

A MEDIATED CRISIS

News and the National Mind

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**This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Research
Masters with Training in Communication Studies
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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

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Source: *The Weekend Australian Magazine*: March 27-28 2006, p 10.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines a mediated crisis and how *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* approach the reporting of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). It looks at how this mediated crisis exemplifies the culture of the national newspaper and in turn how the national newspaper has an historical influence on the national psyche. A total of 649 reports and headlines and 141 letters about SARS in *The Straits Times* (including *The Straits Time Interactive*) were examined from April 2003 to November 2003 as were 125 headlines from *The Australian*.

The early sections of the thesis discuss how a crisis makes news; examine how the media report a crisis and what emphasis is given to aspects such as: actors, primary definers, vocabulary, lexical choices, subjects, themes, issues and value dimension or stance. The first chapter defines crisis, journalism and crisis journalism and discusses where the latter sits within the continuing expansion and development of major theoretical frameworks, including living in a risk society. The implication here is that crisis and risk have a symbiotic relationship.

Historical perspectives of news are discussed in Chapter 2, and the newspaper is placed within the context of contemporary media. The chapter discusses how newspapers are aligned with the concept of the national mind and demonstrates the roles and formations of the two newspapers in relation to the SARS crisis.

Chapter 3 codes the headlines, article titles and subtitles of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* and using content analysis of the headlines, analyses the reporting of a serious health crisis SARS that lasted from March to November, 2003. The quantification within content analysis enables a researcher to read and interpret questions that relate to the intensity of meaning in texts, their social impact, the relationships between media texts and the realities and representations they reflect (Hansen et al, 1998). The theory and method of content analysis is used in this chapter to consider differences between *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* and to exemplify the media's representation of the narratives of SARS as it happened in the countries of Singapore and Australia.

Aspects of crisis and risk, the newspaper and the national mind, narratives, presentations, and post SARS events are discussed in the last chapter. It is concluded from these discussions there is a world narrative that tells the story of how the human condition likes to live and rely on a safe social environment always being available. The relationship between a mediated crisis and risk are also discussed. In addition, it is maintained that reporting in 2003 was not just about SARS but a way of reporting that allowed one to view journalism as an aid to good governance, particularly with regard to living in a risk and crisis-ridden society.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Background

Scholarly studies of mediated crises carried out in the late 20th and early 21st Centuries include: researches into journalistic reporting of war, race riots, HIV/AIDS, the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the Gulf War, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and racism, to name but a few. Despite the studies of the reporting of HIV/AIDS just mentioned, and some studies of the reporting of the Ebola Virus studies have been scarce about the reporting of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) or Avian Flu (Bird Flu).

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a respiratory illness first reported in Asia in February 2003. In early March, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a global alert about SARS. Over the next few months, the illness spread to more than two dozen countries in North America, South America, Europe and Asia. By late July, however, no new cases were being reported and the illness was considered contained. According to The World Health Organisation (WHO), the global data set was closed on 31 December 2003, with the total revised to 8,096 cases (21% among health care workers) and 774 deaths from 29 countries and areas. Over 95% (or 7,768) of the cases were reported by 12 countries and areas of the Western Pacific Region (World Health Organisation, 2006, p. 185).

Over the past few years there have been many warnings of new outbreaks of such diseases as bird flu, and, as mentioned above, SARS was one of them. The way the news

of these outbreaks was reported has been different in many of the countries of the Asia-Pacific Region. However, a much closer watch is being kept on the incidence and the spread of diseases of this type. Recent newspaper reports suggest (Chieh, 2007) that some governments are looking for extra powers to act quickly against the spread of infectious diseases. Chieh also writes that SARS caused some amendments to be made to the Infectious Diseases Act in Singapore. Also, a recent article in *The Straits Times Interactive* suggests that the current viral outbreaks are the result of modern transportation and insists that investigations into this modern happening ‘stick to science and nothing but science’ (Reiter, 2007). Perhaps as a warning to us all, Pearson in *The Weekend Australian* wrote that:

A single, highly infectious individual on a jumbo jet could transmit the virus to dozens or even hundreds of fellow passengers during an inbound flight (Pearson, 2005, 20).

This investigation of the reporting of SARS by two regional broadsheets from the Asia-Pacific region is intended to position and place the print media as a critical factor in the communication of health matters.

Aim and Scope

The aim of this research is to explore the role of the national newspaper both generally and in two countries in the Southeast Asian region within the context of the reporting of a health crisis, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The study uses

content analysis of newspaper headlines to measure and analyse how the reporting of the coverage of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) by *The Straits Times* and *The Australia* differ. Both newspapers are researched for evidence of the characteristics of the reportage of a health crisis and the evidence included in the results is outlined and summarised to draw conclusions about how the print media stand with regard to the reporting of health matters in Australia and Singapore. The intention of the thesis is to explore the reporting of a health crisis and its relevance to the theory of living in a ‘risk society’ in contemporary situations.

There are many different theoretical approaches in the literature on media and communication. Chapter 1 sets out the media terminology, theoretical approaches and comparative methods used in the dissertation. The chapter defines ‘crisis’, examines crisis reporting, and takes up a discussion of and examines some theoretical aspects of ‘what makes news news’. Chapter 2 then establishes, based on historical events, matters concerning the publishing of newspapers, the national mind, and national identity and examines the role of a national newspaper. It identifies a newspaper’s place within the national psyche, establishes a definition of what is meant by news, and identifies aspects of how nations focus on issues that are reported by today’s media. The thesis itself includes an investigation into the reporting by the print media of a crisis, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). It seeks to show how it may be surmised that some governments can place strict guidelines on the way a population should behave, and put pressure on the media to report a crisis from the government’s point of view.

Information from the headlines collected from *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* provide a suitable platform to construct a model that allows a critical examination to be made of the reporting of a health crisis – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Chapter 3. The information in Chapters 1 and 2, along with Chapter 3 which concentrates on research design, explains in detail the topic to be analysed and sets up a method to compare and contrast the ways the two broadsheets, *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*, report Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. As well as clarifying the research problem, the design chapter, Chapter 3 uses content analysis and defines: actors, sources, primary definers and their attributes, the number of sources used or represented in the news items, sources of the information used, types of knowledge provided by the sources used, subjects and topics used in the study and vocabulary and lexical choice.

In Chapter 4, the results of the research are discussed under several headings: Crisis and Risk - the Symbiotic Relationship, the Newspaper and the National Mind, through Narratives, Presentations, Post-SARS events, Analysing Headlines-a Case Study of SARS Reporting, and the Emphases given in the analysis of a case-study. The Conclusion to Chapter 4 highlights that the national mind and the national newspaper, along with narratives and representations, demonstrate that there is a symbiotic relationship between living in a ‘risk society’ and a ‘crisis’. The point is also made that reporting in 2003 was not just about SARS but was a way of reporting that allowed one to view journalism as an aid to good governance. The narrative ends, just like any other news story, when the events being reported cease to have meaning.

CHAPTER ONE

CRISIS JOURNALISM IN THE MEDIA

CHAPTER 1: CRISIS JOURNALISM IN THE MEDIA

Introduction

Any approach to the study of modern media should emphasize that mediated communication is an integral part of, and cannot be understood separately from, the broader contexts of social life. As John Thompson puts it, “mediated communication is always a contextualized social phenomenon: it is always embedded in social contexts which are structured in various ways and which, in turn, have a structuring impact on the communication that occurs” (Thompson, 1995, p. 11).

This chapter discusses how a crisis makes news, examines how the media report a crisis and what emphasis is given in a crisis to the social aspects of: actors, primary definers, vocabulary, lexical choices, subjects, themes, issues, and value dimension or stance. It will seek to establish why the media’s reporting of a crisis is important and how it sits alongside the mediation of other events. It has often been noted that it is the responsibility of the media, and by extension mediated communication, to provide coverage that is accurate and places events in a meaningful context and historical perspective.

The thesis uses Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) as a case study in an attempt to explain why the media can be said to be an antidote to a crisis or to a risk. In

addition, the thesis investigates what the media should try to achieve when reporting a crisis. Messages are fixed within a stratum of words on paper, as far as this thesis is concerned. It is important however to focus on the broader contexts of social life instead of the symbolic content of media messages. This thesis concentrates on explaining how the media should approach the reporting of a crisis without ignoring the complex social conditions that are beneath the production and the circulation of media messages (Thompson, 1995, p. 11)

Journalism defined

The chapter also examines some of the concepts of ‘daily’, raised in many of the dictionary definitions of journalism. Evidence in the Barnhart Dictionary of English Etymology points to the fact that journalism in the year 1365 meant a book containing the form of church service in the day hours of worship, and mentions that the word was borrowed from the Anglo-French ‘jurnal’, or ‘jurnale’ which means a day, or a day’s work. The word came directly from the Old French word ‘journal’, originally used as an adjective that meant daily (Barnhart, 1988, p.367). Journal was used to mean a daily publication when it appeared in Pope’s *The Dunciad* in 1728 and was again said to be borrowed from the French ‘journal’. Lastly, journalism may have originated as a descendent of the French word *journalisme* (Barnhart, 1988, p. 367).

The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) describes the word journalism as being an occupation, the profession of being a journalist, journalistic writing, or public journals

collectively. Recently, in the later part of the 20th and in the early 21st century the word journalism has taken on a rather different meaning and has come to include, through journalism's links with the media, not just observers and writers but a profoundly integral part of the democratic process (Craig, 2004, p.19). Craig maintains that journalism specifically problematises society in the main because of the way that politicians in a modern society submit themselves to public scrutiny (Craig, 2004, p.20). This has an historical basis: as Craig mentions, the results of the French Revolution came to mean that there were no more guarantors of truth. The people had taken over the sovereignty once held by the crown. Journalism became the mechanism through which democracy became articulated, and democratic principles have been spread through the social life of the western world by media and mass communications (Craig, 2004, p. 20).

Journalism has also been defined as information, or communication, but more than that, journalism informs about the events of the day distilled into a few words, sounds or pictures. These are processed by the mechanics of communication to satisfy the world's curiosity, always eager to know what is new (Wainwright, 1972, p.1). Indeed Wainwright says that in the 20th and early 21st century, the fact there is so much news one could say that journalism is swamped by its very availability. Not only that, news is given to the public in many formats: the press, radio, television, and the internet; so much so that the old concept of a 'scoop' by newspapers in the presentation of hard news has virtually disappeared. In addition, managers of news need to make decisions as to what is 'newsworthy' since different countries and organisations have different ideas about what a newspaper's philosophy should be. Many newspapers have their own ideas about what

is important and many have changed their attitude towards what is considered to be important news. In some newspapers the 'seamy side of life' tends to get less opportunity to make the front page these days; in others the frequency of that type of reporting is on the increase. The circulation race, however, is still a fact of life with most newspapers and they all depend for their living on advertising revenue (Wainwright, 1972, p. 16-17).

In the foreword to *Journalism After 9/11*, Victor Navasky writes about the importance of journalism:

[J]ournalism, the flow of news, information, and ideas is the circulation system of our democracy, the way we find out what's what. It is based largely on journalism that we make up our national mind (Navasky, 2002, xiii).

Navasky also wrote about the difficulties the media faced covering a trauma. But, comments made by contributors to this academic tome on the 9/11 tragedy were critical of the slashing of journalism budgets by many media conglomerates. In addition, Navasky claims that in times of great trauma the mainstream media tend to be less objective and insists that in times of danger, tragedy and threat to national security media tend to be less objective and write with less than a normative dissenting voice. However, Navasky says finally that in a situation where there are threats to national security, it is hoped that the press would endeavour to protect the public from official abuse of its prerogatives (Navasky, 2002, p. xiii-xviii). As far as the national mind and the national newspaper are concerned, these will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2. However, at this point it would be as well to foreground how the significance of the national mind bears a certain relationship to the thesis.

It is worth making the point here that many academic writers have observed since the advent of multi-media organizations that the media have become purveyors of infotainment. The media no longer consists of independent organizations that print or broadcast a conversation. A conversation that should inform a democratic society what is happening on the public's stage (Craig, 2004, p. 20). Democratic states may have to be prevailed upon to restore journalism to its role as a producer of a conversation; so it may be able to produce meaning and forge collective identities in mediated public life (Craig, 2004, p. 21).

It has also been suggested that news, and thus journalism is moving away from foreign affairs towards domestic concerns and away from politics towards human-interest stories and people (Allan, 1999, p.190).The changes over time in what 'journalism' means in the twenty-year period between the two definitions already mentioned could be explained by the growth of large and commercially oriented news empires and their desire for larger and larger profits.

However, newspapers have retained their political significance because there is a readership profile that we should take note of. In particular, quality newspapers are read by professionals and what could be called the 'elite' strata of society. The tabloids tend to report for and are generally more focused on the 'popular end of town'. Craig maintains that whilst the tabloids are still very popular, the press is more defined than ever by the 'quality' newspapers and this includes the financial and business news outlets. The press, through journalism, has great influence in establishing which news stories are reported

and in defining how these stories are reported and interpreted. How the journalist interprets the story and how it is framed in the context of subjective journalism through columns, editorials, opinion pieces is also of great importance to the reporting of crisis situations. Stories that are part of the cultural, political and social life of a nation foreground the 'national mind' (Craig, 2004, p. 176). Also, there are many journalists these days who write opinion pieces from their own point of view, often about their own stories. This is particularly true of those journalists who write for a special section in the daily newspaper and are also given space in opinion pages, where they can make their own personal comments on the specialty about which they report. *The Australian's* composition consists of news reporting done by journalists and columnists who contribute opinion pieces and editorial copy that makes the paper's position clear and to which readers turn to and read where the paper stands. For instance Greg Sheridan, the paper's foreign editor, writes a regular column in the 'Inquirer' section of the paper, as well as editing the reports of foreign events that the paper covers.

Journalism's interests

Craig (2004, p.36) suggests that the media are vital political organisations that tend to be at the centre of that part of the democratic process that produces social meaning as reflected in the news. He also maintains that media assigns values and meanings to what is happening within political organisations and to the way these organisations present themselves. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'media' as that which includes newspapers, radio, television, etc., collectively, as

vehicles of mass communication (OED 1989, p. 200). The media also include within their reporting categories just about anything an informed public need to read, hear, and see. Appendix 5 lists sections of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* that demonstrate the coverage the social life of the publics in Australia and Singapore receive and shows what these broadsheets has declared an interest in. They cover, each week: the world, the nation, fashion, sport, business, travel, investments, and more.

In 1992, Murray Masterson published a research paper in the *Australian Journalism Review* entitled 'What Makes News News'. This paper analysed responses from nearly 300 journalists from 67 countries about what factors or criteria they consider turns information into news, and summarily, Masterson wrote:

[Journalists] were asked for opinions on a possible 'core' which may determine whether information can be news at all, what the core contents might be, and to pass judgment on 14 suggested criteria, or news values...responses showed first there were a core of three elements without which no information can ever become news, and second, that there are then six news values, or criteria of newsworthiness, valid internationally, which determine if that information is newsworthy, and how strong a news story is (Masterson, 1992, p. 21).

The three core elements of Masterson's thesis: Interest, Timeliness and Clarity are cited here as part of what interests journalism or the media in general.

There is also a suggestion from James Thompson that the social life of a nation includes individuals who pursue aims and objectives structured in social contexts (Thompson, 1995, p.16). In effect he is pursuing an argument that encapsulates how power is distributed in a modern state. He includes four different types of power, these being: economic, political, coercive and symbolic. It is to the latter that should be looked

at to ascertain what the media are interested in. The media industry has as part of its resources the means of imparting information and communication as part of its power base, so have the Church and educational institutions. The symbols of power mentioned above can be conventionally regarded as typifying, representing or recalling something; especially an idea, or quality, (for example, white is pure, a crisis is dangerous). And these symbols mark or characterize a conventional sign of some idea that is familiar (Thompson, 1995, p.10). However, the media also has an interest in the social conditions that underlie production and circulation of the messages about, for example, a crisis.

The elements of Interest, Timeliness and Clarity, can certainly be applied to stories about risk, about risks to health and about terrorism. At the beginning of 2003 the media focused on the risk game by telling the story of risk; risk that occurred during crisis events caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS); the disease that became the focus of much media attention during the larger part of that year.

When Beck wrote about a world risk society, he said that whether we think about the ozone hole, pollution or food scares, nature is inescapably contaminated by human activity (Beck, 1999, p.145). He also makes the point that the media play a dominant role in the way they place before the community the many dangers and tendencies for crises to occur in today's world. Beck maintains that when crises occur they touch the avarice of the media barons and threaten markets, make the prospects of new sales a worry to sales departments throughout the modern world, and devalue capital (Beck, 1999, p. 68). The panic that takes place in the public and private enterprise sphere is, in other words,

just what the media industry is looking for. It enables them to run with a story, a particular piece of crisis journalism for example, that may continue for many issues of the newspaper.

Beck (1999, p.121) states that on the basis of empirical studies knowledge of ‘unintended consequences’, of natural destruction and health risks which upset the public also contains much unawareness – wilful omissions, mistakes, errors, exaggerations, dogmatisms. Apparently, Wildavsky (1994) and his colleagues, quoted in Beck’s chapter on knowledge or unawareness, drew this conclusion from analysing scientific information which they compared with the presentation of these results in newspapers and television. Beck also makes the point that there are uncertainties about the truthfulness of the way highly publicized risks are managed. In other words, the effects of risks depend upon public trust in science, technology and the institutions that publicise and promote the results of scientific experiments on risks. This also pre-supposes the media can also be trusted to explain the results of these experiments to the general public and also clarify the types of risks involved in a situation such as SARS for example (Beck, 1999, p.123).

Furthermore, terrorism since 9/11 has been an ever present issue appearing in many pages and supplements of the world’s broadsheets, as well as radio, television and the internet. Beck highlights three types of global threats in *World Risk Society*. The first is ecological destruction, the second is directly related to poverty and the third is the threat allied to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons deployed as aids to terrorism.

The above are all a part of Beck's theory of global risk; and are the basis of hard-to-manage dangers instead of what used to prevail, quantifiable risks (Beck, 1999, p.34).

The first two threats are ones that could provoke war, mass emigration, or ecological destruction that in turn could lead to other horror scenarios too terrible to imagine. It seems that there are no limits to catastrophes that could conjoin and bring about a spiral of destruction which could bring about one great crisis (Weizsacker, 1995: 57, in Beck, 1999). Since the SARS crisis there have been other crises. The latest scare, global warming, or climate change has been exemplified in the Al Gore film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006). This looming crisis, global warming, takes the risks and crises of the twentieth century and the early twenty first century and puts them all together as though the latest crisis will prove too difficult to handle if something is not done to alleviate the results of global climate change.

Crisis defined

The noun crisis was first used, probably about 1425, as a word to describe the turning point of a disease. It had its roots in Latin and Greek and was borrowed from Latin 'crisis' and Greek 'krisis' meaning a separation, discrimination, or decision. The sense of a decisive moment is recorded in English in 1627 being a figurative extension of the former medical meaning (Barnhart, 1988, p. 235).

The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) dates the pathological use of the word crisis from about 1543, and quotes other uses in areas such as astrology, judgement and decision, a criterion, token, sign, etc. The SARS crisis caused more fear and social disruption than any other disease outbreak of recent times. By some standards it was the first emerging transmissible disease of the 21st century, although it was not a big killer (WHO, 2006, p. VII). This being so, it has been necessary to choose a definition of crisis that covers the threats just mentioned, and for these reasons the following particular definition of crisis was chosen and defines and exemplifies the serious nature of the SARS epidemic:

A vitally important or decisive stage in the progress of anything; a turning-point; also a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent; now especially applied to times of difficulty, insecurity, and suspense in politics or commerce (Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Ed., 1989, p. 27).

An interesting example of that definition is contained in the same dictionary, which quotes as follows:

1848 Mill, Pol. Econ. III, xii, there is said to be a commercial crisis when a great number of merchants and traders, at once, either have, or apprehend that they have, a difficulty in meeting their engagements (Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Ed., 1989, p. 27).

