
CREATING A NEW(S) VIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENT: HOW CHILDREN'S NEWS OFFERS NEW INSIGHTS INTO NEWS FORMS, IMAGINED AUDIENCES AND THE PRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS STORIES

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Abstract:

Based on a production study of children's news, this article examines the unique new(s) views of the environment created by news programming. Children's news programmes, such as the BBC's programme *Newsround*, construct a new(s) view of environmental degradation. Studying the children's news programme thus provides insights into the unexplored relationship between news differentiation and environmental news representations. This particular investigation explores and demonstrates how *Newsround* and its informing conception of its child audience produces a simplified and personalized view of the environment, which powerfully undermines a reasoned understanding of the relationship between human beings and the natural world. By this means it examines the important connections between news conventions, news programmes and new(s) views of the environment.

Key Words: Children's news, environmental news, news form, professional mediation

Introduction

Academic studies have offered pertinent explanations for the prominence of environmental representations in the news media. A number of these describe, for instance, how coverage of the environment depends on the agenda setting activities of prominent social institutions and interest groups (Hansen, 1993; Hannigan, 1995; Anderson, 1997). When seen from this perspective, the environment issue becomes newsworthy to journalists when discussed as a legitimate political issue by elites (Parlour and Schatzow, 1978; Love, 1990; Gaber, 2000) or campaigned on the behalf of by environmental groups. Indeed, the strategic activities of environmental groups, we are told, can on occasion successfully dislodge the 'primary definitions' (Hall et al., 1978) and outcomes of the structured advantages of dominant social institutions on the news stage and place alternative definitions and claims into the public domain (Linne, 1993; Anderson, 2003). Taken together these insights must be an integral part of any explanation of current environmental representations in the media.

Nevertheless, such a view significantly underplays the professional efforts of news journalists and the forces of news production in the construction of environmental news. News studies that consider how professional news cultures and news practices contribute to the production of environmental issues, on the contrary, provide important insights into the construction of the environmental news agenda. These include how perceptions of the potential 'dramatic' character, 'apolitical nature' and 'emotional' appeal of certain environmental issues contribute to their progression as 'successful' news items (Lowe and Morrison, 1984), while other perceptions ensure their failure within the news production process (Hansen, 1990; Lacey and Longman, 1993). Moreover, recent news studies that discuss news differentiation and the textual properties of news programmes offer a convincing case for the important role that these play in maintaining as well as powerfully conditioning and shaping environmental news representations in the news media. The importance of news forms, the modalities of news story telling and the appeals and conventions, inscribed in public representation and elaboration of news, for instance, have been recognized in a pertinent study of different forms of television news and how these variously shape environmental portrayal (Cottle, 1993a). This article pursues these text-based insights into the production domain and explores how the professional aims and practices of television journalists produce these forms and inflections in practice. In this way we can better examine, and account for, the theoretical 'fit' between the professional ideas of the news form and a specific target audience and consequential shaping of environmental representations. Before presenting findings from the case study of the children's news programme¹ it is first useful to take a closer look at the theoretical claims that discuss links between the news form and environmental representations.

Producing environmental news

As we have discussed, news production studies offer crucial insights into the production of the environmental news agenda. Seen in general terms, these outline how established and culturally inscribed understandings of the environment (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Linne and Hansen, 1990; Daley and O'Neill, 1991) and demands of news style and broadcast time (Friedman, 1986; Dunwoody and Griffin, 1993; Harrabin, 2000) are encapsulated within news values (Schoenfeld et al., 1979). These standard professional views, for example, ensure how 'newsworthiness' is considered within the 'unexpected' and visually attractive, rather than the slow-

