hermann in December 2008 argued that *BBC* did indeed monitor the micro-blogging service. He argued that the *BBC* was forced to make “quick judgements” in “selecting” what they thought was relevant and informative information. For Hermann (2008), messages from *Twitter* did not supply a great deal of information about the events, but did “give a strong sense of what people connected in some way with the story were thinking and seeing”. In concluding his report on the *BBC*’s actions during the Mumbai attacks, Hermann (2008) argues that the *BBC* (as with other news organisations) is still learning how to deal with new forms of information during events, and argues that an active audience is required to analyse and interpret the information the *BBC* links to: “So as the story progresses, as one element of the coverage, we will select, link and label the

emerging information. Further assessment, equipped with this information, is left to you.”

Whilst citizen journalist material submitted to the news media was present during the Mumbai attacks, the attacks were most notable for the contribution of citizen journalists in a more independent form, with the publication of material via blogs and social networking sites rather than the news media.

Having analysed some examples of dependent citizen journalism following an act of terrorism between 2001 and 2008, what have we learnt? Between 2001 and 2008 the utilisation of citizen journalist material by the news media has been both embraced and criticised. There has been a continual growth in the amount of material submitted to the news media for publication, by members of the public. The type of material has grown as technology has expanded, however this may also be linked to a greater willingness and desire on part of the public to participate in the production of news. The attacks in Bali and Madrid (2002 and 2004) provoked citizen journalism for the most part in the format of comments and personal accounts - however as time progressed, citizen journalism expanded to include photographic and video footage, as seen with the 2005 London bombings. Spaces created within news organisations not only enable citizen journalists to contribute to the content of the news, but create an outlet for the expression of emotions that they are able to share with others, thereby assisting them in the process of meaning-making.

Over time material authored by citizen journalists has become more visual and its potential and usefulness was noted, appreciated and welcomed by the news media. In this instance, the *BBC* is not only requesting information and material from the public, but by using social media platforms such as *Twitter* it has begun actively to encourage audiences to follow content that is written by dependent citizen journalists. This is important as it illustrates the extent of the news media's appreciation of what appear to be considered newsworthy contributions by dependent citizen journalists. The *BBC's* director of news - Helen Boaden (2008) - argues that the public are important to the news media as they “enrich” news content:

It's no surprise then that the BBC has gone from passively accepting user-generated content to positively soliciting it. It's not just a "nice to have" - it can really enrich our journalism and provide our audiences with a wider diversity of voices than we could otherwise deliver. (Boaden, 2008)

However, another way of looking at the interaction between the news media and members of the public is by regarding citizen journalism as an extension of the "reality media" format. In the UK, a range of television shows invite audiences to interact with the show and become active audiences: they are encouraged to believe that their opinions matter. This was seen in the UK's 2010 political campaign, where a televised debate between party leaders invited members of the viewing public to contact the show with their questions, a sample of which would then be put to the leaders for answering (ITV Press Release, 2010). By encouraging audiences to "have their say" via acts of citizen journalism we are witnessing the extension of reality television into the news media industry.

There appears to be evidence leaning towards a convergence of interests between the news media and the public. Members of the public utilise the news media as a platform for the dissemination of their own personal information, thereby ensuring an audience; in return, the news media rely upon members of the public to submit information for publication, giving them a more in-depth account of a terrorist attack and thus enhancing their ability to report the event. Accordingly, material produced and submitted by members of the public to the news media is shared with wider audiences - this material is checked for "accuracy" by those working within the news media. It is not necessary to consider dependent citizen journalism as a threat to the existing news media, for if the material is handled correctly by professionally trained journalists, it can supplement the existing portrayal of news.

4.2. The 'Independent' Citizen Journalist during Times of Terror

Citizen journalism published by the news media has expanded over time - but so too have independently-published contributions by citizen journalists. As outlined by Gillmor (2006), there are a number of online platforms that permit users to publish their own material on the web, including (to name a few):

mailing lists and forums, weblogs and *Wikipedia*, and social networking websites. This section will analyse two main platforms that have been used in the self-published reporting of terror attacks: the blogosphere and social media networking websites such as *Twitter* and *Flickr*. Between 2001 and 2008 there is evidence to suggest that *some* members of the public are increasingly utilising their own platforms of communication for the publication of material, suggesting that in addition to citizen journalism that is processed and published by the news media, there has also been an expansion of independent forms of citizen journalism.

Between 2001 and 2005 there appears to be less content independently published by citizen journalists than there is such material published via the news media. Following the 9/11 attacks, a blog post by Zoidberg (2001) titled “Rage Like a Fist” contains a personalised response, starting with the author recounting his colleagues watching the news on the television, and later holding a memorial service for friends and family in Manhattan and Washington DC. The author also discusses his contempt for the response to the terror attacks by President, George W. Bush, and suggests his own preferred, resilient response:

A surreal day spent in a crowded office watching a 767 fly into the World Trade Center, then the subsequent mayhem. Our era has its own Pearl Harbor. I was very disappointed with Bush's response to the terrorist attacks. If there ever was a time he needed to step up to the plate, this is it. People need to feel that he has taken charge of things, that they can trust his administration to deal with this... Do what you can to aid and comfort the survivors, campers. (Zoidberg, 2001)

A second example of a blog post written on the day of the 9/11 attacks was by Lee Kottner, who discusses his own “near miss”. It appears that Kottner had difficulty in writing about the attacks as he was too shocked to put the event into words:

I suppose in some ways I'm one of the near-miss stories in the attack on the World Trade Center (WTC). If I had gone to work at the time I'd planned the night before, I would either have been on the W train coming across the Manhattan Bridge, and thus watching it all happen, or on the

local R train, which runs beneath Church Street, right in front of the WTC plaza, a few hundred yards from WTC 2. At about that time of the morning, if I'd been on the R, we would have been in the very near vicinity of the Cortlandt Street station, the uptown side of which lets out into one of the basements of the towers...But while listening to all of this on the radio (I don't have a TV and was glad enough of it after seeing the stills and streaming video on the net later), I kept thinking, write it down! But I couldn't. It was too fresh, too immediate, too horrific, too unbelievable... (Kottner, 2001)

Interestingly, both posts supplied as examples of instances of "citizen journalism" did not include images or links, which would have added to the presentation of the news. Having contacted both *Live Journal*,³³ the blog hosting site used for the post by Zoidberg (2001), and *Type Pad*, the blog hosting site used by Kottner, it is possible to confirm that users of both *Live Journal* and *Type Pad* (in 2001) were able to include both links and images in their blog posts – yet this appears to be an option not taken by both of these individuals.

The 07/07 attacks brought citizen journalism following an act of terrorism into the spotlight. In addition to submitting footage to the news organisations such as the *BBC*, members of the public utilised public spaces on the Internet for the publication of material surrounding the attacks. There is extensive use of blogs to not only discuss the 07/07 attacks, but in addition, members of the public compiled their own version of events providing links, images and text to construct and portray their own understanding and interpretation of the attacks. Material was largely seen in the format of images and text, with members of the public presenting their firsthand accounts and/or using the blogosphere to inform others of their safety and well-being. Allan argues that following the 07/07 attacks:

Members of the London blogging community were mobilizing to provide whatever news and information they possessed, in the form of typed statements, photographs or video clips, as well as via survivors' diaries,

³³ See Appendix D and E for emails.

roll-calls of possible victims, emergency-response instructions, safety advice, travel tips, links to maps pinpointing the reported blasts locations, and so forth. (Allan, 2006: 15)

Allan (2006: 15) also notes that the blog tracking website Technorati identified more than 1300 blog posts relating to the 07/07 attacks by 10:15am (the attacks took place at approximately 08:50am). Such information suggests that citizen journalism via the blogosphere was widespread.

Not only were blogs used to report “something” about an act of terrorism, but there have also been instances of citizen journalists utilising their blogs to criticise the news media. This can be seen in a blog post written by Tim Porter, whose wife was in London on the day of the 2005 attacks. He compiled a blog post that originated with his attempts to track his wife down in London; the post proceeds with details of reporting activities by members of the public online, and argues for what news should have been reporting following the attacks – particularly calling for further engagement with citizen coverage:

What do I want in my Wall Street Journal, New York Times and San Francisco Chronicle when I pick them up from the porch tomorrow? I want the type of reporting that professionals can still do better than citizens, but also points to the best of the citizen work... (Porter, 2005)

Unlike the activities of bloggers following the 9/11 attacks, Porter and a wide range of other bloggers were making use of links and images to supply further details regarding the terror attacks. Below (figure 12) are three examples of blogs using links and images in their reporting of the 07/07 attacks.

Figure 12: Links and Images – 07/07³⁴

Tim Porter
(Blog 4)

July 07, 2005

LONDON BOMBINGS: THE UNREAD NEWSPAPER



Three newspapers lie unopened and unrolled on my kitchen table.

The fact that I subscribe to the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and the San Francisco Chronicle tells you much about the trust I place in newspapers as an institution. The fact that I didn't give these more than a fleeting glance this morning speaks just as strongly to their **uselessness on a day of major news**.

Stories, photos, audio and video reporting on the **London bombings** in London fill the **Internet**, top the web sites of news organizations and occupy the attention of the **news media**. The front page of the Times is **dominated by a picture** showing a throng of Londoners cheering for the city's successful Olympic bid. **How sadly outdated it is today**.

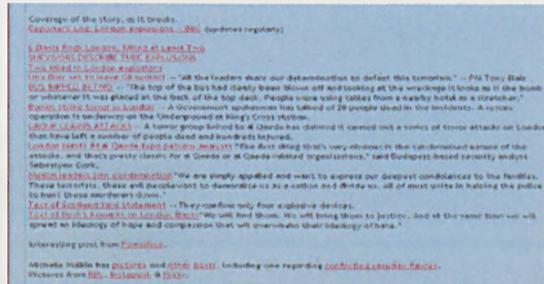
My wife is in London on business, an investment conference not far from one of the tube stations that was bombed. She took a cab today, by chance, rather than the subway and is fine. At 3:15 a.m., a call from her mother woke me, to tell me about the attacks. **It took me an hour to locate my wife**, an hour spent on the phone and on the Internet, finding telephone numbers, reading the BBC and Yahoo and Google news.

Andrew's Photoblog
(Blog 5)

Andrew's Photoblog



Rhymes with Right
(Blog 120)



In an analysis of blogging during 07/07, results revealed that of 169 blog posts, 34 contained images (17.4%), 86 blogs contained links to other blog sites (44.1%) and 76 blog posts include links to news media organisations (39%).³⁵

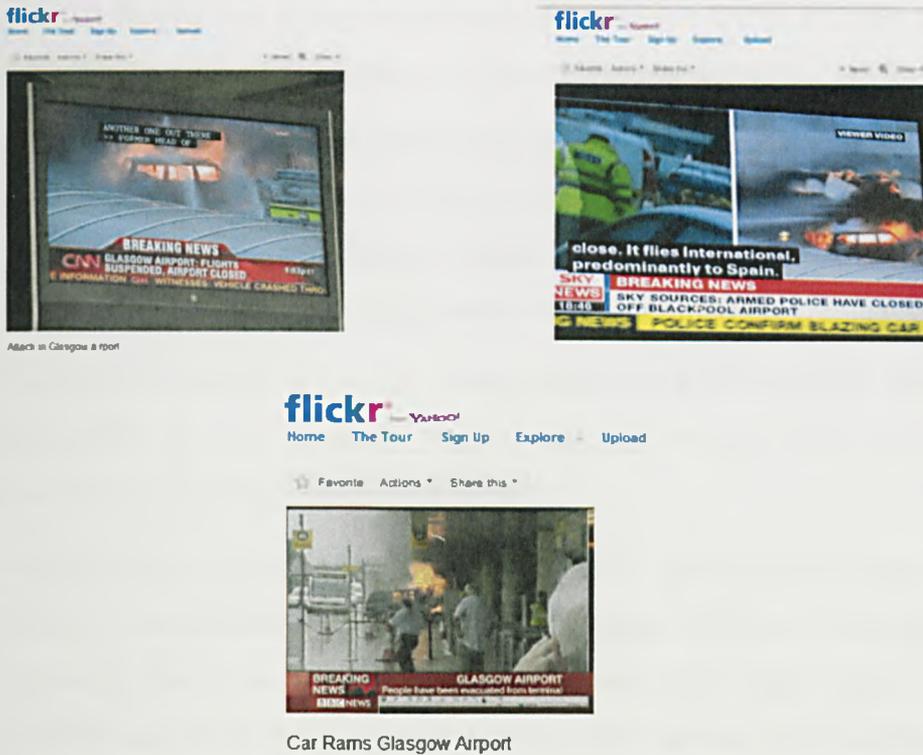
The continuing presence of citizen journalism can be seen following the 2007 Glasgow airport attacks. A *Google Blog Search* for the day of the Glasgow attacks revealed that approximately 1288 blog posts were written about the attacks – suggesting that extensive discussion took place by members of the public across the Internet. The Glasgow attacks also represented the first noticeable usage of *Flickr* by a member of the public to upload and store photographs of the event. Following an advanced search of *Flickr* for the term

³⁴ For list of blogs see Appendix A.

³⁵ The nature of blogging following 07/07 will be fully analysed and discussed in chapter 7.

“Glasgow Airport Attacks” for photos uploaded on the day of the attacks, a total of 90 photos were identified. Only eight of these were found to be of any relevance to the attacks; three contained photographs of television screens announcing the attacks (one of *BBC*, one of *CNN* and one of *Sky News*).

Figure 13: Photograph of News Media Reporting of the Glasgow Airport Attacks (2007)



In this regard, the photograph of a news report appears to serve as evidence of an act of terror taking place.

The six images discussed below were taken by James A. Moore, a member of the public who made his way to the airport to capture photographs of the event, offering live photographic evidence of the situation. Whilst Moore classifies himself as a professional wildlife photographer (Moore, n/a³⁶). By professional, Moore seeks to profit from his photography of wildlife (Moore, n/a). However, by posing images of the Glasgow airport attack on the social networking website – *Flickr* – the act of uploading photographs online can imply that for a specific point in time, Moore acted as a citizen journalist. Moore’s rationale for placing the photographs on *Flickr* was as a log, and also as a way of

³⁶ No date has been cited here, as there is no copyright date on Moore’s website.

distributing the images had they been needed. However, as of March 2010, the photographs had not been used elsewhere. Had the photographs been purposefully sent to news professionals for distribution, Moore would have been working as a professional photographer. However, uploading images to share on a social networking website, rather than his professional (working) website does not imply that Moore was acting on professional grounds. Upon hearing news of the attacks, Moore immediately made his way to Glasgow airport:

I took the photographs about 40 mins after it happened. I live in Glasgow and hearing about it - I was in the car and on my way to the airport without giving a second thought. Thankfully I knew a couple of alternative routes to the airport as the motorway was all jammed up. (Moore, 2010)

Whilst waiting, Moore met a Spanish photographer who showed him images of the burning car. At this moment Moore realised the potential for citizen journalism in this situation:

Interestingly - whilst in the group - a Spanish photographer approached some of the journalists with the signature image of the car burning in the doorway. You may have seen this as it was extensively published - I actually saw it on the back of his camera and at that point realised that despite the best efforts - the people who would have had by far the most evocative and powerful images were those who were at the scene right after it happened. So in this case - it was the citizen journalists who were there by chance rather than intentionally that got the best images. (Moore, 2010)

The pictures presented in Figure 14 (below) were taken by Moore and posted on *Flickr*. In all but one of the six images, it is possible to note the presence of the police.

Figure 14: The Glasgow Airport Attacks: Flickr - James A. Moore



Following the uploading of images onto *Flickr*, Moore felt he was subjected to some hostility from audiences, questioning why he felt it necessary to upload photographs of such events:

I did get a bit of flack for posting them on *Flickr* - but I guess this was before the times of *TwitPic* and the like and maybe then was still frowned upon. The term “sicko” I believe was used. (Moore, 2010)

This reaction raises some interesting questions as to how members of the public feel about the content produced by the public, which would be a fruitful area for future research.

Of particular importance to citizen journalism following an act of terrorism are the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which are now renowned for the central role that citizen journalists played in the up-to-date commentary of news reports and photography of the unfolding terror attacks. Due to the large volume of content produced, reports of the power of social media were soon highlighted across the web: for instance, Gauravonomics (2008) declared *Twitter* as the “best source for real time citizen news on the Mumbai terrorist attacks”. The UK’s *Daily Telegraph* declared that throughout the Mumbai attacks the “social web came of age” (Beaumont 2008), and *NowPublic* declared “crowd-powered news reports of terrorist attacks in Mumbai as a climactic moment in a year in which citizen journalism proved its mettle” (Kioskea, 2008).

One citizen journalist, Vinukumar Ranganathan (2008), uploaded 112 photographs to *Flickr*. The photographs were taken in Colaba and consist of images of the destruction to vehicles and buildings from a series of blasts. The vast range and quantity of images allow for a clear visual presentation of the devastation caused by the blasts. Having uploaded them on to *Flickr*, Ranganathan's citizen journalism efforts were recognised by various news establishments. For example, *Digital Journal*, a citizen journalism-based news organisation, stated:

Digital Journal is pleased to recognize the hard work of photographer Vinukumar Ranganathan, whose photos of the attacks' aftermath are spread throughout the news network. His album is definitely worth a long look, and the articles using his photos shed light into a chaotic week in India; from useful updates to opinion pieces on sliding investor confidence. (Silverberg, 2008)

As noted by Asher Moses (2008) a reporter for Australian media organisation *The Age*, hundreds of thousands of individuals have made their way to Ranganathan's *Flickr* page to view evidence of the Mumbai attacks. As of 5th May 2010, there were 159,958 views of the photoset taken by Ranganathan (2008), which provides evidence that citizen journalism-based material does indeed attract an audience.

Brian Stelter and Noam Cohen (2008) of the *New York Times* report the citizen journalist efforts of Arun Shanbhag, who posted images onto his personal blog. Shanbhag wrote of a "responsibility to share my view with the outside world" (Stelter and Cohen, 2008). His photographs present images of the attacks at the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower hotel, as well as images taken from near the hotel outside cafés and barber shops that show the devastation caused by gunmen, including bullet holes in a motor vehicle and pools of blood from victims of the attacks. Some of the images are graphic, and supply a clear presentation of the devastation caused by the terror attacks. Interestingly, as seen in the second picture, those individuals in the picture (with one exception) do not appear to be caught up in the sight of the blood, but instead can be seen to be talking and (in one case) reading. In this case, not only does citizen journalism

give a wider presentation of the destruction caused in a terrorist attack, but a citizen journalist can also indicate how the public responds during times of terror.

Figure 15: Personal Blog - Aru Shanbhag (2008)

Revision ~ 10:30 – 11:00 pm Indian Time

Follow my updates on Twitter <http://twitter.com/arunshanhag>

OMG! One of the domes of the Taj is on fire; It is burning like a bonfire! I can actually see the structs/frameworks under the tiles in full blaze. OMG! NO! This can't be happening!

~ Hand held; rested my elbow on the sill!; Sorry for blurry images from ~ 10:45 pm



This is so painful – but we should all see these pics and be MAD at the terrorists; Pool of blood of the waiter; He had rushed out of the Leopold with his serving tray, which is still in the pic.

Whilst photography is a powerful form of citizen journalism, other citizen journalists arranged their blogs so as to provide descriptive accounts of their experiences during the Mumbai attacks. For example, writing for *The Guardian* in the UK, Jessica Reed (2008) comments on the use of group discussion boards for the display of information by those on the ground:

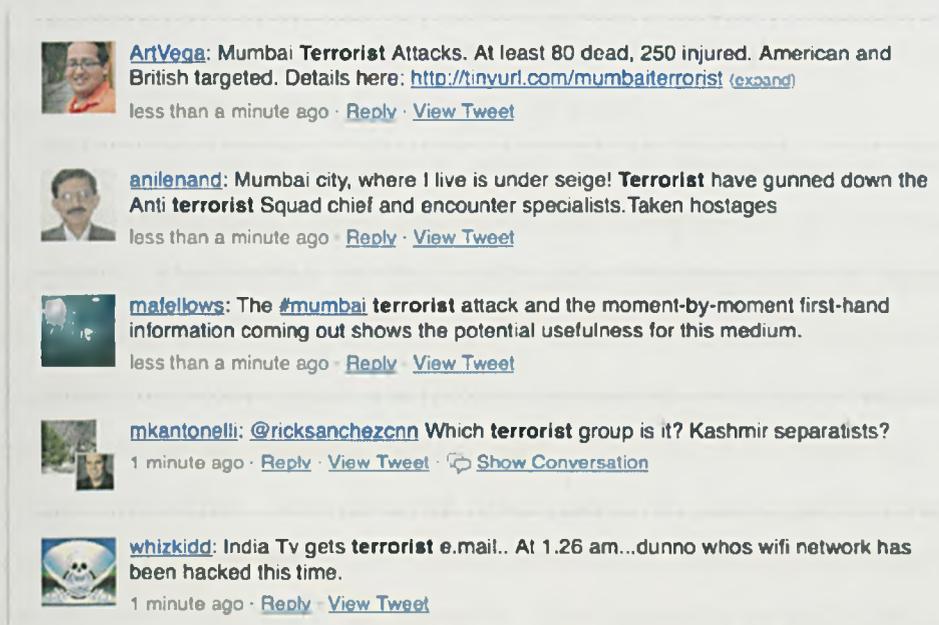
India Uncut recalls the beginning of the attacks as he was standing down the road: That's when we realised that this was much more than a random police encounter, or a couple of gunshots. We heard that terrorists with AK-47s had opened fire outside Leopold's, the pub down the road. We watched transfixed, and as the apparent scale of the incidents grew, we realised we couldn't go home. (Reed, 2008)

Other uses of the blogosphere during the Mumbai attacks were the reporting and discussion of instances of citizen journalism on the Internet. For example, Gauravonomics (2008) utilised his blog to supply an in-depth account of

different citizen journalist activities taking place, from the use of *Twitter* to personal blog sites. Hongyan (2009), writing a paper for the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, discusses the use of the blogosphere for the establishment of information. Hongyan refers to “Mumbai Help”, a blog that provided useful information such as contact details for embassy and consulate hotlines, as well as acting as a service to help individuals get in touch with families/friends in Mumbai.

A distinct feature of the Mumbai attacks, compared to the other terrorist attack discussed in this chapter, is the use of *Twitter*. For Gauravonomics (2008), *Twitter* was the best source of citizen journalism material on the Mumbai attacks. A range of tweets can be seen throughout the attacks; and writing for Tech Crunch, a weblog concerned with profiling and observing new Internet companies, Michael Arrington (2008) provides a number of examples:

Figure 16: Twitter Feed - Mumbai (Arrington, 2008)



Information in the tweets includes the number of casualties and fatalities, as well as more extensive tweets concerning action on the ground - as seen by anilenand (above). Gauravonomics (2008) reports that Twitter was used during the siege for the dissemination of information to friends and family in Mumbai, and mentions he was so overwhelmed by the amount of tweets that he could not keep up with tracking them. As Stelter and Cohen (2008) reported for the *New*

York Times: “at the peak of the violence more than one message per second with the word ‘Mumbai’ in it was being posted onto *Twitter*”.

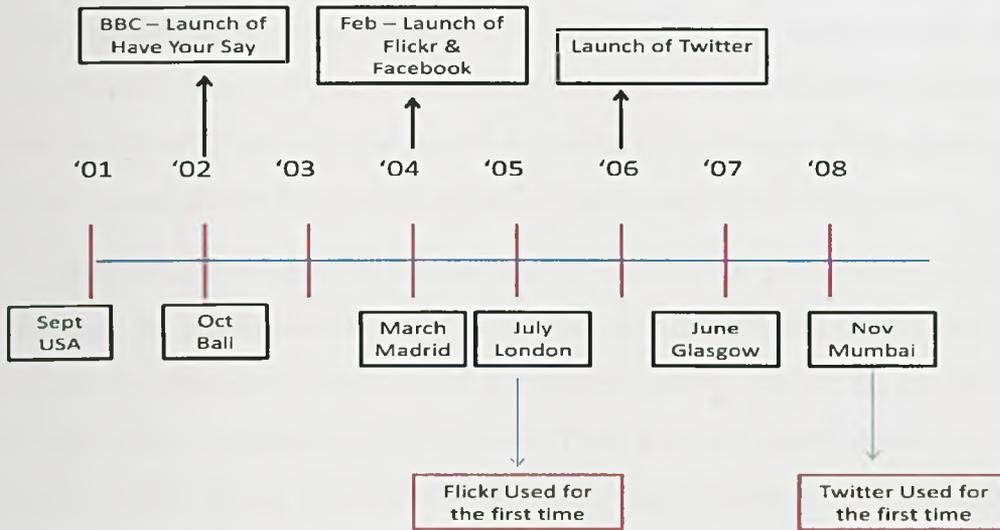
Twitter was not only a popular platform for citizen journalism - for some, it was a means of staying up to date with unfolding events. As reported by Stelter and Cohen (2008), for a small segment of the Lubavitch Hasidic community in the USA, *Twitter* was used to “follow the fate of their rabbi, Gavriel Holtzberg, his wife, Ricka, and their son, who were being held hostage in Mumbai”:

“I relied on *Twitter* heavily,” said Mordechai Lightstone, 24, a freelance journalist and Lubavitcher with a *Twitter* account. “As a person interested in what is going on over there, it gets frustrating when the news cycles on itself.” (Stelter and Cohen, 2008)

As Moses (2008) argues, the citizen journalism effort during the 2008 Mumbai attacks “upstaged” the efforts of professional journalists. When an attack takes place in the public eye, the future of reporting is not simply left to the work of professionals; amateurs can also play a crucial role in the production of information and photography surrounding an event.

What, then, have we learnt about citizen journalism by reviewing instances of independent citizen journalism following an act of terrorism? The most striking observation is the noticeable development in technology, particularly Web 2.0. There has been a noticeable trend in the adoption of new websites and their subsequent use for the publication of material surrounding a terrorist attack by independent citizen journalists. Over time, platforms utilised for citizen journalism have evolved from blogs to social networking sites, particularly *Twitter*. However, this utilisation of new platforms for dissemination has not occurred automatically, therefore developments in technology do not automatically bring about changes in audience interaction with technology, rather, as can be seen in figure 17 (below) there is a noticeable time lag before new platforms are adopted in the process of reporting by members of the public.

Figure 17: Web 2.0 and Independent Citizen Journalism Reporting of Terrorism



In February 2004, prior to the Madrid attacks of March 2004, two fundamentally important social network sites - *Facebook* and *Flickr* - were launched. As of 10th February 2010, *Facebook Mobile* reported having over 100 million users worldwide, all able to access *Facebook* from anywhere at any time (*Facebook* 2010). Just 16 days after the launch of *Facebook*, on 20th February 2004, Ludicorp, a private company interested in developing interactive technology online, launched *Flickr*, a social networking site for uploading and sharing photographs online (Ludicorp, 2004). Each of these social networking sites enable individuals to connect to other people worldwide, by sharing information, photographs, video and establishing global discussion and communication. From the perspective of citizen journalism, social networking sites not only serve as platforms for dissemination of news but can also be seen as agents attracting and engaging audience use of the Internet.

However, the use of *Flickr* and *Facebook* by the public for reporting a terrorist attack was not apparent during the 2004 Madrid terror attacks, showing that it takes time for a new medium of communication to be adopted by members of the public. It was not until July 2005, following the 07/07 London attacks, there seems to be a coincidence in that *Flickr* began to be recognised as a social networking website for the sharing of photographs. The true potential for *Flickr* was realised during the Mumbai attacks when citizen journalists used the

site to publish photographs – as discussed above, one citizen journalist posted over 100 photographs of the destruction caused during the siege. As with *Flickr* and *Facebook*, it was not until over a year following its launch that *Twitter* was forced into the spotlight with the Mumbai attacks of November 2008, showing its ability as a news forum for reporting during/following a terrorist event.

As time has progressed, so too has the number of platforms available to members of the public to take part in the production and distribution of news online. Across the globe individuals are participating and accessing material published online by members of the public. This “growth” in independent citizen journalism is not simply a result of advances in technology, but as discussed in the previous chapter, can also be attributed to a growing desire on the part of some members of the public to participate in the sharing of information on the Internet. From 2001 to 2008 it has become evident that members of the public are participating in the news process following an act of terrorism, not just independently but also through the news media as well. With such a surge in individuals wanting to be involved, it is possible to view this expansion as a form of *contagion*: witnessing others sharing their experiences and opinions may compel others to record and share their own experiences. This may be linked to the globalised nature of interaction and sharing in digital culture.

Giddens (2002) argues that globalisation is a key feature of society, which influences the daily lives of individuals worldwide. Just as the professional news media have become globalised, so too have instances of citizen journalism. Individuals want to express themselves at times of terror and to share their experiences with others - not just close friends and family but anyone who cares to view their material. Evidence of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism has not only occurred in Western countries such as the UK during the 07/07 attacks, but was also found to be evident following the attacks in Mumbai. The “culture” with which an individual associates him/herself does not appear to influence participation in citizen journalism – digital culture is not restricted by geographical boundaries – but appears to be a shared global entity.

4.3. Conclusion: Problems Associated with Citizen Journalism and Implications for Digital Claims-making

The analysis of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism in this chapter has assisted us in seeking to understand the nature of citizen journalism today. In terms of understanding the relationship between dependent citizen journalists and the news media, we have come to recognise that material and experiences recorded and shared by members of the public are, for the most part, newsworthy items. Some news media organisations, such as the *BBC*, have made efforts to include information from dependent citizen journalists in their presentation of an act of terrorism. Not only is this information by members of the public welcomed by the news media, but it is also requested by the news media. Additionally, the *BBC* have been engaged with Web 2.0 platforms such as *Twitter* to encourage members of the public to consume material that comes from dependent citizen journalists.

Elsewhere, members of the public are reporting acts of terrorism without the assistance of the news media, via acts of independent citizen journalism. Whilst they are not guaranteed an audience, the development of social media platforms of communications on the web, such as *YouTube*, *Twitter* and *Flickr*, have made it easier for members of the public to share their information with other Internet users. In general citizen journalists can add to the existing news framework of an act of terrorism, particularly in offering a more personalised experience of the attacks. However, whilst citizen journalists can be seen to complement our understanding of the news, there are also important considerations to be made.

Online forms of citizen journalism offer claims-makers a “new” opportunity for the practice of claims-making. Earlier understandings of claims-making regards claims-makers as being reliant on their (or a contact’s) relationship with the news media for the publication of claims (Blumer, 1971; Spector and Kitsuse, 1973, 1977; Fritz and Altheide, 1987, Best, 1987). Today, however, the digital culture in which an individual chooses to participate offers claims-makers a distinct way of promoting their claims to audiences. The practice of participating in what I refer to as “digital claims-making” is not

without its problems. The final section of this chapter seeks to provide an account of such problems.

The Internet offers individuals a unique space for the self-publication of claims: however, access to the Internet is not the only thing required to participate in digital claims-making. Individuals must also have a desire to participate in their own form of claims-making by using the digital tools available to them. The Internet provides an unlimited carrying space for the publication of individuals' claims, but this does not guarantee that the claims will gain an audience. Rather, those participating in digital claims-making will have to take extra steps to ensure the capturing of an audience for their claims. With such a strong desire to be heard, this leads us to question how far individuals will go to receive an audience for their material.

During the analysis of citizen journalism following acts of terrorism, a query was raised by Pamela Welsh, a journalist writing for *The Guardian*. Following the Glasgow Airport attacks in 2007, Welsh was concerned about whether individuals would place themselves in danger by trying to record evidence, and ignore their civic duty of being of assistance to others:

When the burning car careered into Glasgow's terminal one building and the police were attempting to arrest the suspects, these "citizens" did not go and help the authorities. They put themselves in grave danger, without regard for their safety or the safety of those around them. Surely, the whole point of being a good citizen is to help others, to actively participate in public service, volunteering and working to make life better for all. Why did the owners of the mobile phones that captured the burning car on film not step in? Why did they not do something to help? At the very least, they should have ushered their fellow citizens and on-lookers to safety, not stood there filming such a traumatic event. (Welsh, 2007)

Welsh raises important questions that seek to understand why individuals at the scene of the Glasgow airport attack participated in trying to capture material about the events. This is an extremely interesting area of consideration for

sociology, and should be investigated further: sociologists need to develop a greater understanding of motivations behind citizen journalism³⁷.

Welsh also brings attention to the issue of how far people will go to participate in citizen journalism - will individuals put themselves in danger to satisfy their needs of recording events for publication? Does citizen journalism pose a threat to security and safety? Capturing an act of terrorism on film would be considered extremely newsworthy: the video, if clearly shot, is likely to capture the attention of audiences and encourage others to view the content as well. The footage recorded by members of the public of the airport attack in Glasgow provides evidence of citizen journalism material being newsworthy, as it was picked up and aired live on television by news organisations such as *Sky News* and the *BBC*.

Another way of viewing the “dangers” associated with citizen journalism, is by developing an understanding of whether or not such behaviour is anti-social (Bakker and Paterson, 2011:191). Baker and Paterson (2011) refer to the work of Glaser (2005), who following the London bombings investigated the idea of citizen journalists acting as “citizen paparazzi”; “That naked impulse to tell a disaster story, glaring kleig lights and all, was once the province of mainstream and tabloid news organizations. But no longer. Now, for better and worse, our fellow citizens stand by, cameraphones in pockets, ready to photograph us in our direst times”. Glaser points to Jardin, a freelance technology journalist, who raises the question of the ethical implications of citizen journalist behaviour, if we are able to utilise technology to capture people in their “direst times”, we therefore have an ethical obligation to consider our actions; particularly in relation to norms such as compassion and responsibility. This echoes Welsh’s (2007) questions of why the people with the mobile phones choose to take pictures rather than step in and help. It is essential therefore, to question what citizen journalism means for our morals in certain situations.

³⁷ This recommendation for further research will further be explored in the chapter eight section 8.6

What, then, does capturing newsworthy content imply for claims-making? It is necessary to point out that just because an individual participates in sharing information with others, which is not to say that they are participating in claims-making activities: many individuals may simply be communicating with others, and we must not mistake claims-making for communication and discussion. However, when considering the activity of claims-making, claims-makers will have to compete for audience attention, and this means employing the standards set by the news media in constructing the presentation of their claim as newsworthy and therefore worthy of publication. Since the 1960s it has been evident that for a piece of news to make it on to the news agenda it must be newsworthy (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Warner 1968; Schlesinger 1978; Tuchman 1980), for some, this means that it must have certain features to capture audience attention.

However, newsworthiness is not simply something that can be measured according to whether or not a “story” meets criteria. In addition, newsworthiness is a professional goal (see for example Breed, 1955; Tuchman, 1978 and Clayman and Reisner, 1998). Clayman and Reisner (1998: 178) argue that “for journalists within news organisations, front-page placement is coveted as a badge of professional status and success”, thus it is necessary note that gaining publicity and attention for a story is not necessarily a goal to meet public expectations of what they want to know about, in addition it is tied to the desires and decisions of those working within the professional news media.

For claims-makers to be successful in capturing the attention of audiences online, they must employ tactics that both enable their claims to be placed on their own agenda, and also gain traction within the professional news media. This forces us to raise the question as to how far claims-makers will go to capture audience attention: such as placing themselves or others in danger.

Not only are there difficulties for claims-makers to have their claims heard by audiences, there are also difficulties with the audiences that claims-makers actually have. Audiences are unpredictable, and this raises the problem of trust: as Youngs (2009: 135) argues, audience interaction within the blogosphere is “vast and unpredictable”.

Youngs argues that the blogosphere's vast audience, made up of individuals with very different backgrounds, can mean that the consumption of information does not necessarily "guarantee effective and clear communication" Youngs (2009: 135). This unpredictability within the audience can be linked to Best's (2008) observation of audience segmentation in contemporary societies. There is no longer a single "mass audience", and audiences both demand and expect a wide range of media sources to inform them of news updates. Confusion and unclear communication is an understandable consequence of this, particularly in how a claim may be received. Thus the way that a claim is communicated must be specific and to the point, so as to ensure that the claim is communicated in such a way so as to minimise the likelihood of the claim being received in an unclear manner.