The 1848 example represents many situations that occurred during the SARS crisis in Singapore and other parts of Southeast Asia. There were severe disruptions during the SARS health scare, to education, to transport systems, to hotel occupancy, etc. Anecdotally, many visiting businessmen have said that there were many aircraft landing

at Changi airport with single figure occupancy rather than the 300-400 seat occupancy more usual for the jumbo jet.

To paraphrase the American Press Institute's manual, *Crisis Journalism a Handbook for Media Response*, crisis as applied to the media, means news is reported more urgently, in more detail and in a way that gives more importance to the facts being reported (Grin, 2001, p.11). Indeed, many events/occurrences in the late 20th and early 21st centuries could be classified as crisis situations and have resulted in coverage by the media and looked upon as dangerous and a risk to the developed world's lifestyle.

Beck, considers such world risk as though it eventuated as part of scientific research, research that spawned industries that, seen as whole, have put much of the environment in danger. So much so that there is the possibility that much of the world as we know it in the 21st century could be subject to changes that may cause health risks, as well as environmental degradation. The globality of risk does not mean, necessarily, a global equality of risk. The first law of environmental risk is that 'pollution follows the poor' (Beck, 1999, p. 5). Following on from that, it is quite possible that if environmental risk involves pollution, then each risk of pollution, if left unchecked and not monitored, could result in a series of crises. If these risks caused the SARS outbreak they may also be the cause of the new scare of the 21st century, bird flu. These suggestions are certainly borne out by representations demonstrated by a recent article in *The Guardian Weekly* (March 31 – April 6 2006). The particular piece, 'Flying in the face of nature', by John Vidal concentrates on problems caused to humans by bovine spongiform encephalopathy

(BSE) and its human equivalent Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), H5N1 avian influenza virus, SARS, and other diseases that the writer maintains are crossing to humans because of environmental changes and the intensification of farming. Vidal uses as evidence information from US World Watch Institute, UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, and the Consortium for Conservation Medicine. By extension it could be said that, due to such incidents, possibilities exist of there being more crisis stories to be covered by the world media.

Another issue that faces the presentation of a crisis is that developed in an article in *The Walkley Magazine*, a bi-monthly publication of Australia's Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance. In the August/September, 2006 issue, Bob Connolly, international documentary maker, writes of a concept that begins by posing the statement that real life is an unpredictable arena, and it is difficult to record stories without compromise. Connolly suggests that to be able to record unfolding events without evidence of manipulation, the use of an American method called the 'crisis moment' format is very useful; the film-maker documents a specific *crisis*, so revealing character and providing a narrative structure (Connolly, 2006, p. 17). During the SARS crisis groups of people scientists, doctors, nurses, taxi drivers became part of the ongoing narrative of SARS. It is to their part in the ongoing drama, played out daily in *The Straits Times* and sometimes in *The Australian* that is so important in the arena of real life explanations and the dramatisation of what happened during the early months of 2003.

Finally, a narrative of a crisis could be that told by Churchill in *Their Finest Hour*, The Second World War Volume 2. He wrote:

The efficiency of a war Administration depends mainly upon whether decisions emanating from the highest approved authority are in fact strictly, faithfully, and punctually obeyed. This we achieved in Britain in this time of crisis owing to the intense fidelity, comprehension, and whole-hearted resolve of the War Cabinet upon the essential purpose to which we had devoted ourselves (Churchill, 2005, p. 20).

The point at issue here is that there is, or appears to be, a particular relationship between how a government, a corporation or any large organisation behaves and the methods used by those responsible for decision making, when a crisis point is reached. This is an important concern of the present study and a lot of attention will be given to how these methods are brought into play by stakeholders in the case study that will be presented.

Crisis journalism

An important concern of the present study is to place crisis journalism within a viable construct. If there were going to be global and regional conversations about crises such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), it would be necessary to deal with how these crises impact upon journalistic practices. Indeed, it would also be necessary to note how journalism itself connects with its larger social, political, economic, and cultural worlds.

It is quite possible to define ‘crisis journalism’ as the reporting of information about a state of affairs in which a decisive change for the worse is about to, or has occurred. But, it is also an important concern of this study to place ‘crisis journalism’, at

this point, within the orbit of Masterson's (1992) definition of 'what makes news news'. Crisis journalism should be applied to and used as a definer of the importance of the news value of a crisis, always bearing in mind that news values have worldwide applications.

We have, as far as crisis journalism is concerned, a constructed meaning that became for Singaporeans, as well as many other countries around the world, a shared understanding about how a serious health hazard was being reported to the rest of the world. This enabled the participants to interpret the world, in 2003, in roughly the same way (Hall, 1997, p.1). Concepts, ideas and feelings were represented in differing cultures in ways that were understood by people who lived in those areas most affected by SARS. Also, any arguments that happened within the affected areas could be represented as being linked to 'conflicts' that occurred between the medical profession, the government, and the public. On the other hand it is always as well to remember that these conflicts occurred in social contexts and may have had a structured impact on the way communication between the media, the government and the public happened. Messages, as was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter cannot be understood apart from the contexts of social life (Thompson, 1995, p. 11).

The reporting of a crisis anywhere in the world has certain elements in common with the reporting of other events. More than that, the word 'crisis' has been used to define and identify many serious situations including wars, riots, terrorism, illnesses, diseases, to name a few. In this thesis, it is used as a definer for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), as well as a qualifying adjective for 'journalism' where the two

words ‘crisis journalism’ are used to define a particular aspect of the way different situations and suspense are written about and reported. In fact, it is very difficult to find a complete definition of crisis journalism. The words appear in several places, but not really as an academic sub-section of either ‘crisis’ or of ‘journalism’. For example, the American Press Institute (founded by newspaper publishers in 1946) and the oldest centre devoted to the training and professional development of news industry and of journalism educators produced a handbook entitled *Crisis Journalism a Handbook for Media Response* in October 2001. The purpose of this handbook, according to the publisher, is to help journalists deal with the horrific attacks of 9/11, shortly after its occurrence. The publisher in the introduction suggested that it was their hope that the material will be helpful in the handling of major stories in the future (Watson, 2001, p.iii). There seems to have been an increase in the number of websites devoted to such areas as trauma reporting since the issue of *Crisis Journalism a Handbook for Media Response*, for example a website www.dartcenter.org/index.html covers areas such as ‘tips for covering the most difficult stories.’

Moving on, an example of how a crisis situation may be reported is covered by Singer and Endreny (1993), in their book *Reporting on Risk*. The book focuses on the way hazards are reported in the mass media and concentrates on the possible issues in risk reporting. The authors surveyed a wide variety of print and electronic media and their study observed hundreds of different hazards and the way they are presented to the general public. The book was comprehensive and also covered the fact that the media tended to report on a need to excite the public as well as to inform. Another researcher,

Clive Seale, concentrates his studies on how health matters are represented by the mass media, and the level of accuracy attained through these messages (Seale, 2002). Seale mentions that the media tends to make us aware of a heightened awareness of the risks and crises of life as it continues to provide information about dangers and news of this or that disaster or threat (Seale, 2002, p. 14). He also points out that with the decline of infectious disease as a major cause of illness and death in affluent countries, media stories tend to evoke images from myths of the past and that references to ‘plague’ are quite common (Seale, 2002, p. 80).

Another issue arising from the foregoing is that the particular meaning of ‘crisis journalism’ only has meaning within the discourse about it. For example as mentioned above, API used crisis journalism as an example of how media could/should report on a crisis; that it was about 9/11 is perhaps an easy way of saying that 9/11 was a crisis that had a discourse all of its own (Hall, 1997, p. 45). However, this does not obviate the need for the press to state quite clearly the policies the particular newspaper is to adhere to during the reporting of a crisis. The API handbook states that:

[I]t is the core responsibility of the media to provide coverage that is complete and accurate and that places events in meaningful current historical perspective (Winter, 2001, p. i).

The writers in the handbook go on to state that the handbook has in effect been drafted as a necessary series of checklists for a crisis story such as 9/11. Whilst the headings and sub-headings in the handbook could quite possibly have been composed to guide any journalist there were several aspects that presupposed that in a crisis there was a definite need for a newspaper to think through quite clearly how it was going to present the news

of a crisis to the reading public, which leads into the other aspect of crisis, its management.

Crisis Management

When crises occur they are usually defined in terms of events that affect the running of an organization or a country, and it was very evident that in the 2003 SARS epidemic in Singapore, much of the reporting concerned how the government went about tackling the public relations problems the disease caused. Roper (2002, p.1-2) presents crisis management as part of public relations with one of its functions being the management of problems and issues. Roper quotes Steven Fink and says that crises are situations where we run the risk of events escalating in intensity, falling under close media scrutiny or government scrutiny and perhaps reaching the point where events interfere with normal operations, jeopardize a country's image and affect the country's bottom line (Roper, 2002, p 15-16). Crisis situations are also characterised by surprise, high threat to important values, and a short term decision time (Roper, 2002, p. 10). As reported recently in *The West Australian*, 'crisis preparation is now an essential part of company management', (Carolyn Batt, March 31, 2007, p. 66)

The mediated communication that occurred during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome epidemic (SARS), particularly in Singapore, had a social impact upon the life of that city state; and during that trauma the media often commented about dangerous disruptions that caused many adverse impacts to impinge on the business life of a country

that has always admitted that the city state's business life, its hotels and shopping centres are the crux of its very life. It became clear that SARS had become a crisis as well as news, and the timeliness, clarity and interest of the articles became a reality. As a matter of fact, the adverse impact on travel and business around the world, particularly in Asia, was enormous. Not only were there regional problems, in the middle of the SARS crisis a problem arose in the Pasir Panjang Market, the largest wholesale vegetable market in Singapore. The market was closed for 10 days from April 19, 2003, and at the end of the closure period, the government decided to keep the market closed for another five days to check the health of the people who had been quarantined before allowing them back (WHO, 2006, p. 174.).

As well as regional trade and business problems, as *The Australian* newspaper reported on Wednesday 28, April, 2003, the start of SARS caused a severe downturn for the Australian airline Qantas. The airline carried 68,000 fewer passengers on overseas routes than one year ago (Creedy, 2003, p.23). Singapore Airlines had to ground nine planes and was looking to defer the delivery of aircraft until the crisis eased. The management of Singapore Airlines also asked cabin crew to take seven days unpaid leave every two months. Senior management took a pay cut of up to 27.5 % and the airline looked to cut pilots' wages as well (Creedy, 2003, p. 23).

The problems caused by the spread of SARS had serious repercussions for many other businesses in the Southeast Asian region and many other parts of the world. Not only that the war in Iraq and SARS were seen as the worst and most serious issue both

from a health perspective and for travellers and for the airlines (Korporaal, 2003, p.20); cities where airlines were affected included Bangkok, Denpasar, Seoul, Singapore, London, Taipei, and Los Angeles. In addition, there is no doubt that the growth potential of airlines around the world was seriously affected by the SARS crisis and economists could have been correct when they began to cut growth forecasts for airlines during 2003.

Single digit hotel occupancies and the shutting down of whole floors of international hotels in many cities throughout Asia, the lack of customers for international airlines were among many of the problems *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* covered during this crisis in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Emily Pettafor wrote in *The Australian* of June 5, 2003 that hoteliers faced a long road to recovery. Many senior executives in the hotel industry were commenting that they had never seen anything as debilitating for hotels as the SARS crisis, and as hotels shut down whole floors staff began to take unpaid leave just to keep their jobs (Pettafor, 2003, p. 10).

Other aspects of a crisis situation – post crisis

Shigeru Omi, Regional Director of Western Pacific Region of the World Health Organisation, wrote after the epidemic had ended that he believed SARS was the first emerging disease of the age of globalisation. If the disease had happened at a time before international travel SARS would have been localised and there would have been little or no dangers as far as international health was concerned (Omi, 2006 p.VIII).

There were certain items of interest that occurred during and after the disease had reached its zenith and then began to wind-down. The Western Pacific Region of the World Health Organisation set up a website that gave advice to countries' national health services about how to cope with the problems caused to public health systems caused by SARS. This website became a contact point for the media. WHO stated that never before had the media been so involved with a public health emergency (WHO, 2006, p. 246). Unfair attacks on the media did not happen, mainly due to the openness and forthrightness that became the policy of the World Health Organisation. However, it does seem that more needs to be done for the partnership between the media and WHO to become more productive. WHO suggests that avian flu and the tsunami point to the fact that serious attention should be given to more openness in relationships between them and the media (WHO, 2006, p. 247). Therefore, within the social interactions that occurred before and after the SARS epidemic, some acknowledgement may be necessary that a different discourse or episteme will arise at a later historical moment, supplanting the existing one, opening up a new discursive formation, and producing in its turn a new idea about health in the particular medical area that SARS is positioned (Hall, 1997, p. 46).

The SARS epidemic has been talked about, had television shows produced about it, been legislated for, studied, essay articles and books have been written about it. This being so, there has arisen around the medical and public aspects of SARS a discourse that indicates knowledge and a representation of what the word means at this time. A subject like SARS can only exist meaningfully within its own discourse (Hall, 1997, p. 45).

However, many serious policies, concepts and attitudes towards a crisis came to light during the SARS experience. These were made very evident by the many papers that have been written and/or presented in the post-SARS period. Most of these papers have been included in issues of *The Straits Times* (as well its online version *Straits Times Interactive*) and in Asian based periodicals covering such areas as communications, culture and the media. However, other aspects of the mediation of a crisis have evolved since the end of the SARS epidemic. It has been seen that it is possible to investigate and to write about further aspects of what happens when there is a health crisis. McCullagh (2006, p 32) writes that reports of the spread of SARS rocketed round the world even faster than the virus itself. It is evident from the many reports of SARS that panic, spread by gossip and panic mongers can prey on public nervousness and dubious web sites are often set-up to exemplify and highlight these unfortunate cases of the uses of the media to spread unnecessary concern among the public (McCullagh, 2006, p.32). It is through these post-SARS mediated criticisms and support of the Singapore approach that we get a full appreciation of how the press reported on SARS, day by day, week by week, and month by month.

SARS and Singapore

There were 238 cases of SARS in Singapore and 33 people died as a result of the disease. This was Singapore's worst experience of an outbreak of an infectious disease since the country became an independent nation in 1965. As recent articles have suggested, key methods of handling the crisis and in managing public fear and panic were

transparency and trust. This transparency and trust highlighted the very importance of this method of handling the crisis (WHO, 2006, p. 244).

It has often been said that the people of Singapore want results; they want the government to concentrate on improving the standard of living for the average person, and they want a safe and secure society that will enable their children to grow up in comfort with a sense of freedom from the ravages of a developing society (George, 2000: 16). George also quotes the incumbent Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, who was reported to have said to a group of young Singaporeans:

At the most fundamental level, the strategic challenges facing Singapore have not changed - to make a living for ourselves, to ensure the security of our homes and families, to build ourselves a better future in an uncertain world (George, 2000, p. 16).

Specific events such as SARS are normally looked upon as being crises and it is obvious that a crisis, such as SARS, would not help in creating the much-vaunted safe and secure environment. The Singapore government treated the event as worthy of urgent attention and used crisis management techniques to help the state out of a very difficult situation. If the crisis lasted too long it would affect the highly ambitious and successful state whose population according to Barr (2000) are always living in fear of catastrophe. Barr drives home the point that there is a permanent sense of crisis [in Singapore]. ‘...Change, construction, urgency are the keywords’ (Barr, 2000, p. 237). If, then, crisis is what Singaporeans thrive on, SARS would be right up their alley, and this is what The World Health Organisation (WHO), Western Pacific Region, quoted Singapore as being,

a positive example of transparency and of a well-planned response that to some extent militated against great damage to its economy. Strong measures were taken against the spread of the disease. Through the assistance of *The Straits Times* and other media outlets a well-planned campaign to enlist the help and assistance of the general public resulted in a model of public health epidemic control (WHO, 2006, p. 245). The crisis was well-reported by the media and the government made sure that the public were aware of what was happening.

But, it all depends what is meant by a crisis and how a crisis such as SARS is, or was, represented by governments and the media. Stuart Hall has defined representation as being the relationships that exist between things, concepts, and signs that are fundamental to the production of meaning in language and other forms of communications such as images and stories (Hall, 1997, p.16). The link between communication, images and stories is what has become known as representation. Therefore, it could be said that the communication of news, on SARS, to the media, and the images these stories represented could be different in different countries. To a certain extent, this would depend upon how various governments and the media wished to have the images and the stories represented to the various readers.

The discourse about SARS is exemplified when we note that Lee Hui Cheh, wrote in *The Straits Times Interactive* on December 8, 2005 that Singapore had joined a network that had been set up by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to fight outbreaks of diseases. Members of the global network and government ministers all said that it was

in the interest of Singapore to be involved in the network and thus gain experience and a better understanding of how other countries and the World Health Organisation (WHO) work. This other ‘spin-off’ from SARS should help improve the knowledge and the skills of people involved in health care as they share ideas and values about how they will be able to perhaps prevent future crisis situations. Any developments that will help a nation fight dangerous health problems has great advantages for the region and for the world at large.

Notwithstanding all this, the fact that SARS had such a serious effect on the cultural and business life of Singapore brings to mind the fact that the cultural life of any nation is organised by meanings. The meaning of SARS may have had different connotations in other nations. For example, when we incorporate or construct ideas about a crisis such as SARS within a national culture we speak about the event in a language that provides a model of how the culture and the representation work. Thus we could have a model of how the discourse of SARS (a cluster of ideas, images, and practices) which provide ways of talking about and forming ideas about the conduct associated with this particular subject that occurred in Singapore when the SARS virus took hold. The virus took hold, the media began recording and reporting the disease, and the recording and reporting became the SARS discourse (Hall, 1997, p. 6).

Thus, the communication of a crisis should, according to Carey, try to maintain society’s shared beliefs by reporting the events as community’s fight against risks that are occurring and increasing day-by-day, hour-by-hour (Carey, 1992, p. 18). The

investigation of the way *The Straits Times* reported the SARS crisis, which is examined in the research design chapter of this thesis, endeavours to explain how a newspaper writes about what society does, and how a society acts to cope with a crisis through its (the newspaper's) cultural, social and political assessment of what happens in the city-state. To exemplify the point, Cherian George says that:

Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP have always believed that what people want most from their government is an environment in which they can pursue prosaic material comforts, rather than live up to high-minded political principles for their own sake. Democracy is a means to an end, and that end is a high level of material security for Singaporeans (George, 2000, p. 17).

Bearing in mind that Singapore as a polity is now involved with international trade and tourism on a vast scale – with the entire infrastructure that involves for the business life of Singapore it is easy to see there would be serious problems for Singapore should there be too long a period when travel and tourism were curtailed. Everything in Singapore is often, or has a tendency to relate to, economics. Therefore, the media must try to help in the dissemination of what effect SARS had on Singapore, particularly in the area of its economics during the crisis.

As well as being extremely well covered by the media, SARS caused the Singapore Government to work at a frenetic pace to contain and communicate to the public the disease and its ramifications. To do this the government used crisis response techniques that have already been suggested in the short discussion of crisis management above. Linked to this is another issue: that the outbreak of SARS was the most serious test for China's new leadership ability to deal with a crisis. In fact the headline: "China

and SARS: The Crisis and its Effects on Politics and the Economy”, makes the point that there is more to a health crisis than just the practical applications of public health issues and rules and regulations. Singapore certainly had a serious test of its methods of crisis handling, but different results obtained as a result of its attempts at crisis management that put it ahead of China’s attempts. Several other comments have been made concerning the way SARS, the disease, was tackled by various governmental agencies. However, the most enlightening article appeared in a 2003 issue of *The Straits Times Interactive* that quoted then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong as he outlined the nation’s response to the SARS crisis:

‘ [W]ith changes in habits, Singaporeans can continue to make a living, restore confidence and get the country back to normal again. The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a grave threat to Singapore. It has taken a heavy toll on our public health, our economy and our society (*The Straits Times Interactive June, 2003*).