evolving, environmental issue (Lowe and Morrison, 1984; Singer and Endreny, 1993; Anderson, 1997). However, although such studies provide an insight into the news production process, they tend to overlook how the general ideological openness (Elliott et al., 1986; Schlesinger, 1990; Cottle, 2003a), selection, and framing of news stories, including those stories of environmental problems (Love, 1990; Hansen, 2000) are informed by news differentiation. In terms of environmental representations, it is important to recognize how popular and serious news programmes provide markedly different news treatments of these issues. Cottle's (1993a) study of British television news, for example, provides evidence of how the popular TV news, in particular, carries more environmental issues and how these are characterized by popular representations of the destruction of animal habitats. In addition, the importance of the textual properties of the news programme has also been recognized by recent focused observation-based studies of news production. These outline how the 'news form' is embedded within the news-making process. Thus, in challenging the explanatory potential of the organized nature of the news production process (Cottle, 2000), studies describe how news representations are conditioned and shaped in accordance with news workers' professional visualization (Cottle, 1993b) of the news programme and its inscribed target audience. The understanding of the imagined target audience, in this case, differs significantly from the generalized 'forgotten' audience masked by professional ideas of news making (Schlesinger, 1978) or hidden economic incentives (Gans, 1980) described by previous news production studies. Like that of the news form itself, the imagined audience is seen as specific to the news programme and embedded within its production (Eliasoph, 1988; Cottle, 1993a; Min, 2004). Collectively this body of work provides a convincing case for considering the professional views of the news form and imagined target audience as important to the production of the news programme. Accepting these theoretical insights, the rest of the article explores their significance within a case study of a particular news programme. The discussion that follows is based on an observational study of the production of the BBC children's news programme *Newsround*; using environmental representations, it describes how a professionally visualized news form and inscribed target audience inform the news production process and professional mediation of news representations. However, let us first introduce the children's news programme.

The children's news programme

The BBC children's news programme *Newsround*ⁱⁱ maintains a distinct position with the British news ecology and consequently provides an excellent example of the differentiated nature of the news programme. The eight and half minute daily news programme broadcasts a news agenda that includes international, national and child-centred news events (BBC, 1997). Within the news bulletin, although the news stories resemble traditional story formats and are voiced (like the adult news programme) by adult news presenters, the stories are inscribed with a news stance and news style that is unique to the children's news form (Matthews, 2003). However, we know considerably less about these specialized news programmes and the way they shape news representations beyond this brief overview. For example, academics working within the field of media and communications have said relatively little about the children's news programme and significantly less about its production. Of the available publications that do address the children's news programme, including issues of its audience (Buckingham, 1999; Carter, 2004; Carter and Davis, 2005) and

content (Gauntlett, 1996; Buckingham, 2000), issues of production have been discussed only by news professionals (Craven, 1978; Craven and Rowan, 1984; Home, 1993; Snow, 1994; Price, 2001; Prince, 2004). Unfortunately, the aforementioned authors, often distracted by concerns to justify the importance of news for children or to legitimize the programme's coverage of particular prominent adult news stories, tend to discuss issues of production in rather a superficial way. This body of work therefore obscures important considerations of how news representations become shaped in accordance with the children's news form and its inscribed target audience. Addressing these concerns, the discussion of the children's news programme that follows describes how news workers rely considerably upon a professional view of the imagined audience and *Newsround* news styleⁱⁱⁱ when constructing news stories for children.

News practice: writing environmental issues

The imagined news audience is an important feature within news manufacture that provides the inspiration for the production of the particularized news programme. Within the production of BBC children's news programme *Newsround*, for instance, news professionals view an understanding of the imagined audience and appropriate news style for children as essential knowledge for news making. Consequently, they consider the new *Newsround* employee, arriving with preconceived ideas about news seen in terms of the adult news rather than the children's news programme and its audience, as unskilled and in need of supervision. A series producer echoes this concern:

There is something as a producer you have to watch for. There can be a tendency for particularly people [new *Newsround* journalists] that have been trained in adult newsrooms to go with the story as it is presented to them on paper (news copy). That may be a very small part of the story that we should be telling to children. (*Newsround* Series Producer 2)

The series producer's comments reflect how new employees must acquire appropriate knowledge of the programme and its target audience to be able to participate fully in the news production process. It is within the newsroom that managers of the programme will ensure that the new employee undertakes a period of supervision and instruction in news making and learns how to select appropriate news topics and news voices and to shape news stories in appropriate ways.