The wealth of information available on the Internet brings with it issues to do with whether the information is "trustworthy, reliable or relevant" (Youngs, 2009: 136; Keen, 2007), and what "other" uses information might have. As a result, Youngs (2009) argues that it is necessary for audiences within the blogosphere to be critically active: rather than consuming information passively, individuals must sift through the mountain of information that is available to them and use their knowledge and intuition to decipher its meaning.

In addition to the problem of untrustworthy information, the danger of *too much* information has been highlighted. During the Mumbai siege, the *BBC* was criticised for not checking the information tweeted by the public prior to sharing this information with their audiences. Thus in addition to the need for "critically active" audiences, news organisations also have to be increasingly critical of the information they receive and subsequently choose to publish. In relation to claims-making, this may increase the difficulty of getting claims picked up and published by the news media, as it is often difficult for claims to be validated and subsequently authorised for publication. Maratea's (2008) study found that unless news officials were able to validate claims, the claim would not be given attention; therefore, regardless of the amount of time and attention claims-makers spent using blogs to promote their claims, the claim was not picked up by the news media.

In addition to the criticism of the news media's reliance on *Twitter* during the Mumbai siege, *Twitter*-using members of the public around Mumbai were criticised for sharing too much information. At one point, when *Twitter* was used to release military and police responses of the siege, it was rumoured that the Indian authorities feared that the publication of this type of information might be "useful" to the terrorists. In the quote below, Reed (2008) points to the posting of a message on Global Dashboard by *BBC* reporter "Alex" that the Indian Government had asked for all live tweets from the scene to "cease immediately":

A tweet reading as follows is proliferating on *Twitter* as users re-post it on their feeds: "ALL LIVE UPDATES - PLEASE STOP TWEETING about #Mumbai police and military operations". Various *Twitterers* reply indignantly that if they're to stop posting the details, the broadcast media should do the same.

Melanie Lee (2008) reported similarly, for *Reuters*:

Twitter came in for some criticism as well in the blogosphere for divulging too many details that could prove helpful to the gunmen holed up in the hotels with their hostages and who may have been monitoring blog sites. "It's a terrorist strike. Not entertainment. So tweeters, please be responsible with your tweets," said one blogger identified as *primaveron@mumbai*.

Such extensive sharing of information could potentially pose a threat to the security of others and restrict efforts of emergency services to respond to an incident. However, this fear is based on the assumption that, in the case of the Mumbai attacks, those involved in carrying out the attacks would be following *Twitter* and therefore exposing themselves to information being shared by audiences. The problem therefore exists at the level of knowing what people do once they have been exposed to information – once information has been published the author is unable to control its subsequent uses.

Central to the issue of the secondary use of information is the process of inter-media agenda-setting. Within the blogosphere, inter-media agenda-setting is identifiable through the presence of links within a blog post. When a citizen

journalist uses links to the news media and other blog sites, there is evidence that “others” are setting the agenda for that author. Inter-media agenda-setting appears to be taking place within the presentation of a piece of news by independent citizen journalism. For claims-making, this presents a potential problem of what will happen to the claim once it is published on a blog (for example): the claims-maker has no control over how others will use the claims in his/her own presentation of news, where the claim may be distorted (see for example the case described by Lowney (2007) in chapter 2).

The availability of digital technology and an active public has allowed for the gradual emergence of an online digital culture in contemporary society, renowned for its ability to present an arena for members of the public to create and participate in the construction of news. Consequently, we must question what citizen journalism mean for the creation of news today. As this chapter has shown, the news media have come to appreciate and in some cases, welcome the content that members of the public are able to produce, and is opening up its traditional model of news-gathering so as to involve the public. Thus there is potential for the news media and audiences to work together to create the news. As argued by Boczkowski (2010: 184), citizen journalists can “supplement the media rather than supplanting them”.

In order to explore fully whether this potential has become a reality, it is necessary to conduct further analysis into the relationship between the news media and dependent citizen journalists. To do so, what follows is a thorough analysis of the nature of dependent citizen journalism following the 07/07 London bombings, and also a thorough analysis of independent citizen journalism following 07/07. The use of a case study in both of the following analysis chapters assists with a further exploration of our understanding of the nature, impact and consequences of citizen journalism. First however, let us consider the methodology utilised for this research.

5. Methodology

In order to perform an analysis of how citizen journalists add to the construction of news and what the actions of citizens implies for the mainstream news media, a qualitative media analysis (QMA) was performed using data created by citizen journalists. For analytical purposes, a case study was selected: the 07/07 London bombings of 2005. In addition to assessing two forms of citizen journalism - dependent and independent citizen journalism - an analysis of citizen journalism between 2001 and 2008 has also been conducted, enabling us to see how both forms of citizen journalism have developed over time in relation to the reporting of an act of terrorism. This chapter aims to present an account of the methodology employed in this thesis, and will also highlight any ethical considerations and problems encountered.

5.1. Data Collection: Citizen Journalism and Terrorism - From Blogs to Twitter

In order to assess how citizen journalists' efforts in the reporting of terrorism has developed over time, it was considered relevant to identify data created by both dependent and independent citizen journalists to understand how they were adding to the construction of news following an act of terrorism. A significant sample of terrorist incidents were chosen for analysis: the 2001 9/11 attacks in the USA, the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2004 Madrid train attacks, the 2005 07/07 London bombings, the 2007 Glasgow airport attacks, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks. These incidents occurred during a time that news media staff such as the director of the *BBC's* news group Helen Boaden (2008) and academics such as Allan (2007) and Gillmor (2006) began to highlight the importance of citizen journalists in the reporting of terrorism.

In order to assess the development of citizen journalism, a combination of sources were identified. The *BBC* was chosen as a news organisation to focus on to assess dependent citizen journalism - the *BBC* had developed its website so as to engage the public in the reporting of and commenting on news, and for consistency purposes it was interesting to see how one news organisation

interacted with its audience members. Whilst it would have been useful to focus on more than one news organisation, time constraints restricted such efforts.

The data for understanding independent citizen journalism was identified using the Internet search engine *Google*, enabling a range of data and examples of citizen journalism during each of the attacks to be understood. By no means does this data fully encompass the full extent of citizen journalism following act of terrorism considered: rather they serve as a useful way of understanding the changing habits of reporting over time.

The focus of analysis of both forms of citizen journalism within the other two analytical chapters (6 and 7) was a representative sample of citizen journalism material produced during the 07/07 London attacks. During the presentation of results, material was not amended for grammatical or spelling errors, rather, material presented in this thesis remains in the format it was originally produced, thereby ensuring the presentation of results of "citizen" journalism, a key feature of which is the material not being edited and proof read by professionals prior to publication.

5.2. Case Study: 07/07

This thesis has drawn on a case study of the 7th July 2005 London bombings (07/07) for the primary analysis of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism. This case study has been selected for two reasons. From a practical perspective, citizen journalism material following the 07/07 attacks is largely accessible. This would not have been the case if a more "recent" large-scale terrorist incident such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks had been used. This is predominantly a result of the main platform for the dissemination for citizen journalism during the Mumbai attacks being *Twitter*. The tweets produced throughout the attacks are now inaccessible as a consequence of lack of archives.³⁸ Thus, unless the tweets had been recorded at the time of the attacks,

³⁸ As of 15th April 2010, the Library of Congress in the USA has recently been granted permission by *Twitter* to set up a *Twitter* archive dating back to 2006 (Library of Congress, 2010).

research into the nature of tweets is extremely difficult and would result in an incomplete sample. Secondly, as will be discussed in chapter five, the 07/07 attacks marked a pivotal moment for citizen journalism, with a boom in the presence of citizen journalists following an act of terrorism.

The context of the London bombings is as follows. The UK's capital, London, fell victim to several acts of "terror" on the 7th July 2005³⁹. The attacks coincided with the success of the London 2012 Olympic bid (6th July 2005) and the G8 International Political Leaders Summit in Gleneagles, which discussed overseas development and the problem of climate change.

At 08:50 BST on 7th July 2005, the city of London's transportation network was attacked by four individuals. The first attack occurred on the London Underground on the Circle line between Aldgate and Liverpool Street, the second at Edgware Road station, and the third on the Piccadilly line between Russell Square and King's Cross. The fourth attack occurred an hour later, targeting a London bus service at Tavistock Place. These attacks caused 52 fatalities and 770 injuries (*BBC – What Happened, 2005k*). Immediately following the attacks, broadcasts of "breaking news" were seen across the media; additionally, information about the attacks was beginning to appear online from members of the public both directly and indirectly involved in the attacks.

In order to analyse the content produced by those involved in the creation of information following the London attacks, QMA was used in both investigations of the case study, enabling an understanding of how both dependent and independent citizen journalists constructed the news.

³⁹ The incidents were labelled acts of "terrorism" by news media organisations and the British government. For example, the front page of *The Guardian* on the day after the attacks read "London's Day of Terror" (Behr, 2005). Elsewhere *then* Prime Minister, Tony Blair, referred in his speech about a battle against "not just about the terrorist methods, but their views" – in this way, Blair refers to the perpetrators of the acts in London on the morning of the 7th July 2005 as "terrorists" (Blair, 2005).

5.3. Qualitative Media Analysis

QMA involves the reflexive study of documents, which is a necessary aspect of sociological research as it allows the researcher to approach the study of culture. In relation to this thesis, the analysis of documents allows for an understanding as to how members of the public participate in the social construction of the (news) media's portrayal of an act of terrorism, which lends itself to assisting with assessing how individuals make sense of a situation. In order to understand how individuals are participating in the construction of the news, it is necessary to investigate the context of a given situation in order to explore the construction of an event.

Typically studies that involve some form of media analysis utilise the method of content analysis. As explained by Krippendorff (2004), social researchers tend to utilise content analysis, however the use of content analysis of the study of documents can be traced back to the 17th Century (Krippendorff, 2004). Within the social sciences, back in 1910 Weber went so far as to propose a survey of the press, which would have included (if completed, which unfortunately it was not as discussed in chapter 1) a large-scale content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004: 4). As illustrated by Krippendorff content analysis has been a popular method of choice for the analysis of newspapers and the study of propaganda in the early 20th century, through to the present day. Elsewhere, social scientists have also adopted the method of "discourse analysis" to understand the way in which "things and our knowledge of things are structured and represented through text and talk" (Prior, 2008: 114). Within both content analysis and discourse analysis, as identified by Prior (2008: 116), social researchers use documents as a "resource", that is a source of data for "social scientific theorising".

Another viable method for the qualitative study of documents, particularly media documents, is QMA which has been developed by David Altheide (1996). This method is also referred to as qualitative document analysis, ethnographic content analysis (ECA) and qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2008). The method is widely accepted across the social sciences and has been included in the *Sage Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods*

(Lewis-Beck et al., 2004) as written up by Altheide. "Ethnographic content analysis" is defined as:

"Ethnographic content analysis (ECA) refers to an integrated method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving, and analysing documents for their relevance, significance and meaning...A document is defined as any symbolic representation and meaning that can be recorded and/or retrieved for analysis..." (Altheide 2004: 325)

Why the term "ethnography" is used here in relation to the study of documents is in need of further clarification. As elaborated by Bryman (2008) – these methodologies emphasise the role of the researcher in understanding the construction of meaning within documents. This may for some be referred to as an "ethnographic" practice under the principle that performing an "ethnography" involves researchers spending a significant amount of time "observing" a particular social setting (Bryman 2008). In an online setting, observation of blogs for instance is practiced by the researcher emerging him/herself in blog posts, where the researcher is then able to establish a greater understanding of their formats, presentations and contents, which then enables the researcher to create a flexible protocol for the study of a sample of online blogs, where it will then be possible to develop a wider understanding of the tools, techniques people utilise in a blog post to account and make meaning of something. Whilst contentious, Altheide et al. (2008) defend the method as being ethnographic by stating that qualitative document analysis "involves immersion, exploration, contextual understanding and emergent insights into social meanings, relationships and activities". Furthermore, they draw upon a range of studies which also view ethnography in the same manner (for full list see Altheide et al. 2008: 134).

Why then does this thesis employ the term "Qualitative Media Analysis" rather than one of the other terms? This is predominantly a result of this thesis's goal of observing and analysing what can be referred to as media texts and therefore wanting to utilise a method that has been used in the past for such activities. Let us then consider this method further.

Altheide (1996: 2) argues that the purpose of QMA is to "blend the traditional notion of objective content analysis with participant observation to

form ethnographic content analysis, or how a researcher interacts with documentary materials so that specific statements can be placed in the proper context for analysis". QMA is an exploratory research method that immerses the researcher in a "process of discovery" in the study of documents via observation (Altheide et al., 2001: 306). This immersion of the researcher into documents allows for the gradual development of a protocol for making sense of, and studying, documents in an in-depth fashion. It allows the researcher to interact with the material that he/she is viewing and to understand its content by placing it into its appropriate context. Understanding the context of a given situation is essential as it enables the greater understanding of assessing the way in which individuals come to define a situation, in this case the London bombings. Altheide (1996) argues that QMA is a form of document analysis that allows the researcher to locate, identify, retrieve and organise data for analytical purposes.

It is necessary to note that with any form of document analysis, there is always some form of researcher bias present. As stated by Bryman (2008), when researching documents, the researcher relies upon his/her own interpretation to derive the conclusions. As a consequence, the validity and reliability of the research may be undermined. During the textual analysis of documents in this thesis, as a researcher I used my skills and research training to remain aware of this weakness to the method whilst analysing data. It was concluded that an alternative method of analysing citizen journalist data would not have been viable, and a second coder was unfortunately unavailable due to personal costs and time restraints placed on the research.

A number of studies⁴⁰ have made use of qualitative document analysis (or referred to by other names as discussed above). Examples include a study of the construction of fear and victimisation in the news by Altheide et al. (2001). In this project the authors used triangulated qualitative document analysis to investigate the "ways in which fear and victim were used in numerous news reports and how this changed over time" (Altheide et al., 2001: 310). This

⁴⁰ For a full list of studies that utilise qualitative media analysis see:

process included the usual process of initiating a protocol to evaluate and code data based on context and researcher awareness, but also involved tracking discourse to determine how this presentation of fear and victims in the news changed over time. Additionally, Eyres and Altheide (1999) used QMA to examine how news coverage of Vietnamese youth crime differs from that of Hispanic and Black youth crime. They collated media reports from the *Los Angeles Times* to assess accounts of Vietnamese gang activity between 1985 and 1996. Elsewhere, Tierney et al. (2006) utilised QMA to study media framing of Hurricane Katrina, enabling her to assess the degree to which responses to Katrina were exaggerated and presented as mythical responses. Similarly, Berkowitz (2000) utilised ethnographic content analysis to study newspaper articles concerning the death of Princess Diana, to develop a wider understanding of the cultural ritual of news work. Thus, as briefly discussed here, QMA (or as referred to by other means) is utilised within the study of media and serves as a useful methodology for the study of citizen journalism for this thesis. But how is QMA performed?

A series of steps must be taken in order to ensure the researcher is fully immersed and familiar with the documentation that he/she is analysing. This occurs by the researcher gradually organising and creating a protocol that would later be revised. As will be seen in the example presented below, of the steps taken in chapter seven, QMA produces both quantitative data for analytical purposes and data that enable a qualitative approach to analysis that stems from observations by the researcher.

5.3.1. Performing Qualitative Media Analysis

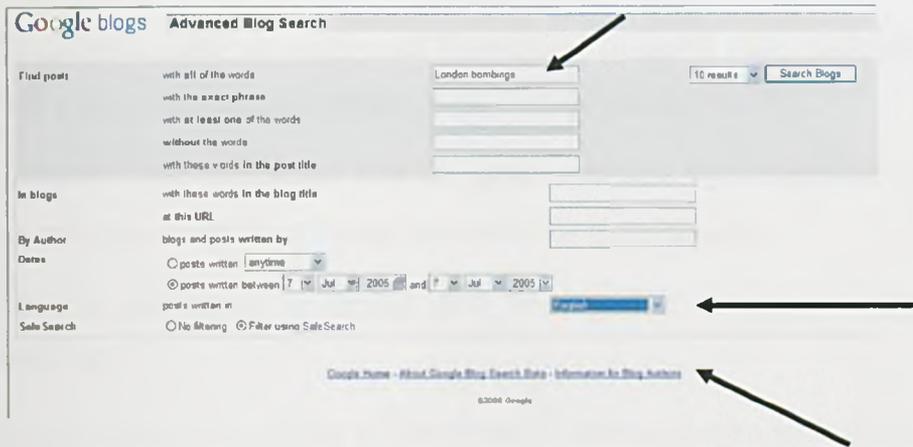
Chapter seven presents a QMA of blogs produced and self-published by members of the public on the day of the 07/07 London attacks. One of the first steps in performing QMA is to “pursue a specific problem to be investigated” (Altheide, 1996: 23). The problem under investigation for this thesis is an examination of the use of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism. It is not enough to know that citizen journalism is occurring: what is essential is to develop a wider

understanding of the nature of citizen journalism that appears, and how this influences the construction of news.

The second step in QMA is to “become familiar with the process and context of the information source...Explore possible sources (perhaps documents) of information” (Altheide, 1996: 24). For this thesis it was necessary to become familiar with the case study under investigation - the 07/07 London bombings. Examples of possible platforms that enabled the publication of citizen journalist material were considered, with the blogosphere identified as being the optimum platform of self-published material. Other studies of citizen journalism following 07/07, such as that by Allan (2007) also assessed the use of blogs in citizen reporting efforts.

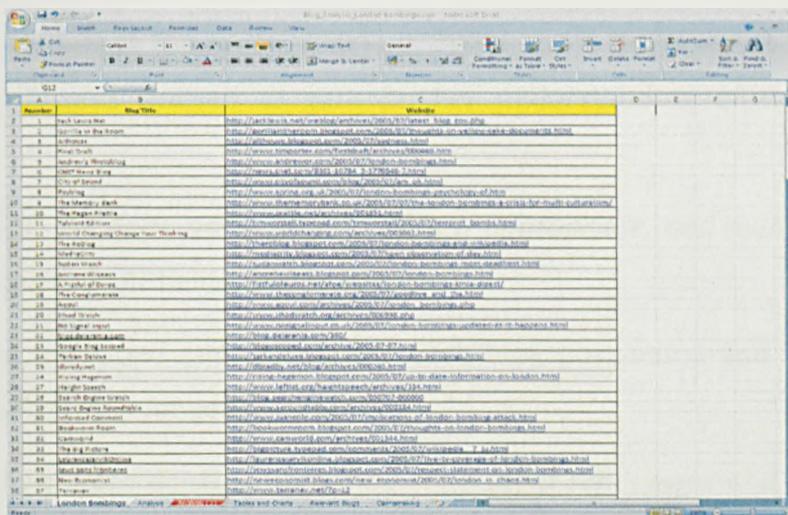
A further question at this stage is which search engine would be the most suitable for identifying relevant blog posts for the case study, thereby ensuring valid data. In their study of inter-media agenda setting between blogs and the news media, Messner and Distaso (2008) utilised the weblog search engine Technorati to identify relevant blogs. However, when searching for blog posts regarding the London bombings, only a handful were revealed and it was not possible to conduct a filtered search that would enable the identification of blog posts written on the day of the attacks only (which would enable an understanding of citizen journalism within the day of the attacks). Accordingly it was deemed necessary to utilise a blog search engine that would offer a larger sample for analysis and an advanced search, from which the decision to use *Google Blog Search* was taken. Following the identification of an appropriate tool for identifying blogs, an advanced search was conducted in April 2009, identifying blog posts that had been written on the day of the London attacks using the following filters: keyword - “London bombings”, date “7 July 2005” and English language blogs only.

Figure 18: Google Blog Search for 07/07 Case Study



Following the search, a total of 195 blogs were identified by Google, allowing for a full sample of citizen journalist-based material from 07/07. This by no means implies that only these blog posts existed: however, in the vast expanse of the Internet it is extremely difficult to determine the exact number of blog posts that were created relating to the 07/07 attacks. For this reason, a search engine devoted to identifying blogs was used for identifying relevant data for the research. In order to store the identified blogs, a Microsoft Excel file was created with three columns. These columns included the blog number (according to the order of results by the *Google Blog Search*), the title of the blog and the website of the blog. Figure 19 (below) provides a print screen of the excel file.

Figure 19: Storage of Data - MS Excel⁴¹



⁴¹ For a full list of blogs accessed see Appendix A.

The following 10 steps were then taken to conduct analysis of the blog posts.

- i. *"List several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection and draft a protocol (data collection sheet)."* (Altheide, 1996: 25).

A draft protocol was completed and an SPSS database was compiled for the initial stage of organising the relevant variables for the protocol.

- ii. *"Test the protocol by collecting data from several documents"* (Altheide, 1996: 26).

In an effort to ensure the validity of the protocol, testing began with the first 20 blog posts that were identified by the Google Blog Search.

- iii. *"Revise the protocol and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol"* (Altheide, 1996: 26).

As a result of testing, the protocol was revised, resulting in a number of additional variables being added to the initial enquiry. These variables include: whether links were directing audiences to other blog sites; whether links were to professional news websites; whether a blog centred on the theme of terrorism; and whether the blog post contained a personal account, where the author was directly affected by the London attacks.

- iv. *"Arrive at a sampling rationale and strategy"* (Altheide, 1996: 32).

It was decided that for the first stage of the research all 195 blog posts would be analysed according to the protocol set up. Only later in the research design were sampling strategies utilised to gain further understanding of the nature of content.

- v. *"Collect the data, using preset codes, if appropriate, and many descriptive examples..."* (Altheide, 1996: 37).

All data was identified and collected – each blog post name and website was stored in an Excel file for processing.⁴²

- vi. *"Perform data analysis, including conceptual refinement and data coding. Read notes and data repeatedly and thoroughly"* (Altheide, 1996: 41).

⁴² There was a limitation to the storage of data which will be discussed in section 5.4.

In order to code the data according to the protocol established above, the statistical analysis program SPSS was used. SPSS allowed for the organisation of data (above) according to the variables identified in the protocol process. Each blog post was then systematically processed and coded as to whether or not they subscribed to the protocol established.⁴³

Figure 20: Coding the Data – SPSS

Case	Relevant	Images	LinksB	LinksM	Comments	TerrorismB	PersonalA
1	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
2	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
6	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
7	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
9	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
10	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
11	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
12	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
13	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
14	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
15	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
16	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
17	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
18	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
19	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
20	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
22	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
23	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
24	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
25	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
26	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
27	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
28	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
29	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
30	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
31	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
32	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
33	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
34	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
35	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
36	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

- vii. *“Compare and contrast ‘extremes’ and ‘key differences’ within each category or items. Make textual notes. Write brief summaries or overviews of data for each category (variable)” (Altheide, 1996: 41).*

Content analysis was performed to reveal the frequency of blogs that subscribed to each of the identified variables, giving an indication of how a blog post concerning an act of terrorism was compiled. However, by performing textual analysis, further information surrounding the findings associated with each variable was presented in an in-depth discussion in the analytical chapter (seven).

⁴³ If a blog post was found to be irrelevant to the London bombings the label “Not Applicable” was assigned.

- viii. Complete a simple random sample of the relevant blogs to allow for an in-depth understanding of the nature of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism. A total of 16 blogs were analysed at this stage – every tenth blog.
- ix. Complete an in-depth analysis of each of the blog posts that were identified as containing a “personal account” of the London attacks. This would enable an understanding of the nature of citizen journalism that was in the form of individuals having been directly caught up in the attacks, or having a family member/friend involved.
- x. Analyse and write up the results.

QMA allows the researcher to take his/her time in drafting a protocol, following which the protocol can then be tested and revisited (if necessary), so as to gain optimum valid results. During the presentation of results, the print screen function was used to provide evidence of the relevant blog posts.

Whilst the aim of chapter seven was to conduct an analysis of independent citizen journalism content, in order to compare the presentation of news by independent citizen journalists to that of the news media, it was necessary to explore how news organisations chose to present news of the 07/07 attacks on their websites. Once again, QMA was used.

5.3.2. Data Collection and Analysis: News Media Content of 07/07

The first step of QMA, described above, was also utilised for the analysis of the nature of content of the 07/07 attacks by the news media. The data used for analysis included British news media articles that were written on the day of the attacks. This data was identified using the advanced *Google News Archive Search*. During the search three filters were selected: 1) Keyword – London attacks; 2)

Date – 7 July 2005; 3) Content that was not paid for⁴⁴. When running the search, Google identified 1,220 articles: however, upon data gathering only 481 of these were accessible⁴⁵. Of these 481 articles, 29 were found to be British news articles – these would later be gathered and used as data.

During the data collection process, all relevant news sites were saved as Adobe PDF files, to ensure that hard copies of the data were later accessible. The websites were also stored within a Microsoft Excel file. Following the collection of data, an SPSS data file was created, using part of the protocol established for the analysis of blogs. Variables under inspection included: whether a news article had utilised images, whether links to blogs were used, whether links to news media was used, and whether the articles had received any comments by audiences. Once coded, this data was then ready for analysis – allowing for a comparison of the nature of the content produced by the news media and by independent citizen journalists.

5.3.3. *Qualitative Media Analysis and the BBC*

QMA was also utilised for the analysis of material by citizen journalists that was then published by the news media. The data used for this second piece of analysis was different to the data utilised previously (that is, the analysis of blogs). Data was gathered from the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) *BBC News – Special Reports of the London bombings*. The BBC was chosen as the site from which citizen journalism content would be analysed for two main reasons. First, during an investigation of the presence of citizen journalists

⁴⁴ "Content that was not paid for" refers to a search option with *Google News Archive* that forces the search engine to, in this instance, not reveal news articles that would require payment to view them. As described by Google's News Archive Search Help (2011) – "This appears only for results the require a fee to read the article. Note that there is no cost for clicking on these links and that you should be able to view at least a short preview of the article without payment. The fee is required by the host of the article to view their content."

⁴⁵ The absence of links to news via *Google News Archive* can be seen as a result of *Google's* battle with news agencies such as Agence France Presse (AFP) and the Associate Press (AP). Both agencies filed a lawsuit against *Google*, claiming that *Google* had breached copyright laws (Perez, 2007). As noted by Paterson (2007) *Google* settled with AFP in 2007 and had also settled with AP several months earlier. At the beginning of the lawsuit in 2005 *Google* began to remove content from AFP (Perez 2005) which may go some way towards explaining the accessibility of news articles via *Google News Archive*.

during the London bombings, the *BBC* was the most prominent news source that actively noted the importance of members of the public in the news-gathering process (Boaden, 2008). Second, the amount and range of material submitted to the *BBC* during the 07/07 attacks made it a useful news organisation to study in relation to its interaction with the public in the news production process. To reiterate, in terms of material submitted, the *BBC* received "more than 1000 pictures, 30 pieces of amateur video, 4000 text messages and around 20,000 emails" (Allan 2006: 148⁴⁶). In their annual report, the *BBC* reported that on the day of the attacks, they received "about a thousand images and clips emailed in by members of the public (BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2005/2006, 2006b: 48). Not only did the *BBC* receive a vast proportion of material, but it attracted a vast audience, receiving over 116 million page impressions on the day of the attacks⁴⁷ (BBC Annual Reports 2005/2006, 2006b: 45).

Prior to performing QMA on material submitted to the *BBC* by citizen journalists, it was necessary to assess the range of material produced by members of the public that were found on the *BBC*'s Special Report page for the London Bombings. Material included the presence of photographs, video footage, eyewitness statements and a survivor's diary. This material was analysed and the results were written up prior to conducting QMA of comments submitted to *BBC* by members of the public.

The data used for QMA of citizen journalism content within the media was also from the *BBC* website in the form of "comments" that were submitted to *BBC*'s "Your Accounts" pages. It is necessary to point out here, that the sample used were from comments that were chosen by the *BBC* for publication; 176

⁴⁶ Allan (2006) received these statistics from an article in the Independent on Sunday which discussed the *BBC*'s then director of news – Helen Boaden – discussed the extent and nature of material submitted to the *BBC* by members of the public: "People were sending us images within minutes of the first problems, before we even knew there was a bomb," said Helen Boaden, *BBC* director of news. By Friday afternoon, the *BBC* had received more than 1,000 pictures, 20 pieces of amateur video, 4,000 text messages and around 20,000 emails. "Some of them are just general comments, but a lot are first-hand accounts. If people are happy about it - and, if people have contacted us, they usually are - we put our programmes in contact with them," said Ms Boaden" (Barnes and Carrell, 2005).

⁴⁷ The number of request to open web pages on the *BBC* website.

comments in total. The *BBC* has editorial guidelines in place which function to ensure that the *BBC* upholds its values and standards – they are: trust, truth and accuracy, impartiality, editorial integrity and independence, harm and offence, serving the public interest, fairness, privacy, children, transparency and accountability (BBC Editorial Values, 2011). In terms of content published on the *BBC* website, a process of moderation takes place. Moderation takes three forms: pre-moderation, post-moderation and reactive moderation (BBC Editorial Guidelines, 2011). Pre-moderation refers to material submitted to the *BBC* requiring editorial moderation to determine whether it is suitable for viewing prior to its publication on the *BBC* website. Post-moderation includes material that is automatically published on the *BBC* website, but then may be removed if the editor feels that the material is unsuitable. Lastly, reactive moderation enables the *BBC* audience to highlight concerning material to *BBC* editors which will then be placed under inspection.

The comments were not solely written by those residing in London, but were submitted by individuals from across the world. For analytical purposes, the 176 comments were filtered, that is the original sample was narrowed down, so as to only include comments that had been written by people in London. The reasoning behind this filtering process (by myself) was directly related to a desire to understand what those in and around London on the day of the attacks had to say. Each of the comments were copied and pasted into NVivo 8⁴⁸ for storage, after which the first 50 comments were examined to identify a protocol with which the content of comments could be analysed. By concentrating on 50 of the comments in the examination stage of the research, a series of thirteen variables were identified as being central to enabling the textual analysis of the research: description, resilience, thanks and praise to emergency services and London transport staff, panic, no panic, chaos, calm, frightened, wanted to help, thoughts to victims, young (under 18), media-related comment, speculation and rumour.

⁴⁸ NVivo was used instead of SPSS as it enabled for the comments to also be stored, enabling a hard copy of the data to be kept. For future research of citizen journalism based material it is necessary for the researcher to use the optimum software for both data storage and analysis.

In order to code the data according to the protocol established above, each category was created as a “free node”. If a comment was relevant to the variable it would be coded according to the relevant code. At this stage, it was then possible to proceed with the analysis of the data according to the protocol set up. Figure 21 (below) supplies a print screen image of the set up used in NVivo for analytical purposes.

Figure 21: BBC - Your Comments - NVivo

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Modified On	Created By	Modified By
Calm	1	18	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Chaos	1	8	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Description	1	101	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Frightened	1	12	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
London	1	176	24/08/10 11:43	24/08/10 11:56	HW	HW
Media Related Comment	1	7	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
No Panic	1	5	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Panic	1	8	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Resilience	1	89	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Thanks and/or Praise to Emerg	1	31	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Thoughts to Victims	1	40	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Wanted to Help	1	3	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW
Young (Under 18)	1	5	25/08/10 14:55	25/08/10 14:55	HW	HW

Comment ID	Text	Location	Country
93	the Emergency Services and the Army doing sterling work under an horrific amount of pressure. Thank you all. I was on the Met line tube this morning but got off at Moorgate to grab a coffee. Apparently, the first one went off on the Met line between Liverpool Street and Aldgate - can't help but think it was the tube I was on. My thoughts are with anyone caught up in this, and count my own blessings.	London	UK
94	I'm at school in Bromley, we first got news at about 11 o'clock, all lessons have carried on as usual, we have been allowed to watch TV, we allowed to call friends and family, we are all very anxious for more news.	Bromley	UK
95	I was at Liverpool Street Station (just as the first bang when off at 9.50 am) with my friend Moira and we both heard a large 'bang' and then the lights went out, and then my friend told me to duck down. We didn't see any smoke but the whole thing is so scary.	London	England
101	I am on Edgware Road, it has calmed down now but was chaotic in the morning. Luckily I decided to come through Marble Arch station today instead of Edgware Road. The Jubilee line stopped at Baker St so I had to walk since all buses were packed. The Jubilee line and staff at the station handled the evacuation very well and managed to clear all passengers out of the underground very quickly. Well Done! Members of staff helped people to find alternative routes as well.	London	UK
107	I am working in Liverpool street and was trapped at Waterloo on the subway and then stuck in traffic on the buses when everything began. It has been horrendous, 5 hours on continuous emergency sirens all around us, plain unknown chaos, all stations are shut all phone networks are jammed. The police are managing the situation very well but what can they do, slowly news is getting through and understanding is replacing unknowing confusion. I feel sick by the events this morning, sick, shaken and rattled, yet extremely lucky. Terrorist will never win when they target the innocents.	London	UK
113	I live in Poplar, E14 and work in Baker Street, just off of Oxford Street in the West End. I normally cycle to work but this morning I had planned to take the DLR and London Underground because of the JP Morgan Chase Challenge run in Battersea Park. I even loaded up my Oyster card last night! At the last minute I changed my mind and came in to work on the moped. At 1.15pm today Oxford Street is devoid of buses and nearly all taxis. The only people you can see is the odd cyclist, bemused tourists and workers attempting to get home. The roads leading to the US		

5.4. Ethical Considerations

Within Internet research, as identified by Berry (2004: 323) there is an assumption “that all texts are created in a public domain or public sphere”. However, as argued by Berry (2004: 323), the increase in what he refers to as “intranets” and “secure network technologies” have enabled some spaces on the Internet to have restrictive access and therefore participants within these networks have a say in what is publicly accessible and what is private. As identified by Berry (2004) and others (see Berry, 2004: 324 for further details) there is also the problem of the contentious terms “public” and “private”, particularly when used within the Internet. Others argue that the boundary between “public” and “private” is eroding (Lange, 2008). As highlighted by Berry

(2004) what is important to note is the degree of security and control that authors of Internet content can maintain. Berry (2004) uses the example of group discussion forums, where in many instances individuals have to actively subscribe to participate. Whilst in the past, some such as Herring (1996) viewed the Internet as an entire public arena, this, however, is no longer the case, as argued by Berry (2004: 326) “advances in security, encryption technologies, password-protected areas further problematise the idea of a single public arena”. Such elements of control make it clearer the boundaries between private – that is secure, spaces and public (insecure) spaces. Lange’s (2008) study of *YouTube* assessed the public/private distinction. Lange found that within *YouTube* there were distinctions between what can be considered public material and what can be considered private. These distinctions are reliant on the individual choice of the author that is whether or not they make their material publicly available or whether or not they place restriction for viewing on content:

“On YouTube, some participants broadcast extensive information about their identity. Moreover, they craft videos with content that is broadly appealing, and they aggressively promote and disseminate their videos. This can be considered quite public video making and viewing, because all three factors—identity information about the video maker, content relevance, and technical access to videos—are designed to be broadly appealing and widely available. On the private end of the spectrum, video makers may choose to restrict information about their identity in videos, and they may make videos with content that appeals only to a few close friends. They can also restrict access to the videos technically, by using few or cryptic tags or by invoking YouTube’s “friends-only” viewing feature, according to which only members designated as the video maker’s friends may access the video.” (Lange, 2008: 369)

The distinction by Lange (2008) and Berry (2004) between public and private was a central consideration within the research conducted for this thesis. Important to the research conducted in this thesis is the element of control. Creators of blogs are able to maintain control, depending on what platform they choose to create a blog. First, bloggers are able to remove blog posts and/or their

blog at their choosing at any time. Second, bloggers are in a position to choose who can access their blogs, for example *Google's Blogger* enables users to specify whether they want their blog to be open to all members of the public, or, bloggers can choose to restrict access by forcing audiences to apply for access. All blog posts accessed for this research were still active within the blogosphere, that is, the material used was not archival. Over the course of the research, any posts that were no longer active were not included in the original sample, so as to respect the actions of the blogger in their choosing of removing the blog and/or blog post. Additionally, this research approached the idea of "public" material as that material that was viewable to any users, with the user not having to request permission to view the material, under the idea of control this research was extremely sensitive to the appeared decision of bloggers; it was perceived that if bloggers had not removed the blog post in the duration of the time between the posting and the research (some four years) then the author was, according to his/her actions, willing to leave the material on his/her blog for others to observe and continue to respond to.