No one could be in any doubt that the Singapore Government knew they had a crisis on their hands and that the media was going to be allowed to play its full part in the reporting of the events and the steps being taken to fight the disease. In fact *The Straits Times* reported in great detail about: public health issues, protection and monitoring of the healthy, prevention of fresh cases, the impact of SARS on the economy, relief measures to help those affected, support for health-care workers, etc. In effect, as WHO has quoted on many occasions since the epidemic, Singapore set a very positive example for tackling a crisis such as SARS. The government took strong measures to contain the threat, they did not assume that the crisis would quickly burn itself out, and they (the government) installed an unprecedented public health effort which included a well-

planned campaign to enlist the help of the public; a twenty first century model for epidemic control (WHO, 2006, p. 245). These implications for Singapore mean, more than anything else, that the city-state has made transparency one of its watchwords for the government of a modern Southeast Asian state of the 21st century.

Nevertheless, it has been said that technology may also make the fight against SARS different from other previous epidemics. It seems that technology has allowed researchers to collaborate differently on the necessary ways and means that public health methods of disease control need to be communicated to the various health departments in countries that may be affected. The internet has made such quick communication easy, and this was not possible a few years ago. Also, technology has allowed the news about the spread of SARS and its effects to be made known to a great many people much faster than had previously been possible (WHO. 2006, p. VIII).

In any nation, at the time of a crisis such as SARS, economic ambitions and a strong economy, political control, and investment take a back seat, although they are still at or near the forefront of a government's thoughts and ambitions. Governments tend to get on with the control of public health matters and making sure the media do not get too carried away with the culture of fear and its news values. Governments will also be concerned about the public perception of significant health risks and what they can do to alleviate public fear about 'what can happen to me and my family'.

Conclusion

As far as the SARS outbreak in Australia was concerned, the country reported a total of 6 cases of the disease. There were no deaths. It is clear from the many comments made about the disease since 2003 that the defeat of SARS in Singapore directly protected Australia (Latif, 2005). The Australian media reported extensively on the disease and much coverage was given to the way different countries had tackled the crisis and what the results of the transparency, and risk communications and the Singapore experience. Bearing all that in mind, the main fear in Australia was that the disease would spread to the continent. However, it obviously did not and *The Australian* gave ample coverage to what was happening to other countries in the Asia-Pacific Region and what affect the spread of SARS was having on business affairs in Australia as well as in other countries in the region.

It is quite possible that if there had been no Iraq war, SARS would have received more media space. However, there are differences between the way war and SARS has been reported in the main because of the differences in the historical and global discourse surrounding the two events. The Iraq war received more media coverage; the stories are told across more 'borders' than the SARS stories were told. In the Iraq case, more people have been affected by the circumstances of the way the war has been conducted. There are also potential occasions where misinformation becomes as important as the correct information. The media has tended to concentrate on the war in Iraq and on global terror. Thus in the early years of the 21st century, the world has seen crisis represented by:

fighting terror; car bombs being exploded in busy shopping centres, and on buses and trains, suicide bombers exploding bombs in the same places; and the management of terror. As well as a global health scare in the form of SARS.

This chapter has defined crisis, journalism and crisis journalism. It has discussed where crisis journalism sits within the continuing expansion and development of major theoretical frameworks used to analyse and explain the mediation and the social consequences of a crisis. It has also endeavoured to set the scene as far as the reporting of news about a health crisis in the Asia-Pacific Region and emphasizes that the reporting of SARS in two of the region's leading broadsheets can be defined as a form of crisis journalism that takes into account the severity and the seriousness of the trauma brought on by the outbreak of this disease and the social consequences for the people involved with and in the crisis.

The next chapter outlines what is really meant by a national daily newspaper, a nation and a national identity with a view to coming to terms with an eventual content analysis of two of Asia-Pacific's most informative broadsheets.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATIONAL MIND AND THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

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Introduction

One of the more important observations of Chapter 1 was that crisis journalism can be about many risk situations in any part of the world. It is also prominent in the reporting of events that happen in the developing and the developed world. For this reason it is important to understand what a crisis is, how it is related to journalism, to the production of daily newspapers and to the reporting of risks. Furthermore it is necessary to relate this to the mind of a nation and the effect this concept has on the production of a national daily.

This chapter develops the concept of the word ‘news’ in an historical and modern perspective. The concept is always of interest to the public and the chapter contains explanations of some earlier meanings of the word and what it has come to represent in the early part of the 21st Century. Secondly, the national newspaper and the formation of what might be referred to as the ‘national mind’ are discussed and the chapter looks to achieve its objective by analysing what is meant by a national newspaper and the national mind and describes in some detail the history of four national newspapers in differing parts of the world and presents some views on how the national newspaper has developed

from its early beginnings. Lastly, the chapter aims to define the place two national newspapers have in the Asia-Pacific region and particularly how they report on a crisis.

The point of view is argued as to how *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* (see Appendix E) have developed their space in the media's position within a culture, and the public and the political situation of the countries to which they belong. Moving on from here, it will be necessary to define and relate crisis journalism, the national mind and the nation to the research methodology and results discussed and analysed in Chapter 3.

The perspective presented here is that every state, every country, every nation needs a narrative; a story, long or short, about where they came from, where they are going at a particular point in time and where they may be in the future. This chapter evaluates the newspaper's role in telling the stories of the metaphysical relationships that exist between a nation's narratives, and the national mind. To clarify what and how a daily newspaper first came into being, the thesis looks at definitions that have come to outline the meanings of the daily 'prototypes' that serve to define the growth of the newspaper in the modern world. A newspaper is not a single edition; it is a process, a moving film rather than a still photograph (Walker, 1982, p. 28).

This chapter also considers cases where the media may use the coverage of a crisis that affects a country in a direct or a serious way. To do this the chapter examines the way print media report on crises that can be said to affect a country's very livelihood. According to Anthony Smith, the newspaper has acquired an important role as the major link through which innumerable chains of information pass, providing for many people information taken from countless different parts of the nation and the world (Smith, 1979, p. 13).

Some historical perspectives

In a study aimed at investigating the history of news, Stephens suggested that news could be defined as: 'new information about a subject of some public interest that is shared with some portion of the public' (Stephens, 1988, p. 9). He goes on to remind readers that the term refers, in fact, to 'what is on society's mind'. Has a disease occurred? Has anyone been hurt? So, before exploring several issues in the history of the newspaper that are relevant to its place in the modern world some of the salient facts are discussed concerning 'news' as a concept.

The difficulties that have existed in defining precisely what a news account is go back more than 500 years. Allan suggests that it was during the fifteenth century that the English word 'news' largely replaced 'tidings' and assumed the meaning well known to us today (Allan, 1999, p. 8). This is not to say that the concept of news was not already in public use. The point needs to be made that the word has its origins in the development of language in oral groups many thousands of years ago. Oral news could be in the form of gossip, sermons, ballads, or tales and was a very effective form of communication (Allan,

1999, p. 8). Stephens also suggests that Rome developed writing as a medium of choice for relating news over distances (Stephens, 1988, p. 62). There are many reported examples of news and Stephens suggests that the *acta durna populi Romani* (the daily transactions of the Roman people) were published daily; copied by hand and sold (Stephens, 1988, p. 64). It is possible that the Romans published these sheets for almost 280 years from 27 B.C. to 476 A.D. and that news originally written in the *acta* flowed out of Rome along sea routes and paved roads that the Romans built in every part of the world they were able to conquer. It is also assumed that production of news helped create the stability and power of the Roman Empire, as well as the reverse, that the power and stability achieved by the Roman Empire helped to facilitate the production of a news system (Stephens, 1988, p. 67). It would be a long time before news flowed so easily again in the Western world.

The possibility may also exist that the word 'news' originated as a part of the purpose and method by which a certain person observed and contemplated what was happening at a certain place, at a certain time and in a particular setting. The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology describes 'news' as an equivalent word to 'newes', or new things as used before 1382. In the Wycliffe Bible, 'news' is identified as the plural of the earlier 'new'. A definition, *Newe* (new thing, appeared about 1200) in *Ancrene Riwe* (Barnhart Dictionary, p. 703). *Ancrene Riwe* was a thirteenth century treatise about the Christian life and contemplation and can be translated as "*A Guide for Anchoresses*". In the Middle Ages, an anchoress was a woman who lived in a small sealed room inside a church; she would have visual access to the Sanctuary and to Holy Communion and she was rather a mystical and wise person, steeped in prayer. She had the opportunity to

observe what was happening, in a religious sense at all times, and this is perhaps an interesting concept concerning the history and development of the word 'news' as a concept that included observation. The word 'news' is now being used in the sense of a ritual and also as a mode of message transmission. Allan considered that news had several links with what was happening in the world of media (Allan, 1999, p. 16.), and developing this view we note that the term 'news values' and the concept of 'news as a commodity' entered the world of what Anderson called the development of print-capitalism with the advent of the newspaper at the end of the 19th century (Allan, 1999, p. 16).

By the year 1620, Amsterdam had become a centre of a large and expanding trade in news (Thompson, 1995, p.66), and the origins of today's newspapers are usually traced to the early years of the seventeenth century. Weekly journals were often produced in many European cities about that time and in London the early corantos, mainly concerned with foreign news, began to appear and before long more local news items were reported. Strict control of the press in England began to weaken around 1640. However, it is to the United States of America we must turn for the beginnings of the use of 'daily newspaper' as a regular describer of what has become as familiar as the palms of our hands. The Oxford Dictionary describes 'daily newspaper' as originating in the U.S. and quotes the following example of its use: in 1823, D. Webster was quoted as saying: 'I am glad to see that you publish, in the Daily [the *Boston Daily Advertiser*], your narrative' (Oxford, Vol. IV Creel-Duzepere, p 217).

With reference to the use of the word ‘daily’ and the development of the newspaper as a regular reporting mechanism through which a relationship is set up between reader, printer, and the author of the information, Anthony Smith sets up four distinct stages through which news publishing passed before it reached the regularity and frequency of publication and the variety of content that is expected of a contemporary newspaper. The first stage was the publication of a single story, usually that which occurred long after the event. The second stage consisted of a long continuous series of relations published in the form of a ‘coranto’. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1980, p. 922), defines the word ‘coranto’, in its various spellings that existed in many countries in the 17th century, as ‘a letter or paper containing public news; a gazette, news-letter, or newspaper.’ The third stage in the evolution consisted of a form known as a ‘diurnal’ which provided a weekly account of the occurrences of several days. The fourth and final stage was the ‘mercury’, which like the others appeared as a book, with a title page and an imprint. Alongside this form there appeared a publication called the ‘intelligencer’ that began to cover a wider variety of subject matter (Smith, 1979, p. 12).

It was not until the 18th century in Europe and North America that the creation of the newspaper in its complete form came about with the daily presentation of miscellaneous content. Smith does say that it is important to realise that early news publication began by reporting events across vast geographical areas. It is easy to see that this planted in the minds of Europeans and the individual literate citizen the picture of a world of public events that he could never see for himself (Smith, 1979 p. 13). Although the development of the newspaper in the Asia-Pacific Region may have been an

exception, it bears out a general rule that newspapers developed interconnectedly across the world, relying for their development on the economic and political conditions in Europe. The needs of trade and business requirements forced the medium into one country after another (Smith, 1979 p. 14), as can be seen from the summary of developments of the national dailies described later in this chapter.

Many national dailies were created in the early and middle years of the nineteenth century. This growth of a mass-market grew as a result of factors such as: the cutting of stamp taxes, great advances in printing technology, and a reduction in the cost of newsprint (Craig, 2004, p.71). Literacy levels also rose, and a public school system was established in the USA and elementary education was introduced in Great Britain in 1870. Bearing this in mind, this chapter discusses summarily the following national or region-based dailies: *The Globe and Mail* (published in Toronto, Canada), *The Scotsman* (published in Edinburgh, Scotland), *The Hindu* (published in Chennai, Southern India), and *The New Straits Times* (published in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). This will enable the chapter to define what a national daily newspaper is and crystallize how, in 2003, two representatives of the host of national dailies that inhabit the world's media empires were on hand to report on the SARS crisis.

According to the descriptions given, the four broadsheets considered below have a long and distinguished history and are regular innovators in the media world of the 21st century. London saw its first daily paper in 1702 that was founded to exploit the increasing flow of news from France and by the middle of the century there were five

London dailies, each with an average circulation of 1500 (Smith, 1979, p. 54). It is fitting to note that the patterns of the development of the English press were imitated by the new newspaper industries in the Anglo-Saxon and imperial world. Australian newspapers, *The Sydney Gazette* and the *New South Wales Advertiser* were founded in 1803, and many newspapers began to see the light of day from the early part of the 19th century as can be seen from the four examples discussed below.

Firstly, *The Globe and Mail* has had a long and distinguished history but the newspaper did not rest on its laurels as it entered a new century. Indeed, the past few years have been among the most eventful in the history of *The Globe*, which began publishing in Toronto during the 1840s. Like many others, *The Globe and Mail* was first published in the mid 19th century and has continued since that time. It is not only an example of a national daily newspaper; it is one of the main daily newspapers of the Commonwealth of Canada. It is a part of the history of the development of national dailies that occurred during the 19th century (Bell Globemedia Publishing Inc. 2007)

Secondly, *The Scotsman*, which began life as a compact newspaper on Burns' Night, 25 January 1817, has regularly been an innovator. In 1928, it became the first newspaper to telegraph pictures from the European Continent. In 1962, *The Scotsman* scored another first by producing a separate Saturday magazine. It became the first paper to sell directly through retail agents in 1865 and the first to telegraph pictures from the Continent of Europe in 1928. It became part of the Thomson Organisation in 1963 and the whole company was sold to Ellerman Investment in 1995. In 2003 the 50,000th

edition was published (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2003 Edition 15 Vol 10 p 563 Micropedia).

Thirdly, the Indian newspaper, *The Hindu* started in 1878 as a weekly, became a daily in 1889 and from then on has been steadily growing to a current circulation of over 900,000 copies. *The Hindu's* independent editorial stance and its reliable and balanced presentation of the news have over the years, won for it the serious attention and regard of the people who matter in India and abroad. *The Hindu* has grown steadily and in 2004 with its readership of over 3 million, both in India and abroad, also became one of the first Indian newspapers to offer an online edition. It enjoys considerable popularity, especially in South India and stands for a balanced presentation of the news. *The Hindu* is a secular newspaper, and the editorials are known to be critical of the many Indian political parties and the activities of non-governmental organisation (The Encyclopedia Britannica 2003 Edition 15 Vol. 5 p. 934 Micropedia) (Accessed May 11 2007).

The fourth and the last example of a modern national daily, *The New Straits Times*, was established in July 15, 1845, making it the oldest English-language newspaper in the Southeast Asian region. Originally known as *The Straits Times*, its name was derived from the Straits of Malacca, a busy shipping lane since the 19th century. The following details of its history are taken from the online edition.

Established in 1845, The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad (affectionately known as NSTP) is Malaysia's oldest and largest newspaper publisher and is a publicly listed company with a head office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (www.nst.com.my) (accessed May 11 2007).

Apart from the above, it is worth mentioning that *The New Straits Times* has, or did have very close relations with *The Straits Times*. After World War II and the development of Malaysia and Singapore as separate nation states, the original Straits Times Press Limited rationalised and became two separate publishing houses, The Straits Times Press Singapore Limited and The Straits Times Press (Malaya) Ltd. Since that time, the two papers have published separately as *The Straits Times* and *The New Straits Times*, the former being published in Singapore and the latter in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Whilst the beginnings of the two, now separate, publishing houses were founded by the same person, Catchik Moses in 1845, they have different objectives and are national dailies of two separate nation-states.

The national mind and the national newspaper

More than forty years ago, well-known playwright, Arthur Miller was quoted as saying: ‘A good newspaper, I suppose is a nation talking to itself’ (In the section on The Press, Number 121 in Collins Dictionary of Literary Quotations Arthur Miller in *The Observer* 26 Nov. 1961). However, Benedict Anderson does propose in his book, *Imagined Communities*, where he reflects on the origin and the spread of nationalism, that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded nationalism – religious communities and dynastic realms (Anderson, 1991, p.12). They declined slowly and very unevenly and a search began for something to replace them, a link to paternity, power and time. Anderson says that the link provided by the development of print-capitalism made it possible for many people to think about themselves in new ways

(Anderson, 1991, p.36). There are many archetypes that are replicated or represented in the narratives of the nation (Craig, 2004, p. 62). Life is given to this construct (nation) through displays of national identity and nationalism. The view also presented here is that it may be difficult to find anything that has contributed more to this reproduction of a sense of place, a representation of particular locales, a representation of peoples, and by extension a national mind than the newspaper. Craig makes the point that the newspaper is ideally suitable to the production of a nation through its common concern with daily life and its ability to capture the myths of the world's run-of-the-mill existence (Craig, 2004, p 72).

The national mind conjures up the concept of a collective unconscious. The word 'collective' when used as the sum of the memories of people who have gone before is, according to Jungian analytical psychology, known separately as a collection of archetypes. In addition to a personal unconscious that includes memories, wishes and fantasies, Jung postulated that a collective unconscious did really exist which includes archetypal national and universal memories. 'There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life', said Jung (1959, p. 48). It may be as well to point out here that an assumption is being made that there has never been much mention, in academic writings, of the national mind. We need to turn to Jung's thesis of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1959, p. 43) to get a true reflective picture of how the national mind is represented within the constructs of the nations of the 21st century. Fordham has suggested that it is essential there be some knowledge and experience of the collective unconscious if we are to understand forces that are ever present that have moved

hundreds of people to act and behave in uncivilized and terrifying ways (Fordham, 1966, p. 118).

Turning at this point to the development of the newspaper, most scholars agree that the printing press was invented in the 1450s by Joseph Gutenberg, but it was nearly two hundred years after this before it was possible to recognize a prototype newspaper and distinguish it from the handbills, pamphlets and newsletters that inhabited the communications industry in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. As discussed by Craig (2004, p. 72), the newspaper developed from these vehicles of local news and commercial events.

The national daily newspaper is a commodity that has developed from a simple broadsheet to what in many countries is part of a media empire that presents daily news, in print form, extended weekend formats, colour supplements, advertising material, art sections and a complete coverage of worldwide sporting events (see Appendix 5 for a breakdown of the way *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* breakdown their daily presentations). Newspapers now also present news via the Internet and are at the cutting edge of computer mediated communication technology (CML). Media conglomerates that have been spawned by the many takeovers of newsprint companies have become very powerful contributors to the business world. They vie with governments and political parties of all persuasions for a say in what happens and what is reported in democratic and autocratic nations that have risen from the remnants of European nation building. The newspaper as a cultural product has a fairly profound meaning. The effectiveness or the convention of a national newspaper is that we find stories about

various aspects of the world's populations on its front page. The events have happened independently of each other and are included as part of the ongoing daily saga of marketing news in the capitalist world of today. The obsolescence of the newspaper on the day after its publication only seeks to emphasise the mass-produced nature of that commodity (Anderson, 1991, p. 34-35). The role of this commodity called a 'newspaper' has placed it at the centre of the national psyche, and newspapers identify many of the aspects of the national focus on national issues that happen each day.

There have been rival entities vying for the important position of *the* national institution that would inform the nation about national issues. The Australian Broadcasting Commission was formed in 1932 to educate inform, entertain, and inspire the nation; *The Australian's* masthead includes an additional line everyday that lets the readers know that the newspaper is there to *keep the nation informed*, on July 21, 2007 this additional line changed to *The Heart of the Nation* (accessed October 13, 2007: <http://www.conterpunch.org/neville07242007.html>). Yet, recently articles have been appearing that are about newspapers operating in an environment that is in tumult. As recently as August 2006, *The Economist* published a leader article that opined that the most useful bit of the media is disappearing. The article implied that newspapers were now an endangered species and that Britons between the ages of 15-24 spend 30% less time reading newspapers (*The Economist*, August, 2006, p. 9). The article said that although newspapers were not yet shutting down in large numbers, it was only a matter of time before that happened. The newspapers that have become more or less household names over the years, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Wall Street Journal* would still last, although they would be much more expensive. Bloggers, armchair

journalists and citizen journalists would take over the journalists' roles and non-profit local newspapers would be the way news was taken to the public.