The professional simplification of the environment

Thus we are made aware of how the *Newsround* news style, informed by an imagined view of the target audience, is embedded within the news-making process. Within the newsroom, for instance, it allows judgements to be made over which issues are newsworthy and how these should be transformed into the *Newsround* news story.^{iv} In terms of newsworthiness, it is issues that are judged as straightforward and visually attractive that are put forward as potential news stories. Of these, the environmental issue is often seen as a popular news choice and recognized as:

... ideal for the children. These do not have complex arguments, are picture-driven and just describe what is seen. (*Newsround* Journalist 5)

The journalist describes how newsworthy environmental matters are considered good material that can be easily transformed into the *Newsround* story. Such issues, for example, are effortlessly imagined in terms of a straightforward news narrative that can be expressed simply in terms of news pictures. In endeavouring to meet the requirements of the children's news style, news workers consider newsworthy environmental matters in the following way:

When we are doing our report about environmental destruction or problems there is always an implicit criticism presented of what is happening. For example, we would never try to suggest that seals dying in Alaska are a good thing. (*Newsround* Journalist 9)

We learn from the journalist how the newsworthy environmental issue will describe a threat to nature, and thus how, for example, news professionals will view and report the plight of seals rather than the reasoned actions of seal hunters as the newsworthy aspect of the issue of seal culling. The professional view of news making, reflected here, sees the *Newsround* environmental news story as purposefully reflecting 'the way things are' in a simple way rather than being, as we recognize, a constructed and 'common sense' news account of environmental matters. Moreover, it is believed that the effort to construct the simplified environmental news story will help the news audience to understand what are considered as these 'self-evident' aspects of the environmental issue, as described by the following producer:

I don't think that *Newsround* is trying to influence them [the audience] in one particular way or other - in terms of the judgements of what's right. But I do think a lot of these things [environmental issues] are self evident - frankly. (*Newsround* Producer 4)

Consequently, in accepting that environmental problems are simple and 'self evident' as the producer does, news workers willingly conceive of issues in terms of simple moral questions and structure the news story about the environment matters accordingly:

... these are not black and white issues. The skill with *Newsround* journalism is that you do not present the environmental as such because that will not provide children with the right information. But, it is easy when reporting the environmental story to tease out the rights and wrongs from the grey areas. (*Newsround* Journalist 4)

Here the comments highlight how the process to condition and shape the news story to reflect the children's news style is considered as a necessary and legitimate part of news making. This has also been the case historically, as is reported by ex-*Newsround* news workers who describe how the same practices have been applied to the environmental news story throughout the programme's history. *Newsround* has thus always described environmental matters in terms of a contest between 'good' and

‘bad’ as the following comments from a journalist who worked on the programme in the 1980s illustrate:

Often it was good versus bad within stories. I remember the very first story I ever did. It was about lead weights and swans that contained a very simple message that lead weights are bad because they kill swans, and here are the alternatives. I’m trying desperately to think of an environmental story in which was not structured with a clear good and bad because on the whole this was always the case particularly in stories of wildlife and habitat destruction. (Ex-*Newsround* Journalist 3)

The analysis of the production of environmental news stories that follows demonstrates how these final comments about news practices in the 1980s remain equally relevant to an understanding of the present production of environmental stories. Indeed the rest of the article shows how the comments reflect the way that the simple news story format has a clear impact on the mediation of environmental issues. For instance, we hear how journalists approach the environmental problem as a potential story that will present the interests of environmental character and those of human beings as being in conflict.

Animals as a synonym for the environmental problem

As animal stories adequately reflect the general news treatment of environmental problems these are a good place to start our analysis of the production of the environmental news story. These important stories feature regularly within *Newsround* and describe the natural world as important and under threat. In particular, the animal story provides personalized descriptions of the characteristics, looks and behaviour of the environmental character, in this case of animals, as the following introductory news story lines reveal:

Now to one of the world’s *greatest* creatures – the grizzly bear. (*Newsround* story 12 September 1998)

Now to the international campaign to protect the last five thousand tigers. The *mighty* animals are under threat because they are used in Chinese medicine. (*Newsround* story 19 January 1999)

Now to the campaign to protect one of the world’s most *friendliest* whales. (*Newsround* story 31 March 1999)

The story introductions describe grizzly bears as ‘greatest creatures’, tigers as a ‘mighty animals’, whales as ‘friendly’. Taken together these help extenuate particular characteristics of the animals seen as ‘under threat’. The first two lines, for instance, engender an imagined celebration of the wild animal by situating animals within elevated positions of an imagined hierarchy. The third, rather than describe animals within an animal hierarchy, locates the whale in relation to human beings and describes these creatures as having human qualities. Human beings, by contrast, generally receive a less favourable coverage than animals within the *Newsround* animal story. Those appearing within the environmental news story are often described as the cause of the environmental problem.