A study by Nardi et al. (2004) raises the question as to why people blog? Why do they share, what is essentially their diary, with millions of people? This is a key question when considering the ethics behind analysing blog posts, writing a blog post is a form of interaction, individuals choose to write a blog post and thus, with this in mind, whilst writing a blog post following the London bombings may make this thesis's sample a vulnerable population, it is necessary to remember that not only do people chose to write the blog post, but with the sample used for this research they also chose to keep the blog post on their blog for people to interact with and thus the degree to which they remain a vulnerable question is in need of research in its own right, it is therefore necessary for researchers to understand the motivations behind blogging. For Nardi et al. (2004) conducted audiotaped ethnographic interviews with bloggers and conducted textual analysis. They found that the majority of their sample were indifferent about privacy. They found that to an extent, blogging can be considered a form of social activity and their research points to a number of explanations for blogging. Examples of explanations range from blogging giving individuals a voice, having a desire to have people listen to what they have to say,

update others on activities and whereabouts, express opinions to influence other, seek other's opinions and feedback and to "think by writing" and to release "emotional tension" (Nardi et al., 2004: 224/225). Implicit in all of these explanations is a desire to have a say and be heard, otherwise, there would be no need to write a blog that they then grant public access to.

Worthy of our consideration is a question posed by Bakardjieva and Feenberg (2001): "the foremost factor determining ethical access and use of group data in cyberspace is whether the group operates in the public domain, or in a private, restrictive space" – within this research, all blog posts analysed were written and published within a space that can be considered to be appearing within the "public domain". As such, some would argue that "any groups whose interactions take place in the public domain can be observed by researchers without explicit announcement and solicitation of consent from participants" – proponents of this position include Herring (1996).

Importantly, within this research whilst this position (of material existing in the public domain) was also taken, it was taken with the bloggers position in mind. That is, blog posts were only included in the research that remained active in the blogosphere. No posts were included that had been removed and/or replicated elsewhere – analysis remained with original documentation as created and published (open to all) within the blogosphere. Additionally, none of the blog posts within the sample were taken from sites that required permission for access. Importantly, this research involved the study of documents, not human participants – had the research required interaction with participants, permission from bloggers would have been sought.

The problem of whether or not informed consent should be gained is raised by Bakardjieva and Feenberg (2001), in their review of publications on ethics they did not find a single publication that argued for researchers to always gain informed consent with online research. Rather, as posed by Bakardjieva and Feenberg (2001: 237): "All authors recognized that certain research goals and methodologies are incompatible with informed consent and yet legitimate under particular circumstances". Accordingly, it may not always be necessary to gain informed consent, however this is highly dependent on the research being

undertaken and should not be taken lightly. As the blog posts used in this research still remain active, blogs have been presented in their original form; this means that names have not been changed or made anonymous, but rather are displayed to readers as they remain displayed to audiences on the web.

For Bakardjieva and Feenberg (2001), an essential principal to online research is to avoid alienation, or what they refer to as “non-alienation”. Non-alienation involves the researcher avoiding taking their object of study out of the context of which it was created. This is a principal that lies central to the method of QMA – the study of blogs in this thesis is centred around understanding and analysing the framing of blog posts within the context that they were written.

When considering use of material submitted to the *BBC*, such as comments, pictures and videos – it is assumed that author’s granted permission to the *BBC* for the continual publication of their material, hence their continual inclusion on the *BBC* website. According to the *BBC’s* terms and conditions (2011), by submitting material to the *BBC* and therefore agreeing to their terms and conditions, authors of material are agreeing to the following crucial points:

If you submit your contribution to the *BBC* you must allow the *BBC* to use the material in your contribution in any way it may reasonably choose on a free-of-charge basis in any media throughout the world. Any contributions you make may be moderated by the *BBC* which means they may be reviewed, edited and/or removed. The *BBC* reserves the right to remove any of your contributions if the *BBC* believes that they do not comply with the Terms.

Thus individuals are agreeing to allow the *BBC* access and use of their material as the *BBC* see fit. Secondly, unless specified otherwise, the *BBC* will utilise names of authors:

We normally show your name with your contribution, unless you request otherwise, but for operational reasons this is not always possible. (*BBC* Terms and Conditions, 2011).

Accordingly, in this thesis, where the *BBC* have utilised names, this has been replicated with the view that permission was granted by the author. With access and permission granted by the author, material on the *BBC* website was treated

as any other form of media analysis (such as newspaper analysis or television analyses).

During the observation of material for the development of an understanding of the presence of citizen journalists during acts of terrorism, restricted material was identified on the photograph social networking website *Flickr*, a publicly-accessible website. This restricted material, although viewable by the public, was copyrighted by the author, James Moore. Upon finding photographs uploaded to the site by Mr. Moore, it was deemed beneficial to the research to contact the author for permission to use the photographs as part of the presentation of results for this project (as approved by the university ethics board). From an ethical perspective, some images on *Flickr* are protected by users – when this occurs, this information is not freely accessible and thus the researcher must request permission for usage and access to material. At this stage Mr. Moore was contacted and he subsequently signed an informed consent form. Mr. Moore not only consented to provide access to the use of images for future publications, but he also consented to an email interview – of which he also gave permission for the publication of results⁴⁹.

Online research ethics is a continual area of debate and rightly so. Further academic debate and discussion is necessary to further our understanding of the constant challenges that new forms of technology present to research ethics.

5.5. Problems Encountered and Notes for Future Research

As with any piece of social research, the research conducted for this thesis was not without its problems. Many of the problems encountered were a result of conducting research online. It is my aim to highlight these weaknesses and to offer advice for future research in this field, so as to avoid the recurrence of the problems encountered here in further research in this area.

The greatest problem encountered was the increase in blog indexing activities by *Google*, which caused problems for the research design in terms of

⁴⁹ See Consent Form – Appendix B.

the reliability of the research. In its efforts to compile a more comprehensive search engine for blogs, *Google* continues to add to its existing index. For the analysis of blogs, the data collection took place in April 2009: at this time the total numbers of relevant blogs according to the search parameters used were revealed as 195 blog posts. As this number was manageable, it was decided that the entire sample would be analysed. However, upon using *Google Blog Search* for another piece of academic work in February 2010, with the exact same parameters, the sample had radically increased, from 195 blogs posts in April 2009, to 2,468 blog posts in February 2010. Upon contacting *Google* to ask why this was the case, the following explanation was given:

New blogs are indexed everyday, all the time. Your more recent search was conducted almost a year after the original one. Over that span of time, many more blogs and blog posts related to that search have most likely been created and indexed. Google's goal is to index all the world's information, so I would hope there would be a lot more blogs indexed over the span of a year! Hope this helps :). (Email, 2010 – See Appendix C)

In short, this increase was a result of the addition of blogs over time. In terms of conducting social research it is essential that for future reference, as was done here, a record of research activities should be held by the researchers involved so as to place his/her results into context. Thus, the findings presented here were a result of a sample taken at a specific date in time. However, problems still arose in terms of access to all of the blogs posts that the search had claimed to identify: when looking through the blog posts, it soon became apparent that only a sample of the blogs (approximately 500) were viewable, while the remainder were unobtainable via Google.

Having identified a discrepancy in the number of blogs available for analysis in the months following the analysis (as discussed above), it was deemed necessary to ensure that the original sample used was statistically significant. Accordingly, using SPSS, the Chi Square test was utilised. As seen in table 4 (*below*) in all of the tests completed, the null hypothesis – H_0 : “The quality check data does not come from the same population as my original data”

-was rejected, that is, there is no significant difference between the two samples with all outputs being >0.05 .

Table 4: Chi Square, Significance Test

	Original Sample (Number /169)	Quality Check Sample (Number /93)	Value	Asymp. Sig. (2 - Sided)
Images Present	34	16	.584	.445
Links to Blogs	86	41	.332	.565
Links to Media	76	35	.057	.811
Comments Present	89	43	.394	.530
Terrorism Blog	3	2	.045	.832
Personal Account	20	6	.144	.704

Significance: $P > 0.05$

For reference in future research, if this substantial difference in sample sizes occurs, it is necessary for the researcher to take the appropriate measures to ensure that the original sample is still suitable.

A second problem relating to conducting research online is a note towards better planning in terms of storing the data under inspection. As discussed above, during the initial data collection for the analysis of blogs, a note of the website was recorded, along with the date the website had been accessed. However, upon conducting further research, problems occurred in terms of being able to access some of the websites, as some links appeared to be disabled during the second stage of research. For this purpose, it is highly recommended that future research into highly transient websites, such as blogs, should gather hard copies of the web pages under inspection either via print screen function or more appropriately via the creation of an Adobe PDF copy for each site, which now allows users to print to PDF.⁵⁰ This step was taken during the second round of research into the blogs, when identifying the presence of claims-making within blog pages. It should be noted that, as time has progressed, so has the ease of compiling PDFs: now that it is relatively effortless to convert a web page to

⁵⁰ Adobe site:

PDF format, we suggest that any future qualitative analysis of web pages such as blogs should be conducted using NVivo for data storage and analysis, rather than SPSS.

A third problem encountered during the process of conducting online research was the lack of accessibility to archived material on the social networking site *Twitter*. Originally, I had intended to conduct primary analysis into the nature of tweets following the 2008 Mumbai attacks to gain an in-depth understanding of the (then) most up-to-date terrorist attack with extensive citizen journalism activity. However, it was not possible to search for tweets that were tweeted during the Mumbai attacks. Currently *Twitter* does not keep an archive of tweets – they simply become outdated and are removed from the system. A number of programs, such as the *Archivist*,⁵¹ and the use of RSS feeds are beginning to be introduced that allow for the archival of tweets for future research. However, some problems and restrictions remain. For example, if another terror attack took place, in order to record tweets it would be necessary for the researcher immediately to start the archiving system manually, as there is no automated service. For now, this lack of archival footage places strain on the exploration of citizen journalist activity from a social research perspective.

This thesis has predominantly relied upon the use of QMA to conduct a qualitative sociological investigation into the nature of citizen journalism following a terrorist attack. By using a method designed specifically for the purpose of analysing documents it has been possible to examine the creation of material in its entirety rather than focusing solely on the use of language. This chapter has sought to provide an overview of how this method has been employed, and of the problems encountered throughout the research process.

⁵¹ The Archivist:

6. Citizen Journalism, 07/07 and the BBC

“I witnessed the bomb ripping the crowded bus to pieces as I got stuck in traffic just behind it, and watched the bus go past me moments earlier with all of its people having no idea of their fate. I wish to express my deepest sorrow for all those who suffered in such a sad way. Be at peace, there is much love for you here. (Comment 264, BBC 2005)

In addition to independent acts of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism, there is also extensive evidence to suggest that members of the public play a role in directly providing the news media with material for publication. The purpose of this chapter is to present results from primary analysis conducted to develop an understanding of how the news media utilise citizen journalism in the reporting of a terrorist attack. To enable consistency within the analysis, this chapter will discuss the 7th July 2005 London bombings (07/07) as a case study, and will focus on material created by citizen journalists submitted to the BBC thereby assessing citizen journalism occurring in the UK that made its way to a British news organisation. As alluded to in chapter 5, material submitted to the BBC for publication goes under a process of moderation, therefore, accordingly, due to editorial standards, not all material submitted to them is published.

This chapter aims to answer two main questions. First, in what ways do dependent citizen journalists contribute to the construction of news of an act of terrorism? Second, what do the public contributions mean for the news media? This chapter will proceed by first developing an understanding of the type of content produced by citizen journalists that ends up being published by *BBC*. It will then focus on one particular type of citizen journalism – “your comments” – submitted to *BBC* by members of the public in and around London on the day of the attacks. Following this, analysis will be made of photography and video footage submitted to *BBC*.

6.1. Citizen Journalism, the BBC and Eyewitness Statements

Following an act of terrorism, members of the public have been recognised as serving an important role in providing eyewitness statements of their experience to journalists. This type of interaction between the public and the news media can be seen in the reporting of the 07/07 attacks. As can be seen in Figure 22 (below), seven articles have been identified within the “Eyewitness” section of BBC’s special report on the 07/07 attacks. Six out of seven of the articles were written within a day of the terrorist attacks, and one article was released a month later. This shows the immediacy of the interaction between the news media and members of the public. Members of the public then have a purpose following a terrorist attack: to provide a sense of “real-life” experience in the portrayal and construction of a piece of news.

Figure 22: BBC “Eyewitness” News Articles

Title	Content of Article	Date Released
“Bus Passenger Cheated Death Twice” (Shukor, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Photograph of interviewee. ○ Photograph of Bus. ○ Quotes from Survivor. 	10 th July 2005
“Survivor’s Tale: Edgware Road Bombing” (Hoskin, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Photograph of interviewee in hospital with Prince Charles visiting. ○ Relay of events by interviewee. 	8 th August 2005
“I saw a bright light behind me” (BBC, 2005a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Photograph of interviewee in hospital. ○ Video footage of interview with interviewee in hospital. ○ Quotes from interviewee. 	8 th July 2005
“I heard people saying prayers” (BBC, 2005b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Photograph of interviewee and family. ○ Photograph of destruction of Kings Cross train. ○ Photograph of Policeman. 	13 th July 2005
“Survivors Recall Bomb Experiences” (BBC, 2005c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Photographs of survivors ○ Photographs of destruction of bus ○ Survivor Stories. 	8 th July 2005
“Witnesses tell of bomb blast hell” (BBC, 2005d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survivor Video Interview. ○ Photograph of destruction of bus. ○ Witness stories. 	8 th July 2005
“People were crying and shouting” (Head, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survivor Quotes. 	7 th July 2005

A mixture of content can thus be found within eyewitness statements from citizen journalists. Via these statements it is possible to observe traditional forms of interaction between witnesses and professional journalists in the format of interviews and submitted stories. Many of these articles also utilise images of the interviewee, as well as a photograph of the interviewee which provides photographic context to the article. In addition, it is possible to note that images within articles also include the destruction caused by the terrorist attacks, such as personal photographs and news media photographs of the bus and tube. By combining real accounts with images, the news media are able to construct a more personalised report of the 07/07 attacks. Figure 23 (below) provides visual evidence of two eyewitness statements.

Figure 23: Eyewitness Statements - Use of Images

“Bus Passenger Cheated Death Twice” (Shukor, 2005)

“Survivor’s Tale: Edgware Road Bombing” (Hoskin, 2005)



In terms of eyewitness statements that BBC is able to capture, there does not appear to be anything particularly “new”. If anything, the presence of eyewitness statements provides a form of citizen journalism that has existed for a long time – that is, the sharing of information between a witness and journalist, showing the continuing presence of the public in the news process.

6.1.1. *Citizen Journalism: A Survivor's Diary*

Following what can be referred to as an independent act of citizen journalism, in which North wrote and self-published a blog post on London forum Urban 75, North (2005) was approached by the *BBC* to write a seven-day electronic “survivor’s diary”:

Among the many private messages left for me by this kindly community of London-based website surfers was one from another person who said he worked for the *BBC*. He wrote that he had been following my diary, and had shown it to *BBC* colleagues, and they would like to ‘share it with a wider audience’. Would I like to write a diary for the *BBC* for a week?...So that was settled: I was a writer for the *BBC* for a week, writing unpaid, as what was later called a “citizen journalist”. (North, 2007: 112)

The survivor’s diary presents evidence of the news media approaching individuals for content – in this case, the *BBC* approached North, inviting her to share her experience with others. This suggests that interaction and communication between the news media and the public is horizontal, with the news media approaching the public for information, as well as the public approaching the news media to publish their information. The diary begins on the 7th July 2005 and includes an account of North’s experiences during the London bombings:

Even more people got on at Kings Cross. It felt like the most crowded train ever. Then, as we left Kings Cross, at about 8.55am, there was an almighty bang...It was so dark that nobody could see anything...I thought I was about to die, or was dead. I was choking from the smoke and felt like I was drowning... Air started to flood in through the smashed glass and the emergency lighting helped us see a bit. We were OK... (North, 2005)

North then goes on to post an account of her daily life, again including a range of comments concerning her emotions and her interactions with other people:

SATURDAY 9 JULY 2005 1031 BST: Yesterday was a weird day. I felt sick all day, which I think was the smoke inhalation and the news overload.

Friends called and texted and several beautiful bunches of flowers arrived. I love flowers... (North, 2005)

For *BBC* audiences, this kind of personal account serves to develop an understanding of the short-term responses of an individual caught up in a terrorist attack. This “Survivor’s Diary” can be seen as an extension of first-hand citizen journalism to an extended account of the seven days following the attacks, involving reflection on part of the individual. For North, agreeing to write for *BBC* worked as a form of “healing”: North argued that “the words flowed out of me...writing for myself became a lifeline, writing for others a comfort” (North 2007: 113-114). North can be seen as viewing her act of citizen journalism as a comfort both to herself and to others:

Writing was a way of releasing the demons, the madness and despair that can bend the shocked brain out of shape and fracture the sense of safety and self after too-close horror. When I was writing I did not feel alone; though the audience was faceless, intangible, nonetheless I could feel a connection with those compassionate strangers. Through that hopeful pull of other people’s presence, further along the path ahead towards the light of normality, encouragement sensed and read in other people’s written responses, I could feel it and find it: a way out of the tunnel. (North, 2007: 113-114).

The *BBC* website also contains a section which allowed members of the public to leave their comments on North’s survivor’s diary. This allows for further interaction between the public and the news media, providing evidence that the public not only actively engages with the news media, but also accesses and consume material authored by dependent citizen journalists. The *BBC* controlled for comments that it deemed appropriate for publication. Examples of comments include:

This account is precious. I was especially moved by the colour of personal experience - sitting in the garden looking at the flowers and the cat going to sleep. Let us be thankful for such things which help us to deal with the hard times and make life worth living. Maybe in our rush to live our lives we need to make more time for such things. Tony, Wales. (BBC, 2005e)

Well done girl. You are an inspiration to all. Judi, Ipswich. (BBC, 2005e)

Rachel, as a parent of a young lady who was in the same coach as you were, I am thankful to you for publishing your diary. It gave me the ability to comprehend what you and my daughter went through. May God's blessings be with you. Victor Hoch, Johannesburg, SA. (BBC, 2005e)

An analysis of the comments sent in to *BBC* in response to the diary reveals that all appear to be of a positive nature. Whether or not there were negative comments on the diary remains unknown, largely as a result of the editorial process employed by the *BBC*.

6.2. Qualitative Media Analysis: BBC - London Explosions - Your Accounts

What follows is an analysis into the personal accounts submitted to the *BBC* website from members of the public. As with other material submitted to the *BBC* these comments would have also (at some point) gone under a process of moderation either before publication or following publication. Those comments submitted from people in the UK have been selected for analysis, allowing for direct observations of citizen journalism within the UK that have not been included under the heading of "Eyewitness Statements". In order to develop an understanding of the nature of citizen journalism during 07/07 it is necessary to establish an understanding of the nature of the language employed in citizen journalists' accounts of the bombings. The use of language and formulation of comments is a necessary step in analysing citizen journalism material, as it allows for the investigation of the way in which members of the public chose to construct their versions of events. Thus QMA⁵² will be used here.

6.2.1. Qualitative Media Analysis – BBC – "Your Accounts"

In order to complete QMA of the 'Your Accounts' section of the London bombings page on the *BBC* website, a protocol was set up to assess the comments. Thirteen

⁵² See Chapter 5 for a further explanation of qualitative media analysis.

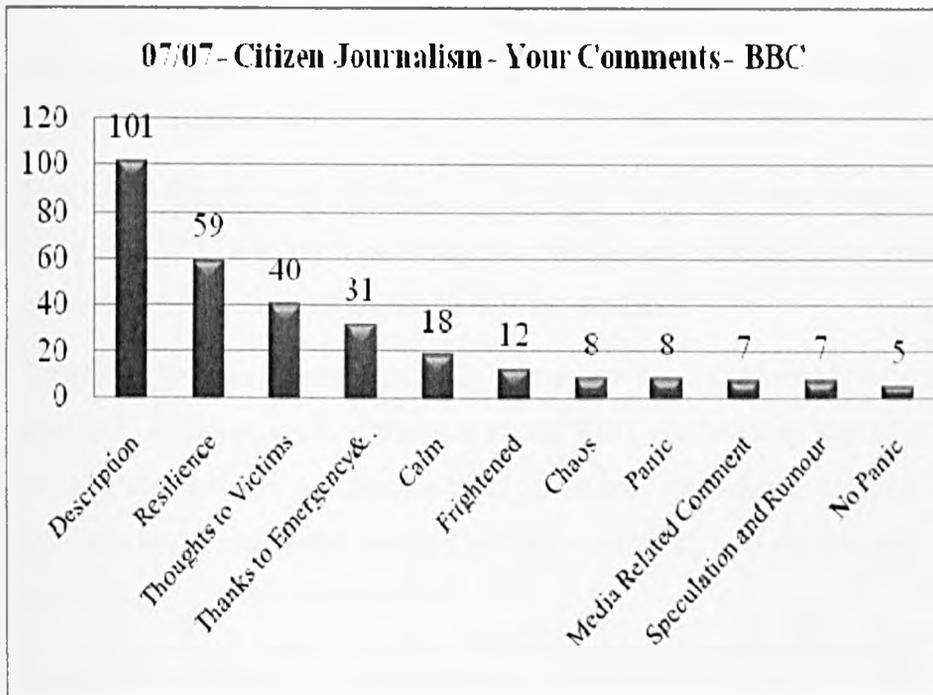
categories were gradually developed and subsequently used for analysis.⁵³ Table 5 supplies a list of the twelve categories under investigation.

Table 5: Categorisation of Comments for Qualitative Media Analysis

Categorisation of Comments	
Description	Frightened
Resilience	Wanted to Help
Thanks and Praise to Emergency Services and London Transport Staff	Thoughts to Victims
Panic	Young (Under 18)
No Panic	Media Related Comment
Chaos	Speculation and Rumour
Calm	

It is important to note that analysis was made of comments from London only. This was primarily due to a desire to understand *local* citizen journalism: comments from outside of London would be more directed at supplying sympathy/outrage towards the attacks. In total, this sample consisted of 176 comments. Graph 2 (below) illustrates the number of comments found to be relevant to each of the 13 categories identified above:

Graph 2: Number of Comments in each Category



⁵³ For further information see chapter 5.

What follows is a systematic examination of the nature of the types of comments that have been identified as being applicable to the above categories. This will allow for an understanding of the content of comments, which provides further insight into the construction of personal accounts of the 07/07 attacks by dependent citizen journalists.

Description of Events

The primary purpose of journalism is to report events that occur in society. Space set aside for citizen journalism in the news media allows for members of the public who are at, or near, the scene of an event to supply firsthand knowledge and experiences to the news media. When coding, 101 out of 176 comments were coded as “description of event” - approximately 57.4% of the sample. Examples of description of events range from being extremely descriptive to being relatively short; some pay particular attention to detail, whilst others appear to supply very little information. This shows the variation in the level of detail supplied by members of the public. The construction of news by members of the public through “your comments’ is not restricted to specific lengths or levels of detail –in supplying their own personal accounts, members of the public are given the opportunity to say as much or as little as they desire. Examples of accounts include:

Short and Specific – Comment 123: “I work on Old Broad Street, just off Liverpool St. We have been instructed not to leave the building and police have cleared the immediate surrounding streets.”

Short and Specific – Comment 151: “I was getting of the west bound central line at Liverpool street station at about 8.50. Halfway up the escalator, I felt the stairs shake a little and then there was a cloud of smoke that shot up from underneath the stairs. The alarm went off and people went crazy and just run out of the station.”

Long and Descriptive – Comment 53: “I was stuck on the Piccadilly train behind the one that exploded for over two hours in a very cramped, hot carriage and I wanted to highly praise the driver for how calm, assuring and often amusing he was. He kept in communication with us, letting

know what was going on (power cut to whole system), and what was happening next. His best quote was when he had tried to evacuate us all onto the train behind, but, because we were in the first carriage, by the time we had got close to the other train, it was too full to get us on. He said something like: "I don't know how you do it every day, but you all managed to squeeze yourselves onto that [first] train. But I can't now get you all onto the other train. I've tried, but there are pregnant women in there. So you lot are going to have to wait, we'll take the other train back to Arsenal and then we'll come back for you. You'll be on your own, but we'll be back soon." (not exact words) They left us there, and then the power came on, together with the air con - he advised us to close all the doors and vents to take advantage of the air con. After a bit, our train started reversing and we were able to get off onto the station through the driver's door. I don't know if you can forward my thanks to this driver. His voice is heard on the amateur mobile video titled "Passenger praises tube driver's calm", from about 1:05 seconds into the footage."

The relatively short comment - 123 (above), which is only 27 characters in length - supplies direct and specific information about the nature of the individual's location, as well as the instructions they had received. It supplies very little information about the experience of being caught up in the act of terrorism, but it shows how individuals are affected even though they are not directly caught up in the attacks. Alternatively, comment 151, which was still relatively short (57 characters), supplies information about the person's experience of having felt the shock of the blast and how those in the station responded. The final comment, 53, is 273 characters in length, significantly longer than the other two comments supplied as evidence here. The account tells the story of the experience of having been caught on a train behind one that had exploded. The author gives a detailed description of the atmosphere on the train as well as an account that provides evidence as to how the train driver responded to the attacks.

Resilience

How the public respond to adversity is a necessary and important study within sociology and the study of disasters. Furedi (2007a) argues that the public react in one of two ways to terrorism – with resilience or vulnerability. Furedi (2007a: 4) puts forward two paradigms, allowing for the distinction between a response of resilience and a response of vulnerability to be understood. A resilient response to terrorism emphasises individuals' ability to help themselves and those around them and is dependent upon a community response. Alternatively, a response based on vulnerability implies that individuals are unable to cope and must therefore rely on outside help to respond to adversity. In the vulnerability model, focus is placed on the individual rather than the community. For further information on the differences between the resilience and vulnerability paradigms as set out by Furedi (2007a) can be seen in Table five below:

Table 6: Resilience and Vulnerability Paradigms

Resilience Paradigm	Vulnerability Paradigm
Valorises self-help.	Valorises help-seeking.
Orientation towards community.	Focus on individual.
Expectation that community possesses coping skills.	Anticipation that individuals/communities are unlikely to cope.
Reliance on informal networks and social capital.	Reliance on professional support and intervention.
Expectation that mental health problems will be relatively limited and short-lived.	Expectation of long term mental health impact.
Problems perceived as physical/material.	Problems perceived as psychological.
Adversity perceived as a challenge to be overcome.	The effects of adversity are never likely to be overcome.

Regarding the comments submitted to *BBC*, it is possible to make several observations about the way in which those participating in dependent citizen journalism perceived both how they and the wider London community responded to the attacks. The comments submitted to *BBC* appear to emphasise Londoners' resilience and capability. A total of 59 comments (approximately 33.5% of the sample) have been categorised as referring to "resilience". Examples include:

Comment 79: "I have been in the City of London close by the sites of today's outrages. I would just like to praise the calmness and common sense of Londoners who have acted calmly and with unflappable good humour in the face of the callous cruelty of these attacks. If only the perpetrators of these attacks could have seen the deep resilience of the Londoners I've been with today they might find themselves doubting the effectiveness of their vicious small minded philosophy of life."

In comment 79, the author praises Londoners for their ability to remain calm and in good humour. The author goes on to use the term "resilience" – emphasising that Londoners were able to cope with the attacks and that perhaps, as a result, those responsible for the attacks should reconsider their actions, for they do not appear to have the intended effect. Similarly, the following comment (168) refers to the author's admiration of Londoners' resilience. The author refers to his/her surprise at seeing members of the public get back on to public transport to return home as though nothing had happened:

Comment 168: "I'm quite amazed by the resilience of Londoners. We were let out of the office early and I had made up my mind to get home walking if I had to, I was not going to take the bus after seeing photos of the blown up double decker. I was surprised seeing so many fearless Londoners jumping on buses as if nothing happened! Amazing spirit."

Whilst the commentator may not always use the exact term, there is evidence to suggest that their comments can be classified as referring to a sense of resilience. From a methodological point of view, it is important to consider the entire structure of discourse, rather than simply the frequency of terms. This can be accomplished from performing QMA, rather than solely using content analysis. For example, in comment 334 (below) the author states that Londoners will not be intimidated by terrorists:

Comment 334: "There are 6 million people in the capital, most of whom get up and get on a bus or tube and do a journey twice a day. The bombers managed to kill only 37 of us, so it's going to take them a long time to really make any impact on Londoners. We will not be intimidated by anyone - no matter who they are or claim to represent!"

The author of comment 271 (below) provides evidence of his/her experience of travelling home after work the day after the attacks. The driver of the train had come on the PA stating his surprise at having so many passengers and his pride at Londoners for responding in such a manner:

Comment 271: "This evening at about 6 o'clock I was travelling home on the Jubilee Line to Greenwich. Over the PA the driver said: "believe me ladies and gentlemen, when I woke up this morning I thought I'd be driving an empty train through empty stations. Now I've seen how many of you are travelling today, it's made me proud to be a Londoner. God bless you all" Couldn't have put it better!"

Many of the comments categorised under the heading of "resilience" refer to the ability to move forward, and for Londoners to continue their way of life rather than being scared by the attacks. Emphasis is placed upon survival. The following comments provide evidence of this type of resilient attitude and behaviour:

Comment 192: "I would like to simply express my pride in Londoners today. Their calm approach, their camaraderie, and yes, sardonic humour throughout the day represents all that they stand for. I at no time felt threatened surrounded by my fellow Londoners because of their immense qualities. Armed with this, I felt happy taking a bus home today, and confident that in the coming days we will all stand up to these atrocities by showing those who wish to harm us that we will mourn our dead by honouring them by continuing."

Comment 197: "I have only been living in London for four days and have put a candle on my window sill to show solidarity with Londoners. This is not religious and irrespective of race and colour. This is about community and citizenship. Put a candle in your window and show that we are not beaten tonight."

Some comments referred to the "Dunkirk" spirit, which evokes ideas about the Londoners' resilient response to the Blitz in the Second World War, and symbolises the idea of communities helping one another out rather than relying on outside help. Some comments go as far as to describe the lack of selfishness

from the community following the attacks. For example, one cab driver refused to let his customer to pay the fare. Examples of comments include:

Comment 322: "Thank you to the kind lady in her MPV running a free shuttle service between Marble Arch and Shepherd's Bush last night. No fuss, non nonsense – just a sense of humour and the Dunkirk Spirit. Made me proud of my city and proud of my country. It'll take more than this to break the Brits"

Comment 326: "From St John Ambulance, London - Operations Manager. We provided 37 ambulances and 20 Mobile Treatment Centres, with over 100 personnel, all day yesterday to support the London ambulance Service, as their principal back-up provider for major incidents...Despite the seriousness and enormity of the situation, we have experienced several instances of kindness and consideration from both individuals and companies. For example, when we were at the main rendezvous point yesterday, a catering company arrived and said that as they could not deliver their food to the customer, due to the incidents, they were providing it free of charge to all our volunteers. Similarly, last night, one of my staff, having worked late into the evening, flagged down a London taxi to get home. On hearing what she had been doing as a St John employee and volunteer, he refused to take any fare..."

Thanks and Praise to Emergency Services and London Transport Staff

Out of the 176 comments analysed, 31 (approximately 17.6%) contained messages of thanks for the role that the emergency services and London transport services played during the attacks. Examples include:

Comment 4: "The emergency services were fantastic in such terrible circumstances... It reminded me of the spirit of Dunkirk."

Comment 6: "Very impressed with the police, health, fire services, the people of London and most surprising the politician's response to this attack. It was bound to happen, it may happen again, but terrorists will not change this city or this country. Lets hope it strengthens London's diversity, and doesn't destroy it."

Comment 13: "For a reason that I will never know, I got on and off that Kings Cross/Russell Square train and decided to catch a bus. The emergency services did fantastically well but I would really like us to thank the London Transport staff too. They had the day from hell too yet they had to get past their own personal worries and try their best to get passengers to safety."

Comment 56: "I was one of the many people stuck on the train in the tunnel at Holloway Road for over two hours. Though it was overcrowded and very hot we were kept informed of everything that was happening. We all had to be put on a train and driven away from the area. We were the train behind the bombed train at King's Cross. The actions of the driver made the experience a little easier with his calm manner and his sense of humour. I don't know who he was but if you or anyone who knows him reads this please let him know his efforts were appreciated! Thank you."

Language associated with thanks and pride includes terms such as: fantastic, impressed, praise and appreciated. Messages in this category demonstrate public thanks and a sense of confidence in the emergency and transport services.

Panic and No Panic

Following a disaster, there is often discussion that seeks to understand whether or not the public responded with "panic". Prior to distinguishing whether or not "panic" took place from a sociological point of view, it is necessary to develop an understanding of what the term "panic" may imply in an emergency situation. Disaster research expert Quarantelli (1954) defines the term "panic" by placing emphasis on fear and a loss of self-control: "An acute fear reaction marked by a loss of self-control which is followed by non-social and non-rational flight behaviour" (Quarantelli, 1954: 272). An individual experiences "panic", according to Quarantelli, first as an emotional response, and second as a physical response.

The presence/absence of panic within the public response to disaster is an essential area of research, as it goes a long way to offering advice as to how

members of the public are able to cope with and respond to adversity. In the case of the 07/07 attacks, citizen journalism can help to illustrate how members of the public perceive that others have responded to the attacks. In total, only eight comments out of 176 (4.5%) were identified as stating that “panic” had been present. One member described their experience on the day of the London bombings as “complete panic” - however, as can be seen in the quote below, there is no contextual evidence to support the statement, which forces us to question whether or not “panic” did actually taking place:

Comment 5: “Was coming out of Liverpool Street when the first bomb went off then was down towards Aldgate when the second did. The worst day of my working life, complete panic, but we must all stand tall and not let these people win ever.”

A second comment describing “panic” is:

Comment 128: “I was on the Piccadilly Line-the first after there was a fire alarm at Caledonian Road. Just after Kings X there was a “bang” coming from the front carriage-the light went out and emergency lighting came on-smoke came apparently from outside-There were no announcement-some people started panicking after a while and tried to smash the doors-but only to injure themselves- after about 30min 2 policemen opened the back door and let people out...They should have passed information that there is no fire etc. the atmosphere in a packed tube carriage is already frightening enough.”

In contrast to comment 5, comment 128 supplies contextual evidence to support the claim that “panic” was present, with people smashing the doors of a train carriage and in danger of injuring themselves. Returning to Quarantelli’s (1954) definition of panic discussed above, evidence from the comment suggests that its author is describing the physical aspect of panic. Overall the author supplies a broad description of events allowing for an understanding of the type of situation that may be classified as “panic” – showing how important further context is to be able to infer what is meant by the terms used. A third comment which describes a situation of “panic” is:

Comment 131: "I had just got on tube at Liverpool street and just before the doors shut, an explosion went off in the next carriage. Lights went out and people calmly left the tube. There was smoke coming from the carriage. On my alternative route to work, I walked up Southampton Row when I heard another explosion and people running in a panic from Russell Square."

In this comment, panic is referred to as that of flight, in that people were running from danger, which Quarantelli (1954: 122) defines as a covert feature of panic: "Covertly there is an acute fear reaction, i.e., an intense impulse to run from an impending danger. Panic participants are seized by fear of a specific object defined as involving an immediate and extreme physical threat". An additional comment also describes panic in the sense of running away:

Comment 151: "I was getting off the west bound central line at Liverpool street station at about 8.50. Halfway up the escalator, I felt the stairs shake a little and then there was a cloud of smoke that shot up from underneath the stairs. The alarm went off and people went crazy and just run out of the station."