However, the Australian columnist Mark Day wrote, quoting Gavin O'Reilly, president of the World Association of Newspapers and Chief Operating Officer of Independent News and Media:

We should remember that 439 million people worldwide buy a newspaper every day. Global newspaper circulation sales (paid-for titles) increased by 0.56 per cent in 2005 and by no less than 6 per cent over the past five years. We are the world's second largest advertising medium (30.2 per cent), exceeding the combined spend on radio, outdoor, cinema, magazines and the internet. In the past five years, more than \$8 billion has been invested in newspaper technology (Day, 16 Nov, 2006).

Opinions differ and *The Independent* has recently been very optimistic about the newspaper industry, as optimistic as *The Economist* was pessimistic. As Day reported:

Television and radio can always be first to report events or show history being made, but overwhelmingly it is newspaper reporting that unearths information and sheds light on the workings of our societies. The daily news agenda is set by newspapers, the result of a huge investment in journalism (Day, 2006).

Breaking news is still the most exciting part of reading the daily newspaper and the print version still has the edge as far as this part of news casting is concerned. There is no reason to believe that the newspaper as we know it will disappear any time soon. The daily news in print form will be with us for some time to come (Day, 2006).

The nation and a national identity

Mercer (1992) believes that the newspaper is the ideal format and well suited to represent the nation. The concentration of news of everyday life captures the main

rhythms and movements of the daily happenings that make the nation a vibrant force in the modern world (Mercer, 1992, p. 29). This section of the study examines the nature of a 'nation' and 'national identity' in the early part of the 21st century, and identifies how the terms nation and a national identity relate to the world of newspapers, their production and their representation of a crisis. It will also be necessary to look in some detail at the word 'state' and its relevance to the way the world defines such terms as nation or a nation-state in the 21st century. This is why the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) is so crucial in the history of international political relations. This important treaty formed the basis for the modern international system of independent nation-states. In fact, it marked the beginning of an international community of law between sovereign states of equal legal standing, guaranteeing each other their independence and the right of their peoples to political self-determination. The two most innovative principles being proclaimed were sovereignty and equality among nations. They were truly political and legal innovations at the time. After the Peace of Westphalia, the state came into its own and from that time, countries such as Germany, France, Holland and Great Britain, as independent entities, made efforts to or went through the process of trying to 'civilise' the rest of the world. After World War II there were changes, and from the late 1950s onwards, as the colonies one after another gained their freedom and became nation states themselves, the number of nation states began to increase in number (Trudeau –Zywiec, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 15, 2003).

Since Westphalia, definitions of national sovereignty have shifted and the system has its limits. Some of the vital interests and the transfer of nation-state sovereign rights were transferred to supranational European institutions. Other opinions have clustered

around the belief that globalisation is bringing about an evolution of the international system that will surpass the Westphalian system. This may be explained by the fact that after the Peace Treaty at the end of World War I, Woodrow Wilson made national self-determination part of the Fourteen Points for peace, thus establishing it as central to a new conception of legitimate sovereignty. These resulted in a modern system of international relations, in which a map of the world became a partitioning of the world into upwards of 180 sovereign nations, with compact territories and borders that were well-defined, national flags, constitutions, passports, laws, languages and currencies, seats at the United Nations and 'sovereignty' (Taylor, 1998, p.188).

Further comments have been made about the nation by Anderson who suggests nations are imagined political communities, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). He identifies three reasons for defining a nation in that particular way: the members of the smallest nation never know a lot of their fellow members, yet in their minds live an image of their communion; the nation is limited because even the largest of them has finite boundaries, and is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution and that period was beginning to destroy divine and hierarchical realms. Finally, it is imagined as a community because the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship despite inequality and exploitation that may occur within the nation's boundaries (Anderson, 1991, p. 7).

However, Anderson has also maintained that what in effect made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a

system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity (Anderson, 1991, p. 43). It has been since then that capitalism has created reading publics that demand their newspapers in the vernacular. It is to these publics and to capitalism that we must ascribe the reasons for the successes of the multi-national capitalist organizations that own the national dailies we described in the introduction to this chapter (Anderson, 1991, p. 43). From this we realise that the historical rise of the nation state has resulted in the formation of a national identity that is represented by symbols, narratives and myths that go to make up what can be identified as the national mind (Craig, 2004, p.177). National identity and the national mind conjure up a concept of a collective type of behaviour that could express the meanings and the values of the publics that reside in a nation.

The next sections of the thesis discuss the approach that two national broadsheets took to the reporting of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) during the early months of 2003 and places the approaches within the context of media production in the nations involved.

Singapore: The Straits Times

This part of the chapter relates how *The Straits Times* founded in 1845 as a weekly paper, became one of the earlier forms of capitalist enterprises in Singapore and Southeast Asian region. It began life at approximately the same time as the earlier examples of national dailies. An important part of the media industry in Singapore and one of the Asia-Pacific's oldest English-language daily newspapers, it is the flagship publication of the publicly listed Singapore Press Holdings Group. In November 1845,

publication increased to twice a week, and in December 1845 a monthly eight page 'overland edition' with news from the Straits of Malacca and from China was included in the circulation. It was recognised at the time that:

Singapore needed a journal, which was "especially devoted to the interests of commerce, a vehicle of mercantile information and a defender of free trade principles" (Turnbull, 1995, p. 19).

At that time, 'free trade' was essential to a 'national' Singapore, and *The Companion to British History* (1995, p.320) lately has defined 'free trade' as a 19th-century reaction against mercantilism. Adam Smith had argued that the removal of trade restrictions between nations would encourage the exploitation of natural advantages and result in an efficient division of labour and world peace. After the East India Company lost its trade monopoly in the Far East after 1833, Singapore prospered.

Latterly, comments by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong indicate that the wealthy but natural resource starved nations 'cannot eat the disk drives' continually manufactured by the electronic industry. As Lee pointed out, Singapore is a small country that depends upon international trade to survive as a nation. Its trade is more than three times its domestic product. Many Singapore politicians have pointed out that without foreign trade the country would not survive. As was recently mentioned Singapore cannot plant its own vegetables and grow its own rice, and since Singapore has signed numerous free trade agreements the city state is insuring its survival as a nation (Business Report, 2006, p. 2 of 5).

However, at this point in the narrative it is important to point out that *The Straits Times* began life as a part of that strong colonial base that arose out of the patterns of the English press that were stamped on new newspaper industries throughout the Anglo-Saxon world during the early and middle years of the 19th Century. Although in India the foundations of the press had been laid as early as the 1780s by James Hickey's Bengal Gazette (Smith, 1979, p.130).

The *Straits Times* has been a media icon since its earliest beginnings. However, since the PAP came into power in 1957, it sought to 'control' the content of newspapers by placing restrictive policies on the broad media. Therefore, it is important to explain the position of *The Straits Times* enjoys within the Southeast Asian region. It has become more than the type of national daily newspaper described in the introduction to this chapter. According to Seow (1998) the People's Action Party (PAP) has always had an uneasy relationship with, and has eventually subjugated the print media. Press laws were inherited from the British and required all newspapers to be licensed, which can be revoked at any time. There is an Official Secrets Act that deters journalists from being on the receiving end of leaks and the libel laws are pretty severe and extreme care is needed with any information gleaned from sources (George, 2000, p.71). The Singapore Government inherited, from the colonial British, the Printing Press Ordinance that had been law since 1920. A newspaper in this case was defined as any sheet of paper printed or published periodically in the Colony which contains public news or comments on public news. Amendments to this ordinance were made in 1930 so that the license was to expire at the end of each calendar year. In 1939 further amendments included the

enlargement of the definition of a newspaper and a newspaper publishing license was required in addition to a printing permit (Seow, 1998, p.10). After the PAP gained power in 1959, amendments to the Printing Presses Ordinance continued apace, making for an uneasy relationship between the Prime Minister at that time, Lee Kuan Yew, and the print media (see Appendix B). The power held by the media seemed to be too much for Lee who claimed that the people who controlled *The Straits Times* represent British interests through owning management shares (Seow, 1998, p. 14).

However, there is a law, *The Newspaper and Printing Presses Act* passed in 1974 that empowers the government to determine the composition of a newspaper's board of directors. Newspapers are publicly listed and their shares divided into management and ordinary shares. The government can select who holds management shares (George, 2000, p. 74), and can exert a lot of control over *The Straits Times*. The government does not need to place people in the boardroom and its control of the press is almost absolute – even though the newspapers, *The Straits Times* and its stable mates, remain staffed and manned by professional journalists.

The paper has nine bureaus in Asia and a worldwide network of other contributors, quite an advance on the way it was organized more than 100 years ago. The newspaper is leading the way in the reporting of important news in Southeast Asian region and as mentioned earlier is a part of Singapore Press Holdings (see Appendix 1) that publishes 14 newspapers and about 80 periodicals. Singapore Press Holdings also provides Internet portal services with online news and e-commerce facilities through its

Internet arm, the SPH Internet Business Unit. It operates two radio stations, Radio 100.3 FM in Chinese and Radio 91.3 FM in English, under a 70%-owned joint venture company, Union Works with NTUC Media. SPH also maintains a presence in the free-to-air television business through a 20 per cent share in MediaCorp TV Holdings Pte Ltd, which operates channels 5, 8, U and TV Mobile. As Turnbull wrote:

Today, *The Straits Times* is part of Singapore Press Holdings, a leading publishing and printing group in Southeast Asia. It was incorporated in August 1984 from a merger of major newspaper groups in Singapore. In August 1988, Times Publishing Ltd., which was part of the original merger in 1984, was separated from the group. The activities of Times Publishing, which included commercial printing of books and print works, was viewed as incompatible with that of the Singapore Press Holdings Group (Turnbull, 1995, p. 55).

So, Singapore's leading English-language newspaper, *The Straits Times*, has been an important part of the city-state's media development and one of its most enduring historical influences. It has also stayed as one of the Asia-Pacific region's most professional news outlets and in the first decade of the 21st century was at the forefront of reporting a health crisis; Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). With regard to one of the world's major crises of the earlier part of the 21st century *The Straits Times* became a major actor and reported extensively on this health risk, and in effect continued to be an integral part of the national mind of Singapore.

Two similar themes appear within any discussion of the Singapore media - one that 'the media are allowed to flourish as long as they present no challenge to the government...' (Merrill, 1995, p. 79). The second theme (and really the same basic idea) says that it has been documented quite consistently that the People's Action Party (PAP)

uses its power to prevent reporting that is critical of the government. Merrill refers to this when he writes about governments using their power openly to prevent critical reporting or embarrassing disclosures:

A good example of the first situation is Singapore, where, despite unparalleled economic growth and prosperity, the government is openly intolerant of critical reporting from either the domestic or the foreign media (Merrill 1995, p 67).

The international media also receive a certain amount of intimidation if they become too critical of government. Bokhorst-Heng, when writing about newspapers in Singapore, argues that the government seeks to protect itself against foreign influence. The Singapore Government in 1986 extended licensing requirements to include the foreign press:

[The government is] empowered to restrict the sale or distribution of foreign publications seen to be manipulating local public opinion and interfering with the domestic politics of Singapore (Bokhorst-Heng, 2003, p. 564).

In the same article Bokhorst-Heng also wrote that *The Economist* and *Time* had their circulations reduced because the information contained there interfered with Singapore's imagining of the nation. In addition, Rodan, when referring to government control of the electronic media said:

A central feature of the Singapore strategy on Internet control is the attempt to bring this medium under the same tight regimen as other electronic and non-electronic media (Rodan, 1998, p 88).

The media is held accountable not by free market economics but by government control. Lee Hsien Hoong has intimated many times that the press moulds the perceptions of Singaporeans. He made this clear in a speech to the Singapore Press Club in February 1988. However, in that same speech he did say they (the press) should do this

constructively by supporting political campaigns. Reporting daily, good journalists require a sense of what is important politically, they should understand issues, they should be able to put the complex in simple terms, report more than just the hard facts, and have something to say and say it well (Birch, 1993, p. 21).

One of the issues facing the media in Singapore in 2003 (SARS) was how to represent SARS to the people. Stuart Hall, writing about representation, makes some interesting points, and says that people give things meaning and find meaning in events and things. He maintains that Ferdinand de Saussure has already pointed out that things do not have a single and fixed meaning. Fundamental to the production of meaning in language (and other forms of communication such as images and stories) are the relationship between things, concepts and signs. This is a process that links language, images, stories and results in representation (Berger, 2005, p.167). So, 'meaning' enabled the readers of *The Straits Times* to interpret the signs of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) as demonstrated in the published narrative about this crisis. Life in the city-state of Singapore was represented by stories written about crisis, fear, risk, and trauma. When we study the media, we must be concerned about 'meaning' and the way they (the media) represent individuals and groups of individuals. For example, if meaning changes, historically, and is never fixed, finally there must be a process of interpretation. Meaning has to be 'read' or 'interpreted'. There had to be necessary imprecision about language and the meaning taken by the Singapore audience about SARS and its implications may not have been what the writers indeed intended. Signs that have not been intelligibly received are not in any sense 'meaningful' (Hall, 1997, p. 32-33). The

Singapore public was obviously affected by this terrible health crisis. Analysis of news items around that time make it is easy to see that after the disease had begun to spread the mediated views of what was being done by the medical staff at hospitals, by public servants, by the government were being reported as *the* main news in *The Straits Times*.

It was only after the event that the public began to realize what had really happened and it is certain that Singapore set a very strong example of the transparency needed in a crisis situation. As far as transparency is concerned, the concept is used in the humanities to imply openness in communication and responsibility. Metaphorically it has a meaning similar to that of ‘transparent’ used in the physical sciences to mean an object that can be seen through. It has come to mean also a way of holding public officials accountable. When government meetings are open to the public and when the media are told exactly what is happening there is less opportunity for governments and public authorities to abuse the system. It is in effect the exact opposite of privacy. Modern democracies build on the fact that people can participate as can the media. There are many ways to influence the decisions made at all levels in a society.

As far as the city state’s example of transparency was concerned it showed in the way it gave out accurate and timely information. It was the public health and medical staff that battled heroically with the virus and it is now well known that transparency and the crisis management techniques employed by the government were aimed at saving the public of Singapore from any more danger. It is also certain that the media played a pivotal role in reporting as accurately as possible the progress of the fight against the

virus. It has been said often that the media tend sometimes to overstate the case when there is a crisis at hand, in this case, although there were occasions when this may be partly true, it can be said that the media were allies of the health workers. Their reporting was generally responsible and most of the statistics were reported accurately and precisely (WHO, 2006, p. 245-246).

This may have been because as Bokhorst-Heng relates, the fact that over the years government leaders in Singapore have pursued a close relationship with the press. Members of parliament and newspaper editors sometimes meet over lunch, informally, to discuss matters of national interest. It is not difficult to believe that during the SARS epidemic Ministers and editors met to discuss the SARS situation and what the press could do to cooperate and work closely with the government. It is possible to interpret this as a case of 'selective interpretation' of transparency. Various analogies have been given to describe the close relationship that exists between the press and the government, apart from the analogy of a football team:

Others have referred to tandem cycling and to Siamese twins to capture similar harmony and cohesiveness in goal and purpose. However, as these analogies suggest, such relationships do not necessarily represent equal partnership. Most often, one team member, one cyclist one of the twins is dominant. The relationship between the press and the government in Singapore is similarly made up of unequal partners, with the government being dominant and controlling the agenda (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002, p. 563).

The issue of SARS reporting in Singapore may also be looked at from a cultural point of view and the national mind placed conceptually so as to show how SARS was represented and how the public of Singapore responded to the serious panic and trauma

brought about by a health crisis. Certainly, there was a time during the outbreak when it was possible to know that the Singapore Government was operating, at its own level, a system of crisis management. However, in the world of mediatised communication, crisis connotes ‘panic’ and in the world of medicine, ‘crisis’ may carry the concept of ‘disease’. The risks involved in a health crisis of the magnitude of the SARS epidemic will always require a certain amount of specialization and skill in the way the risks are represented to the reading public. The population was certainly asked to be disciplined in their approach to the difficulties caused by the crisis and to take note of the many instructions placed before them through *The Straits Times* and other branches of the press and electronic media.

Another issue that could have become a part of the definition of the representation of the SARS epidemic is that of ‘out-of-bounds markers’ the markers the government sets as far as the reporting of political events is concerned. These began in 1994 when Catherine Lim wrote two articles in *The Straits Times* that said there was a ‘great affective divide’ between the PAP and the people, and insinuated that Prime Minister Goh was not really in charge (Mauzy and Milne, 2002, p. 141). This was not an issue during the stages of SARS reporting but, it could be that journalists and editors in Singapore are going to look for more press freedoms as the 21st century progresses. Press freedoms are among the most revered aspects of a liberal democratic system of government. Yet, in a very modern and capitalist society like Singapore, these freedoms are virtually non-existent as far as the investigative reporting of government matters is concerned. Also, various analogies have been made to describe what has become a close

relationship between the government and the press. Whilst in its current phase for political and social change in Singapore may have reached its zenith; there are several ways that the media could go to engage in more open reporting of political events. However, there being no valid and alternative government in Singapore any political reporting is going to be concerned with the activities of the PAP, as the government plays ‘mind games’ with the public. Unless a two party system eventually evolves from what is there now, it is quite possible to say that:

The policy of the PAP Government, relatively unfettered since 1965, has been to develop and administer a modern, technically advanced, secular and independent republic, multiracial and politically plural so long as communalism and communism is not contemplated. Corruption has been kept to a minimum, and the Government has promoted the ethic of hard work, excellence and skill deserving rewards set ... (Minchin, 1990, p. 3).

Minchin also makes the point that the state’s supremacy is asserted by extensive economic and social engineering. The society is involved in hard work, excellence and skill and it deserves rewards, so long as it does not hinder the plans of the ruling party. The media must, perforce, keep in rhythm with the ruling party and one would not expect the messages to be the same as those from Australia’s media.

However, in 2007 Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew in answer to questions stated that the media in Singapore is credible. Many hits in the internet for *Lianhe Zaobao*, the Chinese daily and *The Straits Times* make the point that when people wish to read about the region and Singapore they turn to Singapore Press Holdings for their news. Bearing this in mind, there is still a lot of evidence to support the point of view that the strength of *The Strait Time* and its reach is born out by the ever increasing number of readers of Singapore Press Holdings sites (*Straits Times Interactive*, 5 October, 2007).

The Australian

Although a printing-press arrived in Australia in 1787 with the very first fleet (Smith, 1992, p.130) unlike Singapore, where a national newspaper has been established since 1845, Australia did not have a national newspaper until July 14 1964, although it did have *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. When Rupert Murdoch (Shawcross, 1998, p. 115) founded *The Australian*, Murdoch made a bold statement of his belief that Australia needed a quality national daily newspaper (McKnight, 2004, p. 89). It was a significant event as *The Australian* carried symbolic resonances of what it meant to be 'Australian' (Shawcross, 1998), ranging from its title, its Australia logo, its symbolic 'keeping the nation informed' (now 'The Heart of the Nation') and its weekly section on thoroughbred sales. In an Andrew Olle media lecture broadcast by ABC television on Sunday, October 18, 2007 the speaker, John Hartigan, Chairman and CEO of News Limited, suggested that *The Australian* was Australia's Town Square (Hartigan, 2007).

When *The Australian* was established as a paper it was believed to represent a vision of a nation building exercise Murdoch shared with John McEwen, the leader of the Country Party at that time (McKnight, 2003, p.46). Similar to the national mind it was supposed to embody, the paper struggled financially for two decades until the mid-1980s (Cryle, 2007 p. 49). Looking back, the formation of a national newspaper was an important postwar moment. It represented politically, socially and professionally an important time in the life of journalism in Australia (Cryle, 2007, p. 50). The creation of *The Australian* was also another step along the road to the development of freedom of the

press in Australia. Many institutions have been created during the long process of separation from the United Kingdom, but none have been more important or relevant to the development of a liberal democracy than the development of media outlets such as *The Australian*. However, McKnight notes that *The Australian's* columnists and contributors continue to wage a one-sided culture war against what they call 'the left'. However, this was not always so. Then PM Gough Whitlam and Murdoch became close friends in 1972 and Murdoch even suggested some planks for the Labor's election platform (Leapman, 2001 p. 71). But later on Murdoch had reservations about the politics of Adrian Deamer, the editor from 1968 to 1971. Even though Deamer's editorship was once regarded as the high point of *The Australian's* history. According to Murdoch, Deamer's politics were too radical; he preferred black people to white people, wanted to flood the country with Asians and took up every 'bleeding heart' cause that was fashionable among the 'long-haired Left' (Leapman, 2001, pp 42-43).