Blame and justice in environmental problems: the representation of human actors and their actions

Human beings feature prominently as the cause of animal suffering within *Newsround* and are represented in two main ways: those who harm animals intentionally and those who harm animals unintentionally. In addition, these characters are apportioned blame on an understanding of the legitimacy of their actions (see Table1).

Table 1: Animals, Human Actions and Human Actors in Animal Exploitation and Habitat Destruction Stories

Animal	Human Action	Human Actor/s
Dolphin/ Porpoise/ Turtles/ Sea Lions	Using Drift Nets Trapping / Fishing Leaving Less Food	Fisherman
Wildlife/ Exotic Animals/ Song Birds/ Tortoises / Tiger	Trading/ Illegally Exporting/ Smuggling	Criminals
Grizzly Bears / Elephants/Great White Shark	Hunting	Hunters/ Poachers
Donkeys / Chimpanzees/ Bears	Ill treating / Forced to Entertain / Being Cruel	Owners
Sea Otter / Fish	Pollution	Polluters / Chemical Company
European Animals	Taking Over the Countryside	Humans
Grey Whale	Developing Lagoon	Development Company
Bats/Hedgehogs/Skyl ark/ Birds/ Door Mouse/ Bumblebee	Pesticides / Hedge Cutting / Ploughing	Framers
Wildlife	Oil Spill	People who run Seaport/ Company Who Run Tanker
Elephant	Landmines	Soldiers
Mud Flat Creatures	Barrier Development	Cardiff Council
Tigers	Using	Makers of Chinese medicine

The table illustrates how the *Newsround* story represents human beings as purposefully trading, mistreating and sometimes accidentally killing animals. Most often, stories will discuss the mistreatment of animals and present human beings as showing a desire to profit from animal death (as criminals) or as having a determination to foil criminal activities (as law enforcers and judiciary). For example, *Newsround* often creates a popular news story scenario where animals appear as stuck helplessly within an ongoing struggle between the good and bad intentions and actions of human beings. The following opening line reflects this type of story:

First to the fight against the trade in animal skins. An investigation has revealed parts of endangered animals, like the tiger, are being sold by criminal gangs. (*Newsround* story 14 April 2000)

This example is representative of other stories of this type and shows how, when reporting the mistreatment of animals, journalists tend to demonize the perpetrators and describe their actions in simplistic ways without reference to the context within which these take place. As these stories offer no reasons for this behaviour beyond the claim that human beings become motivated by greed, they deal insufficiently with questions about why human beings behave in this way. The environmental story also

exposes the consequences of the actions of other human beings, as shown in the table. The analysis of the news story thus reveals how legitimate actors tend to escape condemnation within the news narrative for the animals they kill, for example:

Scientists say that a 1/3 of our mammals like hedgehogs and bats are dying out because of pesticides and the destruction of their habitats. (*Newsround* story 5 July 1999)

This story introduction demonstrates how journalists award a degree of legitimacy to the actions of those who harm animals when working lawfully and, in this case, describes the practices of modern farming rather than farmers themselves as a threat to mammals. Although representative of other stories describing similar actions within Britain, the story format and representation of human actors does not apply when the programme represents other human beings working within laws set down within less industrialized countries. A story about the hunting of sharks to create the Chinese delicacy of shark fin soup, ^v for instance, provides a perfect example of how news workers apply a moral framework to criticize and judge the legal legitimacy of the hunter's actions:

This week [...] we report from Hong Kong where shark fin soup is always top of the menu. Thousands of people make their living from fishing the waters of the South China Sea. For countries like this, sharks are a prize because their fins fetch such high prices. The creatures are often caught while people are netting other types of fish.