Whilst analysis of the comments suggests that people did respond with a sense panic, there was also evidence to suggest that there was "no panic". It is important to identify both circumstances, and to understand the full context of a situation: otherwise, public response may be misinterpreted. This places precedence on the importance of what an individual implies by the term they choose to use - how they construct an account is of utmost importance. For some, as discussed above, the term panic may imply mass hysteria, for others it is seen as a flight to safety. The term "panic" thus does not necessarily imply a negative emotion and/or response. When categorising comments, five instances of "no panic" have been identified: two examples are given below.

Comment 2: "I missed the Kings Cross explosion by 10 minutes and was evacuated from Moorgate station. I need to send heartfelt thanks to the emergency services, LU staff and fellow commuters. Not once was there any panic and the calmness and determination of everyone to get on with their day made me so proud..."

Comment 152: "I was on the tube from Highbury and Islington on the Victoria line at about 9.05am...En route, the driver made a second announcement that he had received the wrong message and that the train would not stop at KC St Pancras after all... As I walked from the station I overheard a walkie-talkie message that said something about "evacuating" the station. Outside of the station, most people we were on mobile phones to tell their workplaces they would be late, others were checking maps for bus routes. There definitely didn't seem to be any panic, but as I walked down Oxford Street (about 9.40am) there were so many sirens that people began asking others what had happened. There was definitely a sense of uneasiness that set in."

Both comments supplied above give a broad description of events, allowing for an interpretation of whether or not the identification of an absence of panic is appropriate given the wider context of the usage of the terms. In the first comment (2, above), emphasis is placed on not only the lack of panic, but also on the calmness and determination of individuals to get on with things. In the second comment (152, above), emphasis is once again placed on there not being any panic - instead the author describes a sense of "unease" that set in with the extensive presence of the emergency services, causing members of the public to question what had happened.

From the analysis conducted here, it is possible to note that a person's direct experience of an act of terror is not the sole reason for unease to set in. Those indirectly caught up can feel unsure and confused, with their exposure to responding authorities such as the emergency services. "Panic" then does not solely stem from direct exposure but also through secondary exposure.

Chaos

A total of eight comments, approximately 4.5% of the sample, were categorised as describing a scene of "chaos" following the London bombings. Such comments provide a highly descriptive account of events – allowing for context to be established about the wide variety of situations in which individuals found themselves as a result of the London attacks. Examples of comments include:

Comment 113: "I am working in Liverpool street and was trapped at Waterloo on the subway and then stuck in traffic on the buses when everything began...it has been horrendous, 5 hours on continuous emergency sirens all around us, plain unknowing chaos, all stations are shut all phone networks are jammed. The police are managing the situation very well but what can they do, slowly news is getting through and understanding is replacing unknowing confusion. I feel sick by the events this morning, sick, shaken and rattled, yet extremely lucky. Terrorist will never win when they target the innocents"

Here the term "unknowing chaos" is important, as it relates to the notion of confusion arising from a lack of information regarding the nature of events. This echoes the importance of the public being given information surrounding an event so that they know where they stand with regard to the threat facing them. Comment 142 (below) supplies a declaration of "madness", which may be regarded as a synonym for chaos. However, there is no wider context supplied within the comment to suggest precisely what the "madness" is:

Comment 142: "I work for BPP near Kings Cross. We are a college and have been inundated with family members calling asking that there family made it to college on time. It is madness here."

This lack of context to describe chaos can also be seen in the following comment:

Comment 263: "I was working over in Trafalgar Square when all the chaos began to happen but I must say that the London emergency services have been absolutely magnificent during these terrible moments of terrorism. God help those who are still on the Underground trapped."

A third comment (144, below) supplies context to help explain why there was chaos:

Comment 144: "It's pretty chaotic here - police and air ambulances, the army apparently on it's way - we heard a big bang from my office - it looks fairly serious."

In this case, chaos is explained as a result of the extensive response from emergency services and the rumour that the military would soon be present.

Speculation seems to be apparent within the comments, showing how people not only wish to share their experiences but also use the *BBC* comments board to discuss news of the attacks, all in an effort to understand and make sense of the situation around them.

Calm

A total of 18 comments, approximately 10%, were classified as referring to a situation of "calm". This was greater than the number of comments referring to "panic" (eight comments). For example, one commentator spoke of a sense of "surprise" of there being so many deaths at King's Cross, after what he/she had witnessed, and goes on to refer to the strong sense of "calm" that followed the attacks:

Comment 45: "I'm very surprised that there were so many deaths claimed at the King's Cross explosion. I was standing at the front of the second carriage and apart from a couple of voices that were screaming and praying, there were no cries for help that indicated serious injury or even death. Especially as many as 21 or more as reported. People were in a state of shock but remained calm. Is there any information on how they died or how the explosion could have killed them?"

Another commentator praised Londoners for their ability to remain calm and use their common sense on the day of the attacks. Such a rational and calculated response by members of the public to the 07/07 attacks suggest a rational, resilient and capable public:

Comment 79: "I have been in the City of London close by the sites of today's outrages. I would just like to praise the calmness and common sense of Londoners who have acted calmly and with unflappable good humour in the face of the callous cruelty of these attacks. If only the perpetrators of these attacks could have seen the deep resilience of the Londoners I've been with today they might find themselves doubting the effectiveness of their vicious small minded philosophy of life."

A third comment demonstrates how people calmly evacuated a train at Liverpool Street, but subsequently refers to people fleeing in panic from Russell Square. Here we see what can be described as a “clash” in perceptions of various responses to terror – suggesting that there can be both a sense of calm and panic during times of terror.

Comment 131: “I had just got on tube at Liverpool street and just before the doors shut, an explosion went off in the next carriage. Lights went out and people calmly left the tube. There was smoke coming from the carriage. On my alternative route to work, I walked up Southampton Row when I heard another explosion and people running in a panic from Russell Square”.

Once again, we are not only witnessing the sharing of individuals’ experiences, but also their emotions and their abilities to attempt to understand what has occurred.

Frightened

Twelve comments (approximately 6.8%) have been categorised as commentators expressing their emotions, declaring feelings of being afraid and frightened. Again, as can be seen with the categorisation of “resilience” above, the use of the terms “frightened” and “afraid” may not necessarily be used directly, but the language used indicates feelings of being “afraid” and “scared”:

Comment 101: “I was at Liverpool Street Station (just as the first bang when off at 8.50 am) with my friend Moira and we both heard a large ‘bang’ and then the lights went out, and then my friend told me to duck down. We didn’t see any smoke but the whole thing is so scary.”

Comment 62: “I was on the Kings cross tube that blew up. I was in the middle carriage. It was terrible. We were down there for 30 minutes but it felt like a life time. I thought I was going to die. We then had to walk down the tunnel. I will never forget the screams and the driver coming through on the intercom but didn't say anything. My heart goes out to everyone. I can't believe I am alive I am shocked and saddened by what has

happened. I can't explain what went through my thoughts just that I thought I would never see my family or friends again. I am one of the lucky ones. I want to thank all the emergency services they were brilliant. I am proud to be British. It will be along time before I get on a tube again. I can not explain the feeling of being trapped for that long not knowing what had happened. I Pray that the cowards who did this are brought to justice they need to suffer just like I and everyone else who was on the tubes or that bus. Thanks for listening. It's good to talk as they say."

It is also possible to infer that the author (comment 62) has written a comment on the *BBC* "Your Comments" board as a way of expressing his/her feelings: by ending the comment with "*It's good to talk as they say*", this allows for an insight into the reason behind the author's submission of a comment. Here a possible psychological explanation may be the motive behind participating in dependent citizen journalism.

Wanted to Help

Three comments (approximately 1.7%) were categorised according to their assertions of wanting to be of assistance following the London bombings. For some individuals, there is evidence of a sense of regret about not being fully aware of the situation, in that they could have been of assistance. Examples of comments applying to this category include:

Comment 46: "I was on the eastbound Hammersmith and City train that had just stopped at Edgware Road station. We heard a loud bang, which shook our train. An announcement said that it was a power surge. Everyone was stressed and was told to evacuate. I thought: "London is useless, they don't deserve the Olympics". That makes me feel really guilty now. I know the blast went off at around 8.50am because that is my routine. I always take the same train at the same time, to arrive at Kings Cross at 9am. It's my routine, we were all just doing what we usually do - it's very unfair. Now it is just dealing with the guilt of leaving the others suffering and dying behind. But we were told it was a power surge that is

why we left them behind. If I had known I would have tried to help - I just didn't know."

Comment 85: "It would be very helpful for me to know if BBC can inform us the way to do blood donation in a most appropriate way, if it is necessarily. I think that is only thing I can do at the moment for people who injured."

Comment 221: "My best friend is stuck at Russell Square as she was evacuated from her home. I want to go and pick her up, I know she's alright but she can't go home, I should be with her."

The need to help and/or be involved is further evidence of what can Furedi (2007a) describes as a resilient response to the attacks, suggesting the importance of "social capital" in a disaster situation. Within the study of disaster, one of the areas of enquiry is an attempt to investigate how people and communities respond. Not only are we seeing that citizen journalism is a form of response in itself, where individuals are involved in the production of information and news, but the analysis of citizen journalism in this chapter has also played a central role in identifying how the public interacting with the news media perceive both themselves and those around them to have responded to the 07/07 terror attacks. Whilst descriptions of accounts are not always clear, this analysis of citizen journalism during 07/07 has highlighted the importance of the role of "interpretation" on part witnesses to an event. It is essential for audiences viewing this material to critically question whether terms such as "panic" are relevant and what they might imply. Even if an individual runs away from a scene, does this necessarily cause danger? Must it be viewed negatively or can it be interpreted as a useful human instinct, whereby one removes him/herself from danger and avoids a "stampede"?

Analysis of "Your Accounts" also demonstrated the presence of social capital within an emergency situation. Social capital has been defined by disaster sociologist Russell Dynes (2008) as capital that is embedded in relationships and networks within a community. In an emergency situation such as an act of terrorism, the emergence of social capital can positively influence the response effort. In the comments supplied by members of the public, there is evidence to

suggest that the wider community wanted to be of assistance – for example, wanting to donate blood for the victims or otherwise “do something”. This “volunteer behaviour” was also witnessed following the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks, where Lowe and Fothergill (2003: 294) found that the Red Cross had been inundated with volunteers – figures suggest that they had received approximately 22,000 offers of assistance and had processed 15, 570 volunteers.

Sociologists such as Dynes (2008) and Lowe and Fothergill (2003) have noted the importance of social capital in effectively responding to disasters in the past. By engaging with the community, individuals are made to feel useful at a time when they are otherwise powerless. By analysing written material by citizen journalists, it has been possible to see that *some* individuals do want to be of use at times of a disaster.

Thoughts to Victims

Forty comments (approximately 22.7%) were categorised as expressing thoughts of sympathy towards victims of the London bombings. This provides further evidence of individuals expressing concern for others, in particular the wider London community. Examples include:

Comment 29: “I cannot stop thinking about the awful events of Thursday 7th July. My thoughts are with the families and friends of those who are lost. We need to unite as a nation to show we will not be intimidated by evil.”

Comment 94: “I was on the Met line tube this morning but got off at Moorgate to grab a coffee. Apparently, the first one went off on the Met line between Liverpool Street and Aldgate - can't help but think it was the tube I was on. My thoughts are with anyone caught up in this, and count my own blessings.”

Comment 230: “I felt the shockwave from the Edgware road blast as we pulled into the station from Paddington. My heart goes out to the people trapped in the tunnel, the injured and the families of those who died.”

Young Commentators

Our research into citizen journalism has also revealed that it is not simply adults that are submitting comments to *BBC* following the attacks. A total of five comments, approximately 2.8%, were by those under the age of 18: one 11-year-old, two 13-year-olds, one 14-year-old and one 15-year-old. Thus we see that participatory journalism is being carried out by a range of age-groups: although further research into the demographics of audience participatory journalists is required. Comments from those under the age of 18 include:

Comment 215: "I am only 11 but the terrorist attacks have affected me and literally all of the people I know, most of my friends' parents and older siblings were on the tube or bus at the time of the attack and are devastated."

Comment 191: "I am 13 and today when I was in school I got the news that bombs had gone off in central London. I go to school in south east London, only about 20 minutes from the city. My mum works in the city and I started to get really worried. The phones were down so I couldn't get hold of her. Finally I did and I thank God that she was ok. Also my friends' family were ok so I am really pleased. I give sympathy to the people who had not been so lucky. I also want to say well done for the walking wounded for not panicking and making the situation worse. RIP to all the lives that were lost today in London. I pray for you all."

Comment 291: "As a 13-year-old Londoner, I also yesterday, like many, went through the horror of worrying about my mum and other members of my family. I was fortunate that they were all fine, I know others were not as lucky as me and my heart goes out to them. I am proud of everyone in London and how they dealt with the horrific attacks especially the emergency services."

Comment 208: "I am only 14 and I heard about the devastating attacks in London at school. I cannot imagine the pain to those that have lost family or friends as I myself was extremely worried as both my parents work in Canary Wharf. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the

emergency services for their fantastic dedication and effort into helping the people of London today.”

Comment 338: “I am a 15-year-old Muslim girl and was on my way to central London but luckily I’m safe. The attacks were horrific, barbaric, wrong and really disgusting. It is unfair because Muslims as a whole will be blamed if al-Qaeda have done it, but we are as upset and condemn these attacks very strongly.”

Several observations can be made about the nature of the comments from these younger citizen journalists. The youngest, an 11-year-old, is focused on concerns over the safety of those closest to him/her – friends and family. As the age of the citizen journalist increases, there is greater detail supplied in comments and a sense of maturity. For example, one 14-year-old discusses the attacks and thanks the emergency services, and the 15-year-old is concerned about the social consequences of the terror attacks, that is, that a backlash could occur against Muslims.

Media Related Comment

The final category of comments is the point of reference to the extent of reporting of events on behalf of the media. Two comments (approximately 1.1%) refer to the desire for more information from the media. The comments here supply evidence of the importance of the public being kept up to date with news of the attacks, and it is evident that some have a desire to know where they stand with regard to the nature of events:

Comment 95: “I’m at school in Bromley, we first got news at about 11 o’clock, all lessons have carried on as usual, we have been allowed to watch TV, we allowed to call friends and family, we are all very anxious for more news.”

Comment 139: “I am sitting in my office in Tottenham Court Road and can hear police sirens and helicopters flying over. Apparently there are problems at Kings Cross as well. I hope that we hear more news soon.”

However, this idea of “wanting to know more” was counteracted by one member of the public, who thought it was suitable for people not to be informed of the situation so as to avoid any panic:

Comment 282: “I work in Central London and I must say that the Underground staff were magnificent and their decision not to inform people was correct, we didn't need a panic outside our stations which would have hindered the emergency services getting to destinations and helping those in the tube or bus. My thoughts are with my fellow Londoners.”

One comment referred to a belief that there was an inappropriate theme to the reporting of events, in which the media were concentrating on the emotional aspect of reporting and sensationalising the event rather than solely reporting the facts:

Comment 82: “I have been watching elements of the coverage of the incident this morning and my husband has called to say that he is fine though his office is deserted. While I want to be kept aware of events, I am finding the blanket coverage disturbing and difficult. We have gone through other situations such as these (Brighton bombing, Staples Corner, IRA attacks in the city) yet I do not recall this constant barrage of emotion that the 'news' is giving us. Please can we keep news reporting just that - as news rather than the emotional twist that newscasters are already adding to the story.”

One author referred to the importance of the public in answering questions at a time when information is greatly desired:

Comment 212: “My husband was working on the Underground when this all started up, he helped evacuate and answer questions, guiding people to safety. I think that the press should show some gratitude and acknowledgement towards the brave people from the public transport who helped rescue people, putting their own lives at risk to help others”

Speculation and Rumour

Of the 176 comments, seven (approximately 3.9%) were coded as containing some form of speculation of rumour. As seen in chapter five, the Internet is an environment conducive to the spread of rumours. This spread of rumour can cause inaccurate information to be passed around, as well as causing distress and misunderstanding during times of adversity. Examples of comments that contained speculation and rumour include:

Comment 148: "I was on a westbound Central Line tube that was stuck underground in the Liverpool St area for quite some time. It did not stop at 2 stations (Liverpool St & Bank) and we finally managed to get to St Paul's and were told to evacuate. To me it seems too much of a coincidence that this type of incident has happened the day after London has won the Olympics."

Comment 157: "Our train from Waterloo via Kew Bridge was delayed, we were told it was due to a suspicious package at Waterloo."

Comment 158: "I was on my way home, on the 82 bus from Marble Arch. I was sitting there minding my own business when there was a sudden loud popping sound. Lots of gasps and yelps from the passengers... I told the driver what had happened and he calmly explained that it was probably a stink bomb left by some grotty, idiotic, thoughtless, irresponsible, selfish kid and trod on by someone on the bus. The bus was taken out of service and we waited for another. Many people were quite nervy. It could have been an incendiary or anything."

The rumours range from the development of what may be referred to as conspiracy theories - for example, in comment 148 above, the author links to the winning of the 2012 London Olympic bid. Other rumours relate to the possible devices that caused the attacks, from a "suspicious package" to a stink bomb that could have been an "incendiary".

6.3. Citizen Journalism, the BBC and Photography

What follows is an analysis of 16 images submitted to *BBC* on the day of the London bombings by members of the public⁵⁴. The images have been coded into five distinct categories: photographs that supply evidence of the destruction caused by the blasts, photographs of individuals caught on the underground transport system, photographs of survivors, photographs of emergency services at work, and images of commuters later in the day. Each of the images published by *BBC* is accompanied by text composed by *BBC*, giving a sense of context. As previously stated, *BBC* received more than 1000 pictures (Allan, 2006), but only a handful were selected and granted access to publication to audiences, indicating the editorial impact of the news media on citizen-produced material.

The first group of images provide evidence of the nature of destruction caused by the attacks. It is necessary to point out that, unless they had been at the scene of the attacks, professional journalists would not have been able to capture this type of visual evidence. Citizen journalists then provide rich, new data to the reporting of a piece of news. Figure 24 (below) provides evidence of the five images identified as presenting evidence of the destruction caused:

⁵⁴ Numbering of images here is according to the order they appeared on the BBC website.

Figure 24: Images of Destruction on 07/07 by Dependent Citizen Journalists

Image 1: "An office worker took these photographs from the safety of her workplace..."



Image 2: "...showing the force of the explosion on the bus at Tavistock Square."



Image 6: "Steve Thornhill caught the moment of the bus blast in Tavistock Square."



Image 7: "Moments later parts of the bus's roof lies mangled in the traffic queue."



Image 8: "Toby Mason sent this picture of the bus."



As can be seen in the photographs supplied here, the quality of the images is sufficient to be worthy of publication: others may not have been, which may account for the limited number of images presented of the attacks. In addition, it

may have been that editors felt that it was of no use publishing dozens of pictures of the same content.

The images presented here give visual evidence of the intensity and extent of destruction by the bus bombing at Tavistock Square. Images one and two appear to be taken by the same individual, but from different angles. Image two depicts the force of the blast, by capturing the vast spread of debris and the additional collision of vehicles. Evidence is supplied in image six of the immediate destruction of the number 30 bus at Tavistock Square, taken from the ground. This photograph has a certain stylistic “here” and “now” presentation that may not be found with mainstream media images that may have been taken in the minutes/hours following the attacks. Image six also provides evidence as to the immediacy of members of the public recording footage of the attacks. This was also found in a second image (image seven) by the same citizen journalist, which appears to have been taken relatively quickly following the blasts, showing members of the public still on the bus as well as in and around vehicles. Image eight supplies further pictorial evidence of the degree of the destruction to the bus. Image eight appears to have been taken some time after the blasts, showing police tape having cordoned off the area.

The second category of photographs consists of those submitted to *BBC* by individuals caught underground following the attacks. The five images chosen for publication by the BBC provide evidence to supplement our understanding of how some appear to have behaved during the incidents. Image three and five supply evidence of passengers being led along the underground tracks to safety (this is also stated in the accompanying *BBC* headline). These photographs do not appear to reflect the sense of panic suggested by some of the comments discussed above: rather, we see an orderly movement of people making their way along the tunnels. Image 12 and 13 are by Makris and Jackson (witnesses to the events), who provide further photographic evidence of the state of the situation within the Tube carriages.

Figure 25: Caught Underground

Image 3: "Passengers are led through the tunnels to safety."



Image 4: "Smoke filled the carriage that Matt Dunn was travelling in"



Image 5: "Passengers leaving Bayswater Station."



Image 12: Nik Makris and Alex Jackson: "We were on the Circle line tube which stopped in a tunnel between Notting Hill Gate and Bayswater for over two hours..."



Image 13: "Once we got to ground level everyone was on their phones and started to hear what had been happening which was quite scary."



The third categorisation of images is of those photographs recorded by members of the public or survivors of the attacks, which were then submitted to *BBC* for

publication. The following two photographs were published, with accounts of who the people are:

Figure 26: Your Photographs – Survivors of 07/07

Image 1: Ade Oshungboye: “I was on a bus in front of the one that exploded. All of a sudden I heard a noise and passengers started shouting and trying to get out. I saw a lady with her clothes torn off and a body lying on the floor.”



Image 2: Graeme Weston: “I met these two people at Tavistock Square walking to hospital. They said they were in the front carriage of the tube as it left Kings Cross when a bomb had exploded. They said they were the lucky ones.”

In image nine, photographic evidence of victims is backed up by the author submitting a direct quote from his/her experience: we are thus seeing citizen journalists using a range of journalistic tools for producing information about the terror attacks. The quote supplies a particularly graphic account of what the author had observed. Image ten also contains an account of what the individuals in the photograph said.

The fourth category of photographs consists of three images that contain evidence of the presence of the emergency services following the attacks.

Figure 27: Emergency Services

Image 1: "An office worker took these photographs from the safety of her workplace..."



Image 11: "Bettina Strenske sent in this picture of police clearing the streets."



Image 14: "The Salvation Army provide refreshments for emergency workers".



As can be seen in the accompanying *BBC* text (above), image one had been taken by a female office worker. In addition to providing evidence of the destruction caused by the blast, the photograph also provides evidence of the presence of what appears to be crime scene investigators (in blue), which may tell us something about the time the photograph was taken. In addition, people are not simply interested in solely taking photographs at the onset of an event: they can also be seen to take photographs after the event has taken place.

Elsewhere, citizen journalists have managed to record evidence of the presence and "work" of members of the emergency services. In image 11, for example, it is possible to see that a police officer is directing members of the public - "clearing the streets", as noted by the *BBC*. In photograph 14, the fire service can be seen to be making use of services supplied by the Salvation Army.

This photograph shows evidence of other organisations responding to an incident.

The final categorisation of photographs is of images that provide evidence of members of the public seeking a way to find their way home or go elsewhere following the attacks.

Figure 28: The End of the Day...

Image 15: Angel Johnson captured the scene as Liverpool Street re-opens on Thursday afternoon.



Image 36: Tim G: "Water was the best way off Canary Wharf and the queue was enormous but good-spirited. This picture shows about one third of the people."

Images 15 and 16 supplies evidence of Londoners' resilience in making use of public transport despite the day's events. This may of course have been that the public had no choice but to use the transport system.

A range of different types of photographic evidence was submitted to *BBC* for publication. Images are not simply restricted to photographs of destruction, but serve to provide a wider context and visual representation of the public response to the London attacks. Photos chosen for publication by *BBC* can be seen to tell a story of the unfolding events of the day, ranging from images that present the beginning of news of the blasts in London, to proceeding to show images of people caught underground, victims, emergency services, and finally, coming to the end of the day, pictures show Londoners attempting to travel to an alternative destination.

6.4. Citizen Journalism, the BBC and Video Footage

The 7th July 2005 London bombings also saw citizen journalists submitting video footage of their experiences to *BBC* for publication, four of which were published. Considering the possible number of observers on that day, particularly noting Allan's (2006) observation that the *BBC* received around 30 pieces of amateur video, the number of videos that were published is notably small. As with the publication of images, it is important to consider a news service such as the *BBC* plays an "editorial" role in what it perceives to be quality images that are valid and worthy footage: it is not given that because the members of the public might decide to submit their material it will automatically be used in the presentation of a piece of news.

The first video presents a video montage of survivors' accounts (BBC, 2005g). The video contains 3 clips and a series of voiceovers. The powerful combination of video and voice provides a visual account of an individual's experience of the attacks. The following examples provide further information of the video footage, which includes accounts of what individuals saw and heard:

Example 1 – Descriptions of

what the author saw: "Er there were people with blood all over their faces, just dirt, burns, people with burnt hair." (BBC 2005g)



The video footage is relatively clear, and the addition of the voiceover assists in confirming what the author saw as he made his way down the carriage. He describes seeing people physically affected by the blasts - "blood all over their faces", "burns", "people with burnt hair". Such descriptions provide claims of injuries that people suffered; these claims are not clear within the video presentation.

Example 2 - Statement Outside King's Cross Station: "We went to the next door, to the next carriage, and walked down and right on the track, and then we walked out onto King's Cross, and then the police was there and they gave us water and there was lots of people injured. Apparently someone died, someone had his legs cut, it was really really bad. And I think it was next door to us [yep], so was really bad." (BBC, 2005g).



In the above example, a female eye-witness describes her movements of leaving the Underground and coming out of King's Cross station, where she and other survivors were met by emergency workers. The video makes use two distinct visual tools: still photographs (for example, see the image of the man holding a piece of material over his nose and mouth - left, above) and video footage (right, above). This combination of visual elements shows how the news organisations are able to create a piece of news so as to present an illustrated story of the witness's account.

The second video published by the *BBC* is footage from the explosion at Edgware Road (BBC, 2007). This video was broadcast two years after the attacks, indicating the time lag that often exists in publication of such material. The footage consists of material recorded using a mobile phone on the Circle Line train next to the blast, taken within moments of the attack. Throughout the footage, there is no evidence of panic - people appear to be orderly leaving the train, as was also seen in some of the photographs taken on the Underground. The footage depicts the time of the attack (08:53), different to the original time that the police had understood the attack to take place (25 minutes earlier), suggesting all three tube blasts took place at the same time. Video footage can thus provide vital evidence in the investigation into the terror attacks, and the

BBC submitted this video to the anti-terrorist branch at Scotland Yard (as quoted in the video – *BBC*, 2007). The video is used as background footage to a news statement supplied by a professional journalist working for the *BBC*; here a video is used as visual evidence to go alongside news reports by a news organisation.

A third video (*BBC*, 2005h) supplies video evidence of the aftermath of the bus blast filmed by a passer by on a mobile phone:

Figure 29: Tavistock Square (*BBC*, 2005h)



The video footage is not restricted to the bus, but also focuses on emergency workers and citizens tending to victims of the blast, providing graphic evidence not only of the physical damage to the bus but also its impact on people involved. As with video two, the video is combined with reporting by a *BBC* journalist: material produced and submitted to the news media by citizen journalists is here combined with professional journalism to present the news.

The final video (*BBC*, 2005i) was taken at Kings Cross. The clarity of the video footage is not very good, as a result of the footage being filmed on a mobile phone. The footage supplies evidence of emergency services arriving, including

the fire service and helicopters, all with the goal of assisting those injured and helping with the evacuation of King's Cross.

Figure 30: King's Cross (BBC 2005i)



Video footage of the 07/07 attacks largely came from mobile phones. Thus we see the use of enhanced technology to allow citizens to record and contribute to the news-reporting process. In this sense, it can be argued that citizen journalists are contributing something “new” to the reporting of events as they are in locations where professional journalists would not have been, unless by (unfortunate) coincidence. Amateur video footage allows for a sense of proximity: it captures the “here and now” of live events. Unfortunately, visual clarity of mobile phone footage is not always good, and caution evidently needs to be practiced when the news media opt to utilise video footage for reporting. Accordingly the *BBC* have developed a group that handle material submitted to them by members of the public known as the “User Generated Content Hub”. As previously mentioned, material submitted to the *BBC* by members of the public also goes through a process of moderation (BBC Editorial Guidelines, 2011)

therefore, not all material submitted will automatically be published⁵⁵. Amateur video footage submitted to the news media by individuals directly involved in the attacks has a multitude of uses, all of which add to the construction of news by ordinary members of the public at the scene of an attack. In addition to video clips presenting visual evidence of the attacks, following the event news organisations were also in martyrdom videos by those “citizen journalists” responsible for the attacks.

6.4.1. *Martyrdom Videos as acts of Citizen Journalism*

When considering citizen journalism and the use of video, it is essential to consider citizen journalism on the part of the “terrorist”. Focus will now be placed upon the two known videos recorded by two of the suicide bombers - Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer - published in September 2005 and July 2006 by the Middle Eastern news media organisation *Al Jazeera*. As reported by Hoffman (2006a), the videos were intentionally professional produced and distributed by Al Qaeda’s media communications department - Al Sahab. Mohammed Sidique Khan, who was responsible for the attack at Edgware Road, used a “martyrdom video” to develop a justification for the attacks. Via the news media, Khan has a platform in which he can control one aspect of the attacks - that is to give an explanation, from his perspective, as to why they took place:



Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood... I and

⁵⁵ The BBC are now taking efforts to show how they are choosing to verify social media content, emphasis is placed on verifying locations, sources – for further information see Murray (2011).

thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer. Our religion is Islam - obedience to the one true God, Allah, and following the footsteps of the final prophet and messenger Muhammad... This is how our ethical stances are dictated. Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation. (Khan, 2005)

This act of citizen journalism on the part of the terrorist is able to achieve a second round of publicity for his previous action as a "suicide bomber/freedom fighter" (dependent on the audience's view). Furthermore, in an act of what can be referred to as "propaganda", Khan declared his support for other "martyr's" and his "hero" Osama bin Laden:

I myself, I myself, I make dua (pray) to Allah... to raise me amongst those whom I love like the prophets, the messengers, the martyrs and today's heroes like our beloved Sheikh Osama Bin Laden, Dr Ayman al-Zawahri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and all the other brothers and sisters that are fighting in the... of this cause. (Khan, 2005)

Whilst there is no proof that Khan's actions took place at the request of Al Qaeda, his stated inspiration by Al Qaeda supplies further publicity for the group. The last part of the video included a statement from Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's second-in-command, who blamed the London attacks on Western foreign policy, including the Iraq war.

A second video was released on the 6th July 2006 on behalf of another of the 07/07 bombers - Shehzad Tanweer, responsible for the attacks at Aldgate station. Again the video was released by *Al Jazeera* at the instigation of Al Qaeda

(BBC 2006). In response, *BBC* again reported the video via a mixture of the video and commentary, and released picture clips from the video in addition to news articles.

Figure 31: 7 July Bomber Video – Shehzad Tanweer (BBC 2006b)



This second video is slightly different to that of Khan's, in that the video includes footage of what appears to be a training camp with people mixing chemicals and igniting explosives. In addition, there is footage of an individual circling Victoria station on a Map of London. Finally, the video claims to depict "fighters" celebrating the news of the 07/07 attacks by brandishing their guns and cheering (BBC 2006). The video also includes a statement from Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Again, it is possible to see how citizen journalism is employed by the terrorist on behalf of Al Qaeda. The BBC depicts the video as "crude propaganda", and its own video commentary presents the belief that this video is an example of Al Qaeda utilising the media in its war against the West (BBC 2006). An interview statement by Dr. Azzam Tamimi from the Institute of Islamic Political Thought supports this view:

I wouldn't doubt for a minute that it is Al Qaeda that has produced this tape and that has released it. This is a propaganda war between the allies on the one hand and Al Qaeda on the other and Al Qaeda seem to be winning it sometimes. (BBC, 2006)

Those involved in incidences of suicide attacks play an integral role in gaining further publicity subsequent to an attack. In addition to members of the public

supplying information regarding a terrorist attack, those directly involved with planning and performing the attacks are able to produce material that add to the construction of the news of an event. Furthermore, they are able to frame the terror attacks in a particular manner, so as to justify why they were carrying out such violence in the first place.

This action of performing dependent citizen journalism by the those involved in the attacks may be regarded as a form of digital claims-making. Those responsible are able to utilise their martyrdom videos to present their claims to wider audiences. For example, Khan's first video presents a series of claims:

Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation. (Khan, 2005)

Khan's claims-making can be separated into three claims. First, Khan blames the actions of Britain's government for attacking his "people" across the world. Second, because of Britain's government being "democratically elected", Khan places blame for the actions of the government on the people that elected that government - the British public. Third, Khan claims that he and others are at war with Britain and that until they stop their actions, people in Britain will continue to be targeted as well. Khan therefore claims that the problem is the British government's actions against Muslims across the world. Via the action of citizen journalism, Khan is able to directly submit his claims to the news media. Once aired by the news media, Khan is able to guarantee an audience for his claims and perhaps receive attention by policy-makers. While Khan can be viewed as an outsider claims-maker fighting jihad against the West, this act of citizen journalism would be considered a successful act of digital claims-making in that the claim was made, received and subsequently published by the news media.

6.5. Dependent Citizen Journalism during 07/07: A Discussion

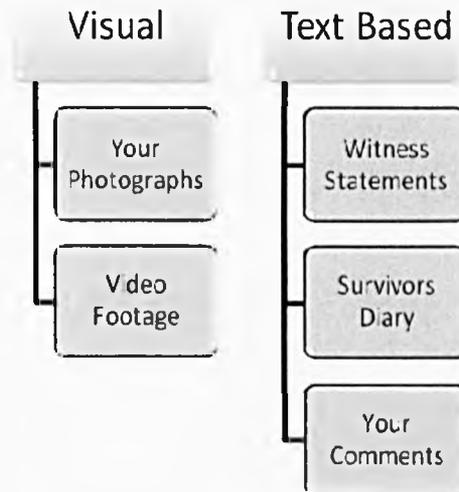
Dependent forms of citizen journalism, which are reliant upon the news media for publication, require three preconditions. First, individuals must have technology at hand to produce their own material. Second, individuals must have a desire to want to publish their own information. Third, and most importantly, news media organisations must have undergone the transition within their organisations of recognising what individuals can offer them, and created a space that enables them to share information they receive from members of the public.

This chapter has presented results from a case study that involved an assessment of the nature of dependent citizen journalism following an act of terrorism – the 7th July 2005 London bombings. By focusing on the 07/07 attacks, evidence exists to suggest that all three preconditions for dependent citizen journalism have been met, leading to a series of “types” of dependent citizen journalism to be present in the *BBC*’s presentation of this event.

First it appears as though citizens had access to technology that not only enabled them to send material to a news organisation to be published, but also technology that enabled them to record evidence of unfolding events – in some cases mobile phones. Underlying both forms of material (visual and text) submitted to the *BBC* for publication is the fact that individuals clearly had a desire to want to share their experiences with others. Without this desire, information recorded is useless; individuals must want to actively participate in the production of news. Furthermore there is evidence of younger generations interacting with the news media: in a number of the comments analysed here, there was evidence of younger individuals posting their own comments and experiences of the attacks. However, regardless of the age and desire of participants, unless organisations open up a space for audience contributions, individuals will have to venture elsewhere to attempt to have their information published and shared with audiences. In the case of the 07/07 attacks, individuals did have the technological means to produce information, they had the desire to publish their information through the *BBC*, and the *BBC* welcomed the material submitted to them and upon moderation, published some pieces of information for audiences to view.

Multifunctional websites such as the *BBC* allow individuals to participate in the wider communication and discussion of an event via acts of dependent citizen journalism. Dependent citizen journalism published by the *BBC* following 07/07 reveals that a number of types of material are available for audiences to consume that were created by members of the public affected by the attacks.

Figure 32: Types of Dependent Citizen Journalism Present in the BBC following 07/07



Types of dependent citizen journalism are split into two categories: visual and text-based. Text-based witness statements do not offer anything remarkably “new” in the construction and reporting of news. Historically, journalists have for a long time, interacted with members of the public to report the news, adding depth and structure to reporting of events. “Witness Statements” then can be seen as a continuation of audience interaction with the news media that helps shape the news. In addition to individuals’ personal accounts of the attacks, the *BBC* also published other forms of text, for example a “survivor’s diary”, providing an extended account written by Rachel North. Furthermore, the *BBC* created a space for individuals to post their own comments of the attacks – some of which provided further accounts and experiences. Individuals at the scene of the London bombings also submitted visual material to the *BBC*, including photographs and video footage. An important piece of technology for recording visual evidence was people’s mobile phones – this supports Pavlik’s (2003) view of the importance of wireless mobile communication as being important to news flows in journalism that covers crises.