Nevertheless, factionalism and political differences have to a certain extent been at the forefront of the relationships between the owner, Murdoch, and his staff. There were even factions within the production team itself. Murdoch was at the start of *The Australian's* production life a hands on manager and also an intimidating one at times (Cryle, 2007, p. 51). Hardly a state of affairs that would happen at *The Straits Times*, as Knight maintains, under the code of ethics that Singapore journalists are asked to comply with, there is the implication that someone other than a journalist or an editor should be the judge of what is fair and honest and this arbiter may be the Singaporean government (Knight, 2000, p. 6).

The Australian was certainly breaking new ground for an Australian daily newspaper. However, Cryle points out that the venture proved to be an expensive exercise for News Limited board members and the shareholders (Cryle, 2007, p. 52). It was after all a national newspaper that sought to present to the thinking men and women of Australia a distinctive brand of news, seriously written and in the words of the newspaper's then signature front page headline 'keeping the nation informed'.

Cryle writes that the development of the paper in 1964 had its lighter moments when the seriousness of its original editor, Max Newton was enlivened somewhat by an incomer from Fleet Street's *Daily Express*, Solly Chandler introduced a few tabloid elements, a mafia attack, headless bodies uncovered by the FBI, a call girl raid and the uncovering of a drug ring, to name a few (Hall, 1994, p. 27). Conscious efforts were made by the first editor Max Newton to impose on the production process the need for a 'good read' (Cryle, 2007. p. 54). The newspaper covered, as well as the press gallery, several government departments such as Treasury, Foreign Affairs and Trade and transport. Certainly, *The Straits Times* would not be encouraged to cover public affair and politics in such depth as did, and still does, *The Australian*.

Rupert Murdoch describes himself as a libertarian, once a term for the left, this now tends to mean the main ideology of the political and corporate elites of 'New Capitalism'. Libertarianism, Murdoch once said meant 'as much individual responsibility, as possible, as little government as possible, as few rules as possible (McKnight, 2004, p. 78). This move by Murdoch away from his early radical views has

meant, for *The Australian*, that its ideological base is neo-conservative, as McKnight describes the newspapers columnists and invited contributors.

Today the newspaper's columnists and contributors continue to wage their one-sided culture war against what they call the left, albeit in a more sophisticated way. In the 1980s *The Australian* called for a world ruled by markets. We now live in a more selfish and less egalitarian world. ...there is a striking paradox, if the newspaper itself had been judged by strict market criteria; it would have folded within a year of its birth (McKnight, 2004, p. 57).

Despite its move to the right, *The Australian* continues to publish articles by a well known doyen of the political left, Phillip Adams. In a 19/20 December, 2006 piece (Adams, 2006) mentions that the pluralist party of Robert Menzies is long gone. The present PM still fiddles while the world burns – hardly surprising since the mining firms top the Libs' war chest. Needless to say, there have been other articles by the same author criticizing the political right in Australia.

Although *The Australian* did not make any money for Murdoch for a long time, it started as a serious paper and has remained so, (Shawcross, 1998, p. 115). *The Australian* became Australia's National Daily Newspaper and much information can be found on *The Australian's* website which describes what is available to readers. The site also gives information on what sections are contained in each daily issue, and the audited readership figures as of December 2006 were: weekday circulation Monday – Friday 134,610. *The Weekend Australian* circulation is 298,107. Apparently, according to readership surveys, 31% of the readers have an income over \$AUD 60,000 and 59% of the readers of *The Australian* are in the AB socio-economic quintile, who are high income earners,

university educated and discerning consumers. In *The Australian* and *The Weekend Australian* advertisers reach an affluent and influential readership. The AB socio-economic quintiles are a means by which the population is segmented into five class brackets based on a person's education, income and occupation. Thus, through many trials, vicissitudes, and years of losses the paper has become a daily and is now produced in all capital cities, as is the weekend edition. The online edition was begun in 2002 (see Appendix D).

During the more than two centuries that have passed since the discovery and the founding of the Commonwealth of Australia, freedom of the press has been developed and independent newspapers in the colony came on the scene in the early part of the 19th century. This 'freedom of the press', driven by cantankerous editors, is one of the many important institutions that were created quickly and developed in a distinctive way over long periods of time. Others were the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, supported by a vigorous and independent bar (Quadrant, Spigelman, March, 2003, p. 19). Since its discovery, Australia has espoused freedom of the press as a necessary appendage to its liberal democratic style of governance. Four of the present daily newspapers originated in the 19th century: *The Sydney Morning Herald* (1831), the *Melbourne Herald* (1840), *The Age* of Melbourne (1854), and the Sydney, *Daily Telegraph*. The penetration of radio and television in Australia, radio since 1924 and television since 1953 has meant that Australia has a healthy news and entertainment media industry, and the development of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in 1932 has done much to give the media a 'national voice'. Yet it was not until *The*

Australian was established in 1964 that the country had a truly 'national voice' in the mainstream news media. Prior to that, state newspapers presented state news as being the main concerns and there were local newspapers that circulated in the shires, towns and cities of the country providing local news at the 'parish pump' level. Then, as now, *News Ltd.* and the *Fairfax Group* had the lion's share of newspaper publishing and distribution in Australia.

Kingsbury (2000, p.35) said that because of possible fundamental shake-ups to the region after Lee Kuan Yew ceased to be Prime Minister there would be whole new sets of political sensitivities that could challenge and even threaten the perspectives of journalists trying to report the region. However, there is the opinion still around that this inevitability means that:

Australia will still need its own journalists in the region, viewing regional developments from an Australian perspective and communicating in a style that addresses the interests and concerns of Australian audiences (Kingsbury, 2000, p 35).

Mahathir has often criticised Australian journalists for what he calls 'preaching'. In addition Australia's pluralism and the way it expresses dissenting views is considered by Lee Kuan Yew to be not what Singapore needs as far as reporting of political and cultural events is concerned. Singapore has a compliant media, one that reports, perhaps through self-censorship, a Singapore that is governed the way the People's Action Party desire. Any criticism is not taken too kindly by the government and woe betide an editor or a journalist who oversteps the mark and presents the PAP in an unfavourable light. In comparison, the Australian media has two or more 'political sides' to report on, it can be

as critical as it likes of the government, the opposition and the minor parties – as long as it bears in mind slander, libel and the laws of defamation (Kingsbury, 2000, p. 36). Although it should be noted that such liberties are under severe pressure in the 21st century due largely to the fear of terrorism and possible changes to media ownership regulations and laws. Changes were made to Australia's media laws on October 18, 2006. These resulted in a rush of takeover bids and company restructuring in the newspaper and electronic media. One Senator complained that this could make a difference to the way news was reported and a reduction in the diversity of media outlets may have an effect on the democratic process (Murphy, 2006).

Australia tends to allow a fair amount of personal freedoms, particularly where politics are concerned. There is also the separation of the state and the judiciary. This separation of powers is fundamental to the type of democracy Australia presents to the region and is what maintains the application of justice and the rule of law in the country. The degree of authoritarianism present in Singapore has only allowed very limited political participation by the public and the degree that the state and the judiciary are joined in that country allows the state to achieve its own political ends, thus silencing its critics in the press.

Conclusion

Geoffrey Blainey exemplified, in *The Tyranny of Distance*, a possible method for codifying and 'signifying the Australian nation', or as Anderson (1991) would have it, 'imagining the community':

If one can select any year which marks Australia's transition from its traditional role as echo and image of Britain as an outpost of Europe, the year which stands out is 1941. One can go further and select 7 December 1941, when Japanese planes bombed an American fleet at Pearl Harbour, Honolulu, 4000 miles to the north east of Australian soil, or alternatively select 10 December – three days later – when the British battle cruisers Prince of Wales and Repulse went down off the Malayan coast (Blainey, 1971, p. 328).

Blainey went on to say that these events marked the end of a time when hereditary ceased to be so powerful, when Australians ceased to have nearly all their emotional, commercial, military, financial and human ties with Britain. This was the time in the twentieth century when the Australian position on the tail of Asia and on the shores of the Indian and Pacific Oceans became more important (Blainey, 1971, p. 329). The end of World War II saw an emergence of economic vigour and this continued in Australia into the 1970s. The population rose from 7 million in 1945 to 13.5 million in 1976 and now stands at approximately 20.9million as at the end of March, 2007 (<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0/>, accessed 14 October 2007). The ALP in 1946 initiated a policy that assisted the entry of about 15,000 migrants, not only from the United Kingdom but from war-distressed Europe. There was much debate about whether the new migrants should be assimilated or accepted into a multicultural society. The latter policy was eventually favoured.

Changes of government in 1972 when Gough Whitlam became Prime Minister saw a change on policy towards Australia's relationship with Asia. However before that, more genial relations were developed in the region when Australia became a signatory to the Colombo Plan. This plan meant that Australia gave assistance to its friends within the region and there began an inflow of students from Asia that has endured. In fact, in the

mid-1960s the number of Asian students was of the order of 12,000 each year. However, Blainey maintained that the strongest contact between Asia and Australia was commerce. But, there is a tendency for the atlas to deceive and exaggerates the closeness to Asia. Eight out of every ten Australians live in the southeast corner of the country and between farms and cities and Asia lie not only the sea, but a formidable barrier of Australian dry land (Blainey, 1971, p.337). The policy of excluding Asians was abandoned in the late 1960s and the acceptance of refugees from Indochina during and after the war in Vietnam was the most visible evidence of the new policy. By 2000 about one third of ‘settler’ immigrants were from Asia. As Horne said:

The phrase ‘White Australia’ dropped out of public use – the Labor Party was the last to openly use it – and more noticeable liberalization introduced by Prime Minister Holt in 1966 meant that by 1978 about 3,500 non-European and 6,000 part-European immigrants were coming each year to Australia, a fact greeted with such indifference that it seemed easy enough to increase these numbers (Horne, 1972 p.46).

Foreign correspondents and those reporting events overseas have a domestic concern to follow in determining what the coverage should be. It is necessary that those reporting be informed about news that would appeal to or interest the audience. This determines what kind of story will be told; it includes what the editors require and what the journalists see as their role as national correspondents about countries other than Australia. John Tebbutt (2000, p. 95) mentions that rather than ‘values’, it is the power that is exercised through the organising practices of reporting and administration (Barrett, 1991, p. 134-7; Foucault, 1980, pp. 115-6).

Historical and geographical aspects of the ‘national newspaper’ have been examined in this chapter. Before doing some content analysis and examining the intended time period, it is important to remember that an understanding must be gained of the social, cultural, economic and political construct of the mass media in Australia and Singapore, which would in turn enable us to understand its mechanisms, its role and its trends, especially in relation to the SARS episode in 2003.

Content analysis of the reporting of SARS is discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis and in this chapter investigations have been carried out of the way writers in *The Straits Times* reported Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and how, compared with *The Australian*, the reporting covered some of the problems associated with that disease in a multicultural society. The rapid spread of the disease, particularly in South-East Asia, caused extreme measures to be taken to control its spread in the city-state of Singapore, and journalists reported many aspects of the disease and its affects on the organizing of communication facilities, and the way the disease was being investigated in Singapore and elsewhere. This reporting reached its peak during the months of April, May and June 2003.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) became a major global crisis in 2003. Headlines such as “Why take the risk? Find ways to live with bug” presented in *The Straits Times* of May 7 2003, were repeated in many countries around the world. The “bug” spread to over seven different countries and was the subject of a full-scale investigation by the World Health Organisation (WHO). As a matter of fact, was SARS a

real crisis, or was it, as Michael Backman suggested ‘a WHO induced Panic?’ (Backman, 2004 p.36). Whatever it was, SARS certainly filled many pages of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* during the early months of 2003. SARS scared away tourists, emptied restaurants, and forced manufacturers to run up inventories just in case production was interrupted by the disease (Backman, 2004 p. 37).

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

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Introduction

It is important to remember, as stated in Chapter 2 that an understanding must be gained of social, cultural, economic and political constructs of the mass media in Australia and Singapore, which would in turn enable us to understand its mechanisms, its role and its trends, especially in relation to the SARS episode in 2003. Chapter 2 also explained and defined news as a general term related to reporting of information and as a term related to a crisis situation caused by a deadly disease called SARS. The cultural implications, as defined by Carey, identify and codify the role of a national newspaper. James Carey defined news in its relationship to culture several years ago as follows:

[news] is a form of culture invented by a particular class at a particular point of history – in this case by the middle class in the eighteenth century. Like any invented cultural form, news both forms and reflects a particular hunger “for experience,” a desire to do away with the epic, heroic, and traditional in favor of the unique, original, novel, new – news (Carey, 1992, p. 21).

In a documentary on SARS, (aired on The Cutting Edge, and screened on Australia’s SBS TV on 25 May 2003) it was stated the disease began in Guangdong Province of Southern China in November 2002. The first time the disease was reported in *The Australian* was on the front page of the 17 March 2003 edition. The article stated: “Aussie alert as disease sweeps globe”; with the victims of the disease reported as being in China, Vietnam, Canada, and that other cases had been treated in Indonesia, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Germany. The day after that, in the ‘Nation’ section

of the same newspaper, another article appeared entitled “Three feared infected with killer flu bug”. This referred to Australians being infected with the disease. Another article on the same page was by the newspaper’s health editor “Medical detectives fight clock”, neither of these three articles were any longer than 500 words and gave the bare minimum as far as medical details was concerned. On the following three days more news items were published. In *The Weekend Australian* of the 22-23 March 2003 a more detailed article was published by science writer Leigh Dayton who wrote in much more detail about the mystery illness; the article began to ask questions about the place it was first discovered. The article explained much more about what SARS was, its history, and what the World Health Organisation (WHO) was doing on a global scale to contain the disease.

By the time April came around, the Business Section of *The Australian* was reporting on the effects that SARS and the Iraq War were having on stock markets, and a global recession was reported to be at hand. *The Australian* of 8 April, 2003 contained even more news; the Business Section, The World Section, IT Today and IT Business Section all contained news about ‘fears of 3000 new killer bug cases’. In The Nation Section, ‘profit in a panic’ in the IT Business Section, ‘Hong Kong panic’, ‘Asia alert as bug spreads’ was reported in the Business Extra, and ‘SARS threatens electronics trade’ was reported in IT Today.

A report issued by The World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2006 mentioned that the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) was set up in 2000.

This was a strike force that would enable surveillance of diseases such as SARS. As the report said, inadequate response capacity about a disease such as SARS, in a single country, can endanger national populations and the public health security of the entire world. They also suggested that in the last decade of the 20th century several outbreaks such as cholera, pneumonic plague and ebola hemorrhagic fever caused international concern. The formation of this organization solved a lot of outstanding problems. The SARS outbreak was the first time that GOARN identified and responded to an outbreak that spread globally. Another issue of importance is that there must be some relationship between how a nation copes successfully with a crisis such as SARS and the philosophy that allows a nation to cope; whether the philosophy is political, social, or personal. Going on from that, one could pose the question as to how the media assists in this coping, if it does (WHO, 2006, p. 52).

In the administrative page of a press release issued by Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 21 September 2004, after the SARS threat had dissipated, Jody Lanard speaking in Singapore in a conference organized by WHO, in 2004, said that 'defensive pessimism' was one of the reasons why Singaporeans coped so well with SARS. A further look at those two words could perhaps make one believe that Singaporeans erred on the cautious side; working hard not to lose what you already have; planning for all possible outcomes. Whilst Singapore was praised by the World Health Organisation there is plenty of evidence that the criticism of the Singapore Government for being authoritarian, harsh, ruthless and draconian did not cease to be written about in the world's press. What the Singapore Government did was to communicate with citizens so

as to build trust with them as well as with other nations. Dr. Lanard accused leaders of other nations of not being as trusting of their populations and not being as resilient and full of community spirit as they attacked SARS. The fear caused to the community by SARS was acknowledged by political commentators and obviously this fear was transferred to the press during the numerous press conferences that were held during 2003. There were some press reports that said closing schools pandered to and caved in to people's fears; the national newspaper ran opinion polls on the issue of home quarantines and whether the names of people who broke the quarantine orders should be published.

The World Health Organization has said about SARS that an early challenge to its SARS team working in Geneva and in the Regional Office in the Western Pacific in Manila was to get together a meaningful response to the outbreak. Media officers were appointed to China and these officers along with those appointed in Manila, Geneva, and Hanoi kept the information flowing to the media around the clock. Peter Cordingley, the Public Information Officer in Manila admitted that they made mistakes but set the rules about how to respond to a public health crisis.

The influential South China Morning Post in Hong Kong (China) agreed in its issue of 25 February, 2004, it cited the way Mr Cordingley had handled his public information responsibilities during the crisis as a prime example of how to communicate with the media (WHO, 2006, p. 66).

An approach to research design in crisis reporting

This chapter examines and analyses the contents of *The Straits Times* (including *The Straits Times Interactive*) and *The Australian*, and targets Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) as a case study. Thus far the thesis has concentrated on crisis reporting in the media and the newspaper and the national mind. It will continue to examine the role of the media in the coverage of the SARS in relation to social, medical and health fears of Singaporeans and Australians who read these two broadsheets. The hypothesis used and tested for the examination of them is: *The Straits Times* reports the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis differently from the way *The Australian* reports the same event for various reasons that will be explicated throughout the rest of this thesis.

In dealing with crisis reporting it has been necessary to find a concept/category such as SARS and determine its measurable units for the purpose of this study. The measurable content of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* has been classified as ‘headlines’ that are about the daily reporting of the progress of the SARS epidemic. The headlines have been coded, the data collected and a measurement system established to analyse the reporting of a serious health matter that lasted from March to November of 2003.

In this chapter, reasons are discussed why content analysis (see Appendix C) is deemed to be useful as a research tool when examining the headlines of *The Straits Times*

and *The Australian* during their reporting of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic during 2003. It also considers the efficacy of the approaches used by Van Dijk (1991) as described in his analysis of *Racism in the Press*, as well as in Propp's (1928) *Morphology of a Folk Tale*. Van Dijk used a multi-disciplinary approach and noted that the role of the press as a corporate, social and cultural institution needs to be analysed in relation to other institutions, such as those of the polity or the economy (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 48). Van Dijk's overall approach was to apply discourse analysis as it was deemed to be appropriate to his study of ethnic reporting in Europe. As he notes:

[D]iscourse analysis specifically aims to show how the cognitive, social historical, cultural, or political contexts of language use and communication impinge on the contents, meanings, structures, or strategies of text or dialogue, and vice versa, how discourse itself is an integral part of and contributes to the structures of these contexts (Van Dijk, 1991. p.45).

The analysis of news reports also contributes to the formation of changes in the 'social cognition of the readers or the reproduction or legitimation of power elites' (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 45). This suggests that the analysis of news reports can be used to investigate what has happened in the social and cultural milieu of a place that is part of the research.

Vladimir Propp first published *Morphology of the Russian Folktale* in 1928. The study was concerned with the formulaic elements in art and literature, although it has now progressed beyond the boundaries of investigations into these art forms. The document produced by Propp has become a central document for the analysis of narratives and has been used to analyse such popular events as television soap operas, newspaper articles and drama. In the 1968 translation of Propp's work, a narrative

function is described as ‘an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action’ (1968, p 21). Because the narrative of the SARS epidemic carried on for more than a year, it appears as though Propp’s method could be used to translate the story of SARS using the actors in the news coverage as designated ‘functions’. Clive Seale believes it is also pertinent that the narrative perhaps tells us a lot about how a crisis behaves and as he says:

Let us take it that an important overall ‘story’ in media health coverage is the life of the body, its struggle against the evil of death, its search for an admiring gaze, its elevation of Everyman or Everywoman to the status of hero or victim. Helper-heroes may take the form, say, of doctors or research scientists bearing magical cures, nurse behaving like angels, Villains may take the form of disease, disease carriers, We begin to see that all of the elements that occur in narratives generally occur from time to time in the big story told by media health representations (Seale, 2002, p. 29-30).