The local fish market is full of exotic animals caught in the waters around South East Asia. But you don't see live sharks here, because they're caught, their fins are cut off and they're thrown back into the water to die.

At least a hundred and fifty countries are involved in the shark fin trade, with Hong Kong at the centre, but most of it's eaten here and in Mainland China. (*Newsround Extra* 21 January 1997)

This story extract, as a general example of this type of story, ^{vi} shows how journalists question the legitimacy of individuals that harm the environment when working within the law. Here, for example, it defines the shark as an exotic animal, not a raw ingredient of soup, and describes the process of its capture and death with rhetorical devices so as to horrify the audience. This interesting example brings to an end our discussion of the simplification of the environmental story. In this section we have discovered how news writing constructs a simple news narrative that emphasizes the environmental character, environmental threat and the human perpetrator. Our discussion of news writing will continue next by mapping the professional effort made to connect the environmental story with the news audience.

Personalizing the environment

News workers simplifying the news story also attempt to personalize the discussion of the environmental problem to the audience. They achieve this end by using tried and tested news-writing methods that elucidate the connections between the news event

and the audience within the voice-over. They believe this activity will stimulate interest among an audience who have a general (un)interest in all things news, as is illustrated by a news producer:

... some of the research that we have done shows if you make them [the audience] identify with children in an earthquake they will find it engaging. (*Newsround* Producer 2)

Agreeing that only personalized news writing will successfully arouse the attention of the news audience, as described by the producer above in terms of the earthquake story, journalists work tirelessly to inscribe personalized appeals within the news story more generally.

‘Natural’ appeals to the audience

Personalized appeals within *Newsround* are often made to the audience on behalf of the environmental character. Personalized environment descriptors are constructed to encourage the news audience to identify personally with the environmental problem, in this case environmental space, as the opening lines to a story on global warming show:

There was an urgent warning today about *our* environment.
There could be a huge increase in disasters around the world
unless *we* take action now to control global warming.
(*Newsround* story 12 May 2000)

The first line of the story includes the subject pronouns ‘our’ and ‘we’ to purposefully direct the audience’s thoughts to the impact of the environmental problem of global warming in a personalized way. The choice of language, in this example, helps to establish the threat to be faced by the global shared environmental space and the remedy to be found only in the personal action of individual members of the news audience. Moreover, *Newsround* stories more generally follow this strategy and introduce the audience to a personalized discussion of, for example, ‘our environment’, ‘our rivers’, ‘our mammals’, and ‘our sea life’. Similarly, stories describe the audience as influential in the causation of environmental problems, as is shown in this extract from a story on climate change:

All of these disasters have been blamed on climate changes
brought about by the way *we* treat *our* environment.
Protecting the environment now say Christian Aid is the key
to preventing these climate disasters from becoming bigger
and more severe in the future. (*Newsround* story 28 June
1999)

Again the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ appear within the sentence ‘the way we treat our environment’ to personalize the environmental problem of climate change. In this example, the story helps to position the audience to think about ways to protect the environment and participate in suggested environmental solutions. In a similar way, news stories also use specific language choices to provoke emotive reactions towards featured animals.

Anthropomorphic appeals to the audience

The environmental story written to maintain the attention of the news audience often includes particular representations of animals. The *Newsround* news commentary, as an important part of the story, for instance, includes emotive descriptions to build attachment between the news issues and the audience:

Unlike other television programmes, *Newsround* would provide a feeling that we cared. For example, the tone of voice in *Newsround* wouldn't be as disinterested as you would get from a national adult journalist. (Ex-*Newsround* Journalist 3)

Added to the interested tone of voice, the voice-over also includes anthropomorphic descriptions that further serve to meet the professional aim of personalizing the plight of animals. The following recent opening news lines reveal this:

Mum is the first shark in captivity to have babies. (*Newsround* story 21 October 1999)

The first white tiger cub to be born in captivity is enjoying his *first birthday* with a few pals. (*Newsround* story 27 October 1999)

Rootigy is a welcome addition to the *family*. (*Newsround* story 5 August 1999)

The above anthropomorphic descriptions perfectly demonstrate the outcome of the general news practice to personalize animal representations. These describe, for example, the shark as a 'mum'; animals as 'having birthdays' and 'friends' and as being 'additions to families'. These representations are conditioned and shaped purposefully to encourage thinking about these animals in specific ways - an example of the professional mediation of news language. Having thus discussed the way news language is shaped and conditioned within the news production process, we can now explore how news visuals become professionally mediated to meet the *Newsround* news style.