This information surrounding an act of terrorism that originates from members of the public is central to the social construction of news today; news is no longer simply made by newspapermen, but the public are increasingly providing material that adds to a news organisation's presentation of the news. What then can we infer about the social construction of news by dependent citizen journalists?

6.5.1. Dependent Citizen Journalism and the Social Construction of News:

It is evident from the analysis of dependent citizen journalism in this chapter that members of the public are clearly contributing to the production of news in a number of distinct ways. Rather than performing one "type" of dependent citizen journalism, they are producing and sharing a range of material with the news media, and playing a significant role in the construction of news. Following an incident such as a terrorist attack, dependent citizen journalists are able to supply alternative information to that which is produced independently by the news media. In effect, the instances of dependent citizen journalism assessed here are, for the most part, numerous cases of "witness accounts". But in contrast to the workings of the traditional relationship between the news media and members of the public, where the public interact with professional journalists to supply personal accounts, dependent citizen journalists are able to provide rich personal perspectives of the 07/07 attacks. These perspectives can extend beyond written accounts to visual information, such as photographs and video clips. By sharing this information with the news media, dependent citizen journalists are providing an alternative story-telling "function" of the news.

Dependent citizen journalism is not restricted to providing information from the scene of attacks, but also presents individuals externally affected by the attacks to share their emotions and responses with other audiences of the act of terrorism. Numerous examples of comments were written by individuals not directly involved in the attacks, rather they had heard about the bombings and deemed it necessary for them to share their opinions and responses. In this way dependent citizen journalism functions as a way of enabling individuals to express themselves following an event that they feel strongly about.

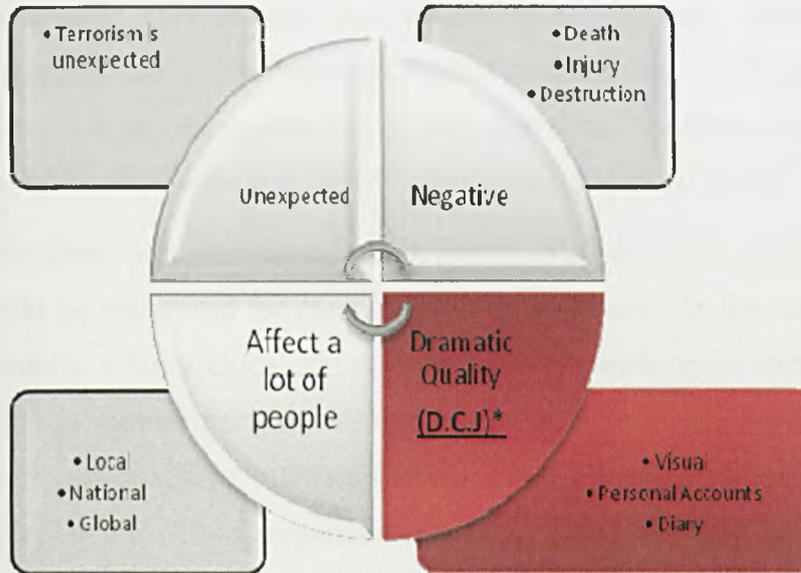
In addition to material being published by the news media and placed on their website for viewing, this material is also used by news organisations in their presentation of news stories. For example, during the analysis of videos of the 07/07 attacks recorded by dependent citizen journalists, one video was used as part of a broadcast by the *BBC*, where the reporter referred to the video having been recorded via a mobile phone proceeded to provide details of unfolding events. Thus we see collaboration between citizen journalists and the news media where material from dependent citizen journalism is regarded as complementary to the news media's presentation of the news and, upon receipt and moderation, is used as part of their broadcasting. From this perspective, as highlighted elsewhere (Lasica, 2003; Bruns, 2008), analysis in this chapter has revealed that a symbiotic relationship does indeed exist between the news media and dependent citizen journalists. But while the news media can be seen to be benefiting from the actions of citizen journalists, and it is important to note the degree of power that the news media still have in handling material produced by members of the public, some, such as Andrew Keen (2007), fear the rise of the "amateur".

6.5.2. *Power of the News Editors in the Contemporary News Environment*

Taken on its own, an act of terrorism would be extremely newsworthy to news media organisations. News values consist of those elements of a story which make it valuable to a news organisation for publication, as identified by scholars such as Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Warner (1968). Such elements include the relevance the story has to the "domestic public" (Warner, 1968) – in relation to the 07/07 attacks, following the events in London, news of the attacks can be seen as being extremely important to the "domestic public" as the attacks included the "domestic public". In turn the attacks can be seen to have "affected" a lot of people, as was also identified as a criteria for newsworthiness by Warner (1968). Other criteria of newsworthiness that the attacks appeal to include: meaningfulness, unexpectedness, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative (as identified by Galtung and Ruge, 1965). The following diagram

(Figure 33) seeks to explain how terrorism appeals to some of the news values that some news organisations might view as being central to whether or not a piece of news is important.

Figure 33: Terrorism as Newsworthy



**D.C.J – An act of terror is made extremely newsworthy as a result of material captured and shared by dependent citizen journalists.*

Material supplied by members of the public can be seen to add to the newsworthiness of an act of terrorism, particularly in terms of supplying personal evidence in the form of visual images, video footage, accounts and experiences to the dramatic quality element of the news. Material created by members of the public in many ways provides a raw account of the attacks and may be seen as being appealing to the personalised nature of news whereby a story must matter to audiences and include “people” that the public can relate to. Because material from members of the public is significantly newsworthy, this information is now being actively sought by news organisations. Yet while material from the public might be considered newsworthy, it will not necessarily be published due to moderation practices and editorial guidelines. The *BBC* for example has stated that they are committed to upholding their values, as argued by Helen Boaden in her speech on the importance of citizen journalism material for the *BBC*:

I hope I have demonstrated that the BBC is embracing these changes as positively as we can and should. I believe it's essential for the development of our journalism and our public purpose of informed citizenship. But BBC journalism is also rooted in some core values - truth and accuracy, impartiality and diversity of opinion, independence, reporting in the public interest and accountability to audiences. So embrace change and modernise we will, but those traditional values will always remain the lode star of BBC journalism. (Boaden, 2008)

As mentioned above, the news media continue to play a role in deciding what material should be presented for consumption by audiences. In the earlier days of the news media, a hierarchical structure existed in which news media editors played the role of gatekeepers, deciding what to include in the news and also what audience responses to publish (Bruns, 2008). However in the current information age, Bruns (2008) regards citizen journalists as yielding the power to put an end to the era of "gatekeeping"; he argues that all individuals, and not simply professionals working within the news industry, are now "gatewatchers" of the news. Because the Internet provides news organisations with an unlimited carrying capacity, Bruns argues that stringent decision-making about what "should" be included is no longer necessary. For Bruns (2007), embracing the contributions of the public and creating a space for this content is the first step in enabling "produsage" - audience involvement in the production and use of news - to occur. With an abundance of news available on the web, it is now the duty of everyone to act as "guide dogs", keeping watch of the news and identifying newsworthy material that they "find" from outside sources before highlighting it for others to consume: they are "gatewatchers" of the news.

However, an analysis of acts of dependent citizen journalism following 07/07 has revealed that the gatekeeping process is actively occurring within the construction of news today. Dependent citizen journalists are able submit their accounts to the news media at the second stage - input. Upon receivership by the *BBC*, the *BBC* determines whether or not the information is publishable; once a decision is made, the material is either published on its own, or used in collaboration within other reports by the news media, subsequently discussion

of and commentary on the news is opened up to the masses, however, the publication of this material is still dependent on moderation practices by news organisations, and is therefore not entirely “open” to the masses as described by Bruns (2008).

The news media are able to give access to a far greater number of people to present their own accounts of the news than when they were restricted by newspapers’ carrying capacity. This material may be in the form of textual evidence or visual evidence, but is no longer restricted to a select few instances of journalists interacting with eyewitnesses. It is important to note that whilst the news media now publish more material that is produced by the public, they are still able to play an important editorial role in deciding what to publish. Comments, photographs and videos, for example, must be filtered by editors prior to publication. The news media are therefore able to remain in control of the content they choose to publish, and to decide what material is worthy of attention from their audiences – they are able to therefore remain as gatekeepers of the news, as similarly found in other studies of online news production (Matheson, 2004; Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida and Thurman, 2008).

Controlling content within the presentation of the news is essential for ensuring the quality and standards of professional journalism. We have already seen that the media can be criticised for relying on unauthorised material: this was evident during the 2008 Mumbai attacks. By making the conscious decision to control what citizen news contributions to publish, news organisations are able to ensure they present high-standard news pieces, thereby retaining professional standards of journalism whilst embracing their audiences’ desire to be involved in the production of news. As argued by Singer (2006), it appears necessary for news organisations to review their traditional gatekeeping practices so as to open up news participation to audiences, whilst upholding their professional standards.

6.5.3. *The Role of Dependent Citizen Journalism in Society*

Dependent citizen journalists play a series of roles in society. One of the most striking roles is that of *informants*. It is evident that dependent citizen journalists

play a key role in the production of information following an act of terrorism. However, in order for information to be published by mainstream news organisations like the *BBC*, this information has to fit the agenda that is set by the news organisation. It is possible that in the foreseeable future, dependent citizen journalists will be able to initiate the news media agenda, by supplying mainstream news organisations with breaking news. Accordingly, the role of dependent citizen journalists is to inform, not just audiences, but also the news media. Thus we see the “informant” role of dependent citizen journalists as being multi-faceted.

Dependent citizen journalists are not restricted to informing society about news developments: they are also able to inform social scientists. For example, material by dependent citizen journalists can be useful in informing academics of how eyewitnesses perceive individuals to have responded to a disaster situation. Analysis of dependent citizen journalists has revealed how they perceived those around them to have responded to the 07/07 attacks. For example, many who shared their experiences via the *BBC* comments board identified other people as being calm and collected, with only a handful of instances of individuals referring to scenes of panic. Of those accounts that did describe scenes of “panic”, there was not always sufficient evidence to suggest individuals panicking; and photographs and video clips pointed to a lack of discernible panic in response to the attacks. On the whole, there appears to be emphasis on individuals describing events in such a way that suggests a resilient response to the attacks. This resilient response was not seen solely by those describing their experiences of the bombings, but was also found when reviewing audience comments about the London bombings from those who had both direct and indirect experiences of the attacks.

Analysis of material gathered and produced by dependent citizen journalists offers those wishing to study the public response to disaster a distinct way of reaching those who were at the scene of a disaster event. Whilst the accounts provide evidence of individuals’ perceptions rather than “objective facts”, this information can be used to supplement other methodological enquiries. In their study of public responses to the 07/07 attacks, Drury et al.

(2009) combined analysis of comments submitted to the news media with interviews and analysis of newspapers. They similarly found that there was very little evidence to support claims that there had been a “panicked” response to the attacks:

However, there were 20 such accounts that explicitly denied there was panic, while 37 referred to “calm” amongst those affected by the bombs, and 58 described the response as an “orderly evacuation”. In the archive personal accounts, 46 people described the events as “panic” or referred to people “panicking”; but 53 of them (and indeed 17 of the same people) also characterized the evacuation as “orderly”. (Drury et al., 2009: 76).

We can therefore see that information created by dependent citizen journalists about the news is not just useful for mainstream news organisations, but can also be valuable sources of information to academics.

In addition to being informants, dependent citizen journalists are also able to play a significant role in digital claims-making. As identified in the analysis of dependent citizen journalism material published by *BBC*, the use of martyrdom videos by terrorists, which can be viewed as acts of dependent citizen journalism, can be understood as a form of digital claims-making. As activists, terrorists are able to make claims as to why they are being put in a position of taking part in violence – giving details as to what the problem/issue is from their perspective. In the case of the 07/07 attacks, such claims state that the problem is the British government’s involvement in the war in the Middle East, and the problem of the British public supporting such a war. These claims are aired by a number of new media outlets and as a result can be seen to gain publicity from a far-reaching audience.

The 07/07 attacks and the subsequent martyrdom video can be seen as behavioural claims, as well as verbal claims. The terrorists’ actions are used to promote their cause, and this is achieved via publicity that they receive from the news media both for the act of terrorism in which they have participated, and the martyrdom videos they have self-created and had professionally produced and distributed following their deaths. In the case of the 07/07 attacks the suicide bombers can be seen as responding to other claims-makers – Al Qaeda - who

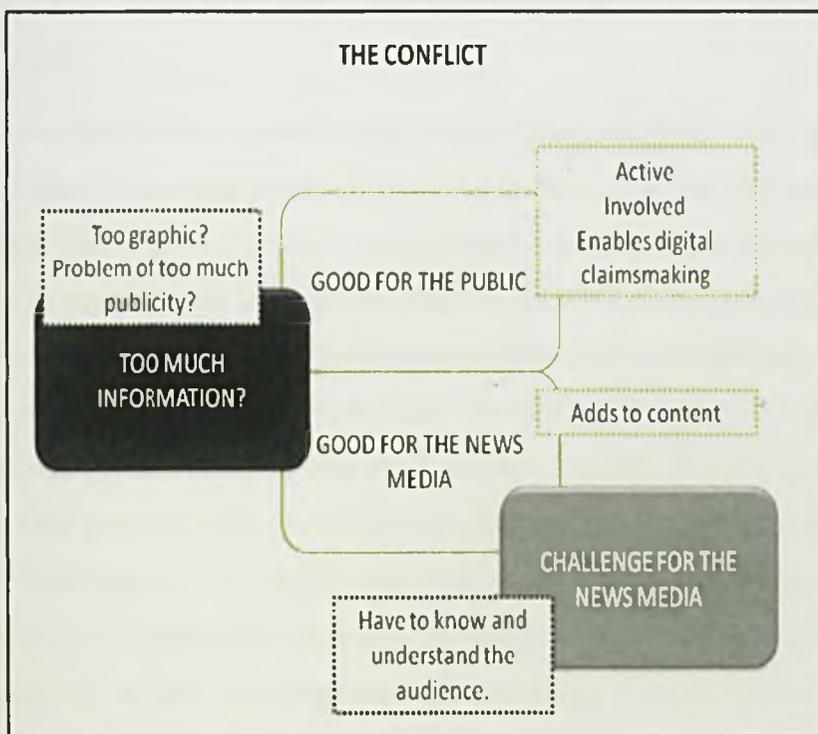
have also claimed that the West is causing problems in the Middle East and, in response, have declared global jihad.

The journalistic activities of the suicide bombers in creating their own martyrdom videos and distributing them to the news media for publication provide evidence that the digital era has the potential to enable individuals to participate in claims-making activities. Claims-making in this digital era can thus be a more personalised activity, with individuals able to approach the news media for the publication of their claims. This may be via behaviour such as images and video, or may be in the format of text, such as comments submitted to the news media. Although dependent citizen journalists would still have to compete with others for audience attention, by contributing material to the content of the mainstream news media, digital claims-makers are able to gain a global stage for the dissemination of their claims.

6.5.4. *Dependent Citizen Journalism and the News Media: The Conflict*

The relationship between dependent citizen journalists and the news media is a complex and conflicting one, as the diagram below (figure 34) seeks to show.

Figure 34: Dependent Citizen Journalism and the News Media: The Conflict



Dependent citizen journalism benefits both the individual and the news media. The individual is able to take an active role in participating in “something” in society; he/she is able to channel the desire to be involved in the sharing of information into something worthwhile, by gaining publicity for their material from a wide audience, rather than from a select few via their own means of personal communication. Additionally, the act of participating in dependent citizen journalism provides an effective way of claims-makers bringing attention to their claims. In turn, the news media are able to benefit from the material supplied by dependent citizen journalists, as it greatly adds to the news content they are able to offer to audiences for consumption.

However, despite this symbiotic relationship, dependent citizen journalism does pose a significant challenge to the workings of the news media. This is not to say that it poses a *problem*: as discussed here, dependent citizen journalism both assists the news media and is reliant upon it, so it poses no threat to replace the news media. The challenge is that a working relationship is required between the news media and those members of the audience who wish to participate in the production of news. In order to establish this relationship, it is necessary for news media organisations to understand their audiences: an imperative that has arguably been less pressing in the past (Schesliner 1978; Tuchman 1980).

Some organisations have already begun this process of making efforts to understand how to manage material from the public. The *BBC*, for example, has set up a team that seeks to understand audience needs and can assist the *BBC* in responding to content sent in by the public. Matthew Eltringham, assistant editor of interactivity and social media development at the *BBC*, established a team that initiated the “User Generated Content Hub”: for Eltringham, the 07/07 bombings were a turning point, where it was evident that the *BBC* did not know how to handle the vast amounts of material being submitted to them by the public. Five years later, the team at the “hub” now actively work to educate people about conducting citizen journalism. They are assisting both citizen journalists and the *BBC* in adapting to the requirements of managing content from the public (Eltringham, 2011). Whilst dependent citizen journalism may be a challenge to

news media, with effort, the two can work alongside each other, enabling society to be presented with rich, informative news that the both the public and professionally-trained journalists have worked together to create.

Another “problem” with the involvement of the public in the news process is the consideration of whether too much information is now being shared. This issue will be explored in chapter eight in relation to the additional publicity provided to terrorists: for now, let us consider the question of news footage supplied by the public in general. To illustrate this point, consider a video submitted to the news media by a member of the public which presented images of the destruction of the bus and the harm the bomb blast had caused to people involved. At times the video camera appears to zoom in to capture extremely close footage of the victims, forcing us to question whether there is such a thing as “too much” information. Do we need to see such dramatic footage of an act of terror? What about the privacy of the individual injured? Understanding the motivations behind citizen journalism and what people think about material it produces should be a key area for further research, which will help us to understand whether or not this is a real “problem” we should be dealing with in relation to citizen journalism material. Perhaps it will be found that people have a desire to see “live” footage of events, rather than a report.

By conducting an analysis of dependent citizen journalism in relation to a case study, it has been possible to further our understanding of the impact of dependent citizen journalists on the social construction of news, and also the possible implications of dependent citizen journalism for the news media. It is now necessary to repeat this type of investigation by focusing on acts of independent citizen journalism, to see whether different forms of citizen journalism have a different impact on the social construction of news and, additionally, what independent citizen journalism means for the news media.

7. Citizen Journalism: Blogging 07/07

Evidence suggests that the practice of independent citizen journalism following an act of terrorism is gaining momentum, as citizen journalism has become more widespread and openly discussed. Between the 9/11 attacks in the USA and the 2008 Madrid attacks, as discussed in chapter four, there has been a noticeable increase in the activities of members of the public independently producing and distributing the news. Consequently, assessing independent citizen journalism from a sociological angle is an important area of enquiry for this thesis.

During 07/07, the blogosphere was one of the main platforms for the publication of independent forms of citizen journalist material. Accordingly, this chapter will analyse the content of blogs that have been found to be relevant to discussing the 07/07 attacks.⁵⁶ Independent citizen journalism in this chapter is considered to be those journalistic acts entirely carried out, produced and self-published by individuals, all of whom are acting independently from the news media in their efforts to have their own material published on the Internet. To understand these efforts, this chapter employs QMA of blogs self-published by individuals following the 07/07 attacks. Chapter five discussed various definitions of what constitutes a blog. This thesis will follow the explanation provided by Quiggin (2006: 482):

A personal webpage in a journal format, using software that automatically puts new entries ('posts') at the top of the page, and shifts old entries to archives after a specified time, or when the number of posts becomes too large for convenient scrolling.

This chapter aims to answer to a number of relevant questions, similar to those asked in the previous chapter regarding the nature of dependent citizen journalism following an act of terrorism. By doing so it will be possible to add to our understanding of the nature of citizen journalism in its entirety, both dependent and independent forms of citizen journalism, following an act of terrorism. Questions include: how does the social construction of news by

⁵⁶ See chapter five for further information on methodological design.

bloggers differ to the construction of the news by the news media? Do citizen journalists reinforce the news media? How is the news agenda set for citizen journalists? Does digital claims-making take place in the citizen journalist reporting of terrorism? If so, how does it happen and what types of claims are present?

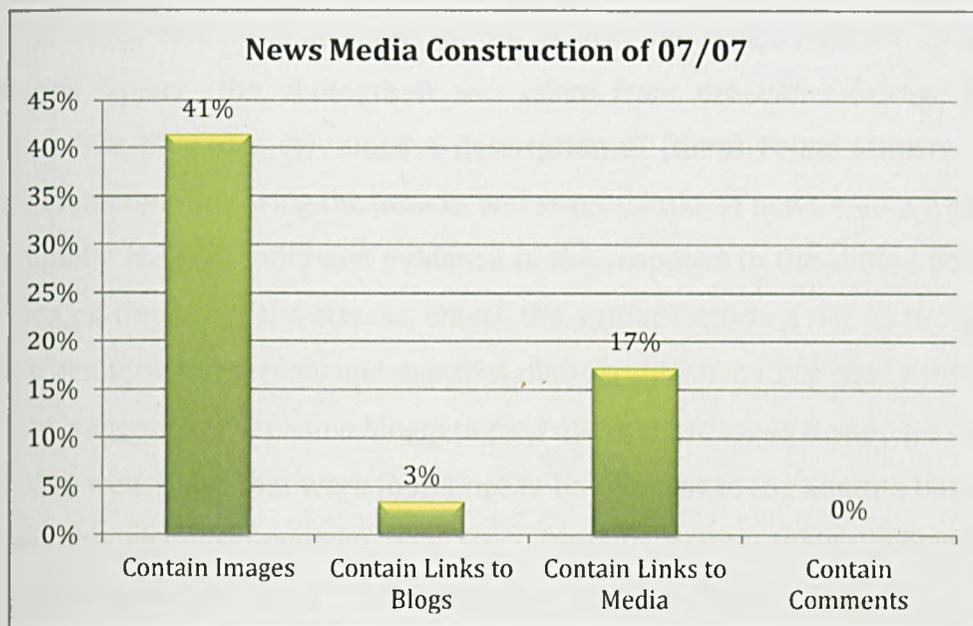
The results of this analysis will be presented by first showing how the (online) news media construct and present the events of 07/07, allowing for a comparison to be made between the news constructed by citizen journalists and that constructed by the news media. It will then provide a brief overview of results found in the initial stages of the research process. This overview of results will be followed by an analysis of the direct forms of citizen journalism found in personal accounts of the London attacks, and an investigation of a random sample of sixteen blogs to assess whether or not digital claims-making is present within the blog posts. The chapter will come to a close by presenting a discussion of results related to the research questions.

7.1. The News Media and the Presentation of an Act of Terrorism

An assessment of the nature of the presentation of the 07/07 attacks by the news media provides a brief insight into how the news media construct a piece of news in comparison to citizen journalists, who act independently from the media. The research involved using some of the relevant variables identified in the analysis of independent citizen journalism to analyse whether the news media framed the London bombings in a format similar to that of independent citizen journalists. Variables included: whether the news media used images in their reports, whether the news media utilised links in their posts – both to blogs and other mainstream news websites – and finally, whether comments were present that enabled audiences to interact with the news reports. A *Google News Archive* search was conducted to reveal relevant news articles concerning the London bombings. Of the 481 articles that were accessible, 29 were found to be of relevance to the parameters set for this research: whether the article had been written on the 7th July 2005 and was a British piece of news.

As shown by graph 3 (*below*), the number of news articles that contained images was approximately 41% (12 out of the 29 articles), the majority of which were used by the *BBC*. Only one article, by *The Guardian*, included links to other blog sites. Of the 29 articles, only five contained links to other news media: this was predominantly found in the *BBC* articles (4 out of 5), where the links were used to direct audiences to other *BBC* articles relevant to the 07/07 attacks. Only *The Guardian* supplied links to other news organisations. None of the articles examined for this analysis contained comments written by the audience.

Graph 3: News Media Construction of 07/07



By looking at these statistics it will be possible to compare and contrast the use of images, links and comments in the construction of a piece of news by the news media to that created by independent citizen journalists in relation to the events of 07/07.

7.2. Blogging 07/07 – Overview of Results

A *Google Blog Search* for the term "London Bombings" on the 7th July 2005 revealed a total of 195 blog posts. After systematically processing each individual blog post, 169⁵⁷ (86.7%) were found to be of direct relevance to the terrorist

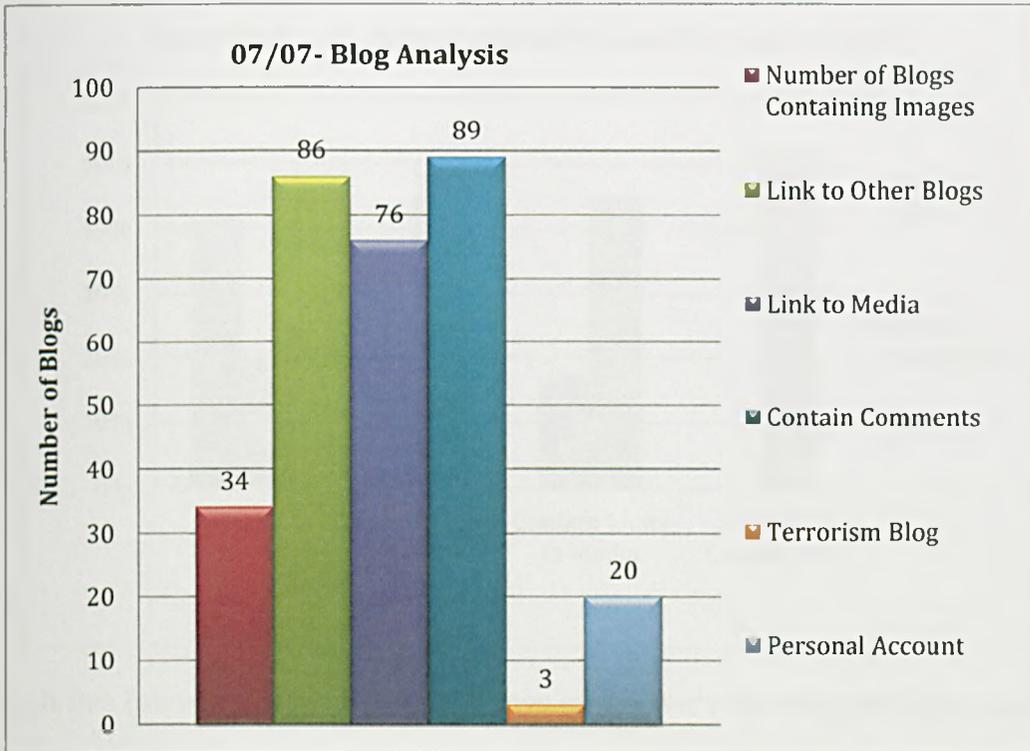
⁵⁷ See Appendix for list of blogs.

attacks in London on 07/07. Of the 195 blogs identified, the reason why only 169 were used for analysis purposes was due to the nature of the content. If the blog post did not refer to the London bombings this post was categorised as being not applicable. Unfortunately, when using *Google Blog Search* to identify relevant blog posts, the use of parameters did not always ensure that all blog posts contained material relating to the London bombings.

Examples of blogs that were identified as relevant to the 07/07 London bombings include blog 1 - Jack Lewis.Net, which presented several links to other blog coverage of the London bombings. A second example is blog 65 - Sepia Mutiny, which contained an image of the destruction of the number 30 bus at Tavistock Square (the photograph was taken from the *BBC* coverage of the attacks). The blog also contained a description of (then) Prime Minister Tony Blair's statement following the attacks and several links to news media websites. Additionally blog 65 contained evidence of the response in the United States of America on the day of the attacks, where the author reports a rise in the official level of the terrorist threats and supplies photographs from *The New York Times* website, suggesting that some bloggers paid attention to news responses outside the UK as well. Blogs that were found not to be relevant to the London bombings include the terrorism-centred blog 91 - Dhimmi Watch, which refers to an alternative news item titled "5 Pakistanis arrested over 'honour' rape".

Those blogs that were found to be of direct relevance to the London bombings were subsequently processed according to the six variables under inspection during the protocol stage of the research (see Graph 4 below). Following the development of a protocol for qualitative media analysis, variables of interest included: whether the blog contained images, whether the blog supplied links to other blogs, whether the blog gave links to online news media, whether the blog received any comments, whether the blog was devoted to the topic of "Terrorism", whether the blog contained a "Personal Account" of being affected by the 07/07 attacks.

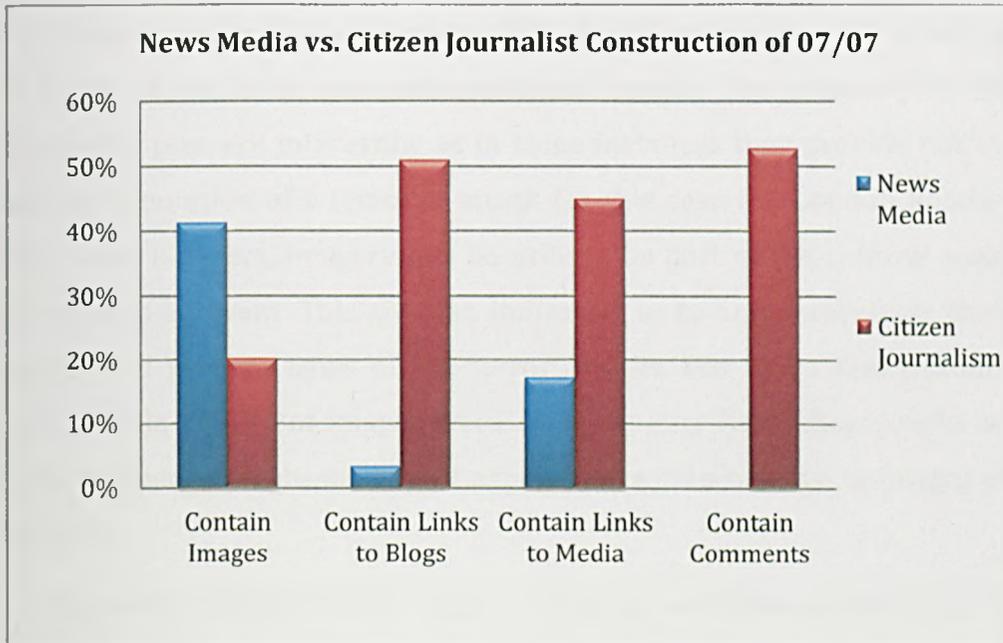
Graph 4: 07/07 Blog Analysis – Overview of Results



From the blogs that were found to be relevant to discussing the 07/07 attacks, the following results were found with regard to the listed variables (above): Of the 169 relevant blogs, 34 (17.4%) contained images. A total of 86 blogs (44.1%) contained links to other blog sites; a total of 76 blogs (39.0%) supplied links to other media websites (for example *BBC*, *CNN*, *Sky News*, *the Guardian* and so forth). Eighty nine blogs (45.6%) contained comments. Three blogs (1.5%) were dedicated to the topic of terrorism and 20 blogs (10.3%) supplied evidence of a personal account of the London bombings.

When comparing independent citizen journalist's construction of the news to the news media's construction of the news, the following results were identified:

Graph 5: News Media vs. Citizen Journalist Construction of 07/07



Graph five (above) suggests that the news media were far more likely to employ the use of images in their portrayal and analysis of the 07/07 attacks than were independent citizen journalists. On the other hand, independent citizen journalists were far more likely to engage with new forms of media by sharing links to other blogs as well as to the news media. Additionally, independent citizen journalists were more likely to receive comments to their posts; none of the news media articles analysed for this research received comments from audiences, comments submitted to the BBC in the previous chapter, were not comments submitted in response to a written article, but were comments from members of the public in response to the attacks, that the BBC opened up a space on their website for. It is therefore possible to identify in this instance significant differences between the portrayal of news between the news media and independent citizen journalists.

What follows is a discussion of each of the variables presented in graph three above, with the use of examples to illustrate and explain the nature of findings of the citizen-produced material.

Use of Imagery

Use of imagery in the blogs discussing of the 07/07 attacks was not widely seen: only 17.4% of the blogs analysed contained images. The presence of images within a blog post are interesting as in some instances they provide not only a visual representation of a terrorist attack (in this case the London bombings), but for some bloggers, imagery can be utilised as part of the cultural meaning they attach to an event. This gives an indication as to how individuals chose to construct and present news of the terror attacks. For those that did employ images, a wide variety of images were used, ranging from photographs of the attacks, to older photographs of past experience with adversity, to images of the Union Jack.

Figure 35 (below) is from blog 8 – PsyBlog - and presents an image of the destruction of the number 30 bus at Tavistock Square. The blogger does not directly refer to the image in his/her post. Rather, the image appears to be utilised as photographic evidence of the London explosions, in this case employing the iconic image of the double-decker bus.

Figure 35: PsyBlog “London Bombings: Psychology of Terrorism”



The screenshot shows the PsyBlog website interface. At the top, the logo reads "PSYBLOG" with the tagline "Understand your mind" and navigation links for HOME, ABOUT, CONTACT, and ADVERTISE. Below the header, there is a section for "Join 25888 readers" with links for "RSS Feed" and "Email updates". A central message says: "Hi, if you are new [subscribe to the RSS feed](#) or get [free email updates](#) for the latest from PsyBlog." The main article is titled "London Bombings: Psychology of Terrorism" and features a small image of a double-decker bus. The text of the article begins: "As the dust settles on the [terrorist bombings](#) that hit London yesterday, and people begin to take stock of what has happened, thoughts will doubtless turn to how such atrocities can be avoided. To understand that, it is useful to examine how a single person could be brought to carry out such an extreme act of violence. Professor Fathah M. Moghaddam discussed the psychological processes that lead up to a terrorist act in an article published in early 2005 in the *American Psychologist*. This article analyses how an ordinary person might become a terrorist."

For various bloggers, an image of the British Union Jack flag was utilised instead of a photograph. Figure 36 (below), from blog 167 - Watching Washington - is a blog post titled “Counting the Days”. The blogger literally counts the days since other attacks including 9/11, the promise by (then) US President George. W. Bush of bringing in Osama Bin Laden “dead or alive”, the Madrid bombings and

the attacks at Pearl Harbour during the Second World War. The use of the British flag appears to symbolise the visual representation of the United Kingdom as the latest country that has fallen victim to terrorism.

Figure 36: Watching Washington “Counting the Days”



An alternative use of images in a blog post is the inclusion of historical photographs to compare the past with the present. In figure 37 (below), blog 61 - Annika's Journal - presents an image taken during the period of the Blitz to compare the past with the present. The author links the two periods in time in which British citizens had to respond to adversity in the form of bombings. In comparing the Second World War to the London attacks, the author directly challenges the idea that British citizens are *still* capable of uniting to confront the latest security threat to the UK.

Figure 37: Annika's Journal “Various Disconnected London Thoughts”

During the first London Blitz of August 1940 to May 1941 over 43,000 civilians died and 139,000 were injured. The height of the blitz. During the V-weapon blitzes of 1944, about 8800 civilians died. One might think that the Brits WWII. But they were united then, and now i'm not so sure. They have a sense that this is America's war, and seem war. Until we fought side-by-side with them to victory.



In stark contrast to blog 61 (Image 19), blog 152 – Horizon - titled “London Pride” (Figure 38, below) utilises the experience of the Second World War as a positive representation of the capabilities and resilience of British people.

Figure 38: Horizon “London Pride”



There is evidence of the use of a photoblog to report the 07/07 attacks. A photoblog is a blog that uses photographs to present the author’s desired content. This provides direct evidence of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism. As can be seen in Figure 39, blog 5 – Andrew’s Photo Blog - presents a series of photographs from around London on 07/07. One photograph captures *The Evening Standard* news board. Other photographs include members of the public being directed by police outside Liverpool Street station and an image of city workers walking in the road along Bishopsgate in London. Rather than employing language to report events, pictures are used to construct and present an alternative framing of news. As with other blogs, photoblogs are also able to elicit discussion from their audience. In this case, Andrew’s Photoblog on the London bombings received seven comments.