If, in the final analysis of the headlines, a method had been used along the lines of the above account similar to the structure of Russian folk tales, it would have meant reducing actors to a small number of functions and stock characters. This would have been a possible alternative analytical method. However, after giving consideration to the accuracy required, the relevance to the concept of measuring every aspect of the headlines, a decision had to be made to choose between: the use of discourse analysis, Propp’s framework for narrative analysis and content analysis as measures of the content of the headlines. It was decided that content analysis of the headlines of the news reports about SARS was the better alternative. It would seem to allow a more rigid testing of the original hypothesis and would be more meaningful and informative. Content analysis is used as a research method to obtain information about a topic, especially for comparative purposes. As mentioned in the Introduction, we may want to know if the content we are

measuring in one newspaper differs from the content in another. Berger (2000, pp 175-6) maintains that we can use content analysis to find this out.

Content analysis as a research method

Having defined what this chapter uses and how it has been used to analyse the reporting of SARS, it is necessary to describe in some detail the method. As has already been mentioned, content analysis was chosen as the particular method. Using George V. Zito's (1975) definition from *Methodology and Meanings: Varieties of Sociological Inquiry*, content analysis may be defined as:

a methodology by which the researcher seeks to determine the manifest content of written, spoken, or published communication by *systematic, objective, and quantitative analysis*. It is, then, a quantitative method applicable to what has traditionally been called qualitative material – written language [...] Since any written communication (and this includes novels, letters, suicide notes, magazines, and newspaper accounts) is produced by a communicator, the *intention of the communicator* may be the object of our research. Or we may be interested in the audience or *receiver* of the communication, and attempt to determine something about it (Zito, 1975, p.27).

The purpose in the first instance was to count the number of occurrences of the characteristics of texts and by doing this, to quantify the messages the texts carry; then in a qualitative way to identify what the images in the texts, represented about the subject(s) of the texts and their social significance. The decision to use content analysis has certain advantages over other textual methods of analyses. In particular, it is possible to take the quantification within content analysis to a degree that makes it possible to read and interpret questions that relate to the intensity of meaning in texts, their social impact and intensity, as has already been mentioned and the relationships between media texts and

the realities and the representations they reflect (Hansen et al, 1998). In this way, qualitative outcomes may also be achieved/attained.

The analyses of the news reports in the two newspapers concerned will concentrate on analysing headlines from the time the reports begin in April 2003 and end when the SARS epidemic was over in November 2003. These analyses take a close look at some of the properties of the headlines: words and lexical style, the coverage in 2003, actors, sources, and primary definers, they consider subjects, themes and issues and finally, examine the value dimension and the stance that each newspaper takes with regard to the reporting of the SARS crisis.

Content analysis has been criticised for its attention to the numerical aspects of texts and for its tendency to fragment texts (Berger, 2000, p. 173). This study addresses this 'problem' by attempting to enrich the technique of content analysis by offering more than just a numerical measurement of news. It includes information about the social personalities of the newspapers concerned. Berger says that content analysis is a method for analysing texts; it is not a theory (Berger, 2000, p 173). Yet a theoretical framework and a clear conceptualisation of the nature and social context of the documents that are being examined are required in addressing a crisis such as SARS. Analyses of media content may concern questions about the production side: influence of ownership, commercial interests, editorial policies, journalistic practices and news sources. On the consumption side: the role of news coverage in relation to social, political, ideological, and economic processes, and the roles of news coverage in relation to individual audience

or readership phenomena are significant issues to consider (Berger, 2000 p. 173). As a remit, to cover the reports of the SARS epidemic in a meaningful and analytical manner, it became necessary to examine the lexical styles and the words used in the two broadsheets, *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*, used as case studies in this thesis. Thus this thesis examines a total of 649 reports and headlines and 141 letters about the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in *The Straits Times* (including *The Straits Times Interactive*) from April 2003 to November 2003. Comparatively, 125 headlines from *The Australian* are also examined.

Van Dijk (1991) has said that the main functions of headlines are to summarise the most important information of a report. They have an important cognitive function since they act, for the reader, as an overall organizing principle for the representation of the news event in memory and serve as a model for the situation. Headlines have ideological implications and may express the most important information of a news event. However, it is also possible they may bias the understanding process, although they do make clear, according to the writer of the headline, what is the most important aspect of the story. It is quite possible that a summary implies an opinion or specific perspective of the event. Van Dijk makes the point that headlines in the press have important textual and cognitive functions:

Their main function is to summarize the most important information of the report. That is, they express its main 'topic', [...] grammatically, headlines are often incomplete sentences: articles or auxiliary verbs may be deleted (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 50).

Headlines in newspapers are in the main the responsibility of sub-editors (Bell, 1991, p 43). One of the requirements is that the headline should fit within the newspaper's design framework. The newspaper's typeset book usually indicates how many letters a headline may hold across one, two or three columns, but only loosely. The basic headline should contain significant words and the minimum of definite and indefinite articles; yet it has to make sense. Bell (1991, p. 44) says that it is possible the headline is an abstract of an abstract, in other words it is nearly always the case that in printed news the headline is a 'last-minute' addition. Bell (1991, p. 151) also maintains that journalists do not put headlines on their own stories: that is the job of subeditors and says that stories are usually identified by the ultimate in abstracts, a one-word catchline that is unique to the story. Hodgson describes the headline writer as having two main functions, both to do with manipulating words. He describes the copy editor as 'a synthesiser, filtering the material so that the essence is refined into a simple 'read-me' message' (Hodgson, 1998: p.125). Finally, Hodgson also points out that 'headlines attract the reader's attention, so good headlines excite curiosity' (Hodgson, 1998: p 133).

In view of the 'attraction' and 'attention getting' capacity of headlines, it was decided that a content analysis of the headlines of SARS articles/stories in *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* would be useful. In this particular case study a virus that threatened to spread and kill many people expresses the most important and the highest expression of a model of a health situation. Since the headlines express how newsmakers have represented a health issue, to paraphrase van Dijk (1991, p. 50), headlines of news reports about health affairs summarise events and stories that *The Straits Times* and *The*

Australian find most relevant for readers. These headlines define and evaluate the health situation as the editor or journalist sees it.

The method used in this study of the print media's representation of a health crisis is an approach that examines their role in reporting events, how content analysis and a small amount of discourse analysis has been used to explain the reporting of SARS, the way news readers understand discourse in the news, and how Beck's (1999) theory of a 'risk society' can best be interpreted in the light of an event such as SARS. The role of the press includes an examination of the roles of: *The Straits Times* (including *The Straits Times Interactive*) and *The Australian*. The thesis also places the news media, in this instance, as representing panic, crisis, or trauma in two countries, and more importantly, sets out an approach to crisis reporting. The scene is also set, particularly in Singapore, for serious possible disruption to the economic and social life of a modern country.

The Analysis - definition of the research problem

The role of the media in the representation of a crisis can only be properly understood and explained in terms of an account that combines political, cultural and society dimensions of media organisations at the macro level with international, discursive and cognitive aspects of news-making and news reports at the micro level. The research design, using content analysis, seeks to determine the content of the headlines of the two broadsheets at the micro level. An overall view of the media organizations in question is included in the chapters on those organisations. Appendix 4 summarises the place of *The Australian* within the structure of its parent company News Corporation.

Appendix 1 places *The Straits Times* and *The Straits Times Interactive* within the structure of Singapore Press Holdings, their parent company. It was also considered necessary to position the communication of a crisis within the overall theory of risk as defined by Ulrich Beck (1992) in *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* and in doing so, one may be able to identify crisis reporting as a subset of ‘risk society’.

After briefly sampling the headlines to identify the research problem and the objective of the study, content analysis was applied on a selected number of issues of *The Straits Times* (including *The Straits Times Interactive*) and *The Australian* to establish which parts of the news needed to be analysed i.e., dates, texts, relevant content. In addition, a decision was needed as to how many analytical categories would be required to reach a result that would satisfy the aim of the study. Appendix 3, Content Analysis Coding Schedule – Press Coverage of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) explains the method used, content analysis, in some detail.

Some discussion has already taken place, in the background chapters of this thesis, about the significance of the ownership of the press and the way it impinged on the way SARS was reported in Singapore. Commercial interests, journalistic practices and news sources will be factored in to discover whether or not they have any effect on the way SARS was reported; as will the attention paid, by the media, to the losses of revenue, costs incurred by large corporations and losses of tourism dollars.

Examination of the headlines

A few slight modifications to a coding schedule contained in *Mass Communication Research Methods* (Hansen, et al, 1998, p 117) were made and this examination of the headlines replicates the representation of the sections of the schedule contained at Appendix 3. As far as the measurement of the content analysis is concerned ten tables were used and these are included in the succeeding pages.

Aggregate of the articles in *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*

The first steps in the study were to read the headlines of both newspapers and analyse them under the headings: laid out in the content analysis schedule as demonstrated at Appendix 3. We look first at a summary of the articles appearing in the two papers under study in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: An aggregate of articles and letters regarding Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that appeared in *The Straits Times* in 2003

Month	Articles	Letters
April	237	59
May	250	65
June	82	10
July	38	0
August	16	0
September	17	7

October	6	0
November	3	0
TOTAL	<u>649</u>	<u>141</u>

Table 2: Aggregate of the articles regarding Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) appearing in *The Australian* from March to July 2003.

Month	Articles
March	13
April	69
May	26
June	10
July	<u>7</u>
TOTAL	<u>125</u>

The tables above show the corpus of headlines occurring in *The Straits Time* from April 2003 to October 2003 and occurring in *The Australian* from March 2003 to July 2003. *The Straits Times* had 649 headlines and 141 letters during the period of the study and *The Australian* had 125 headlines, and no letters.

These were indications of the importance attached to the health crisis by the newspapers in the study. Indeed, *The Straits Times* ran a separate section called SARS Outbreak during most of the period of the crisis in that country which emphasizes, on the surface at least, the significance of the outbreak of SARS as an important news item. In

fact, it could be argued that there was more urgency than ever, in a crisis, to get the headline correct and meaningful.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), which had a special responsibility for recording what happened during this crisis has a website www.who.int/en/ on which is recorded the several cases of SARS that occurred in countries during the crisis. On this site we can read that in Australia a cumulative number of cases of 6 persons; no deaths were reported. Singapore for the same period had a cumulative number of cases of 238 persons; 33 deaths were reported.

Table 3 Length of headline in *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*

The Straits Times		The Australian	
All	Keywords	All	Keywords
6.26	4.96	6.05	4.94

The average length of the headlines in *The Straits Times*, including all articles on SARS and letters to the editor was 6.26 words; and the average length of the same items including only the keywords used in the headlines was 4.96. The average length of the headlines in *The Australian*, including all articles on SARS and letters was 6.05; and the average length of the same items including only the keywords was 4.94. By ‘keywords’ is meant words in the headlines such as nouns, verbs and adjectives, thus, there does not appear to be any marked numerical differences between the way the headlines were written, organised and finalised in the two newspapers being researched. Keywords, in

effect, defines the subjective aspects of the headlines – what the headline is defining about the narratives.

The next steps in the study were to examine the headlines in more detail and summarise the results that were tabulated using the headline structures, dates, and authors of the media information.

Table 4 Writers/reporters involved in the SARS story in *The Strait Times*

	Number	%
Editorial & Reporting Staff		
Editorial	7	1.0
Leader		
News Editorial Staff	25	3.8
Health Correspondent	33	5.1
By-Lines from staff	213	32.5
Staff reporters not named	148	22.5
Political Desk	10	1.5
Senior Correspondent	18	2.8
Features Editor	3	0.5
Senior writer	11	1.7
Copy editor	3	0.5
Editor at large	1	0.2
Correspondents		
Science	8	1.2
Arts	1	0.2
Markets	2	0.4
Property	1	0.2
Finance	8	1.2
Transport	7	1.1
Education	2	0.4
Consumer	5	0.7
Technology	1	0.2
Companies	3	0.5
Court	1	0.2
Foreign desk	1	0.2

United States	1	0.2
Taiwan	7	1.1
Kuala Lumpur	5	0.7
Hong Kong	9	1.4
East Asia	5	0.7
Europe	2	0.3
China	10	1.6

Press Bureaus and overseas newspapers 67 10.3

Contributors

Anonymous contributors	7	1.1
Minister for Trade	1	0.2
Prime Minister's Press Release	1	0.2
Contributions from medical persons	2	0.4
Contributions from World Health Orgn.	1	0.2
Harvard School of Public Health	1	0.2
Sister Publication	1	0.2
Health Department	1	0.2
Health Promotions Board	1	0.2

GRAND TOTAL **649 (Includes Headlines/Titles for 141 letters)**

Looking at the results in Table 4 and comparing them to Table 5, it can be seen that *The Straits Times* allocates a lot more writing duties to named staff, as opposed to anonymous authors or nameless bureau staff. Whether this means the newspaper uses a different management style, or uses a different organisational structure, is a matter for further research. However, a Health Correspondent wrote 5.1 percent of the stories in *The Straits Times*, and 3.2 percent of the stories in *The Australian* were written by a Health Correspondent. Staff reporters with by-lines accounted for 32.5 percent of the stories in *The Straits Times*, and for 24.8 percent of the stories in *The Australian*.

As illustrated in the above table, there were a grand total of 649 articles in *The Straits Times* and 125 articles in *The Australian*. It is also worthy of mention that there were 141 letters addressed to the editor in *The Straits Times*, *The Australian* may have received letters, but it certainly did not print any letters about SARS during the time the paper reported the disease as a crisis event.

One could quite easily surmise that there must be valid reasons for this large difference in the attention paid to the crisis by the two broadsheets. A summary by the World Health Organisation of probable cases from November 1 2002 to July 31 2003 tells us that Australia had a total number of cumulative cases of 6, with no deaths from the disease (www.who.int/en/). Whereas for the same period in Singapore, the total number of cumulative cases reported were 238 with 33 deaths. There would of course been much more activity by the government of Singapore as it made every effort to get the news out to the media.

Table 5 Writer/reporters involved in the SARS story in *The Australian*

Categories of staff	Number of staff	%
Editorial & Reporting Staff		
Editorial	2	1.6
Staff	5	4.0
Advertisement	2	1.6
By Lines from staff	31	24.8
Correspondents		
China	22	17.6
Hong Kong	19	15.2
Science	19	15.2
Arts	1	0.8
Equities/Business	10	8.0
Health	4	3.2

Contributors		
Unknown	1	0.8
Press Bureaus and overseas newspapers	9	7.2
TOTAL	125	

Table 6 Type and number of articles that reported on SARS.

Type of Article	The Straits Times & the Interactive		The Australian	
		%		%
Front page	1	0.1	7	5.6
Other news stories	103	15.4	1	0.8
Feature	487	72.6	110	88.0
Editorial	28	4.2	3	2.4
Letter	52	7.7	-	
Advertisement			3	2.4
Other			1	0.8
TOTAL	671		125	

Table 6 contains the number of articles in the two newspapers and analyses them by type. It can be seen that in *The Straits Times*, 72.6 per cent of the articles were ‘features’ and for *The Australian*, 88 per cent were ‘features’. It was considered to be enough evidence to point to the importance of SARS in a social, cultural and political sense. It seems that both broadsheets gave the SARS epidemic good coverage and space because of its importance in the areas mentioned in Table 6.

Table 7 Actors, sources and primary definers used in the headlines of the stories of SARS in *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*

Actors sources, primary definers	The Straits Times Interactive No. of times terms used	Expressed as a percentage of total	The Australian. No. of times terms used	Expressed as a percentage of total
Victims	23	2.9	5	4.1
Visitors/tourists	14	1.8	4	3.2
General Population	155	19.6	11	8.9
Sports people	2	0.3	-	
Theatre people	6	0.8	1	0.8
Music people			1	0.8
Nil	7	0.9	14	11.3
Govt/public service	386	48.7	29	24.1
Politicians	24	3.0		
Scientists	33	4.2	9	7.3
Doctors	29	3.7	4	3.2
Nurses	1	0.1	-	
Business interests	102	12.9	37	29.9
Combined results:				
Scientists/doctors	1	0.1	2	1.6
Scientists/nurses			1	0.8
Visitors & business interests			1	0.8
Visitors & public service			1	0.8
General population & business interests			2	1.6
Theatre people & music people			1	0.8
Gov/public service & scientists	1	0.1	1	0.8
Doctor & Nurses	2	0.3		
Scientists/Drs/nurses	1	0.1		
Doctors & Gov/Pub. Service	1	0.1		
Govt/Pub service &	2	0.3		

politicians		
Govt, public service &General Population	1	0.1
TOTAL	791	124

Table 7 analyses the actors, sources and primary definers used in the headlines of the newspapers included in the study. Hall et al (1978, p. 61) suggests that the media tend to reproduce the existing structure of power in society's institutional order. One of the results of this structured preference given in the media to the opinion of the powerful is that these 'spokesmen' become what we call the 'primary definers' of the topics. However, Hansen et al (1998) disagree somewhat with this representation of primary definition. They say it does not normally distinguish between the different messages that come from the same group of primary definers, nor does it indicate varying degrees of 'legitimacy' coded as different sources or voices by the media. To try to assess the effect of all voices/actors and primary definers, Table 7 isolates actors, sources and primary definers from the headlines in *The Australian* and *The Straits Times*, in an effort to assess the news making scenarios, which actors, sources and primary definers become newsworthy and establish a claim to be articulators of the topic under review in this study. As the table shows, the general population, government and public service, business interests and victims tended to get plenty of coverage in both newspapers.

In *The Straits Times*, the general population was mentioned 155 times, that is 19.6 percent of the measured total of actors, sources and primary definers. The government and the public service were mentioned 386 times that is 48.7 percent of the total. This result gives a certain weight to the resultant comparisons contained in Table 7 and this

weighting gives credence to the fact that in Singapore the general population and the government/public service played a greater role in the activities that occurred during the SARS epidemic and defined where the media believed the symbolic structure of power lies in that city state. The two terms, general population and government/public service were used on 68.3 percent of the occasions. Business interests were mentioned a total of 12.9 percent of the occasions.

Turning to the results from *The Australian* in Table 7, the general population is mentioned on 11 occasions that is 8.9 percent of the measured total of actors, sources and primary definers. In *The Australian* the government/public service was mentioned 29 times that is 24.1 percent of the occasions. The two terms general population and government/public service were used a total of 33 percent of the occasions. Business interests were mentioned a total of 29.9 percent of the occasions.

Comparatively speaking, these results give confirmation to the conclusion that the structure of society during the time of a crisis in Singapore is measured by the importance given to the government and to the general public. In other words, these two definers or ‘spokesmen’ represent, for the media, a powerful place in the hierarchy of actors and primary definers in that city-state. As far as *The Australian* is concerned, this broadsheet defines the most important actors, sources and primary definers as being ‘business interests’, a definer that occurs 29.9 percent of the times the term is used. Government/public service and the general population, as mentioned above, occurred on a total of 33 percent of the occasions. Thus, it can be seen that the media give almost

equal weight to business interests as they do to the government and the general public. Whether or not this is due to the relative seriousness of the SARS epidemic in Singapore compared to the way it occurred in Australia is not conclusive from the data represented in the study. However, it is quite possible to conclude from the data analysed above that media interests in Singapore consider that the population/general public, the government/public service and business interests have an equal share in the importance expressed by the print media when they report on a crisis that occurred in that city state as a result of the SARS epidemic in 2003.

Global definitions and evaluation of lexical choices

In Table 8, as far as the global definition and the evaluation of vocabulary and lexical choice are concerned, words manifest the underlying semantic concepts used in the definition of the situation. In this case the choice of words defining how SARS is referred to, are classified as follows: ‘mentioned directly’; ‘mentioned indirectly’; ‘referred to but not mentioned directly or indirectly’; and ‘other occurrences’.