Mediating the rest of the environmental story: complementing words with pictures

Newsround journalists spend a good deal of time carefully constructing appropriate news visuals because they believe the visual aspects of the news story will help maintain the attention of the news audience during the programme. The following description of the production of an imaginary earthquake story by *Newsround* reflects this thinking:

Take the Chinese earthquake as an example. Being aware that 5 million people are dead you must think how shall I cover this story? [...] You will have to dig up pictures from the library such as an earthquake that previously happened in that area, for example, to visually illustrate it. That is how you will spend your time at *Newsround*, whereas [adult] news would be happy to go with a story with very little in the way of coverage. (Ex-*Newsround* Editor 1)

The former editor, comparing the decisions traditionally taken over the selection of news visuals in adult and children's news programmes, describes how the presentation of low-grade news visuals, such as those used within adult news, would be considered unacceptable for the children's news programme. Like the former editor, news workers presently working on the programme understand the professional requirement to include news pictures that will elucidate the news event as well as attract the attention of the news audience.

Acknowledging children's sensibilities and the news visual

In addition, journalists view audiences' sensibilities to some news pictures as an important consideration when selecting appropriate pictures to accompany the voice-over in the news story. Here, internal guidelines, for instance, help them make appropriate decisions over the suitability of scenes of human grief, death and the mistreating of animals. When a video news release detailing the ill-treated caged bears in Chinese zoos was forwarded by the animal welfare group WSPA^{vii} and considered for broadcast, it was observed how journalists were able to make quick judgements over which images were acceptable for the programme. After finishing the news story, the journalist involved offered the following thoughts on the process of selecting and preparing the news pictures for the story:

They [WSPA] had taken some secret filming of zoos in and around Tokyo and found some horrific stuff. The information was already there really. It was just a case of filtering out stuff that would be suitable viewing for children, because some of the stuff was very horrific. It was just literally a case of censoring it if you like. There were really bad pictures that I would have never have used. (*Newsround* Journalist 10)

The comments reveal an intention to produce a sanitized visual account of the treatment of the bears by discarding those news pictures assumed to be 'too horrific' for the news audience. As an illustration of everyday news practice, the example shows how visuals are censored for matters of taste. Similarly, other important decisions taken over news visuals within the newsroom reflect the potential influence that certain news pictures may have on the audience's views and their interest in the news story as is described below.

The power of pictures

Journalists believe that news pictures that contain a powerfully inscribed view of a news issue will impact on the audience's understanding of news issues. This view is illustrated aptly in the following comments:

It doesn't matter how much you explain the other side of some stories such as that animals may be pests, you have always to bear in mind that one image of a caught fox running across a field is the equivalent of a thousand words for the other side of the argument. You have to be incredibly careful. (*Newsround* Series Producer 1)

This account suggests that the audience's inability to distinguish between the view expressed by news visuals and that explained in the verbal soundtrack informs their misunderstanding of the environment issue. Hence the news producer believes that

news should always attempt to present the ‘real’ side of environmental problems within the voice-over, described in the example of fox hunting, as purposefully representing the fox as ‘pest’ rather than a hunted animal. However, the desire to provide an objective and impartial visual account, where possible, of an environmental news story conflicts with the presentational demands of the children’s news form. Journalists recognize how the *Newsround* news style informs the production of particular news pictures that shape the audience’s perceptions:

I have a big problem with the way that emotive pictures of animals can warp the argument. Often on those occasions, it does not matter what you put in your script, you know that environmental agencies are sat there signing up hundreds of new members because you put that on the tele at five o’clock.
(*Newsround* Journalist 8)

The comments illustrate the inevitability of having to produce standard news visuals that are congruent with the *Newsround* news style. In terms of news practice, journalists meet the requirements of the news style by constructing visual sequences that communicate the threat to animals within the news story. Thus, seen in general terms, the news visuals impart a sequence where the environmental character is viewed first as ‘unaffected’ within its natural habitat, followed by scenes of the animal as under threat. Moreover, the practice of visually communicating the environmental problem is used unquestioningly within contested and uncontested news issues alike, as the script of a whale-hunting story (Table 2 – See Appendix) demonstrates.