Figure 39: Andrew’s Photoblog: “London Bombings”



Figure 40 (below) provides evidence that some bloggers, such as the author of blog post 111, used a print screen shot of the *BBC* website as a focus for their criticism of this news organisation. The author argues that the *BBC* had “forgotten” its editorial guidelines of not using the term “terrorism” to report

such attacks. From this perspective it is possible to note the use of a blog post to engage critically with the news media.

Figure 40: Snapshots A Camera Blog “Terror Strikes London; BBC Forgets Editorial Guidelines”

BBC.com's morning article on the attacks is headlined "London Rocked by Terror Attacks." The news organization has not similarly described attacks on Israeli buses and nightclubs as "terror." In fact, BBC has methodically avoided using this word when reporting on these attacks, probably as an extension of its editorial guidelines, which state:

The word 'terrorist' itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. We should try to avoid the term, without attribution. We should let other people characterize while we report the facts as we know them.

If BBC purports to be objective, then it must apply its guidelines consistently, whether terrorists operate within its borders or outside.

BBC on London Terror Attacks



In addition to using a picture of the devastation of the London attacks, blog 114 – Willisms - uses photographs of politicians to represent the political responses to the London attacks (see Figure 41, below). The author's focuses on the reactions of then British Prime Minister Tony Blair and then US President George. W. Bush.

Figure 41: Willisms “Tony Blair’s George W. Busy Moment



I hate to minimize the deadly deed committed today in London by those terrorist comrades, but I can't help but wonder what Tony Blair was thinking when making his statement to the press.



It's important to remember that the president is not a politician. He is a leader. He is the only person in the world who is responsible for the lives of all Americans.

The use of images in a blog post represents the various interests/viewpoints that bloggers have when reporting an event. In contrast to the news media's reporting of an act of terror, there appears to be far greater creative freedom in blog posts discussing and constructing news about the occurrence of an act of terrorism.

Links to Other Blogs

A second component of blog posts that the analysis of the 07/07 London blog posts revealed is the use of links. Links are used to direct audiences to the news media, but there is also evidence of interaction between bloggers: 44.1% of the relevant blogs provided links to other blog sites.

For many bloggers, a blog post offers the opportunity to supply his/her audience with links to other blog sites. Blog 4 - First Draft - is a classic example of a blogger providing links to other blogs, in this case 'Norm Blog'. Furthermore, the blog includes links to the photograph social networking site *Flickr*, and websites such as the citizen-produced online encyclopaedia directory *Wikipedia*. Other blogs that include links to other bloggers include blog 79 - Simon World - which includes a link to the live blog site Winds of Change, which sought to update the blog as the events of 07/07 took place. A third blog, blog 96 - The Mudville Gazette - provides links to a series of blogs that were not necessarily directly linked to commentary surrounding the London bombings, but were linked to discussions of terrorism in general. For example, blog 96 - The Mudville Gazette - provides a link to The Truth Seeker, a blog that develops analysis into the various causes of terrorism in a series of "Internet Essays". A fourth blog, blog 190 - Babalu Blog - provides its audience with links to a series of blogs including the terrorism-centred blog The Command Post, which provides a "roundup" of blogging following the London bombers.

As this analysis has shown, links may not be specific to a wider discussion of the London bombings, but are central to the nature of blogging following an act of terror. There is evidence to suggest that bloggers not only write blogs for their own personal reasons, but that they also explore content from other bloggers, which boosts other bloggers' publicity across the Internet. Consequently we witness the extension of publicity of a terrorist attack across the Internet via a number of means of communication. The activity of sharing links between blogs provides evidence of both inter-media agenda-setting

between blogs and a form of social interaction⁵⁸ online. Therefore, it is possible to note that it is not simply the news media that sets the agenda for bloggers: other blog posts do that too. However, bloggers also can, and do, provide links to the news media.

Links to News Media

Thirty nine percent of the sample supplied links to the news media. Examples include blog 4 - First Draft - by Tim Porter, which supplies links to the *BBC*, *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* websites. Here the blogger, Porter, provides evidence of reporting from both British and American professional news media. Not only does the author supply links showing his own interaction with the news media, but he uses the blog post to criticise the news media's reporting of the London attacks. The author supplies a list of criteria which he believes should be included in the news media's reporting of 07/07:

Figure 42: First Draft

What do I want in my Wall Street Journal, New York Times and San Francisco Chronicle when I pick them up from the porch tomorrow? I want the type of reporting that professionals can still do better than citizens, but also pointers to the best of the citizen work:

- **Context:** The history of terrorism in London and on the European continent.
- **Update:** What happened to the Madrid subway bombing suspects?
- **Local:** What are the safety measures on the New York subway system? On BART in the Bay Area? How have they changed since the Madrid bombing? What money is involved?
- **Geography:** A large, data-rich info-graphic of what happened (which so hard to read on-line).
- **People like me:** London is filled with American tourists. Tell me their stories.
- **Debate:** An op-ed page devoted to liberty vs. security.
- **Voices:** The words and images of those who were there.

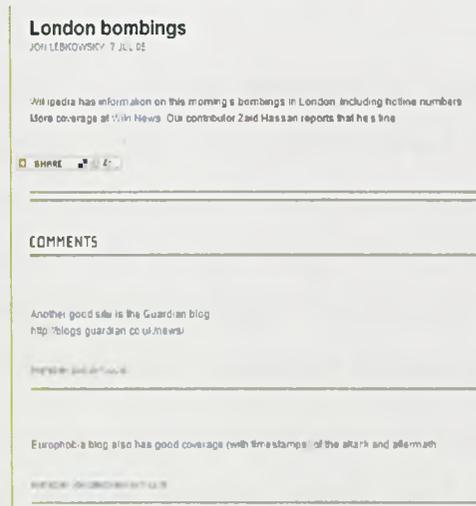
What kind of newspaper would you make for tomorrow? We need **everything but the news.**

Other blogs that include links to news media include blog 39 - News Hounds - which supplies further critical analysis of American news network *Fox News's* coverage of the London bombings. Whilst there is evidence of critical news analysis from bloggers, by containing links to news media sites (see blogs 90, 100, 101 for examples), many blogs reinforce the news media rather than supplying an alternative voice. For example, blog 120 - Rhymes With Right - supplies over twenty links to news media sites including the *BBC*, *The Times*

⁵⁸ Further discussion of this point will take place in the discussion section of this chapter.

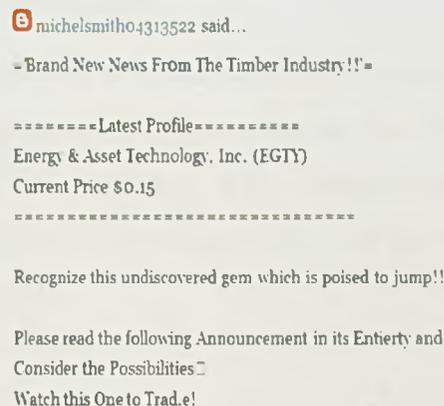
author but can also be seen with those interacting with a blog, who supply links within comments to the blog post.

Figure 44: World Changing – Change Your Thinking



Alternatively, blog 41 - Cowboy Caleb - contains extensive discussion in its comment section, ranging from thanks to the author for the links supplied in the blog post, to a personal reflection on the impact of the terrorist attacks. There is also evidence of the misuse of comments submitted to a blog post in which individuals use another person's blog as an advertising space for their own personal gain. An example can be seen in blog 162 - Science Religion and Citizenship:

Figure 45: Science Religion and Citizenship



Results of the analysis of blogging during 07/07 suggest that comments are a useful tool to understand the interaction of bloggers with his/her audience.

However they can also be used for more “selfish” reasons, such as for personal advertisement.⁵⁹

Terrorism Blog

Throughout the analysis, one of the protocols of interest during the initial analysis stage was whether blogs existed that focused their attention solely on the topic of terrorism. Results suggest that a minority of blogs were based around terrorism; only three of the 169 blogs (1.5%) were found to be relevant to the category of terrorism-centred blogs. The first was Blog 20 - Jihad Watch - which provides a critical analysis of the London bombings. Jihad Watch is a blog:

...dedicated to bringing public attention to the role that jihad theology and ideology plays in the modern world, and to correcting popular misconceptions about the role of jihad and religion in modern-day conflicts. We hope to alert people of good will to the true nature of the present global conflict. (Blog 20)

In relation to the 07/07 attacks, Jihad Watch discusses the planning behind the 07/07 attacks; reinforcing claims by an “expert” that the attacks were carried out by “at least” 24 individuals. This expert was director of the Center for Defence Studies at King's College London, Michael Clarke. The second relevant blog, blog 44 - The Counter Terrorism Blog - claims to be a “multi-expert blog” providing information on counterterrorism:

The site is intended to provide fresh information and various perspectives (sometimes opposing), as presented by the Contributing Experts and in the news articles, columns, and website links posted on the blog. Contributing Experts are responsible only for the content of their posts and links. (Blog 44)

⁵⁹ This was similarly found in a photo essay I completed on a Russian nightclub fire in December 2009 and the use of *Twitter* to report the incident. To illustrate, evidence was found of one *Twitter* user - ‘Sex_Porn_Pills’ to use news of the nightclub incident as a way of advertising Viagra (Watson, 2009).

The above blog post, identified by Google Blog Search, is titled “Multiple Terrorist Bombings in London” and was written by Andrew Cochran. The post contains references and links to a number of news media sites and photographs, presenting an overview and analysis of the London bombings, and was gradually updated throughout the day. The final blog dedicated to the topic of terrorism was blog 157 - Message for my Friends - a *Flickr* page set up as an outlet to send a message to the authors’ friends, allowing people to see that the author is ‘OK’. The page also contains a number of photographs taken on the 7th July 2005 in London. Whilst *Flickr* is a social networking site, *Google Blog Search* categorises the site as blog pages for individual authors, and may therefore be considered a form of photo blogging. The post received a number of comments from the page’s audience:

Figure 46: Message for my Friends



From the perspective of attempting to differentiate between different types of blogs, it appears that most blogs used to discuss the London bombings are those that individuals use for personal use to discuss a range of topics. Very few are dedicated solely to the discussion of a terrorist attack.

Personal Account

Of particular interest during the analysis of blog content was the presence of personal accounts, with the view that these would be more “direct” personal accounts of individual’s experiences of 07/07 to those blog posts that would simply reiterate the news media’s account of the attacks. Of the 169 blogs, a total of 20 (10.3%) were identified as supplying a personal account whereby the author was directly affected by the attacks. Examples of content includes a post

by Tim Porter writing on blog 4 - First Draft - in which he discusses his morning and the trouble he had in locating his wife in London:

Figure 47: First Draft

My wife is in London on business, an investment conference not far from one of the tube stations that was bombed. She took a cab today, by chance, rather than the subway and is fine. At 3:15 a.m., a call from her mother woke me, to tell me about the attacks. **It took me an hour to locate my wife**, an hour spent on the phone and on the Internet, finding telephone numbers, reading the BBC and Yahoo and Google news.

The first-day story **no longer belongs to newspapers** - and hasn't for a long time. It isn't even the property of professional journalists any longer.

A second example of a blog that contains a personal account is blog 5- Andrew's Photoblog - which, as discussed earlier, contains a series of photographs taken by the author out and about in London on the day of the attacks.

Figure 48: Andrew's Photoblog



Blog 7 - City of Sound - supplies an account of an individual working for the *BBC*. The blog's focus is on the safety of the author and his/her colleagues, and the efforts of the *BBC* in assisting its workers, as well as the workers' efforts to keep news of the London attacks rolling. Alternatively, blog 25 - d.brady.net - contains a brief post indicating the author's safety and the claim that train and buses "seem to be shut down in central London". This is similarly seen in blog 157, a photograph uploaded to *Flickr* titled "Message for my friends", which contains a picture message of "I'm OK", allowing friends and relatives to see that the message was handwritten. The blog post contains a number of comments with what appears to be replies from friends and acquaintances (see Image 46 above). Evidence suggests that various methods are used by bloggers to relate their personal experiences of the London bombings. An in-depth look at the personal accounts will follow in the second section of this chapter.

When considering use of links within the personal accounts, only 6 (30%) individuals supplied links to other blogs. Nine (45%) citizen journalists supplied links to the news media, providing evidence that *some* citizen journalists choose to reinforce the news media. Within those personal accounts only one blog (0.05%) contained a criticism of the news media, where the author made efforts to point out that newspapers are out of date before they are even published and discussed what he expected from the news media at this time:

Three newspapers lie unopened and unread on my kitchen table. The fact that I subscribe to the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and the San Francisco Chronicle tells you much about the trust I place in newspapers as an institution. The fact that I didn't give them more than a fleeting glance this morning speaks just as strongly to their uselessness on a day of major news. Stories, photos, audio and video reporting on the horrific bombings in London fill the airwaves, top the web sites of news organizations and occupy the attention of the blogosphere. The front page of the Times is dominated by a photo showing a throng of Londoners cheering for the city's successful Olympic bid. How sadly outdated it is today. (Blog 4)

Throughout the analysis it became apparent that blogs are not solely used for the purpose of reporting events, but can also be used to present a more personal response to an act of terrorism in the form of different cultural responses. Authors are able to use their own forms of creative thought for presenting a blog post that they deem suitable to the events.

7.3. In-Depth: Blogging 07/07

The following section will be split into two parts. The first will provide an in-depth analysis of a simple random sample of 16 blog posts.⁶⁰ The second will access all 22 personal accounts identified from the 169 relevant blog posts and assess their content for any sign of claims-making, providing evidence as to

⁶⁰ For further information on sampling see methodology chapter (5).

whether citizen journalists act as claims-makers in their reporting of an act of terrorism. In order to understand fully the content of blogs, it is necessary to analyse a sample of the relevant blogs, made up of every tenth blog (16 in total). Table seven below provides a list of the blogs included in this analysis.

Table 7: Blogs Included in Smaller Sample

Blog Number	Title
Blog 11	Tabloid Edition
Blog 21	No Signal Input
Blog 33	The Big Picture
Blog 44	The Counterterrorism Blog
Blog 55	Captain's Quarters
Blog 65	Sepia Mutiny
Blog 75	Hyscience
Blog 85	Steve's Random and Often Belligerent Journal
Blog 96	The Mudville Gazette
Blog 109	Squaring the Boston Globe
Blog 123	Kung Fu Monkey
Blog 139	Mystery Pollster
Blog 151	Rubber Hose
Blog 162	Science, Religion, Citizenship
Blog 172	Red State Son
Blog 184	Blue Sun 2600

By examining the above blogs in greater detail, a number of observations can be made regarding their content. For blog 109 - Squaring the Boston Globe - reporting took the form of making reference to the occurrence of the London bombings. The author refers to the blasts not being the result of a "Power Surge", as had first been thought, but was the result of acts of terrorism. The author can be seen tracking the gradual development of knowledge surrounding the blasts. The blogger also comments on the lack of the "T" word by the news media. In other blogs (11, 21, 44, 75), the authors supply a running commentary of the news reports surrounding the London bombings. It is possible to take notice of the efforts made by these individuals in following the updates in news and utilising their blogs as a "current" source for information that updates throughout the day. The authors supply website links to news media websites and other blogs commenting on the London bombings. Here, bloggers appear to be reliant on the news media to compile their version of events. An example can

be seen in blog 21- No Signal Input - (see figures 49 below – words underlined in the figure are links), and blog 44 - Counterterrorism Blog:

Figure 49: No Signal Input

Full coverage can be found all around the Internet, and you can also switch on your TV set. London bloggers are blogging the situation as we speak.

Coverage can be found at Project Nothing!, with bloggers from London such as Bethlet and Nosemonkey

Update: The BBC is collecting eye witness accounts from those unfortunate enough to be caught up in the attacks in London.

I was on the tube at Kings Cross when it was evacuated; the sight of the injured, blackened with soot, dirt and covered with blood is a vision that will stay with me for a long time. I had to get away from the scene so I walked towards Euston only to be told that there had been another explosion, but this time on a bus. It seemed like confusion was at every corner. It has taken me 4 hours to walk back to work, via the back streets and avoiding any buses or main roads. There has always been an air of fear; now it's real.
Alex Spreckley, City of London

Poribat is liveblogging events as they evolve.

Aardvark provides another Londoner's account of the situation.

Another example of the type of content within a blog can be seen with blog 33 - The Big Picture - where the blogger refers to *Wikipedia's* reporting of the London bombings. The author can be seen to be reliant upon the post on *Wikipedia* to supply content to the author's blog: indeed it appears as though the material is simply copied and pasted from the Wikipedia page into the blog.

Figure 50: The Big Picture

Wikipedia: 7 July 2005 London bombings

Thursday, July 07, 2005 | 04:36 PM

■ in War/Defense | Weblogs

Wikipedia has started an ongoing description of the 7 July 2005 London bombings:

"On 7 July 2005, beginning at 08:49, during the height of morning rush hour, a series of four bomb explosions struck London's transport system. Three Underground trains were hit within half an hour, and a bus a further half an hour after that. At least 40 died. The number of injured treated is at least 700. At least one news report has quoted 360 injured [1]. Fox News reported 700 injured. This number is expected to rise as authorities survey the impact of the blasts. It is the worst terrorist attack to take place within the United Kingdom since the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, which killed upwards of 200 people.

In some blogs there is evidence of a clear cultural script. For example, when considering blogs 21, 85, 123, 184, there is a script in which the authors

emphasise resilience amongst British citizens following adversity. Another script compares the past with the present (as seen previously with the use of images – see Figure 51 below).

Figure 51: Presence of a Cultural Script

Blog 21

We knew this was going to happen one day, and when it finally does occur it's hard to accept that we were another target in this long struggle to make the world a safer place. The response of the people of Britain just goes to show that although we may seem to get on with our lives through thick and thin, deep down we are determined to fight back and the people who messed with Britain will soon realise they made a big mistake. We'll fight this our own way, and we will win!

Blog 85

Okay, this seems to be the **official LONDON BOMBING** quote post...

Update: Wow, this got a huge response! Thanks to everyone who submitted more quotes and links - **feel free to link to this post, by the way, you don't have to ask!**

The quotes themselves somehow seem inadequate to show the spirit of the people who have contributed or left a comment on here. A site that goes some way towards doing this is this one:
<http://www.were-not-a-raid.com/>

Blog 123

London's been bombed flat during the Blitz, suffered riots, more bombings during the Troubles, and now this. And all the while, as **Warren** points out, without losing their bottle. I wouldn't presume to claim the stones to be a Londoner.

Blog 184



Blog 65 (Figure 52, below) indicates the expression of emotion within a blog post: the blogger shows anger at the occurrence of the 07/07 attacks – “sick, sick, sick” - and makes assertions over then Prime Minister Tony Blair’s reaction to the attacks:

Figure 52: Sepia Mutiny



Terrorists have struck London, just a day after the city jubilantly reacted to winning the 2012 signature red, double-decker bus murdered dozens while leaving hundreds injured. The de Jihad Organisation in Europe”.

The BBC discovered a brief statement claiming ownership of the horrific attacks: I'll never ur right before a proud admission of guilt.

- Nation of Islam and Arab nation: Rejoice for it is time to take revenge against the Brits
- In Iraq and Afghanistan. The heroic mujahideen have carried out a blessed raid in Lor
- eastern, and western quarters.

Sick, sick, sick. Blessed raid? Does anyone else want to cry?

Other blog posts reveal a sense of confusion and hesitancy over how an individual's actions may be considered following the attacks. For example in blog 151, in a post titled "Petty", one blogger writes about his hesitancy over meeting with his Arabic tutor in the middle of a London train station for coffee and a language lesson following the attacks in London:

Figure 53: Rubber Hose



The content of a number of blogs took the form of the author reminiscing over other periods in time in which society has had to face experiences of adversity. For example two blog posts refer to the British experience of the Blitz (blog 55, 184), while others refer to the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States of America (blog 65, 129) and the attacks in Madrid in 2004 (blog 55). Terrorist attacks, then, can trigger memories of other periods in time and experiences of adversity and terror.

A final consideration, central to one of the queries of this thesis, is that one blogger (blog 162) questions the importance of publicity following an act of terrorism. The blogger is concerned with the extent of publicity given to a terrorist attack, questioning whether or not this should be the case. To some degree this blog can be seen to contain irony, in that the blogger then does not see the blog post can also be seen as increasing the publicity of a terrorist attack.

Figure 54: Science, Religion and Citizenship

What if . . . just what if . . . when something like this happens, there were simply a brief announcement that an incident had occurred? Then, later, after an assessment has been done, another brief announcement of the results and conclusions on the evening news. Perhaps a website where those most concerned could go for more information. But otherwise, silence. No condemnations or lamentations for them to chortle over. Just silence, punctuated by a few matter-of-fact reports to keep the public informed.

Would the terrorists then be quite so motivated? Would they eventually get tired of "screaming and kicking" if no one appeared to be listening?

In addition to the results found in the overview of the analysis, an array of content can be found to be relating to the blogging of an act of terrorism. A blog comes in many shapes and forms rather than simply a news report.

7.4. Independent Citizen Journalism and Digital Claims-making

As was discussed in chapter two, platforms for citizen journalism such as blogs offer individuals the opportunity to participate directly in claims-making activities, where they are able to utilise a blog (for example) to disseminate their claims to a wider audience. The purpose of this section is to determine whether claims-making is taking place, authored by those directly involved and communicating to the public via citizen journalism following an act of terrorism.

In order to verify whether claims-making is occurring, attention will be focused on those blog posts that were found to apply to the category "Personal Accounts". Analysis of claims-making within the practice of citizen journalism will thus be focused on those individuals who have been personally involved in the attacks in some way, rather than those who had simply recycled news to which they had been exposed. For this analysis of claims-making within citizen journalism, although 20 blog posts were identified as "personal accounts", 18 have been processed, as two of the blog posts are no longer accessible online.⁶¹ Of the 18 blog posts, six (approximately 33.3%) were found to present verbal claims within their posts. Table 8 (below) provides an overview of those blogs

⁶¹ See chapter five for further information.

that were identified as both containing and not containing claims surrounding the 07/07 terror attacks.

Table 8: Presence of Digital Claims-making following 07/07

Blog Number	Title	Claims-making
4	First Draft	Yes
5	Andrew's Photoblog	No
7	City of Sound	No
25	dbrady.net	No
45	Pyromaniac	No
61	Annika's Journal	Yes
66	Escape of the Freelance Conscience	Yes
72	Blatant Optimism	Yes
76	<i>Flickr</i> - Close up of Soldiers at Buckingham Palace	No
95	Empire Burlesque 1.0	Yes
122	Skype Journal	No
144	Too Much Information	No
151	Petty	No
154	3 Years of Hell to Receive the Devil	No
157	<i>Flickr</i> - Message For My Friends	No
158	Wirelan	No
161	Mistress of Dorkness	No
191	Roads of State	Yes

Of those blogs that did contain some form of claims being made, three different types of claims have been identified. The first is a claim that puts forth the argument that the news industry, particularly newspapers, are outdated; this presents a social problem in that newspapers are unable to keep people up-to-date and therefore do their duty of informing people. Only one claim was found in this category, in blog 4 - First Draft (discussed above). One of this author's primary claims was the failure of newspapers to present the first item of news of the day:

Stories, photos, audio and video reporting on the horrific bombings in London fill the airwaves, top the web sites of news organizations and occupy the attention of the blogosphere. The front page of the Times is dominated by a photo showing a throng of Londoners cheering for the city's successful Olympic bid. How sadly outdated it is today. (Blog 4)

This author (Porter) continues to present claims on the failure of the press, and goes a step further in announcing the success of participatory journalism in the fact that individuals are now all potential reporters. Porter uses a powerful example of a newsworthy piece of information (an act of terrorism) to engage critically with the state of news. He emphasises the failure of traditional methods of news reporting and the success of news-gathering by members of the public. In this regard Porter is able to use evidence of the 07/07 attacks as an opportunistic moment to present his claim to audiences, making his claim stronger than if he had made it at another time.

The second type of claim was that of a call for revenge and a military response to the 07/07 attacks. This claim presents terrorism as a social problem - a threat to the security and wellbeing of citizens - and calls for the ongoing attempt to try to create a stable Iraq. This type of claim was identified in one blog post, blog 61 - Annika's Journal. In the blog post, the author emphasises her emotional reaction to the London bombings - "anger" - and argues that the only possible response is to seek "vengeance on those responsible and their sympathizers". Additionally, the author believes that the appropriate action/solution to fight terrorism in the West is by continuing with efforts to create "democracy" in Iraq:

It should suffice to say that the only acceptable reaction to the bombings is, i believe, anger. The only acceptable response is to seek vengeance on those responsible and their sympathizers. i believe the time for a measured and proportionate response is long past, if it ever existed...And how could such a disturbing pogrom be averted? Not by pulling troops out of the Middle East. Not by abandoning Israel to the wolves. No, not even by signing the Kyoto treaty. It can only be averted by creating Democracy in the center of the storm. A stable and democratic Iraq is the best hope for the survival of Western Civilization. (Blog 61)

In the quote above, the author attempts to make sense of the London attacks by identifying what she feels is the best solution to such an atrocity - in this case, continuing with military action against those who seek to destroy democracy in the West.

The final claim was found in the remainder of the four blog posts (66, 72, 95 and 191), and related to what the bloggers believed to be the main cause of the London attacks: namely Britain's involvement in Iraq. For example Tom Dolan, the author of Blog 72 - Blatant Optimism - argued that the London terror attacks were a reminder that Britain, in deciding to "back the war in Iraq", had taken a wrong turn:

It's been a very very very strange day. I got into work before it happened... But this country has been buoyed up with all the political pressure we were creating about Africa, about climate change, about debt relief. We won the 2012 Olympics to our surprise. We were thinking we were the good guys. And then someone reminded us that we'd backed the war on Iraq. We'd forgotten about that. Which makes you realise that the terrorists may have put our minds back on the real issues we should have been chasing our governments about after all. How fickle we are. How easily we can be manipulated. (Blog 72)

Dolan's claims were further supported by Chris Floyd, author of blog 95 - Empire Burlesque 1.0. Floyd also argued that the situation in Iraq was the cause of the attacks, but in a much more dramatic/direct fashion. The author attacks Britain's Tony Blair and America's George W. Bush, comparing the violence and destruction in London to the constant destruction inflicted by Blair and Bush on Iraq:

In any case, there was Blair - with Bush at his side - raining contempt and condemnation on all those who would use violence to advance their cause, on "barbarians" who think nothing of killing innocent people to get their way... Today's violence and destruction in London - horrific, sickening, indeed barbaric - still pales in comparison to the epic destruction, looting, chaos and death that Bush and Blair have inflicted upon Iraq... The hour of destruction and fear in London, and a day of partial paralysis (already easing as I write, at 5 p.m.), while terrible in its own right, especially for those left grieving or injured, again pales in comparison to the daily horror Bush and Blair have engendered in Iraq, particularly Baghdad, where the simplest actions of daily life have become

a dance with death, where the people live and breathe fear, ruin, terror and strife every day of their lives. (Blog 95)

Floyd continues to blame Bush and Blair for the violence in London, stating that it is not possible to wage war and not expect war in return:

Bush has done this. Blair has done this. They didn't have to do it... They have made senseless, violent, barbaric war on others; and now others make senseless, violent, barbaric war on them. This not to excuse the terrorists in any way. Their crime is as heinous as the war made by the great Christian statesmen... But you cannot make war and not expect war in return. (Blog 95)

Further repeated claims that the terror attacks are a result of Britain's involvement in Iraq can be seen in blog 191 - Road of State - where again the author can be seen to state the link between the terror attacks in London and the military situation in Iraq. The author declares that the attacks are a "punishment" for Britain's role in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The author asserts this as ironic, as many Londoners' took to the street of London in March 2003 to march against the war:

And now, this morning, we have seen the awful attacks on the Tube in London. ... I am very sad to say it, but this is undoubtedly our 'punishment' for Afghanistan and Iraq. It is ironic in so many respects, really, when this is such a free-thinking and diverse community. Not just because all nationalities of the globe are represented here, so that any attack is necessarily indiscriminate in its impact on people of all races and religions, but also because in fact London was the centre of the world's anti-war campaign. One million people marched in this city against the war on that one day in March 2003 which forms the memorable backdrop to Ian McEwan's latest novel which is simply entitled "Saturday". (Blog 191)

Blog 66 differs to the others, who includes a number of other claims spoken by her "boyfriend" and "neighbour" - that someone "out there" is making money out

of the terror attacks, and that it the bombings are a result of “insane religious groups” trying to start a Third World War:

But now I've been hearing that the death toll is going up, and it's just so fucking ridiculous and pointless. And if the real reason behind the bombings has to do with English troops being in Iraq, well that's fucking lame because none of us should have gone there in the first place! My neighbor thinks that someone out there is making billions of dollars from these terrorist attacks. If that's the case, that's fucking sick and twisted. Matt thinks that its because of insane religious groups trying to create WW3. That's just fucking stupid too, why can't we actually learn from our history and our past mistakes? (Blog 66)

Such a post provides evidence of the ease with which conspiracy theories and rumours surrounding several different claims about the perceived cause of the London attacks can be promoted and disseminated online. The posting of such claims *could* lead to confusion and miscommunication over the causes of the London attacks. However, the extent to which these individuals are consciously participating in claims-making is unknown: they may simply be letting off some steam by writing on their blogs.

When considering the presence of claims, for those blog posts that were analysed and found to be making claims concerning the London attacks, it was found that 50 percent had received comments. As a result, it can be confirmed that for *some* digital claims-makers, there is certainly an audience that wishes to interact with their claims. For those that did receive comments (blogs 4, 61, 191), there is evidence of audiences agreeing with claims being made. For example, in responses to blog 4, which made claims about the state of the news industry, audiences not only agreed with the author but took the time to use the comment section of another person's blog to express his/her opinion on the matter:

Jason Smith Commented: “What a powerful statement your post makes. I agree with you that our traditional newspapers and periodicals have become simply pieces of “historical context” and are often cited by us bloggers when providing background to our posts. Of course, I don't think

the major newspapers are readily accepting this role because it's less profitable. The new media paradigm will be led by whoever figures out how to embrace it and build a successful business model around it." (Blog 4)

This was also seen with the claim made by Annika's journal (blog 61), in which audiences felt that democracy in Iraq was the necessary step to stability in the West:

Rob Commented: "Well put, Annika. Like you said, the Left's answer is to bend over and take it in the ass -- by dropping our alliance with Israel, withdrawing our troops from the "muslim land," and abandoning Iraq to the Zarcawis of the world. Doesn't seem like much of a response to me. The Right's answer is to plant that seed of democracy in the middle of the desert...On the front door of hatred and extremism, democracy will ring the doorbell, enter, and kick some ass. All we need to do is stay vigilant, and support our decision to go there, and our men and women fighting there." (Blog 61)

Whilst the presence of comments is not a reliable indicator of whether or not a blog has an audience, in this case it does add support to the idea that bloggers are able to function as digital claims-makers, with the ability to capture and importantly, engage audiences by encouraging them to interact by leaving comments. However, whilst digital claims-making does appear to be taking place via citizen journalism efforts, the degree to which one can assume that the authors are purposefully and consciously participating in claims-making is unknown.

7.5. Independent Citizen Journalism during 07/07: A Discussion

Following an act of terrorism, the communication of news about the event is not restricted to that to which we are exposed via mainstream media outlets, but now also appears in publicly-created spaces on the Internet. In acts of independent citizen journalism, we are beginning to observe the presence of the public in using their own systems of communication. In order for independent

citizen journalism to take place, there are three preconditions that must be met; and analysis of forms of independent citizen journalism present following the 07/07 bombings has revealed that all three preconditions have been met. (1) Individuals have utilised digital technology available to them such as cameras and computers, (2) and have made the decision actively to involve themselves in the wider construction of news by (3) choosing to participate in digital culture. By combining these three features, independent citizen journalism has taken place, enabling us to assess how independent citizen journalists construct their version of the news.

7.5.1. How do independent citizen journalists construct the news?

Understanding how independent citizen journalists construct the news is an essential area of enquiry if we are to provide a sociological analysis of citizen journalism today, as are questions to do with how the news is presented to audiences and how the news agenda is set. In order to understand the construction of news by independent citizen journalists, focus will here be placed on two main areas of enquiry. First, we will consider how the news is presented to audiences by considering the use of images and links. Second, efforts will be made to understand the nature of agenda-setting within independent citizen journalists' construction of the news, enabling us to understand who influences the independent citizen journalist's news agenda and what this implies for the mainstream news media today.

7.5.1.1. Independent Citizen Journalists' Presentation of the News

The way in which blog posts are presented to audiences is a crucial step in understanding how independent citizen journalists choose to present their version of the news. In the case of the London attacks, the use of links and images was an interesting feature of blog posts that differed to the presentation of the attacks offered by the *BBC* and other British news organisations.

An important feature within a blog post is the ability of individuals to use links to other websites within the blog post. Reese et al. (2007: 249) found that

there was extensive dependency on the use of links within a blog post: their analysis of 410 blog posts revealed that 33.5% of blog posts used links to other blogs and 47.6% of blog posts included links to other blogs. In our research, the use of links within the blogging efforts of the 07/07 attacks revealed that of the 169 blog posts analysed, 39% made use of links to other blogs and 44.1% used links to the news media. As was also identified by Messner and Distaso (2008), not every blog post contains a link. The use of links within a blog post need not be seen as “dependency”, in the way it is regarded by Reese et al. (2007) - rather, the use of links can in some way, present a form of “accountability” on part of the blogger, as argued by Blood (2002), which enables the author to provide contextual evidence about the source of the information.

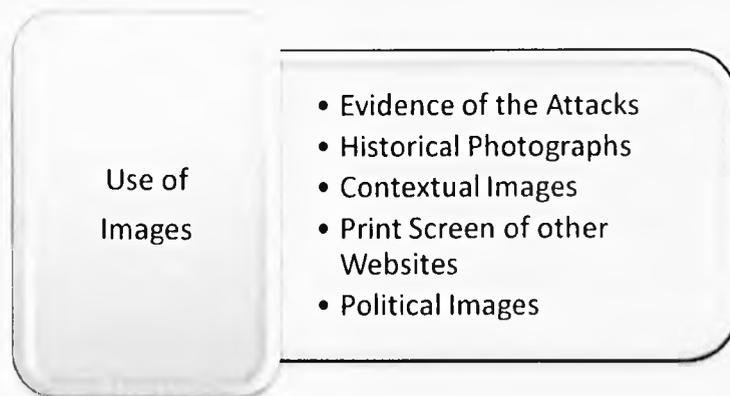
When comparing the use of links by independent citizen journalists to the news media, the news media placed less emphasis on the utilisation of links. Of the 29 web articles identified in a news search, only five contained links to other news media, and only one news organisation, *The Guardian*, supplied links to other news organisations. This contrasts to Messner and Distaso's (2008: 453) analysis of the use of blogs as a source for newspapers, which found that “almost half of the time weblogs are used in news coverage as a secondary mention, followed by their use as a source, and less than a quarter of the time they are discussed as a primary news topic”. Further research is therefore necessary to assess inter-media agenda-setting between blogs and the news media and what this means for the echo chamber effect within the reporting of a crisis situation, and furthermore, to assess the use of links within the media by considering news on the Internet rather than just newspapers' use of sources.

The use of a variety of links within a blog post is a distinctive feature of independent citizen journalism. Another notable difference in the presentation of news between the news media and independent citizen journalists was the use of images. Of the sample of news organisations assessed, 41% contained images within their presentation of the news, but these images consisted of images directly related to the attacks: other types of images were not employed in mainstream reports. Interestingly, only 17.4% of the blog posts analysed contained images. There is therefore a substantial difference in the employment

of images by the mainstream news media compared to material produced and self-published by independent citizen journalists. The use of images within a news piece is often used to assist the media's display of the reality of a situation to its viewers; images are therefore considered a significant salience cue that would influence the perceived importance of an event. Thus, it is possible to see that the use of imagery as salience cues is not necessarily significant for bloggers. Rather, bloggers' use of imagery appears to be a personal decision, based on the author's access to images as well as his/her desire to use an image within a blog post.