Table 8 Vocabulary and Lexical Choices – how disease mentioned

Choice of words	The Straits Times & Straits Interactive	The Straits Times	The Australian	
Mentioned directly	203	29%	48	38%
Mentioned indirectly	17	2%	28	22%
Referred to but not mentioned directly or indirectly	69	10%	13	10%
Other occurrences	403	59%	36	30%
TOTAL	692		125	

Table 8 suggests that *The Straits Times* has defined the situation by mentioning SARS directly on 29 percent of the occasions and that *The Australian* define the situation by mentioning SARS on 38 percent of the occasions. In other words, *The Australian* is direct on 9 per cent more occasions. If one combines ‘mentioned directly and ‘mentioned indirectly’ then the results indicate that *The Australian* uses a direct or an indirect reference to SARS in 60 per cent of the occasions measured, whereas *The Straits Times* uses a direct or indirect reference to the epidemic on only 31 percent of the occasions. These differences could be explained by accepting the fact that SARS in Singapore was more intense in its effects and more cases occurred in that state

Both papers in the study mentioned SARS or its derivatives directly, 29 per cent in the case of *The Straits Times* and 38 per cent in the case of *The Australian*. It is interesting to note that as far as *The Straits Times* is concerned in 59 percent of the cases, other words were used to describe SARS, virus, bug, etc. The following is an example of how SARS was mentioned directly, taken from the April 7 2003, headlines of one story in *The Straits Times Interactive*, ‘All the right moves for SARS but info’s a bit slow, no?’ In another issue of *The Straits Times* we see that the paper still reported direct references to the disease, for example, ‘In case of SARS’, and the day after also reported that ‘Two SGH nurses, patient hit by SARS’. Indirect reporting of the disease also received prominence in *The Straits Times*: ‘Why take the risk? Find another way to live with the bug’ (8 Apr 2003). There were many more, and from the issue of April 10, 2003 we read of this one: ‘More from SGH down with bug’. In addition to the direct and indirect references, a format for expressing SARS as being

referred to, but not mentioned directly or indirectly can be seen from this example taken from the 10 Apr 2003 issue of *The Straits Times Interactive*: ‘Ridiculed for wearing masks’; and on 13 Apr 2003, ‘Here to stay so let’s live with it’. Finally, another way of analysing Choice of Words was by classifying headlines under ‘Other’. Examples taken from two editions of the newspaper exemplify this classification: April 13 edition of *The Straits Times*, ‘For Better or Worse’, and from April 19, 2003 edition, ‘Pastor missed but church-goers out in force’.

SARS was analysed as being reported by *The Australian* using a similar type of classification method as used for *The Straits Times*. For example, on 5 Jun 2003, *The Australian’s* headline read: ‘SARS after effects linger much longer’, and on 16 Jun ‘Beijing denial worsens fears: SARS is out of control’. Samples of SARS mentioned indirectly occurred also in *The Australian’s* headlines, on 21 Apr 2003: ‘China sacks officials over bug’, and on 2 Apr 2003, ‘Virus thrives on cover-up’. SARS was referred to but not mentioned directly or indirectly in *The Australian* on 5 May 2003 and the headline reads: ‘Beijing to sink or swim on openness’, and on 26 Apr 2003, ‘Toronto a city of wartime phases’. Other methods of classifying the analysed headline data in *The Australian* were, ‘Fear of flying hits take offs’ (4 Apr 2003) and ‘Wary QANTAS pulls in its wings’ in the same issue.

Table 9a Most frequently used words in the headlines of *The Straits Times* during the period of the study (Mar-Jul 2003)

Occhs	Words used	% total	Occhs	Words	% total
194	SARS; age of SARS, SARS II, SAR, SARS affected, SARS', Anti SARs	12.85	8	Taiwan	0.5
69	Singapore	4.62	8	Hit(s)	0.5
27	China	1.79	7	Staff	0.46
26	Not	1.72	7	Action	0.46
21	Virus	1.5	7	Bad.	0.46
20	Case(s)	1.32	7	Institute of Mental Health	0.46
20	No	1.32	7	For	0.46
20	Back	1.32	7	Market(s)	0.46
19	World Health Organisation	1.25	7	Lab	0.46
17	Fear(s)	1.13	7	Measures	0.46
17	New	1.13	7	Firm(s)	0.46
16	Travel	1.1	7	Can	0.46
16	Fight	1.1	7	Here (s)	0.46
16	Quarantine	1.1	6	Don't	0.39
15	Outbreak	1.1	6	Battle	0.39
15	Get	1.1	6	Lifts	0.39
15	Hong Kong (HK)	1.1	6	Crowds	0.39
15	Hospital (s)	1.1	6	May	0.39
14	Beijing	0.93	6	Now	0.39
14	Bug	0.93	6	Next	0.39
14	All	0.93	6	One	0.39
13	Health	0.8	6	Time	0.39
13	Fever	0.8	6	Tourists	0.39
12	Out	0.8	6	Stay	0.39
11	Help	0.7	6	So	0.39
11	Up	0.7	6	Malaysia(sians)	0.39
11	Checks	0.7	6	Life	0.39

10	Home	0.66	6	Are	0.39
10	Against	0.66	6	Housing	0.39
10	Again	0.66	6	Screening	0.39
10	Crisis	0.66	6	Still	0.39
10	Patient(s)	0.66	5	What	0.33
9	Government	0.6	5	Wholesale	0.33
9	Over	0.6	5	Out	0.33
9	Take	0.6	5	Praises	0.33
9	Lessons	0.6	5	Right	0.33
9	Man	0.6	5	Cabby(ies)	0.33
8	Doctors	0.5	5	S.G.H.	0.33
8	Prime Minister	0.5	5	Leave	0.33
8	Return	0.5	5	Tough	0.33
5	To be	0.33	4	Nurses	0.26
5	After	0.33	4	Open (s)	0.26
5	Control (ling)	0.33	4	Puts	0.26
5	Minister (s)	0.33	4	Returning	0.26
5	Rule	0.33	4	Relief	0.26
5	Under	0.33	4	Safety (ly)	0.26
5	Medical	0.33	4	Spread	0.26
5	Need	0.33	4	Save	0.26
5	News	0.33	4	Scanner	0.26
5	Tan Tock Seng Hospital	0.33	4	Says	0.26
5	Two	0.33	4	Three	0.26
5	Kuala Lumpur	0.33	4	Trade	0.26
5	List	0.33	4	Test	0.26
5	Moves	0.33	4	Thermal	0.26
5	Growth	0.33	4	Threat (s)	0.26
5	About	0.33	4	Week	0.26
5	Economy	0.33	4	Workers	0.26
5	Firms	0.33	4	World	0.26
5	ASEAN	0.33	4	Warning	0.26
5	Days	0.33	4	Ward (s)	0.26
5	Big	0.33	4	Yet	0.26
4	Around	0.26	3	Asia	0.2
4	Action	0.26	3	Asks	0.2
4	Alert	0.26	3	All clear	0.2
4	Boost	0.26	3	Advisory	0.2
4	Can	0.26	3	Better	0.2
4	Despite	0.26	3	Best	0.2
4	Dies	0.26	3	Backing	0.2
4	Enough	0.26	3	Cleaning	0.2
4	Find	0.26	3	Check-points	0.2
4	Few	0.26	3	Cuts	0.2
4	Fighting	0.26	3	Centre	0.2

4	Goes	0.26	3	Cash	0.2
4	Good	0.26	3	Chance	0.2
4	Gets	0.26	3	Chief	0.2
4	Hotels	0.26	3	Contact	0.2
4	How	0.26	3	Cost	0.2
4	Heroes	0.26	3	Celebrate	0.2
4	Info(s)	0.26	3	Donors	0.2
4	Infection(s)	0.26	3	Dialects	0.2
4	Into	0.26	3	Death	0.2
4	Kids	0.26	3	Effort	0.2
4	Kit(s)	0.26	3	Face	0.2
4	Live	0.26	3	Free	0.2
4	Let's	0.26	3	First	0.2
4	Lifted	0.26	3	Global	0.2
4	Move	0.26	3	Gloom	0.2
4	Most	0.26	3	Industry	0.2
3	Know	0.2			
3	Last	0.2			
3	Lapses	0.2			
3	Message	0.2			
3	Needs	0.2			
3	Off	0.2			
3	Play	0.2			
3	Okay	0.2			
3	People	0.2			
3	Slow	0.2			
3	Survey	0.2			
3	Slows	0.2			
3	Service	0.2			
3	Senior Minister	0.2			
3	Takes	0.2			
3	Top	0.2			
3	Tears	0.2			
3	Taxis	0.2			
3	Try	0.2			
3	Today	0.2			
3	Testing	0.2			
3	Tribute	0.2			
3	Thermometers	0.2			
3	Too	0.2			
3	Toronto	0.2			
3	TV	0.2			
3	Those	0.2			
3	Tourism	0.2			
3	Veggies	0.2			
3	Who	0.2			

3	You	0.2
3	Australia (Aussie)	0.2

Table 9b Most frequent words in the headlines of *The Australian* during the period of the study (Mar-Jul 2003)

Occhs	Words	%total
45	SARS	24.5
13	Bug	7.1
11	Fear	6.0
11	Killer	6.0
8	Disease	4.4
8	Australia/Aussie/Australian	4.4
7	Flu	3.8
7	Hong Kong	3.8
5	City	2.8
5	Crisis	2.8
5	Qantas	2.8
5	Virus	2.8
5	War	2.8
5	Airlines (airline)	2.8
4	Cover-up	2.2
4	Epidemic	2.2
4	Health	2.2
4	Spreads	2.2
3	Beijing	1.6
3	Cuts	1.6
3	Cases	1.6
3	Hit	1.6
3	Lift	1.6
3	New	1.6
3	Not	1.6
3	Out	1.6
3	Panic	1.6

What the headlines define about the situation

Finally, in Table 10 the study examines what the headlines defined about the situation under review.

Table 10 What the headlines defined about the situation when reporting SARS

What headlines define about situation	The Straits Times and the Straits Times Interactive	%	The Australian	%
Social opinions are expressed	217	27.4	12	9.8
Political opinions are expressed	100	12.7	13	10.7
Cultural opinions are expressed	4	0.5	1	0.8
Medical statements reported	86	10.9	9	7.5
Scientific opinions reported	34	4.3	8	6.5
Alert sounded-emphasis placed on crisis situation that has evolved	70	8.8	17	14.0
Health authorities take stock	101	12.7	4	3.3
Business actions are reported	109	13.7	32	26.4
Relief that disease is almost over	23	2.9	2	1.6
Fear of infection	38	4.8	9	7.4
Social opinions and health authorities	1	0.1	1	0.8
Social opinions and business actions	1	0.1	3	2.4
Political opinions and Fear of infection	1	0.1	1	0.8
Political opinions and scientific opinions			1	0.8
Cultural opinions and business actions	1	0.1	1	0.8

Medical statements and business actions			1	0.8
Social opinions and medical statements			1	0.8
Medical and scientific statements	1	0.1	2	1.6
Medical statements and health authorities taking stock			1	0.8
Health authorities take stock and business actions reported			1	0.8
Political opinions & medical statement	2	0.2		
Business actions and relief that disease is almost over			1	0.8
Political opinions, health authorities take stock and business actions reported			1	0.8
Social & Political Opinions	2	0.2		
Political opinions & business actions	1	0.1		
Alert sounded & political opinion	1	0.1		
Health authorities & take stock & political opinions	1	0.1		
Business actions & alert sounded	1	0.1		
TOTAL	795		122	

Table 10 analyses what the headlines define about the reporting of SARS. In *The Straits Times* 27.4 per cent of the occurrences refer to social opinions, 12.7 per cent of the occurrences refer to health authorities taking stock, 10.9 per cent refer to medical statements being reported, and 13.7 per cent refer to the reporting of business actions. In-so-far as *The Australian* is concerned, political opinions are expressed 10.7 per cent of

the occasions, 14 per cent refer to alerting of a crisis situation, 9.8 per cent to social opinions and 26.4 per cent refer to business actions being reported.

Also, the following categories on this list: social opinions are expressed, political opinions are expressed, cultural opinion are expressed, medical statements reported, scientific opinions reported, alert sounded-emphasis placed on crisis situation that has evolved, health authorities take stock, relief that disease is almost over and fear of infection were considered to be the most important definitions of what the headlines said about the situations in both broadsheets. The other definitions were combinations of what the newspapers reported about SARS. Expressed as a percentage of the total headlines, *The Straits Times* includes, for the above categories, 85 percent of the total occasions. *The Australian* includes 61.2 percent for the above categories. As far as the 'business actions are reported' category, *The Straits Times* used this 13.7 percent of the time. *The Australian* used it 26.4 percent of the time. One must conclude that because of the seriousness of the outbreak of SARS in Singapore *The Straits Times* has placed more emphasis on the nine categories. It also appears that *The Australian* has given twice as much emphasis to 'business actions' than has *The Straits Times*.

Conclusion

The methodology used in this chapter to consider the differences between *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* is, in the main that of content analysis and this has been used to exemplify the media's representation of the narratives of SARS as it happened in

the countries of Singapore and Australia. The tables and statistics used to explain how the two newspapers represented the various happenings and narratives during this episode have been derived, as has been mentioned before, from an outline process of a Content Analysis Coding Schedule contained in Appendix 3. As mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter, the cultural implications, the most frequently used words and their semantic concepts, the actors and primary definers who took part in the narratives have also been included in the tables that describe some of the media's versions of the happenings in Singapore and in Australia. A short list below explains some of the examples of what the headlines described about the situation.

Social opinions expressed:	'Hospitals coping despite strain on resources'
Political opinions are expressed:	'SARS inflicts heavy political toll on China'
Cultural opinions are expressed:	'Booklet on how to fight virus for every home'
Medical statements reported:	'worried that kids are scared, talk to Principal'
Scientific opinions reported:	'S'pore, US set to battle new health threats together'
Health authorities take stock	'was there need to name HDB quarantine block?'
Business actions are reported:	'Asia's wealthy buy their own protection'
Relief that disease is almost over:	'A silent prayer and back to living again'
Fear of infection:	'SARS stigma stays despite end of outbreak, HK survey finds'

Apart from the newspaper being an important place in which to relate the narrative of a crisis, headlines have always had some ideological implications. If crisis reporting is important to the way society functions and a salient feature of contemporary consciousness headlines may be the best way to relate the narrative of a crisis. This chapter has analysed and explained the way headlines are used functionally by newspapers, and they could be one of the most important methods by which news is mediated. As Van Dijk mentions:

Headlines in the Press have important textual and cognitive functions. They therefore deserve special attention. As every newspaper reader knows, they are the most conspicuous part of a news report: they are brief, printed 'on top' in large bold type, and often across several columns. Their main function is to summarise the most important information of the report (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 50).

The above information collected from *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* provides a suitable platform to be able to construct a model that allows a critical examination of the reporting of a health crisis. Indeed, Anthony Smith has written that the newspaper has acquired an important role as the major link through which innumerable chains of information pass (Smith, 1979 p. 14).

Van Dijk in his study of headlines (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 50) used a multi-disciplinary approach and noted that the role of the Press as a corporate, social and cultural institution needs to be analysed in relation to other institutions, such as politics and the economy. Also, as mentioned in the Introduction, we may want to know if the content we are measuring in one newspaper differs from the content in another. The information gleaned from the content analysis of the headlines has demonstrated that the method is useful for

a research project such as this because it allows the investigation to concentrate on the headlines and provide a model of the situation as it appears in Singapore and in Australia. The measurable content of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* has been classified as ‘headlines’ that are about the daily reporting of the progress of the SARS epidemic. The headlines were coded, the data collected and a measurement system established to analyse the reporting of a serious health matter that lasted from March to November of 2003. Also, as mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter, it is possible to take the quantification within content analysis to a degree that makes it possible to read and interpret questions that relate to the intensity of meaning in texts, their social impact and intensity, the relationships between media texts and the realities and the representations they reflect (Hansen et al, 1998). In this way, qualitative outcomes may also be achieved/attained.

Tables 1 and 2 show the corpus of headlines that occurred in *The Straits Time* from April 2003 to October 2003 and in *The Australian* from March 2003 to July 2003; *The Straits Times* had 649 headlines and 141 letters during the period of the study and *The Australian* had 125 headlines, and no letters. These indicate the importance attached to the health crisis by the newspapers in the study. Indeed, *The Straits Times* ran a separate section called SARS Outbreak during most of the period of the crisis in that country which emphasizes, on the surface at least, the significance of the outbreak of SARS and its importance as a news item. In fact, it could be argued that there was more urgency than ever, in a crisis, to get the headline correct and meaningful.

A general difference between the two broadsheets is shown by Tables 4 and Table 5. These show that *The Straits Times*, as opposed to *The Australian*, allocates a lot more writing duties to named staff, as opposed to anonymous authors or nameless bureau staff. Whether this means *The Straits Times* uses a different management style, or uses a different organisational structure, is a matter for further research to be done elsewhere. However, differences specifically related to crisis reporting are noted by the fact that a Health Correspondent wrote 5.1 percent of the stories in *The Straits Times*, and 3.2 percent of the stories in *The Australian* were written by a Health Correspondent. The health crisis may also explain that by-lines from staff accounted for 32.5 percent of the stories in *The Straits Times*, and by-lines from staff accounted for 24.8 percent of the stories in *The Australian*.

Moving on to Table 6, this contains the number of articles in the two newspapers studied and analyses them by type. It can be seen that in *The Straits Times*, 72.6 per cent of the articles were ‘features’ and for *The Australian*, 88 per cent were ‘features’. It was considered to be enough evidence to point to the importance of SARS in a social, a cultural and a political sense. It seems that both broadsheets gave the SARS epidemic good coverage and space because of its importance in the areas mentioned in Table 6.

When we get to Table 7 we find this table analyses the actors, sources and primary definers used in the headlines of the newspapers included in the study. Hall et al (1978, p. 61) suggests the media tend to reproduce the existing structure of power in society’s institutional order. One of the results of this structured preference given in the media to

the opinion of the powerful is that these ‘spokesmen’ become what may be called the ‘primary definers’ of the topics. It is quite possible to conclude from the data analysed in Table 7 that media interests in Singapore consider that the population/general public, the government/public service and business interests have an equal share in the importance expressed by the print media when they report a crisis that occurred in that city state as a result of the SARS epidemic in 2003. The table also shows that the general population, government and public service, business interests and victims tended to get plenty of coverage in both of the newspapers. It is not conclusive from the study that this is due to the relative seriousness of the SARS epidemic in Singapore compared to the way it occurred in Australia.

In Table 8, it is shown that both papers in the study mention SARS or its derivatives directly, 29 per cent in the case of *The Straits Times* and 38 per cent in the *The Australian*. It is interesting to note that as far as *The Straits Times* is concerned in 59 percent of the cases, other words were used to describe SARS, virus, bug, etc. The following is an example of how SARS was mentioned directly, taken from the April 7 2003, headlines of one story in *The Straits Times Interactive*, ‘All the right moves for SARS but info’s a bit slow, no?’ SARS was analysed as being reported by *The Australian* using a similar type of classification method as used for *The Straits Times*. For example, on 5 Jun 2003, *The Australian*’s headline read: ‘SARS after effects linger much longer’, and on 16 Jun ‘Beijing denial worsens fears: SARS is out of control’. Table 8 suggests that *The Straits Times* has defined the situation by mentioning SARS directly on 29 percent of the occasions and that *The Australian* has defined the situation by mentioning

SARS on 38 percent of the occasions. In other words, *The Australian* is direct on 9 per cent more occasions. This could have been because there were many more stories and a greater variety of stories in Singapore. This is borne out by the fact that ‘other’ lexical choices occurred on 59 per cent of occasions in *The Straits Times* and on only 30 per cent of occasions in *The Australian*.

Turning now to Table 9 in *The Straits Times*, SARS and its derivatives were mentioned on 12.85 % of the occasions and in *The Australian* the acronym SARS was mentioned 24.5 % of the occasions.