The decision to design the environmental story with ‘powerful’ pictures has consequences for the message that it communicates. In the example of the whale-hunting story, the particular visuals and music that were introduced provide a clear stance on the issue of whale hunting under discussion. An analysis of the visual elements of this news story reveals how news visuals are organized into a narrative sequence that conveys a particular perspective on the news issue. Arranged within three elements, the visual narrative shows first the whale within its natural habitat, then its contact with human beings, and finally its death. Prominent within the opening section is the widely recognized image of the ‘natural whale’, where first it surfaces from beneath the water, momentarily projecting its size, before sinking back within the sea, leaving only a projecting tail which characteristically rises and then falls into the sea of foaming ripples. Accompanying these shots are underwater sounds and whale cries imposed over a slow rhythmic beat that adds to the specific presentation of the majesty of the large animal swimming within its natural habitat, disassociated from human beings. The second element contains a selection of visuals that detail whale watchers’ faces amazed and transfixed on the slow-moving whale; this sequence communicates a preferred human/animal relationship. It is, however, the third element that interrupts the previous serene images. This selection of pictures communicates vivid images of whale hunting and animal death, showing close-up shots of the hull of a rusty trawler, surrounded by blood-stained water, where a whale’s bloodied carcass is being winched slowly aboard. Shattering the constructed image of the splendour of a gargantuan creature within its natural environment, coupled with the joy of the whale watchers, the third element represents the outcome of whale hunting. On the basis of this analysis, we can conclude that the visual narrative contains simplistic images that are fuelled with emotive overtones, which

tend to overemphasize the distinction between the natural whale and its unnatural death. Thus, on balance, we can argue that visuals constructed in this way override the views that whale hunting is a contested issue and that there is a rational argument to continue the hunting of whales.

Conclusion

At the start of this discussion, I argued that explanations based on views of 'newsworthiness' or elite and environmental groups' agenda setting overlook the importance of the textual properties of the news programme when accounting for the visibility of environmental issues on the news stage. In concluding this discussion, I suggest that adopting an approach to news production that is sensitive to the textual properties of the news programme can provide new and interesting insights into environmental news representations in the news media. The study of the children's news programme *Newsround* reported here describes how associations made between environmental issues and the target audience maintain news professionals' interest in reporting issues of the environment. Moreover, the study directs attention to how the same professional considerations also powerfully condition and shape simplified and personalized news representations of the environment. These findings raise concerns about the audience of *Newsround*. The oversimplified and personalized children's new(s) view provided by the *Newsround* seems here to delimit the audience's access to information, knowledge and debate about environmental degradation as well as other serious issues.' The study reported here also encourages academic research to view the study of textual properties and inscribed target audiences of news programmes as important and worthwhile. More research in this area would enhance our understanding of the professional mediation of environmental issues by news programmes more generally. For now though, we can reason that the news form does play an important part in determining, along with other factors, the frequency and variety of environmental news stories in the news media.

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Figure 1: News language, visual and music in whale hunting story (20th October 1999)

News Language	News Visual	News Music
<p>Now to the battle to save the whale. The Australian government wants to stop the killing of whales in all the world's oceans by next year. But it's facing fierce opposition from countries like Norway and Japan which hunt and kill several hundred of them every year.</p> <p>Our down under correspondent reports how whale fans are lending their support to the campaign from Harvey bay in Australia</p> <p>It's at this time of year that humpback whales come to the east coast of Australia to breed.</p> <p>And it's probably because Australians can so easily come out on boats to see them that they are so passionate about stopping whale hunting around the world.</p> <p>Some of the whales have been coming back here for so long that the locals have even given them nick names 'yo wally'</p> <p>'I'm just totally overwhelmed. I've had had a fantastic day. I've been totally touched by them. They're brilliant, brilliant creatures'</p>	<p>Presenter with VT displaying footage of the humpback whale.</p> <p>Map of Australia showing Harvey Bay</p> <p>Pictures of the humpback whale surfacing for air and then diving</p> <p>Correspondent on boat with whale sufficing behind</p> <p>Middle range shot of whale watchers observing the surfacing of whales</p> <p>Close up shot of whale watchers and whale</p>	<p>Music underwater sounds and whale cries.</p>