Within a blog post, images have been found as not only presenting visual evidence of the 07/07 attacks, as would have been seen in the news media, but also as providing culturally-specific images of a response to the 07/07 attacks. The use of images in blogs following the 07/07 attacks can be split into five categories:

Figure 55: Use of Images within Independent Citizen Journalists Presentation of the News



First, there are those images that provide photographic evidence of the destruction of the 07/07 attacks. Second, there is evidence of the use of historical photographs (for example, the London Blitz) to compare the past with the present. Third, images provide further contextual information about the attacks, ranging from pictures from around London on the day of the attacks, as well as pictures of maps and flags – giving an idea of the geographical location. The fourth type of image found in the blogs analysed include the use of the print screen function to provide evidence of footage from other websites such as the

professional news media, thereby serving as evidence of bloggers reinforcing the news media. Finally, there is the use of images of political figures (such as then British Prime Minister Tony Blair), which supply evidence to accompany assessments of political responses to the 07/07 attacks.

The use of alternative types of photography delivers *different* publicity of the terrorist attacks than would otherwise have been reported by the news media, who traditionally rely on images of destruction, survivors and political figures – all directly relating to the event being reported. Furthermore, this alternative use of images is suggestive of how individuals, both directly and indirectly affected by an act of terrorism, use culture to assist them in developing a meaningful response to adversity and threats.

A final feature distinguishing the presentation of news by independent citizen journalists to that of the news media is the presence of emotion within the compilation of a blog post. Emotions range from humour to anger and confusion. Blogs highlight individuals' need to understand why such an event has occurred, and a blog allows for the expression of confusion to be conveyed. If, at times of terrorist attacks, individuals' questions are not being satisfactorily answered by mainstream press, they will seek answers elsewhere. Social media sites such as blogs allow individuals to seek and openly discuss their questions with others. Although a question may not be answered, the act of participating in the wider discussion of an event can lead to individuals developing their own conclusions. In this sense, blogging gives individuals an outlet for expressing their feelings.

Relating to the presence of emotion is the somewhat unconscious inclusion of a cultural script within some blog posts. Broadly speaking, Furedi (2007b) argues that a "cultural script" can help to reveal emotions such as fear. Furthermore, he states:

[A] cultural script communicates rules about feelings, and also ideas about what those feelings mean. Individuals interpret and internalise these rules according to their circumstances and temperament, while always remaining very much influenced by the rules. (Furedi, 2007b)

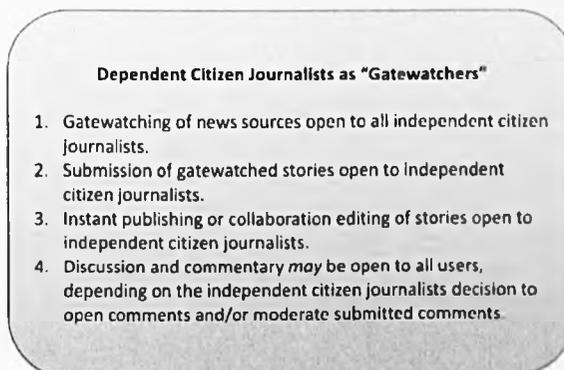
From this perspective, culture assists with the construction of meaning, and drawing on a cultural script indicates to people how they should respond to a situation. In the case of the London bombings, there does indeed appear to be evidence of a cultural script being present. The script appears to focus on the response of Londoners towards adversity, placing emphasis on the resilience of the British people as a result of their past experience.

7.5.2. *Independent Citizen Journalists and Agenda-setting:*

Mainstream news organisations have historically played a central role in setting the news agenda, which informs and establishes the public agenda. An analysis of dependent forms of citizen journalism following the 07/07 attacks revealed that the news media were able to continue to set the news agenda. However, others are also able to initiate their own agenda if they choose to. The process of agenda-setting has transformed: accordingly, we must understand what independent citizen journalism means for this process.

Bruns (2008) argues that rather than the news media acting as gatekeepers, along with others interacting with the news, they are gatewatchers. This position was criticised in the previous chapter, where it was identified that with regards to dependent citizen journalism, via their position of control, news professionals are able to remain as gatekeepers in their selection and presentation of the news. However, the concept of “gatewatching” within independent citizen journalism can be seen as taking place. The following figure applies and adapts Bruns (2008) concept of gatewatching to independent citizen journalism:

Figure 56: Independent Citizen Journalists as “Gatewatchers”



Independent citizen journalists then, are able to act as gatewatchers of the news, however this is not entirely as described by Bruns (2008). Rather, it is necessary to amend stage four “response”. Within independent citizen journalism, authors of content are still able to maintain control over comments and discussion that occurs on their blog. This element of control may be conducted via editing, or may even be in the form of not enabling audiences to comment. Thus, discussion and commentary is not necessarily open to all.

Independent citizen journalists exposure to other sources plays an important role in how they decide to present their own accounts of the news in society. By considering the results of the analysis presented in this chapter, it has been possible to identify who independent citizen journalists are interacting with, and therefore who influences the news agenda of independent citizen journalists.

Understanding the use of links within a blog post helps with our understanding of the nature of agenda-setting within independent citizen journalists’ construction of the news. Thirty-nine per cent of the blogs analysed here provide links to the news media, suggesting that its agenda influenced the agenda of some independent citizen journalists – hence we see inter-media agenda-setting taking place. Messner and Distaso (2008: 458) similarly found that “weblogs rely heavily on other media source”. Similarly, Boczkowski (2010) argued that bloggers heavily relied upon news organisations for content. Whilst this research did not prove “heavy” reliance upon the news media, in terms of links present, there is a degree of dependency. Future research is required to understand the entire nature of reliance on news organisations for content, as research investigating documents does not supply a full picture, rather research is required that directly deals with those responsible for creating blog posts.

Rather than simply viewing a link to the news media as a sign of “reliance”, using a link to the news media can also be seen as an indicator of independent citizen journalists reinforcing the news media and, in some respects, helping to promote the news media, by introducing their own audiences to that content. From this perspective it could also be argued that the news media can set the media agenda for some bloggers.

However, the analysis of independent citizen journalism also revealed, that whilst independent citizen journalists can be seen as reinforcing the news media, bloggers can also use links to the news media in posts that are critical of mainstream reports. This is significant as it presents further evidence of the use of blogs to challenge and keep watch on the existing news media, as previously argued by Domingo and Heinonen (2008). Critical analysis of the news media allows bloggers to interact and engage with the reporting of news, rather than passively consuming it. Unfortunately, the method used here for the analysis of blogs does not help with understanding the extent to which those blogs that had *not* included links to the news media were influenced by the news media: it may be that individuals choose not to use links within a blog post because they simply lack the time or technical knowledge to do so. The fact that individuals are using blogs does not necessarily imply that they know everything they can do with a blog - lack of digital literacy may still be an obstacle.

A second point of enquiry within the sociological analysis of the 07/07 blog posts was whether bloggers included links to other blog sites. From this it would be possible to detect whether inter-media agenda-setting was taking place within the blogosphere. It was found that 44.1% of blog posts included links to other blogs - bloggers *do*, then, use and access posts written by other members of the public in their consumption of online information surrounding an event. Furthermore, the use of links to other blog posts provides evidence of a relationship between bloggers, and their ability to influence one another's portrayal of events - confirming Hass' (2005) finding that inter-media agenda-setting is occurring. Similar results have been found in other studies of the nature of inter-media agenda-setting within the blogosphere: Messner and Distaso (2008) found that newspapers relied on bloggers as sources and bloggers likewise relied upon the traditional news media as sources. We have also found evidence to suggest that bloggers influence each other's agenda, suggesting that it is not simply the news media that set the agenda for the creative outlet of information, but that ordinary members of the public are able to initiate discussion and the wider circulation of information surrounding a terrorist attack - thereby initiating their own news agenda.

The use of links to other blogs provides evidence that blogs do indeed attract audiences. Following an act of terrorism it appears that individuals do not only rely upon the news media, but that they go to other sources of information such as blogs to find out information. This goes some way to help explain the extent of trust that individuals place on publicly-authored pieces of information. If authors believe that the information that they have read elsewhere is trustworthy, they play the part of editor in choosing to utilise that information in their own construction of events, and then they direct their own audiences towards other blogs.

Analysis of acts of independent citizen journalism following the 07/07 London bombings has enhanced our understanding of the way that independent citizen journalists chose to construct news of the attacks. A striking feature of the construction of news by independent citizen journalists is the difference in their presentation of content to that of the mainstream news media. There was far greater reliance on links and greater bias present, in terms of emotion coming through reports. In addition we are witnessing a variation in the types of photographs and images utilised in blog posts compared to that of the news media, which is indicative of what appears to be a cultural script present within some constructions of the attacks. Independent citizen journalists, unlike professional journalists, are not restricted by editorial control - they can do whatever they like.

In addition to assessing the differences in the presentation of the news by independent citizen journalists, this research has also revealed further insights into the nature of agenda-setting within independent citizen journalism. Results from the analysis of the 07/07 attacks revealed that independent citizen journalists are able to act as gatewatchers of the news. Furthermore, our observations about how links are used within the reporting of an act of terror provides some evidence about who influences the authors, indicating that a number of instances of inter-media agenda-setting are taking place. This research has revealed that the social construction of the news by independent citizen journalists in 2005 was significantly different to that of the mainstream news media. However, only a handful attempted to challenge the news media's

presentation of events, providing evidence of what appears to be an effective working relationship between the news media and citizen journalists.

7.5.3. *Independent Citizen Journalism and Digital Claims-making*

What citizen journalism means for digital claims-making is an essential area of enquiry. Research conducted into the nature of independent citizen journalism following the 07/07 attacks aimed to assess whether independent citizen journalists made efforts to present claims within the construction of their posts. We have found evidence of what might be described as “digital claims-making” occurring within blog posts, whereby *some* members of the public are using their blogs to make claims relating to the 07/07 attacks. The analysis shows that of the 18 blog posts analysed, 6 (33.3%) contained claims being made by the author.

Three different types of claims were found to be present in response to the London bombings: claims that challenge the abilities of mainstream news organisations to report the attacks; claims that made efforts to create support for the war against terror; and claims that sought to highlight perceived causes of the attacks - namely Britain’s involvement in the war in Iraq. During the identification of this final type of claim, we also noted evidence supporting the idea that whilst blogs can be utilised for digital claims-making, they also provide a conducive environment for the formulation and spreading of rumours and conspiracy theories concerning the “cause” of the terror attacks. New forms of media such as blogs are a useful tool for conspiracy theorists, and recognising the limitations of truth within a blog post is crucial to the way that the public may relate to and interpret its content. Stemming from the creation of conspiracy theories is also the problem of “rumour”. Blogs offer rumours the possibility of circulation. Members of the public utilise the Internet to convey and share their own theories and ideas surrounding events. These ideas are not necessarily based on fact, and may contribute towards a misguided understanding of events, sometimes adding to insecurity surrounding an event. While rumours have always come about following an incident, the damaging potential of a rumour on the Internet, with its vast audience and wealth of different voices, is far greater than a simple case of community “Chinese Whispers”. As a result, individuals

may receive information that heightens insecurity, which may in turn result in further pressure placed on emergency services and the wider community response to an act of terror.

As the results section of this chapter identified, an extremely newsworthy piece of news such as an act of terrorism offers individuals the ideal opportunity to disseminate claims about a social problem. In this sense, claims-making in the digital era may benefit from opportunistic moments, in which audiences are craving information about an event and exploring the Web looking for further information. At this point audiences may accidentally come across claims that have been disseminated.

A crucial question raised during the analysis into the presence of digital claims-makers was whether individuals were consciously participating in claims-making, or whether they were simply using their blogs to express their thoughts and feelings on the attacks. At this point in time, it is unclear whether claims-making following 07/07 was part of a deliberate strategy. However, as this analysis has shown, the blogosphere does indeed offer a new environment for claims-making to take place and for claims potentially to be heard.

The question of whether digital claims-makers receive an audience is of particular interest when seeking to further our understanding of claims-making on the Internet. Of the blogs analysed in relation to digital claims-making here, 50% received comments from the blog's audience. This provides evidence that some independent citizen journalists are able to gain audiences for their material. The presence of comments was also a variable of interest within the assessment of independent citizen journalism efforts following 07/07. Of the relevant blogs, a significant proportion (45.6%) received comments, supplying evidence that blogs do gain audiences, and also supporting the argument that social media platforms such as blogs can indeed function as communication platforms for digital claims-making.

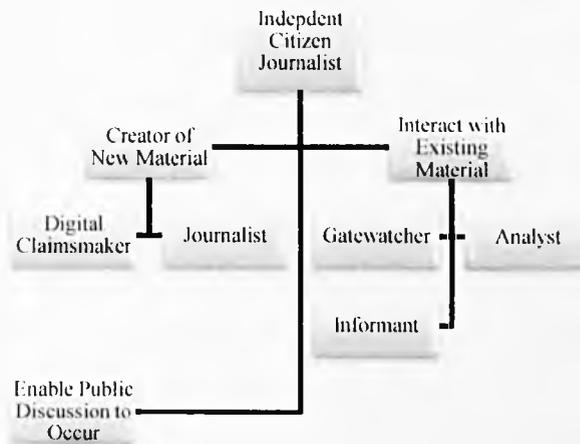
Comments are central to blogs as they allow for the further discussion and therefore the wider communication of an event. For digital claims-making, this creates a circle of communication, whereby the communication of a claim is potentially able to expand to a wider audience. In addition, the comment section

of a blog allows individuals that might not necessarily have their own platform for expression the freedom and ability to do so. However the use of comments to determine whether or not a blog has an audience should be assessed with caution. It cannot be relied upon to understand audience figures, particularly when some bloggers choose not to enable the submission of comments. Furthermore, some audiences may not feel that it is necessary for them to leave a comment.

7.5.4. *The Role of an Independent Citizen Journalist*

Independent citizen journalists are not simply “journalists”: rather, the analysis of instances of independent citizen journalism following the 07/07 attacks has revealed that independent citizen journalists play a variety of roles in the creation and promotion of news, as Figure 57 (below) illustrates.

Figure 57: The “Roles” of an Independent Citizen Journalist



Independent citizen journalists interact with two types of material: that which they have created themselves, or material they find from elsewhere. By considering these two different uses of material it is possible to identify a series of roles that independent citizen journalists are able to perform.

First let us consider the role of independent citizen journalists when interacting with new material. Independent citizen journalists are able to create new information via the creation and publication of digital claims, whereby they utilise their own systems of mass communication to present their claims to audiences. Alternatively, independent citizen journalists are able to perform the

role of “journalist”: they are able to supply “new” information based on their experiences and accounts of events, such as being involved in an act of terrorism. By acting as “journalists” they are able to collect, organise and publish their own accounts of the news.

The second range of roles that an independent citizen journalist is able to perform is associated with their exposure to other sources of news. By utilising their own systems of mass communication, individuals are able to use their gatewatching skills to collect a range of sources about a particular news item and publish it on their blog (or other form of social media) to share with audiences. By collecting and sharing information, independent citizen journalists are not restricted to sharing information, but are also able to perform the role of “informants”, by informing others of the news. In order to inform people about the news, they must use tools at their disposal to create their own accounts of the news. In addition to acting as collectors and informants, independent citizen journalists are also able to function as “analysts”. They are able to utilise their own systems of communication to provide their own analytical accounts of the news, which they are then able to share with their audiences.

A feature central to all the roles discussed here is the ability of independent citizen journalists to share their own version of events, whether these are based on direct or indirect exposure to the news, with their own audiences. If they choose to open up communication ports they are able to create a space for the wider community discussion of the news. For instance, in the reporting of 07/07, members of the public that chose to open up discussion to others played a vital role in allowing and enabling individuals to participate in the wider public discussion of these terrorist attacks, presenting them with an outlet for expression.

Future analysis of independent citizen journalism should not assume that material “has” to be new material: rather, it is necessary to acknowledge and assess the variety of roles that independent citizen journalists are able to perform. Only then will social scientists truly be able to understand the impact of independent citizen journalism in the creation of news today.

8. Conclusion: Citizen Journalism in the Digital Age

Western society has become inundated with digital technology, which has in part, contributed to the production of news. The news media has evolved throughout its journey to establish an “online self”, via what has been described in chapter three as an “organisational transition”. No longer restricted to newspapers, television, radio and magazines, the news media have reorganised and reinvented themselves, and are now participating in the distribution of news to global audiences online. Accordingly, audiences now have access to the news as and when it takes place – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Along with changes within the news media, there have also been some noticeable differences in the way in which audiences are seen to interact with the news media. In the past, audiences have been known to cooperate with the professional news media by providing information such as personal accounts; in the present digital climate, the public are able to participate directly in the production and distribution of news, both with and without the assistance of the news media. As outlined in chapter one, the construction and presentation of news in society by ordinary members of the public has been referred to as citizen journalism. This thesis has used terrorism as a case study for analysis of citizen journalism from a sociological perspective. A summary of findings now follows.

Chapter three focused on establishing an understanding of how citizen journalism has emerged in society. It supplied evidence of the various preconditions required for citizen journalism to occur. These preconditions include the availability and access to digital technology by members of the public. Without access to digital technology, it would not be possible for individuals to record and share their experiences and opinions with others. The second precondition is the need for an active and engaged audience. Unless people have a desire to participate in citizen journalism, there is no chance of this practice taking place. The third precondition is what has been described as a “lived” experience in digital culture, whereby precondition one and two must come together, when individuals turn to the Internet to share their information. The final precondition, for dependent citizen journalism, is that an organisational

transition must occur within mainstream news organisations, where they acknowledge and make space for audience contributions in their presentation of the news. The emergence of all of these preconditions has led to the emergence of citizen journalism, with individuals choosing to make use of the Internet for the distribution and discussion of news.

Chapter four charted the growth of citizen journalism in relation to an act of terrorism. By considering acts of terrorism between 2001 and 2008, it was possible to illustrate how citizen journalism has developed in relation to the reporting of such acts over time. It was found that the news media began to welcome the material produced and shared with them by members of the public, to the extent that news media organisations began to request information from citizen journalists, as well as creating spaces for citizen journalist-authored information on their websites. In addition, following the 9/11 attacks, the development of technology and of social networking websites made it easier for individuals to publish their own information. Individuals were beginning to access a range of social media communication tools, from blogs to social networking websites such as *Flickr* and *Twitter*, to publish their own accounts and experiences of an act of terrorism.

Chapter four also discussed some of the problems associated with citizen journalism and the subsequent implications for digital claims-making. One problem relates to how far individuals and therefore claims-makers will go to attract attention and make themselves heard. There is the potential for individuals to put themselves in danger to capture information and to also present their claims. Furthermore, there is the risk of individuals presenting extremely subjective accounts to audiences, in the form of personal emotions and opinions, which may lead to confusion. A second potential problem highlighted includes the added competition for digital claims-makers: outside claims-makers in particular will have to make extra efforts to capture the attention of the news media and also the public, and the newsworthiness of claims becomes increasingly important in the vast information network on the web. A third problem - and one of the most important issues highlighted - was the difficulty in assessing the validity and reliability of information that comes from citizen journalists. As the *BBC* discovered during the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the news media and news audience both have to be critical when handling material produced by citizen

journalists, and should not rely on the information provided as being “fact”. Accordingly, for digital claims-makers it becomes increasingly important for claims to be validated, particularly if they are to gain attention by larger audiences.

Chapter six presented results from the analysis of dependent citizen journalism following 07/07, exploring the social construction of material submitted by citizen journalists to the *BBC*. This analysis found that members of the public participating in dependent acts of citizen journalism do so in a number of different ways. Types of materials included diaries, comments, images and video footage. Furthermore, there was evidence of members of the public continuing their traditional role in the construction of the news, by interacting with journalists to provide eyewitness statements. Focus in this chapter was placed on the use of comments, images and videos submitted to the news media. From the analysis of comments it was possible to decipher how the public interpreted the public to have responded to the attacks. In addition to assessing dependent citizen journalism authored by members of the public in and around London on 07/07, chapter six also assessed citizen journalism content, in the form of martyrdom videos authored by those responsible for the terrorist attacks.

The assessment of dependent citizen journalism revealed that material created and shared with the news media by dependent citizen journalists is considered to be newsworthy by news organisations. Research conducted for this thesis supports other studies in confirming that news organisations appear to be continuing their role as gatekeepers of the news. It was also possible to identify a series of roles that dependent citizen journalists were able to play, including informants and digital claims-makers. The chapter concluded by considering the conflicting relationship between the news media and dependent citizen journalists: whilst the news media can be seen to welcome citizen journalists’ material, they must learn how to deal with it appropriately and share it with audiences in such a way that maintains their professional code of conduct.

In contrast to chapter six, the focus of analysis in chapter seven was on the nature of independent citizen journalism following the 07/07 attacks. By exploring the use of blogs by citizen journalists to report the attacks, it was possible to identify a number of similarities and differences between the reporting efforts by citizen journalists and the news media. Material created by citizen journalists was less likely to utilise images than that produced by the news media, although the use of images by

citizen journalists was of a more varied nature. Citizen journalists were more likely to supply links within their posts, providing evidence of inter-media agenda-setting occurring. Independent citizen journalists were seen to act as gatewatchers of the news: keeping watch on a range of sources and choosing to present their news based on the sources to which they had been exposed. However, this thesis views the gatewatching role of independent citizen journalists in a different matter to that seen by Bruns (2008), in that the final state of gatewatching, that is responding to the news, is not necessarily open to all users and is instead, highly dependent on the decisions of the author of the content in enabling and/or editing comments submitted by audiences.

Chapter seven also provided an analysis of digital claims-making, finding that although claims were present, it was not possible to determine whether these claims were in fact “claims” made consciously by the individual or whether they were simply thoughts and opinions being expressed. As with chapter six, chapter seven concluded by considering the various social roles played by independent citizen journalists, ranging from creators of new material to users interacting with existing material and re-organising news to present to audiences.

With this short summary in mind, what follows is a series of discussions that allude to the research questions presented in chapter one. This thesis will conclude by recommending a number of aspects of further research for citizen journalism within the field of sociology.

8.1. How is online interaction mediated through citizen journalism?

In chapter four, it was found that the adoption of citizen journalism by members of the public can be seen as part of a broader cultural trend, in terms of an increase in the amount of time that an increasing number of individuals are spending online. In the UK for instance, 30.1 million adults access the Internet on a daily basis (Office for National Statistics, 2010). Amongst a host of other activities, people in Britain can be seen to use the Internet to access information and to connect socially with other Internet users (Office for National Statistics, 2010). Greater amounts of time spent on the Internet may have brought the adoption of what can be understood as a “new” habit in society.

Social interaction on the web is one such “habit”, and as was explored in chapter four, is the subject of great debate amongst academics interested in whether or not interaction online impedes or complements social interaction offline. As reviewed in chapter four, some studies found that use of the Internet increased social interaction, whilst others concluded that it causes a decrease in social interaction. This thesis has not attempted to understand the impact of the Internet on the frequencies of offline social interaction: rather, it has made an effort to understand how citizen journalism can be considered to be a form of social interaction on the web.

By means of participating in independent forms of citizen journalism, some individuals are choosing to spend time on the Internet to socialise with others in presenting and discussing the news. Not only is there a desire on part of some to participate in the construction of the news in society, but there is also evidence to suggest that a number of people are viewing and interacting with others on the Internet in the wider discussion of news. Both online social communication platforms, and news media websites that allow audience participation, enable social interaction to take place around the production and discussion of news. The extent to which these online activities translate into offline communication and discussion of the news is unknown and is in need of further investigation: only then will we be able to understand the impact of citizen journalism on how the public interacts with the news. However as identified here, what is important to note is that by choosing to be active in the digital realm, individuals are able to converse with others at an extremely difficult time, such as dealing with an act of terrorism, bringing people that have been in a similar situation together, and allowing them to share their stories and opinions of events.

The analysis of the nature of citizen journalism following 07/07 has revealed that, following a terrorist attack, citizen journalism has a number of important functions, particularly in terms of it enabling interaction. First, it allows the public to be involved in the wider (analytical) discussion of a piece of news that is directly related to them. By participating in the discussion and production of news, individuals are able to present their views and interpretations of events. In this way people are not restricted to viewing second-hand versions of events. This *may*, in turn, help individuals to come

to terms with news of the attacks, which may enable them to make sense of them⁶². Second, conducting and participating in citizen journalism enables individuals to have “something” to do at a time when they are otherwise powerless. By sharing their experiences and participating in the wider discussion of an event, individuals may feel that they are providing a service to others. Finally, citizen journalism supplies evidence that the public do actually care about what is happening around them, and enables social interaction within a society that may otherwise appear to be individualistic. Through citizen journalism, members of the public are able to communicate with one another and share the experience of terrorism, which may make them feel as though they belong to a community. Through citizen journalism, then, an act of terrorism can become a shared community experience. Through this we are witnessing something of great importance to sociology – that of an engaged public.

The activities of members of the public engaging with news in acts of citizen journalism suggest that we are faced with a public that is concerned with social life and takes an interest in engaging with matters of interest to them by utilising digital technology and the Internet to communicate with others. It appears as though we are faced with what Bruns (2008b) refers to as a “new public sphere”, which draws upon Habermas’s (1989) original conceptualisation of a “public sphere”. Originally published in 1962, Habermas’s “The Structural Transformation of the State” focuses on supplying a historical account of the public sphere in society. For Habermas, the public sphere was a place of communication in civil society that existed separately to the private sphere and functioned to shape public opinion. When considering the location of the public sphere today, commentators have suggested that there are a “variety of new spaces which augment and supplement the mass-mediated public sphere by adding new modes and models of public, political interaction” (Bruns, 2008b: 65). Furthermore, Dahlgren (2005: 160) argues that the Internet is at the “forefront” of the public sphere and engaged citizens are at its centre: one such type of “engaged citizen” are citizen journalists. The establishment of an engaged public operating on the Internet is an extremely important area for future sociological research.

⁶² Motivations behind citizen journalism is a key area of future research and will be discussed further towards the end of this chapter.

Citizen journalism should not be viewed as an action that simply involves the public participating in the creation of “news” material: it is a much more complex phenomenon than that. It is of utmost importance not to label citizen journalism as one type of practice: instead, when assessing citizen journalism it is necessary to consider the different subtypes of citizen journalism that occur under the umbrella label “citizen journalism”, as have been highlighted in this thesis. Citizen journalism can tell us not only how news is created in society, but also, in what issues, debates and arenas people are choosing to involve themselves, and is therefore an extremely important area of consideration within the field of sociology.

8.2. How does citizen journalism influence the publicity given to an act of “terrorism”?

In chapter one, attention was placed on identifying why terrorism would be a useful case study for the analysis of citizen journalism. One of the reasons outlined was that political and social scientists are paying attention to the relationship between the media and terrorism, which enables this thesis to consider the impact of a distinctive type of journalism occurring today.

To reiterate, terrorists are seen to be reliant on the news media for publicity. As discussed in chapter one, with “propaganda by deed” in mind, terrorists are considered by many academics to use the media as a weapon of communication, whereby the media allows them to reach audiences beyond those directly caught up in a terrorist attack. In turn, the news media are seen as being reliant on terrorists for giving them newsworthy, attention-grabbing stories to sell news. Consequently, terrorists and the news media are regarded as having a symbiotic relationship, with each benefiting from the other. As this thesis has been concerned with the evolving news media, it has been able to contribute to understanding the relationship between the news media and terrorism by considering the impact of citizen journalism on terrorism and the type of narrative that citizen journalists construct in relation to terrorism.

Research conducted for this thesis has found that this publicity of “terrorism” can be categorised as four distinct types. First, via the use of links, citizen journalists repeated information that was initially broadcast by the professional news media, reinforcing publicity that was already taking place. Second, citizen journalists that did

not use links to the news media extended publicity given to the 07/07 attacks by simply discussing their occurrence and enabling others to interact with material and add to this discussion via the writing of comments on their blogs. Third, citizen journalists using blogs to promote their experiences can be seen as providing “new” accounts of the attacks. Finally, citizen journalist’s dependent on the news media for the publication of their material added to the news media’s reporting efforts of the attacks, which would have inevitably led to further publicity.

The additional publicity by citizen journalists is not restricted to reinforced publicity that had already been supplied by the news media, but can contain new, distinctive, and much more dramatic publicity than that which may have been initially presented by the news media: in this way, it is an extension of publicity. With advances in digital technology, members of the public at the scene of an attack choosing to participate in citizen journalism are able to publish, either via the media or their own means, live photography and video footage of a terrorist attack and its aftermath. Not only then do citizen journalists increase publicity of an attack, but they do so in an extremely personal, intimate and visually graphic manner. When citizen journalists participate in publicising of an act of terror, they do not restrict news of an event to stating what happened, but often develop a narrative, that involved engaging with the news of an event.

The construction of a narrative, in some cases appeared in the form of comparing past incidents with the present situation, as was seen with some individuals drawing on the Blitz in the Second World War to emphasise how individuals should respond to the 07/07 attacks. In addition, there was also evidence of some individuals making efforts to present “claims” to attempt to explain why the attacks had occurred. Accordingly, the publicity given to a terrorist attack by citizen journalists is not necessarily publicity that spreads fear and terror, by emphasising the unknown as well as death, injuries and destruction. Rather, in some cases, the public-led response to the 07/07 attacks by

citizen journalists can foster a response that is led by the public rather than terrorists⁶³. A response that is led by the public includes emphasis on understanding the causes of the attacks and can in some cases emphasise what type of response individuals feel are worthy. Sometimes this public-led response may be in the form of written text, but also via photography. By presenting news of the attacks in a particular way, some members of the public can be seen to be making a choice of how the public should respond to the incidents.

The involvement of citizen journalists in extending the publicity of news surrounding an act of terrorism can go some way in telling us, not just about how publicity is increased, but also how the public are choosing to respond to terrorism using technology. Following an act of terrorism, citizen journalism may be a responsive mechanism that allows people to cope with the situation confronting them.⁶⁴ Why people might choose the Internet as a coping mechanism may be rooted in the way the Internet is becoming an increasingly central part of our everyday lives. On a daily basis many people use the Internet to share “something” with “others”: who may be family, friends, associates, acquaintances, friends of friends, or may even be strangers, with whom they have no social ties. The adoption of social networking sites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* allows individuals to share “things” with others. An enormous number of “things” can be shared on the web, including people’s ideas, thoughts, experiences, photographs, videos or even their personal files. With this type of sharing occurring so often, it is possible to deliberate over why people might choose to share an experience such as an act of terrorism with other people. It may be an automatic response in contemporary society that when something happens that you feel is worthy of being shared, you find a way to do so – that “way” is more often than not via the Internet. From this perspective, as a response to terrorism, citizen journalism can be seen as a

⁶³ Such a “resilience-led” response to the terror attacks was discussed by Allmark (2008) in her assessment of a website used by individuals to upload and share photographs after the 07/07 bombings. Across the world, some members of the public chose to doctor photographs to prove that they were not afraid of the terrorists. As noted by Allmark (2008), “the Website offers the sense of a global connection. It promotes itself as ‘citizens for a secure world, united against terror’. It attempts to provide a universal solidarity, which appears uplifting. It is a defence against anxiety in which, in the act of using personal photographs, it becomes part of the collective memory and assists in easing the frustration of not being able to do anything.”

⁶⁴ As will be seen in section 8.6, there is a need for further research to develop an understanding of the reasons behind participating in citizen journalism.

by-product of digital culture. However, it is not only members of the public that are participating in citizen journalism, but the creation of martyrdom videos by those involved in an incident can also be considered to be engaging in citizen journalist-based activities.

The thesis has found that there is evidence of individuals engaging in citizen journalism in the form of martyrdom videos that are later distributed for consumption through news media following the attacks. In this way, by using citizen journalism, those involved with the 07/07 attacks were able to secure further publicity, during which they were able to outline their aims and develop a rationale for their behaviour. By creating a martyrdom video, individuals are able to control the way in which their actions may be perceived and are able to take responsibility for the attacks – in effect they were able to create their own narrative. Furthermore, by participating in citizen journalism, those involved in the 07/07 attacks were able to conduct a form of digital claims-making: they gained access to the traditional news media for the publication of their claims and were able to capture the attention of audiences and policy-makers.

Does the extended publicity brought about by citizen journalism support the idea that there exists a symbiotic relationship between citizen journalists and those involved in “terrorism”? At first glance, it would appear that by citizen journalists participating in the publicising of an act of terror, those involved in perpetrating the incidents are receiving the attention they seek. Citizen journalism has the ability to increase the amount of publicity given to an act of terrorism: not just in the form of reinforced publicity, but crucially, by adding new information to the publicity, ranging from photographs and videos to personal accounts. Through this expanded publicity, those involved in an act of “terror” are able to gain the attention that they are seen to crave. In addition, by participating in citizen journalism themselves, they are able to attract recognition for their part in carrying out the attacks. “Terrorists” can thus be seen to profit from their own acts of citizen journalism, as well as from the activities of others participating in citizen journalism.

However as previously discussed, it is possible to speculate that citizen journalism may also hinder the effect of a terrorist attack on the wider population, and therefore the nature of the publicity received will not necessarily have the “desired” outcome for the claims-maker: for example, to incite fear into the wider population. For

instance, as seen with some of the posts by both dependent and independent citizen journalists, emphasis was placed on responding to the attacks rather than simply writing about the nature of the attacks. In writing about response, some citizen journalists placed emphasis on resilience and recovery, not on fear and danger. In this way, those carrying out the 07/07 attacks may not entirely receive the desired publicity of death and destruction which may for them, incite fear and terror in the population. The attention given to the terrorist attack, which would imply further publicity for the original incident, is not necessarily publicity that would assist the goals of those responsible for the attacks: it may cause an adverse reaction that ignites resilience in people rather than fear. It should therefore not be assumed that terrorists will “profit” from this added publicity.

Let us consider the other side of the relationship. Do citizen journalists gain anything from an act of terrorism? The symbiotic relationship between the news media and terrorism traditionally sees the news media “benefiting” from an act of terrorism, in that it is a story that sells as previously argued by Schmid and deGraaf (1982). However, can it be assumed that citizen journalism is a profit making mode of production?

One way of determining whether or not material produced and disseminated by citizen journalists is profitable is by using Gandy’s (2003 [1982]) concept of “information subsidy”. From the perspective of the news media, material submitted to them by dependent citizen journalists can be considered a subsidy. Typically, news organisations would not have to purchase material; rather dependent citizen journalists are supplying them with “free” material. For Fuchs (2009), the consideration of user-generated-content as a whole, can be regarded as a commodity, in which eventually, material can be made into a profit. By users participating in the creation and dissemination of information, they are acting as a “prosumer commodity” or “prouser commodity”. As also identified by Fuchs (2009: 81) specifically refers to the use of web 2.0 applications, in which users are commodities:

“Commercial Web 2.0 applications are typically free to users; they generate profit by achieving as many users as possible by offering free services and selling advertisement space to third parties and additional services to users. The more users, the more profit, that is, the more services are offered for free, the more profit can be generated.”

As commodities, there is therefore the danger of creators of material being exploited (Fuchs, 2009), not just by participating in creating material, but as argued by Petersen (2008) also by the activities of companies: "Through a distributed architecture of participation, companies can piggyback on user generated content by archiving it and making interfaces, or using other strategies such as Google's AdSense program". Considering citizen journalism as a commodity or subsidy, means viewing citizen journalism as a profit making means of production; either for news organisations or for large organisations such as *Google* and *Yahoo* (Fuchs, 2009: 82; Petersen, 2008).

While pessimists might argue that citizen journalists "benefit", in that an act of terrorism might give them something to write about or record and get published, it is extremely difficult to determine how the individual personally "benefits". With the news media, the benefit may in part be financial and professionally orientated. However, with the citizen journalist this is not necessarily the case (with some exceptions, as "reported" during the time of the Glasgow attack⁶⁵), others may profit from their activities (as discussed above), but that is not to say that the individual personally "profits".

It is necessary to note that individuals involved in citizen journalism may not even realise the effect that their material has in terms of giving terrorists what they want, in terms of publicity. Before making such ungrounded assumptions, further research is necessary to explore the motivations and effects of citizen journalism on the part of the citizen journalist.

From the research carried out for this thesis, it is therefore not possible to conclude that there is a symbiotic relationship between terrorists and the individual, citizen journalists. Rather, we must understand that publicity given to an act of terrorism is no longer led by the news media alone; rather, we are witnessing the greater inclusion of members of the public in the creation of news about an act of terrorism. Those interested in studying this relationship between the media and terrorism must take steps to assess the full range of media that impact upon the reporting of an event, and not simply review the traditional news media.

⁶⁵ See chapter four.

8.3. What kind of narrative does citizen journalism construct in relation to terrorism?

Sociologists interested in the study of disasters often focus on how society responds to a disaster situation. Following the analysis of material produced by citizen journalists, it has been possible to assess how some of those involved in the attacks who then participated in citizen journalism interpreted both their own response and that of those around them. A central point to recognise is that these observations of the public response to 07/07 are based on citizen journalists' interpretations - they are neither necessarily factual, nor are they a representative indication of how the public responded. This is not to say that these reports are fictitious; it is to emphasise that the data analysed is here biased on part of the original author. Such accounts are nonetheless worthy of our attention, as they are cultural products of a disaster, and can go some way in telling us what type of narrative citizen journalists construct in relation to terrorism. Whilst citizen journalism does not necessarily give us a foolproof understanding of how the public responded to the 07/07 attacks, it goes some way in indicating how others perceived the public's response to adversity. Furthermore the activities of citizen journalists can tell us how *some people* chose to respond to the 07/07 attacks, and if combined with other sources of data, can be a useful way of understanding the public response more broadly.

Sociologists interested in the study of disasters have found a tendency for narratives to be centred on the promotion of disaster "myths". Disaster mythology as a concept suggests that following a disaster, the everyday norms that people live their lives by will collapse and be replaced by irrational and unpredictable behaviour. Typical characteristics of this understanding of public reaction include: people fleeing in panic, being psychologically dependent, suffering from shock and therefore unable to act independently, acting selfishly, and taking part in looting (Quarantelli, 1954; Alexander, 2003; Fischer, 2002; Glass et al., 2002; Wessely, 2005; Jones et al., 2006; Jacob et al., 2008). As Perry and Lindell (2003: 49) argue, those affected are often referred to as being "socially disorganised" as well as being "personally disorientated". In a recent assessment of common "myths" discussed in the wake of a disaster, Jacob et al. (2008: 562/563) assessed the distinction between "myth" and "reality" following Hurricane Katrina in 2005:

Regarding the issue of psychosocial responses to disaster, it was believed and hyped in the media that massive trauma led to the abandonment of social mores and relationships and even to violence, as people attempted to escape or to satisfy their own individual needs (Myth #4). To the contrary, studies of behaviour in disaster show that the great majority of those directly affected tend to remain calm and behave in an orderly and considerate fashion... Contrary to the view that affected populations respond with shock, helplessness, and overall passivity (Myth #5), the tendency toward social affiliation also leads to a multicultural dedication to the common good, expressed in altruism, camaraderie, and social solidarity among victims, enabling many to find new strength and resiliency during the emergency and to respond positively and generously.

As seen in the extract above, Jacob et al. found that the media generally exaggerate what is known as “mythical” responses to disaster: emphasis is placed on poor community relations and individuation, but in reality individuals respond in a “calm” and “orderly” manner. Individuals can be seen to be resilient and find new strength when faced with adversity. If perceptions of how the public reacts to terrorist incidents are shaped by inaccurate “disaster myths”, this could have negative effects on how the public regard the threat of terrorism, and may hinder their capacity to respond to future attacks.

As highlighted in chapter seven, Furedi (2007a) argues that the public react in one of two ways following a disaster: with resilience or vulnerability. He develops two paradigms to aid understanding of the difference between a resilient and a vulnerable response to terror. When regarding a “vulnerability paradigm”, focus is placed on the individual rather than the community, and it is believed that the individual/community is unable to cope with an attack. In comparison, under a “resilience paradigm”, there is an “orientation towards the community” and the faith in the ability of the community to cope (Furedi, 2007a: 4). The analysis of material by citizen journalists following 07/07 in this thesis has shows how citizen journalists construct narratives that present how both they and others are perceived to have responded to the attacks. Whilst descriptions of accounts are not always clear, this analysis of citizen journalism during 07/07 has highlighted the importance of the role of interpretation by witnesses to the event: information highlighted by citizen journalists comes from their perspective,

accordingly, researchers much critically assess the material they are exposing themselves to. For example, it is essential for audiences viewing the material to question critically whether terms such as “panic” are relevant and what they might imply. Even if an individual runs away from a scene, does this necessarily cause danger, and must it be viewed negatively? Or can it be interpreted as a human instinct, whereby one removes him/herself from danger and avoids a stampede?

Following 07/07, citizen journalists generally seem to point towards a more resilient interpretation of response to the attacks. This is supported by a number of studies that have since directly assessed the response of those caught up in the attacks. Sheppard et al. (2006: 235) found evidence to suggest that whilst the media reported of widespread “panic” following the 07/07 attacks, in fact there was “cohesion, unity, and mutual co-operation”. Following a telephone survey of 1,010 Londoners 11-13 days after the attacks, Sheppard et al. (2006: 235) found that although one third of the sample reported symptoms of stress as a result of the attacks, when asked whether or not the attacks had impacted their “planned” future travel arrangements, only 30% stated that they planned to use public transport less. As reported by Sheppard et al. (2006: 235) following the study, further information from the underground network in London suggested that use of the Underground had “returned to expected levels within three months”.

Elsewhere, by using the method of triangulation, through the analysis of newspapers, archival personal accounts and primary data collection, Drury et al. (2009: 84) found that despite the widespread reports of “panic” following the London bombings, their analysis suggests otherwise:

In describing the London bombings of July 2005, the term “panic” was used by a number of witnesses and survivors—and, indeed, more so by commentators who did not witness events directly. Yet the concrete and detailed descriptions of survivors’ behaviours tell the opposite story. Rather than personal selfishness and competition prevailing, mutual helping and concern was predominant amongst survivors, despite the fact that most people were amongst strangers rather than affiliates. There is also evidence that this helping behavior took place in spite of perceived danger rather than because people felt that they were now out of danger. (Drury et al., 2009: 84)

Drury et al.'s findings suggest that there was evidence of people assisting others during the emergency, and that despite people fearing they were in danger they would still try to help others. Drury et al. (2009: 85) found that there was predominantly a sense of resilience in the form of "solidarity", rather than an individualised, vulnerability-led response. Importantly, some of the archival personal data that Drury et al. (2009: 72) used for part of their analysis of the public response to the London bombings was in the form of blogs and other accounts submitted to news media sources such as the *BBC*. By accessing this material published on the *BBC*, there is evidence to suggest that other researchers are accessing citizen journalist-based material to help them assess how the public responded to the attacks, thereby supporting this thesis's view that sociologists engaged in the study of disaster responses should engage with "news" material created by members of the public – citizen journalists – in the aftermath of a disaster.

As seen in chapter six, analysis of comments written by citizen journalists provides further confirmation of individuals helping one another and of people describing calm situations. Furthermore, as this thesis has identified and as was also found by Drury et al. (2009), individuals can be seen to promote the idea of the "Blitz Spirit": evoking historical situations to deal with the present. Some citizen journalists argued that Londoners should carry on with their daily routines and physically show the terrorists that they would not be intimidated by the actions of those who wish them harm. Citizen journalism then, can be seen to support findings from other studies to assess how the public responded to the 07/07 attacks.

Assessing citizen journalism in the wake of a disaster offers social scientists the opportunity to assess data that functions as evidence that was created during a crisis situation. This information should not be used by itself to understand the public response to adversity, but can be used alongside other forms of independent research to assist a more comprehensive understanding.

8.4. What does its construction of news say about citizen journalism?

The analysis of independent citizen journalists' construction of news following an act of terrorism has revealed that citizen journalists tend to construct the news in a slightly different manner from the professional news media, in turn, this has consequences for what citizen journalism means for the news media.

Observations of inter-media agenda-setting revealed that citizen journalists appear to place far greater emphasis on the use of links to the news media, as well as to other bloggers. In addition, the choices of images used within the presentation of news by citizen journalists differ to that used by the news media. Whilst the news media rely on images of the attacks, in addition to providing illustrative evidence of the attacks, citizen journalists draw on a range of images, from the Union Jack flag to photographs of previous experiences of disaster to construct their news reports. The length of the article written by citizen journalists and the news media can also be seen to differ. Whilst the news media concentrate on giving as much descriptive information as possible about the attacks to keep audiences up-to-date, citizen journalists do not always give such detailed presentations of the news and can at times produce short, limited, reports.

In some instances, it has been possible to see how citizen journalists can add something “new” to the wider presentation of an act of terrorism through their choice of presenting information. Consider Andrew Or’s photoblog, which presented pictures from in and around the city of London on the day of the 07/07 attacks. These photographs were extremely different to those offered to the news media by audience participatory journalists. Rather than supplying evidence of the situation at the scene of the attacks, Or’s images presented information that may not have otherwise been seen in the news media: for example, people walking in the road because of the lack of public transportation following the attacks. In addition to presenting alternative information, some members of the public opt to use information unrelated to the 07/07 attacks to present their perspective: for example, photographs of the Blitz. Citizen journalism then, allows for a greater range of information to be shared about an event, which might not be deemed by the news media as newsworthy or relevant to telling the “story”.

Thus, we can see that there are, at times, noticeable differences between the construction of news by citizen journalists and the news media. In this way, it is possible to note that citizen journalists are not always entirely influenced by their exposure to the presentation of news by professional news organisations, and when creating news stories independently, are able to choose their own methods for presenting their take on events. Whilst their means of construction may be slightly different, it is necessary to consider what the presence of material means for the professional news media.

An assessment of dependent forms of citizen journalism following the 07/07 attacks suggests that rather than reinforcing the news media, the material submitted by members of the public serves as information published on behalf of the news media. So dependent citizen journalists are quite simply authors of content within the media, and thus serve as journalists working in collaboration with the news media by providing information for audiences to consume. Crucially, news organisations continue to function as gatekeepers of the news, moderating material prior or in some cases, following publication. Alternatively, an assessment of independent citizen journalism following the London attacks reveals a slightly mixed picture of whether or not independent citizen journalists reinforce or undermine the news media.

Independent citizen journalists can, at times, be seen to also reinforce the news media. For those involved in the wider discussion of an act of terror via independent citizen journalism, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence to suggest that the news media set the initial agenda and that citizen journalist's act as what Bruns (2008) calls "gatewatchers" of the news. Many of the blogs analysed refer to news of the 07/07 attacks, based on what the author had been exposed to via the news media – in effect, much of the material is simply what Domingo et al. (2008) refer to as re-mediation – with independent citizen journalists redirecting audiences back to news organisations with the use of links (this was also seen with Messner and Distaso (2008) study of inter-media agenda setting). However, it is important to note that independent citizen journalists do however hold the power to decide what on the news media agenda they choose to discuss.

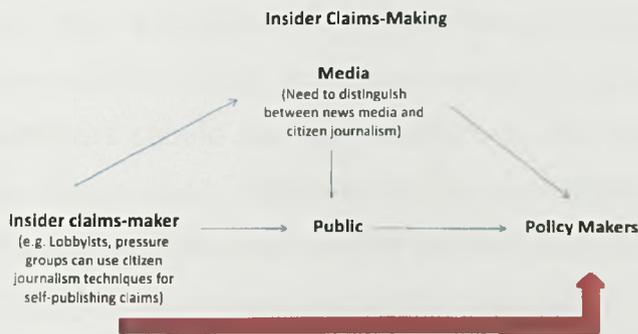
Alternatively, independent citizen journalists can also be seen to respond to the agenda set by other bloggers. Through inter-media agenda-setting, it is possible to note that bloggers are able to influence and reinforce each other. Whether or not this creates what Sunstein (2001; 2007) calls an "echo chamber" is in need of further investigation. What we can deduce from the analysis conducted for this thesis is that agenda-setting on the Internet is far from straightforward.

Agenda-setting is not a single, direct process in which the professional news media set the news agenda and the public agenda: rather, we are seeing the public having an impact on the establishment of the news agenda within the blogosphere as well. Whilst, professional news organisations are able to function as gatekeepers within

their own presentation of the news, they are not able to entirely influence the news agenda outside their arena.

The analysis of the construction of news by citizen journalism in this thesis has also led to greater understanding of citizen journalist's ability to function as claims-makers. Citizen journalists are able to function as claims-makers both dependently and independently from professional news organisations. Citizen journalists can function as claims-makers in their own right, as well as being used by other claims-makers by acting as a form of media. By drawing on Best's (2008: 65) original diagram seeking to explain the difference between insider and outsider claims-making, the following figure seeks to outline how citizen journalists fit into this complex process of claims-making.

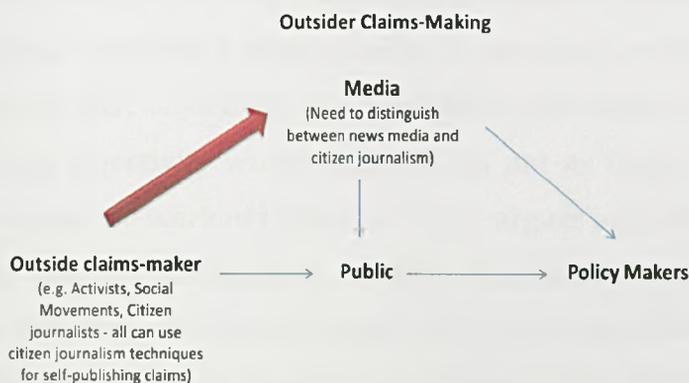
Figure 58: Citizen Journalism and Insider Claims-making



As seen in figure 58, insider claims-makers have a direct route to policymakers. Citizen journalism adds to the original process in three ways. If necessary, insider claims-makers can utilise their own systems of personal communication to publish their own claims; additionally, they can approach the news media via means of citizen journalism, or they can approach influential citizen journalists and independent forms of media to publish claims.

The functioning of insider claims-makers in contemporary society is similar to that of outsider claims-makers. As can be seen in Figure 59 (below), outsider claims-makers can also utilise their own systems of communication to publish their claims. Additionally, without taking part in citizen journalism, they can approach both the professional news media and established citizen journalists to publish claims for them. Alternatively, they can turn themselves into dependent citizen journalists, as did the terrorists analysed in this thesis, and utilise the news media to promote their claims for them.

Figure 59: Citizen Journalism and Outsider Claims-making



Citizen journalists then can act as both insiders and outsiders during the claims-making process. The most important addition to both types of claims-making is the great range of independent media now available both to audiences and citizen journalists. When investigating the construction of social problems in society by assessing the activities of claims-makers, researchers should also pay attention to the dissemination of claims online. Claims are no longer simply published by the professional news media: instead they may be passed across and discussed within the realms of personal communication platforms online. Thus if we want to understand the construction of social problems via claims-making “today”, we must consider the full range of media that can be utilised in the dissemination of claims.

This thesis has provided evidence of the positioning of citizen journalists in the construction of news today. Citizen journalists are able to work under the control of professional news organisations via collaboration, and independently from the news media. Both forms of citizen journalism are able to reinforce the news media and in some cases, provide an alternative “story” to that presented by the news media. Audiences of citizen journalists’ material must be critical in the viewing and trust of material produced by citizen journalists. That is not to say that material should not be created, just that we need to be increasingly active and critical in our viewing and subsequent use of material. This is particularly, true for news organisations interacting and using material from dependent citizen journalists.

Whilst continuing to involve the public, the news media need also to ensure that they protect the fundamental values that uphold the quality of professional journalism in Western society: free speech and truth. Note here, objectivity has not been included as a value; this is predominantly a result of the difficulties in achieving absolute

objectivity. As argued by Keeble (2005), for some such as Schudson (1978), Tuchman (1972) and Allan (1999), objectivity is an essential aspect to professional journalism for it is a professional journalist's responsibility to present the facts. However, Keeble (2005: 57) believes that objectivity is a "stubborn" past time of journalists, and that achieving absolute objectivity within reporting is not as important as reporting the truth. He draws upon the work of McNair who also argues against ideals of "objectivity" as journalism is heavily influenced by society: Yet mainstream journalists' stubborn commitment to objectivity and the belief that 'fact' can be separated from 'comment' not only flies in the face of the postmodernist critique of the Enlightenment dualities – which prioritized the intellect over emotion, mind over body, head over heart, the objective over the subjective; by suggesting the pursuit of information can be value free, the ideology of objectivity also serves to marginalize the ethical and political dimensions within the dominant journalistic culture. As McNair argues (1996: 33): 'News is never a mere recording or reporting of the world "out there" but a synthetic, value-laden account which carries within it dominant assumptions and ideas of the society within which it is produced.' (Keeble, 2005: 57).

A vast body of research, such as Herman and Chomsky's (1988) "Propaganda Model" and Cohen and Young (1978) "manufacturing the news", Schudson's (2003) exploration of sources, point to the importance of viewing other influences on news organisations. McNair (2005: 154) points to the control theory of critical media sociologists who argue that journalism is "instruments at the disposal of the social dominant". Whether or not objectivity is achievable is a debate for another time. Future research should consider what presenting the "truth" means for citizen journalism. For instance, critic Andrew Keen (2007: 188⁶⁶) argues that "blogs have become so dizzyingly infinite that they've undermined our sense of what is true and what is false, what is real and what is imaginary". Thus with media organisations increasingly relying on the public to assist them in presenting the news, it is necessary to take efforts to ensure that material is reliable. This thesis holds the position that journalism should focus on reporting the facts – whether or not they put their own "spin" on the article is another matter.

⁶⁶ Keen (2007) is an e-book Kindle reference, rather than page numbers there locations.

In terms of a future for the news media and citizen journalists, it is necessary for journalists to gather and efficiently investigate all sources of information – including those stemming from the public. When presenting dependent citizen journalists material, it is the responsibility of the professional news media to take steps to ensure that the material is trustworthy and legitimate prior to publication, and therefore, they must maintain their editorial standards and moderation practices – rather than “blindly” relying on material by citizen journalists. It is this thesis’s opinion that citizen journalism material is newsworthy, but not necessarily, trustworthy.

8.5. Future Research

Sociologists have for a long time been interested in the functioning of the news media in society. This thesis has focused its attention on the rise of digital media, in particular the audience’s involvement in citizen journalism. There is however, much more research that needs to be conducted in order for us to continue to understand the impact of digital technology in society today. We live in a fast paced, ever-changing digital world, and this thesis has raised many new questions. At present it is possible to highlight five areas that require attention.

First, returning to the process and use of digital claims-making, the Internet has indeed caused a “boon” in claims-making (Best, 2008: 141). Lowney (2008) also raised the question of what the Internet meant for claims-making. This thesis has attempted to address citizen journalism as one of the ways in which claims-makers can utilise the Internet to participate in the dissemination of claims. Maratea (2008) has also attempted to develop a greater understanding of the way in which the Internet influences the process of claims-making in the construction of social problems. As seen in chapter two, Maratea appears to support the view that the Internet, particularly the blogosphere, offers a new arena for claims-making, though he found that the impact of the blogosphere on claims-making remains event-specific, and therefore its uses and consequences need to be further studied. This thesis has similarly found that more sociological research is necessary to assess how, precisely, those actively participating in claims-making utilise digital media for disseminating their claims. Rather than simply focusing on outside claims-makers, this thesis has found that citizen journalists can also function as insider claims-makers on the web. Both insiders and outsiders need to be

considered when assessing claims-making on the Internet: only then will we be able to understand and fully appreciate the process and impact of digital technology upon claims-making.

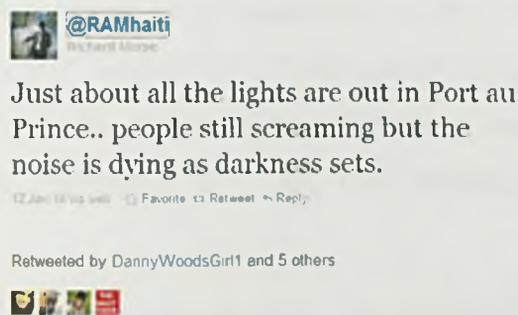
Second, it is necessary to conduct primary research into why individuals engage in citizen journalism. Research to date has revealed a number of reasons as to why individuals take part in blogging (McKenna and Pole, 2008; Nardi et al., 2004; Technorati, 2008; Cohen, 2005). Whilst a number of reasons seem to exist as to why people might choose to take part in blogging, this does not necessarily tell us why people might choose to participate in citizen journalism - which is different from simply writing a blog. Accordingly, "why" people choose to participate in citizen journalism requires attention in its own right. By asking individuals what motivates their actions, we will have a far greater understanding of the reasons behind citizen journalism. In addition, by conducting research that directly engages with citizen journalists, we can begin to understand from a demographic perspective "who" in society chooses to participate, thereby significantly expanding our understanding of this phenomenon.

The third area identified for future research emphasises understanding the relationship between citizen journalism and audiences. As was discussed in chapter two, sociologists have long been interested in the impact of the media upon public opinion. In light of this, it is necessary for social scientists to assess the impact of digital media upon audiences. Questions that could be raised include: do audiences access citizen journalism? If so, how do they treat the material? Are they cautious about trusting amateur-produced material? Do they check elsewhere to clarify information? How does citizen journalism influence their perceptions of social problems? Does citizen journalism influence public opinion? An example of an attempt to understand the impact of the news media on public opinion is provided by the British Crime Survey (BCS), a survey of crime victims run by the UK Home Office to assess public perceptions of crime. In 2009/2010, the BCS (2010: 113) revealed that "Readers of 'popular' newspapers were more likely to think that crime had increased nationally than readers of 'broadsheets' (72% and 52% respectively)". The problem with the BCS's analysis of public perception of crime is that focus is placed on newspaper readership and

television⁶⁷ viewing of news, rather than acknowledging other sources of news that people may interact with, such as that accessed via the Internet. In light of the evolving news media, focusing on the impact on public perceptions of newspapers and television is highly inadequate, and researchers must pay additional attention to the impact of digital media.

Fourth, it is necessary to consider how citizen journalism works in other emergency situations. For example, following the January 2010 Haiti earthquake, the extent of the damage meant that individuals were forced to share information in traditional manners, for example word of mouth. However, there were some instances of individuals using mobile phone technology to report news and assist in informing those outside of Haiti of the feeling on the ground. One such example is by musician and hotelier Richard Morse (2010), who used *Twitter* during the crisis to send out live information. An example of one of his tweets is provided below.

Figure 60: Tweet by RAMhaiti (Morse, 2010)



Elsewhere, following the eruption of the Eyjafjallajokull volcano in Iceland in March 2010, an ash cloud spread across Europe, causing great disruption to holidaymakers and others, as aircrafts were forbidden to fly over certain areas. In dire need of “better” communication, individuals turned to social media and citizen journalism to report updates in the news and their personal situations (Watson, 2011). Thus, we must not only try to understand the use of citizen journalism following an act of terrorism, but in addition, we need to develop our understanding of how citizen journalism can be used (for the better) in a disaster. If individuals are using digital technology to report, then we can assume that digital technology can be used more creatively to assist those in need. We should learn how best to utilise digital media in emergency situations,

⁶⁷ See page 123 of the BCS (2010) report for full statistics.

whether it be an alert mechanism, as was used in Australia in January 2011 throughout the flood crisis (Emergency Alert, 2011), or as a tool for passing along information and assisting with responses.

The final consideration for future research is what citizen journalism implies for governments' control over information in society. Governments have historically been seen to make use of the news media to exert some forms of social control. That some members of the public are now choosing to participate in the construction of news leads us to conclude that news is no longer solely created by the professional news media: accordingly, this leads us to question what citizen journalism implies for the management of information by governments today.

For some, the government may be seen to exert social control via the news media: for example, with the use of the media to "make" the American public to feel vulnerable to further acts of terrorism following the 9/11 attacks. As noted by Jackson (2005: 97), a "discourse of danger" was created by the US government, who worked to promote the idea that Americans were vulnerable to the "new threat" of terrorism, leading to the promotion and support for a "war against terror". Through "discourse", such as text, information can be dispersed to society and sending out a message and used as a form of social control: in this case, that terrorism presented a threat to security.

Altheide (2003, 2006) has also explored the manipulation of the public by the government through the news media. Altheide suggests that when reporting terror, the media, in conjunction with authorities, have cast "fear" as the contemporary predominant discourse of "being" for individuals. Through popular culture and news, this social construction of "fear" becomes a reality, in what Altheide describes as a "politics of fear". Altheide (2003) discusses the importance of the concept of victimisation, and how emphasis on people as "victims" contributes to a politics of fear. Through the media, we are led to believe that we are all potential victims, and with the random targeting associated with terrorism in the twenty-first century, there is a strong belief that we need to be "protected" from sources of victimisation such as terrorism (Altheide, 2003: 46).

Numerous other studies discuss the impact of the government on the construction of news in society. However, with the presence of citizen journalism in the

production of the news, future research must take into consideration how citizen journalists can impact the control of information by the government. Throughout this thesis it has been evident that some individuals have a desire to be involved in the discussion of news in society, proving that we are witnessing what appears to be an active and engaged public. What then are the implications of citizen journalism for governments?

One possible implication of this more “active” public may be that citizen journalism may empower the public, which may directly challenge government rule. Let us consider the recent political unrest in the Middle East, in which anti-government protests in Egypt in January 2011 led to the Egyptian government attempting to block users from *Twitter*, one of the social network websites that individuals were using to attempt to promote the protests (Keating, 2011). With individuals using the Internet as a powerful tool for the dispersal of information, such tools may appear to represent a threat to governments, who may then take steps to restrict this spread of information. However, such action may simply result in further protest by the public, who are directly challenging the restrictions placed upon them. With regards to citizen journalism in the Middle East, Hamdy (2009) argues that citizen journalism wields the power to force issues onto the media’s agenda that might otherwise be restricted from entering the public domain. Is shutting down the public the only way of exerting control? Citizen journalists do not simply create trouble for governments in the Middle East but, as highlighted by Maratea (2008), they can significantly affect politics in the West as well. Further research into what citizen journalism implies from a governmental perspective is an interesting area of enquiry, leading to broader questions about how governments will respond to the public’s engagement in contemporary society.

The future of journalism from a media perspective is an area of consideration for journalism scholars. The nature, impact and consequences of the media in contemporary society are questions which sociologists need to develop a greater understanding. Our current knowledge about the impact of digital media on our lives is profoundly limited. As members of the public increasingly turn to engage with and participate in a variety of forms of citizen journalism, we must rise to the challenge and further understand this social development.

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Appendix A - Blog List for the 7th July 2005 London Bombings

No	Blog Title	Website
1	Jack Lewis.Net	
2	Gorilla In the Room	
3	Althouse	
4	First Draft	
5	Andrew's Photoblog	
6	CNET News Blog	
7	City of Sound	
8	Psyblog	
9	The Memory Bank	
10	The Pagan Prattle	
11	Tabloid Edition	
12	World Changing Change Your Thinking	
13	The RoBlog	
14	MediaCricity	
15	Sudan Watch	
16	Ancrene Wiseass	
17	A Fistful of Euros	
18	The Conglomerate	
19	Aqoul	
20	Jihad Watch	
21	No Signal Input	
22	BLOG.DELARANJA.COM	
23	Google Blog Scoped	
24	Tarkan Deluxe	
25	dbrady.net	

26	Rising Hegemon
27	Haight Speech
28	Search Engine Watch
29	Searc Engine Roundtable
30	Informed Comment
31	Bookworm Room
32	Camworld
33	The Big Picture
34	LAURENCEJARVIKONLINE
35	JEWS SANS FRONTIERES
36	New Economist
37	Terranav
38	Lennin's Tomb
39	News Hounds
40	...Or Does it Explode?
41	Cowboy Caleb
42	Reason Online
43	Micro Persuasion
44	The Counterterrorism Blog
45	PyroManiac
46	Webbed Fet, Web Log
47	Global Gurreillas
48	The Blog Herald
49	AfricaVox
50	The Corridor
51	Emergent Chaos
52	Way Off Bass
53	The QandO Blog
54	IMAO

55	Captain's Quarters	
56	The Quaker Ranter	
57	Your Village Voice	
58	The Command Post	
59	Corante	
60	Dailly Sally	
61	Annika's Journal	
62	Grateful Dating	
63	24ahead.com	
64	Jeff Matthews is not making this up	
65	Sepia Mutiny	
66	Escape of the freelance conscience	
67	Para Pundit	
68	Anders Jacobsen's blog	
69	Vergil Reality	
70	Informaniac Behind the News	
71	American Street	
72	Blatant Optimism	
73	Simplicity	
74	Instapundit.com	
75	Hyscience	
76	Flickr	
77	Livingroom	
78	Grok Your World	
79	Simon World	
80	Blackinformant	
81	Bloggelydygook	
82	Around the world in 80 days	
83	TreeHuggerz Blog	

84	The Black Kettle	
85	Steve's random and often belligerent journal	
86	Confederate Yankee	
87	The Belmont Club	
88	Making Light	
89	The Jarndyce Blog	
90	EU Referendum	
91	Dhimmi Watch	
92	Church of the big sky	
93	Across the Bay	
94	Jessey.net	
95	Empire Burlesque 1.0	
96	The Mudville Gazette	
97	Ralph the Sacred River	
98	Podcast NYC.net	
99	The Fire Ant Gazette	
100	The Radical Centrist	
101	Crow's Nest	
102	Cyber Chocolate	
103	Shadow Warrior	
104	Steve Clift's Notes	
105	Sirotablog	
106	Northwest Progressive Institute Official Blog	
107	The Jawa Report	
108	girtby.net	
109	Squaring the Boston Globe	
110	techno.blog	
111	Snapshots a camera blog	
112	Yes! Magazine	

113	Free Thoughts on Iran	
114	Willisms	
115	Rconversation	
116	Be Specific	
117	Thinking Anglicans	
118	Castrovalva	
119	Respublica	
120	Rhymes with Right	
121	Normblog	
122	Skype Journal	
123	Kung Fu Monkey	
124	Yoav's Space	
125	The Ryan King	
126	Where Worlds Collide	
127	Countersignature	
128	Grasping Reality with Both Hands	
129	Legacy Matters	
130	View from the Pew	
131	BTC News	
132	The Florida Masochist	
133	Bloggerheads	
134	Orthomom	
135	Hughes for America	
136	Europhobia	
137	Socienics	
138	Great Smoky	
139	Mystery Pollster	
140	The Smedley Log	
141	The Huffington Post	

142	Rhodarian	
143	Michelle Malkin	
144	Too Much Information	
145	Perrpectives	
146	Different River	
147	Drunken Blog	
148	Corante Moore's Log	
149	WorldAndUs	
150	Jennifer's History and Stuff	
151	Rubber Hose	
152	Horizon	
153	Alarming News	
154	Three Years of Hell to become the Devil	
155	The Iraq War was Wrong Blog	
156	Jeff Krimmel	
157	Message for my friends	
158	Wirecan	
159	The Volokh Conspiracy	
160	Thirdwavedave	
161	Mistress of the Dorkness	
162	Science, Religion and Citizenship	
163	Professor Chaos	
164	The Astute Bloggers	
165	Another Worthless Blog	
166	Leo Kelb's Stories	
167	Watching Washington	
168	Guido Fawke's Blog	
169	Anticipatory Retaliation	
170	Karen's Musings	

171	dan.lucas	
172	Red State Son	
173	A Watercolor Artist's Journal	
174	Ragged Thots	
175	The Black Kettle	
176	Pacific Views	
177	Blogenspiel	
178	KN@PPSTER	
179	Paul Kingsnorth	
180	My Many My's	
181	Chocolate and Gold Coin's	
182	micah holmquist's irregular thoughts and links	
183	Random Pensees	
184	Blue Sun 2600	
185	Buzz Machine	
186	Colorado Politics Archives	
187	neo-neocon	
188	Peenie Wallie	
189	Gridskipper	
190	Babalu	
191	Roads of Stone	
192	Capitalist Pic vs Socialist Swine	
193	Upside Downsie World	
194	The Wicked Stage	
195	ethiopundit	

Appendix B - Informed Consent: James A. Moore

**University of
Kent** | School of
Social Policy,
Sociology and
Social Research

T: +
F: +

Hayley Watson
School of Social Policy,
Sociology and Social Research
Cornwallis Building
University of Kent

23rd February 2010

Dear, Jim Moore

I am a Sociology PhD student at the University of Kent. My PhD concerns a sociological analysis of the relationship between Citizen Journalism and terrorism. Citizen Journalism is defined in my research as material that is gathered, organised and self-published to audiences online via blogs, personal websites and social networking websites (such as Flickr, Twitter and Facebook).

The material that you have collated and published online (with regards to the Glasgow airport attacks in 2007) and the email discussions you have participated in with me (February 2010) is of particular interest to this thesis. I would therefore like to require your permission to utilise this material in my future academic publications; including my PhD thesis and any academic journals and books. If at any time, you would like to withdraw this material from use please contact me.

If you have any questions or concerns about the use of this material, please contact me at the postal address (above) or via email:

Many Thanks,

Hayley Watson

To give your permission, please complete the following:

I (full name) JAMES A MOORE give consent, that the use of my photographs and email comments be utilised by Hayley Watson in her future academic publications.

Signed: _____

Date: 4/3/2010

Appendix C - Email Exchange with Google



Hayley Watson

Re: [Web Search Help] Google Blog Search - Inconsistent Results

Google Help
To: h.watson@

11 February 2010 18:37

Kirstie has posted an answer to the question "Google Blog Search - Inconsistent Results":

Hi hw88,

New blogs are indexed everyday, all the time. Your more recent search was conducted almost a year after the original one. Over that span of time, many more blogs and blog posts related to that search have most likely been created and indexed. Google's goal is to index all the world's information, so I would hope there would be a lot more blogs indexed over the span of a year!

Hope this helps :)

-Kirstin

[View this question at the Google Help Forum](#)
[Unsubscribe from answers to this question](#)

Appendix D - Email from Live Journal

H.Watson

From: LiveJournal.com Support [lj_]
Sent: 17 February 2011 16:50
To: H.Watson
Subject: Re: Historical Question about LiveJournal

Below is an answer to your support question regarding "Historical Question about LiveJournal

Yes, in 2001 it was possible to include links and images in journal entries.

Did this answer your question?

YES:

NO:

If you are having problems using any of the links in this email, please try copying and pasting the *entire* link into your browser's address bar rather than clicking on it.

Replies to this address are not monitored. To reply to your request, use the links above.

Appendix E – Email from Type Pad

H.Watson

From: Jen [notifications-support@typepad.zendesk.com]
Sent: 17 February 2011 18:02
To: H.Watson
Subject: [TypePad Support] Re: [Contact Form] General Product Information

In replies all text above this line is added to the ticket

Ticket #27983: [Contact Form] General Product Information

Your request (#27983) has been updated.

You can add a comment by replying to this email.

Jen, Feb-17 10:02 am (PST):

Hi Hayley-

Thanks for contacting us about TypePad. The option to include links and images within posts has been available for the life of TypePad.

Please let us know if you have any other questions.

Thanks,
Jen
TypePad Support

Hw88, Feb-17 12:58 am (PST):

Contact Form submission from Hayley Watson.

URGENT ENQUIRY

Hello,

I don't know if you can help me, I am doing some research for my PhD into the nature of blogging during the 9/11 attacks - and have found a number of bloggers that used typepad to write their posts following the attacks. I noticed that there were no images or links used within the post and therefore wanted to enquire about the history of this service. Was it possible to use links and images back in 2001?

Thank you for your time and attention.

Hayley Watson

This email is a service from TypePad Support