<p>'Once you've been out here and had a bit of a look. Sort of a thought of to go killing them...'</p> <p>This is footage taken by Greenpeace in Antarctica. Greenpeace claim that this Japanese boat is killing whales for meat.</p> <p>But Japan denies this saying that it has to kill several hundred whales a year for scientific research.</p> <p>Norway also argues that it has to kill whales to keep its traditions alive.</p> <p>But the Australia government disagrees.</p> <p>'We don't see any purpose for whale hunting now. There are alternates for all the products traditionally taken from whales'</p> <p>The sister of the supermodel Elle McPherson - Mee - owns her own whale watching business and supports the government's drive.</p> <p>She says more and more people are realising that it is better to watch whales than to hunt them:</p> <p>'For a start you can use a whale more than one</p>	<p>Close up shot of interviewee Close up shot of second interviewee</p> <p>Long shot of side of whaling ship dragging a bleeding whale through the sea</p> <p>Long shot of rear of ship hoisting bleeding whale into the ship</p> <p>Long shot of the side of the whaling ship</p> <p>Close up shot of Australian government minister</p> <p>Panning shot of interviewee with correspondent watching whales.</p> <p>Close up shot of whale swimming through water.</p>	
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<p>time when you watch them. You can watch a whale over and over and over again. Whereas with whale hunting you only kill a whale once'.</p> <p>Australia hopes to convince the international whaling commission to declare the south pacific a whale sanctuary by the middle of next year. If it wins that battle its says , it will fight on to make the whole world a place for whales to live</p>	<p>Close up shot of interviewee</p> <p>Close up shot of whale thrust its nose out of the water.</p> <p>Close up shot of the whales tail disappearing into the water.</p>	<p>Music as before.</p>
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ⁱ The project studied the production of the BBC children's news programme Newsround. The time between 1997 and 2000 was used by the author to observe news production routines and practices, to collect and analyse news production documentation and to conduct interviews with the then present production staff as well as others who had contributed to the programme over its history. A lengthy quantitative and qualitative analysis of environmental news output spanning the history of the programme was also undertaken

ⁱⁱ Newsround is a BBC children's news programme. It appeared first twice weekly in 1972 and has developed into an established part of the BBC children's schedules, broadcast daily on terrestrial and digital channels and accompanied by a yearly series of 12-minute documentaries called Newsround Extras. Moving from a traditional slot of 5pm to 5.25 in 2000, the eight-minute programme includes two or three main stories and a summary of others within a 'newswrap'. The programme consistently tries to cover news items that are considered relevant to children as well as those they assume will interest and entertain them. A website that contains story summaries, background information on important stories and message boards supports the daily broadcasts.

ⁱⁱⁱ A production study of the unique and hitherto unexplored children's news programme Newsround informs this discussion. Those interview comments included are thought to be representative of the wider professional view of the news agenda, news stance and news style of the children's news programme. In addition, former news workers' comments are included to demonstrate the continuity between past and present understandings of Newsround and, more specifically, the news practices that condition and shape environmental news representations.

^{iv} It is important to add that the professional intention to simplify news is also reflected in the professional mediation of news access opportunities for news voices (see Matthews, 2005) and explanations of news issues within the story, as well as those that feature on the Newsround website, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/>

^v The Newsround Extra was filmed on the bequest and with the help of the East Asia wing of the animal welfare group TRAFFIC.

^{vi} These observations have also been made of other news and wildlife programming (see, for example, Bouse, 2000; Cottle, 2003b).

^{vii} World Society for the Protection of Animals