In this study, the last table, Table 10 examines what the headlines define about the situation under review. In *The Straits Times* 27.4 per cent of the occurrences refer to social opinions, 12.7 per cent of the occurrences refer to health authorities taking stock, 10.9 per cent refer to medical statements being reported, and 13.7 per cent refer to the reporting of business actions. In-so-far as *The Australian* is concerned, political opinions are expressed 10.7 per cent of the occasions, 14 per cent refer to alerting of a crisis situation, 9.8 per cent to social opinions and 26.4 per cent refer to business actions being reported. One must conclude therefore that because of the seriousness of the outbreak of SARS in Singapore *The Straits Times* has placed more emphasis on the first nine categories. It also appears that *The Australian* has given twice as much emphasis to ‘business actions’ than has *The Straits Times*.

In Chapter 4 the findings are exemplified and the conclusion adds some finality as to how the headlines in the two broadsheets affect and are limited by the methods used to arrive at the conclusion. There is also a description of where the study sits within the theoretical context of the field of media, communications and culture.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVES & REPRESENTATIONS: TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

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Introduction

There is a world narrative that tells the story of how the human condition likes to live and this narrative relies on a safe social environment being always available. The human condition is always in fear of disasters, diseases, terrorisms and the like. It is aided in the observation of these events by national newspapers that take the story from its source and narrate it as it happens. Both *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* captured for a few months of 2003 the narrative of the life of a nation under siege and stress from a serious health crisis, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

This chapter discusses the aim of the research which is to explore the role of the national newspaper in two countries in the Asia-Pacific region within the context of reporting a crisis (SARS). Also discussed is how the reporting of a health crisis is relevant to the theory of living in a 'risk society', and why crisis reporting has taken centre stage over the past two to three years and has been so well represented in two of the region's broadsheets. Content analysis is mentioned as it has been used as a measure of the reporting of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) by *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*. The chapter discusses the symbiotic relationship of crisis and risk, the newspaper and the national mind, narratives and presentations, post SARS events, prior

to a discussion of a case study based on the headlines of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* during the time of the SARS crisis.

Following on from this, an assessment is made of how the reporting in 2003 was not just about SARS, but was a way of reporting that allowed one to view journalism as an aid to good governance as well as keeping the public informed. The thesis has also highlighted the point made about freedoms by *The Globe and Mail*, the history of which was mentioned in Chapter 2. That newspaper believes that only an informed public can defend itself against power seekers who threaten its freedoms (McFarlane and Clements, 2003). How the public was kept informed during the SARS crisis is well demonstrated by the analysis of the content of the headlines of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*.

Crisis and Risk - the symbiotic relationship

The thesis offers an explanation of how the reporting of a health crisis can be understood via the theory of living in a 'risk society'. It also suggests why crisis reporting has become important over the past two to three years, because of an influx of esoteric diseases such as bird flu and SARS. Earlier in the thesis, crisis is defined, journalism and crisis journalism placed in context and crisis journalism positioned within the continuing expansion and development of major theoretical frameworks used to analyse and explain the mediation and the social consequences of a crisis. One of the defining points in the thesis is that two of Asia-Pacific's leading broadsheets examined the severity and the seriousness of the trauma brought on by the outbreak of a disease and the social and

economic risks for the people involved with it is highlighted. One of the more important observations of Chapter 1 was that crisis journalism can be about many risk situations in any part of the world. It is also likely to be prominent in the reporting of events that happen in the developed and the developing world. For this reason, it is important to understand what a crisis is: from its relationship to journalism, to the production of daily newspapers and to the reporting of risks.

Foremost in the argument are the cultural and political issues in Southeast Asia concerning risks. These risks are in the areas of veterinary work, trends in livestock production, food, fibre and energy, intensive production methods and environmental input. The World Trade Organisation and global trends are also beginning to be reported more often in the media (Reiter, 2007, p. 2). An explanatory model of how SARS came to be such a dangerous risk to the world community is as yet unknown. According to WHO, livestock markets and wildlife species are involved. After SARS, Avian Influenza made the headlines for a certain period and there is some concern about the density of poultry populations. From the point of view of poultry management, production of poultry for human consumption requires management control systems to be developed and disease control objectives need to be stratified. Principles of risk control in any culture and a good response to health planning, and staff training is a must for all these areas of poultry management, as is meaningful engagement with the stakeholders and communication with the media.

One would also have to consider the cultural reasons for an outbreak such as SARS, particularly if one understands the reasons for selling live chickens. Tradition in parts of Southeast Asia says the chicken is best eaten just after it has been killed. This point is noted by Trevor Ellis, a doctor who spent time in Hong Kong during the SARS outbreak (Ellis, 2005). The point here being that there has been precious little reporting of what happened before and after the outbreak in the area of the culture of chicken husbandry. The next steps in certain parts of China appear to be the implementation of the abattoir system of killing poultry and selling them through a western system of food marketing and distribution (Edwards and Ellis, 2005).

Crisis and risk apart, fear of another outbreak in Hong Kong is limited but there are still fears of the possible occurrence of avian influenza (H5N1). The newspapers in Hong Kong reported, during the SARS crisis, that the public feared hospitals as far as the SARS virus was concerned, and there was also fear of death because there did not seem to be much hope that members of the public would see their relatives again if they (the relatives) had been diagnosed with SARS. The media also exposed the blame factor to the general public, although they (the media) did not report that there were different strains of the SARS virus at that time (Edwards and Ellis 2005).

Turning to the relationships during the crisis, Hawkes argues that the nature of things lies not in events themselves but in the relationship we construct and then perceive between them (Hawkes, 1977, p. 17). This may be applied to the relationship between Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and other diseases of that type that have

appeared on the scene in the 20th and the 21st centuries. They point the way to what Beck has called the ‘risk society’, a society where the world is at risk from disease, from the spoiling of the environment, from terrorism, from industrial threats, and others. Thus if we try to understand news and reports, we must take account of what news really means:

If we seek to understand the news we will need to take account of two major determinants of what it means; (i) the language (sign system) in which it is encoded, and (ii) the social forces which determine how its messages are both produced and ‘read’.... It should be remembered that the news, like all other discourses, is a social force in its own right (Hartley, 1982, p 14).

Hartley makes the point that the social force referred to here is concerned with preferred meanings in other words, how the readers interpret the ‘news’ whether it be about SARS or anything else for that matter. The readers who had to interpret the SARS messages may have been affected by the circumstances in which they found themselves during the time the disease was being reported in Singapore or in Australia (Hartley, 1982, p. 36).

Fear, crisis and risk can also take on a more important aspect when they become global. For example, there are certain similarities between SARS and the 1918 flu pandemic in that in both cases the disease spread through the transportation network. In addition there was a trend in the reporting of the news of a crisis in that the number of mentions in the newspapers rose as the mortality rose and lessened as the mortality declined. This can be observed in the content analysis summarized in Chapter 3 and it can be ascertained that this closely follows the format of the 1918 pandemic (McCullagh, 2003, p. 32); although the scale was vastly different.

Crisis is closely related to the term risk and this term has been identified and discussed in some detail by Beck. He calls risk the modern approach to foresee and control the future consequences of human action, the various unintended consequences of radicalised modernisation (Beck, 1999, p.3). It should be possible to analyse what Beck really means by comparing a plan to climb Mount Everest and the human emotion that would have invaded the thoughts of the person who is to make the attempt. The risks involved in making the climb are not insurable, neither are events and happenings like the modern day risks of ecological change, global warming, nuclear disasters, and so on (Beck, 1999, p. 4). Likewise, a disease such as SARS is not insurable, nor is the business of selling animals in a market place that also sells 'wild' animals, with all the consequences that could arise from any disease that may occur and be spread by this type of animal husbandry.

The point at issue really is that it is possible to postulate that as far as disease is concerned, 'world risk' is of course linked very closely with globalisation and the increasingly efficient air travel industry. Air travel has become much more frequent due to the increases in the efficiency of technologies that Beck writes about. As he also says:

In the 'global age', the themes of risk unites many otherwise disparate areas of new transnational politics with the question of cosmopolitan democracy: with the new political economy of uncertainty, financial markets, trans-cultural conflicts over food and other products (BSE), emerging 'risk communities', and, last but not least, the anarchy of international relations. Personal biographies as well as world politics are getting 'risky' in the global world of manufactured uncertainties (Beck, 1999, p. 5).

It is certainly a point to take into the discussion that global uncertainty was a factor in the massive coverage that Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome received in the early months

of 2003 in many countries of the world. The article from *The Straits Times* mentioned earlier, entitled “Globalization’s nasty bite”, also points out that globalisation of disease is a result of modern transportation (Reiter, 2007, p.2).

The Newspaper and the National Mind

The prime reason for talking about risk and crisis, in relationship to the nation, is to develop the discussion to the point of examining what use can be made of news as an antidote to a national crisis. For example, how does the general public defend itself against the power seekers in the businesses of animal husbandry (as well as those in the forests) who threaten our freedoms; freedom to travel, freedom to eat, to live in a society free from the associated risks of global warming, diseases and climate change. One way it may be suggested is to have a free and independent press that believes, as *The Globe and Mail* does, that only an informed public can defend itself against the power seekers who threaten its freedoms (McFarlane, 2003, p. 23).

What the study is in effect identifying is the effect a crisis may have on the way a nation would or should behave. National identity and the national mind conjure up a concept of a collective type of behaviour that could express the meanings and the values of the publics that reside in a nation. Two national newspapers in the Asia-Pacific region have been examined as to how they report a crisis situation. Chapter 2, which is concerned with the national newspaper, has evaluated the newspaper’s role in telling the stories of the metaphysical relationships that exist between a nation’s narratives, and a

national mind. To clarify what and how a daily newspaper first came into being, the chapter defines how the daily ‘prototypes’ of a newspaper arose and how this prototype grew into the newspaper of the modern world. Anthony Smith makes the point (Smith, 1979, p. 13), that the newspaper has acquired an important role as the major link through which innumerable chains of information pass, providing for many people information taken from countless different parts of the nation. It is quite clear that when reporting on a crisis, the rhetoric used in newspaper headlines treads a fine line between sensationalism and excitement to inform the public.

Narratives

Informing the public also points to the perspective of a narrative, and the concept of the ‘narrative’ suggests the idea that every state, every country, every nation needs a story, long or short, about where they came from, where they are going at a particular point in time and where they may be in the future (Walker, 1982, p. 28).

To complete the narrative, publics are informed by correspondents and journalists, amongst which are foreign correspondents who report from overseas, but have a domestic concern. It is necessary that the correspondents be informed about news that would appeal to or interest the audience. This determines what kind of story will be told. It includes what the editors require and what the journalists see as their role as national correspondents about countries other than Australia. John Tebbutt (2000, p. 95) mentions this particular concept when he writes about how foreign correspondents report. Tebbutt

suggests that the practice of reporting and the kinds of stories that should be told holds good and is a product of implicit and explicit directions from editors as much as journalists' concept of their role and would hold good for reporting on such items as SARS, just as much as it does for the practices of reporting on foreign items of news. He notes 'It is in this play of dependencies between journalists and audiences – editors, nations, hosts that power is exercised through the organised and organising practices of reporting and its administration' (Tebbutt, 2000, p. 95).

Presentations

This thesis has also concentrated on the media's representation of SARS and examines the question, what are the preferred meanings of the headlines presented by *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*? The media constructs classification systems of news production such as sports, social, business, general news and the like. People who read newspapers tend to read certain types of news. When SARS was first reported it was presented as a type of disease that occurred in a peasant type of agriculture in China, and it was this geographical, cultural and social location that made the headlines. By the time it had reached Singapore it represented a supreme danger to the life and business interests of that city-state. Chapter 1 presented visions of how SARS is represented in the news, its metaphors and some of the fears and notions that can be connected to it. (Berger, 2005, p .173). One of the issues facing the media in Singapore in 2003 was how to present and report SARS to the people. Stuart Hall, writing about representation, says that people give things meaning and find meaning in events and things. He maintains that Ferdinand de Saussure has already pointed out that things do not have a single and fixed meaning.

Fundamental to the production of meaning in language (and other forms of communication such as images and stories) are the relationship between things, concepts and signs. This is a process that links language, images, stories and results in representation (Berger, 2005, p.167). So, 'meaning' enabled the readers of *The Straits Times* to interpret the signs of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) as demonstrated in the published narrative about this crisis. Life in the city-state of Singapore was represented by stories written about crisis, fear, risk, and trauma. Signs that have not been intelligibly received are not in any sense 'meaningful' (Hall, 1997, p. 32-33), but the signs in the news during the SARS epidemic were very obvious.

The Singapore public was obviously affected by this terrible health crisis. Analysis of news items around that time shows that after the disease had begun to spread, the mediated views of what was being done by the medical staff at hospitals, by public servants, by the government were being reported as *the* main news in *The Straits Times*. So, one can take it that SARS was being presented and represented as the most important event in the narrative of the life of Singapore during the period of March to July in 2003.

Several writers have identified ways in which hazards and crises have occurred and as was mentioned earlier in the thesis, an example of how a crisis situation may be reported or represented was mentioned in Chapter 2 as covered by Singer and Endreny (1993) in their book, *Reporting on Risk*. The book focuses on the way hazards are reported in the mass media and concentrates on the possible issues in risk reporting. The authors surveyed a wide variety of print and electronic media and their study observed

hundreds of different hazards and the way they are presented to the general public. The book was comprehensive and also covered the fact that the media tends to report on a need to excite the public as well as to inform. Also mentioned in Chapter 2, another researcher, Clive Seale, concentrates his studies on how health matters are represented by the mass media, and the level of accuracy attained through these messages (Seale, 2002). Seale says the media tend to make us aware of a heightened awareness of the risks and crises of life as it continues to provide information about dangers and news of this or that disaster or threat (Seale, 2002, p. 14). He points out that with the decline of infectious disease as a major cause of illness and death in affluent countries, media stories tend to evoke images from myths of the past and that references to 'plague' are quite common (Seale, 2002, p. 80).

So, a crisis can be represented by the press in a symbolic and ideological way and this thesis points to the fact that there is a need to focus on a framework in reporting a crisis, and much more insight is needed into the structures and meanings of the reporting of the crisis. Seale (2002) suggests that media health representations reflect media stereotyping and journalists and editorial writers have created mythical persons, professional heroes and the magical power of drugs and high technology that will cure all ills. Seale also suggests that media health representations might also include the fact that life is full of danger from the environment, malevolent bugs, harmful substances and sometimes bad people who carry disease (Seale, 2002, p. 80).

Post-SARS events

To take the discussion a step further, since the end of the SARS crisis in July 2003, many interesting articles have been written about the virus, how it may be contained and how the media and the medical profession may treat it. In these articles, the role of the press in the representation of a health crisis has been assessed against criteria of headlines that define such elements as fear, panic, economic factors, trade, etc. It would appear from the investigations carried out that the role of the press is to a great extent symbolic and ideological and hence based on practices that are critical and expository. As such a special approach is required that is able to describe the subtleties and rigour of crisis journalism. Paul Tambyah (2007) says that Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) was a wake up call. It reminded us all that we live in a globalised environment. We ignore interactions between humans and other inhabitants of this planet at our peril and we need the cooperation between scientists, governments and the media to help control plagues that are occurring today and may do so tomorrow.

Bearing this in mind, an article by Auyash (2005) considered that the handling of the crisis in Singapore was so effective that it should be looked upon as a benchmark model for anyone to apply in times of a health crisis. Several concepts and factors such as Singapore's group culture, acceptance of advanced technology and the government's understanding of 'fear' as a characteristic of SARS that could be 'treated' with communication were addressed in Auyash's paper (Auyash, 2005, p. 207). In a special theme issue of the *Asian Journal of Communication* (2005), many writers commented on

how the media should behave during a crisis, particularly about how media and crisis are linked through human communications and decision making and conflict of interest. One author Ma, also makes the point that SARS could be described as being more than a health crisis. It became a learning package on media and crisis and can be looked on as serving to identify that communications is always at the centre of an analysis of a crisis situation (Ma, 2005, p. 245).

Very appropriate to a discussion of the SARS crisis is the interesting aspect of mediating news of a health crisis and the changing of 'news' from normative to critical. Wilkins (2005) suggests that like the 1918 influenza pandemic, SARS was a signal event in that it shaped public health policy worldwide, and perhaps the future of public health policy. It became a symbol of the limits of science at the time, of the actual events that happened at the time and the understandings of public health (Wilkins, 2005, p. 249). SARS also had an effect not only on the public health systems but on businesses and other economic and political areas (Tian and Stewart, 2005, 289). Countries that were not influenced by a direct outbreak of the disease were affected by a decrease in tourism and a decline in the number of people travelling by air.

Thus, as well as playing a prominent role in identifying what news is, journalists and headline writers are always influenced by the political, cultural, economic and technical factors that are happening around them during a news event. This was obviously so during the SARS crisis when a country such as Singapore was compelled to take extreme measures to combat this disease. Despite the hard work involved during the

crisis, the country managed to put into place a carefully planned approach that pointed to the fact that in times of a serious health crisis, a more intimate and cooperative government-media relationship would prove to be better for the overall health of the public (Plate, 2007, p. 1).

WHO said that the SARS epidemic was ultimately beaten by some of the simplest and oldest tools of public health: contact tracing, quarantine and isolation. WHO also said that ‘an early challenge for the SARS team was responding to the surging media interest’. Also, the world community expects accurate, complete, and timely information about diseases that do not respect international borders (WHO, 2006, p. 246).

Analysing Headlines – A case study of SARS reporting

One should mention that empathy, transparency, honesty and long term effects do not avoid the regional issues and the success of the way the SARS epidemic was managed in 2003. Its impact on markets and media communication, the action by effected groups in getting it right or getting it wrong all had an affect on the way risk and crisis were reported in the Asia Pacific region The concept of a risk society explained earlier in this thesis can be summarized as concerning:

Human dramas – plagues, famines and natural disasters, the looming power of gods and demons – may or may not quantifiably equal the destructive potential of modern mega-technologies in hazardness. They differ essentially from ‘risks’ in my sense since they are not based on decisions, or, more specifically, decisions that focus on techno-economic advantages and opportunities and accept hazards as simply the dark side of progress (Beck, 1999, p. 50).

The fact that news is the account of an event, not the event itself, should be borne in mind when summarising the analysis of the accounts of how SARS was reported by the two newspapers in question. As far as the conceptual field is concerned, ‘crisis journalism’ the concept depends not upon the place it has in the spectrum of the presentation of news but upon the way the news spectrum is divided up within the news production system. In other words to understand ‘crisis journalism’, one must also understand political journalism, sports journalism, editorials, op-ed pages, health journalism, and so on (Culler, 1976, p 23).

Turning now to the headlines, they have an ‘attraction’ and an ‘attention grabbing’ capacity, Chapter 3 codified and analysed the headlines of *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* using content analysis. In this case study, the SARS virus that threatened to spread and kill many people represented the most important idea of a model of a health situation. To paraphrase van Dijk (1991, p. 50), headlines of news reports about health affairs summarise events and stories that *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* find most relevant for readers. These headlines define and evaluate the health situation as the editor or journalist saw it.

Headlines also have a rhetoric, lexical style and syntactical style and their main attraction is what they say about the reporting of SARS. Headlines are a model of the situation and summarise and express what the main topic is and from this the readers build a ‘personal memory’ and representation of what happened during the reporting of SARS. As soon as the word SARS or ‘bug’ or ‘virus’ appear, the reader activates his/her

general knowledge about epidemics and pandemics. The readers move into their ‘disease script’ and a paradigm of the situation is activated, and the words included in the headlines notify the reader of the importance of the main topic.

The Straits Times and *The Australian* use bug, disease and virus under the heading of the most frequent words used in the headlines. *The Straits Times* uses SARS, virus, bug, fever a total of 16.08 percent of occasions under the heading of ‘the most frequently used words in the headlines’. *The Australian* uses, SARS, bug, virus, killer, fear, on 46.4 percent of occasions under the heading of ‘the most frequently used words in the headlines’. Thus, even though Australia had only 6 reported cases and Singapore had 238, the ‘fear factor’ was used 30 per cent more times in *The Australian*. This could have been because *The Straits Times* uses many more different words in its headlines than *The Australian*. To identify to the reader what was being written about, *The Straits Time* uses, apart from the acronym SARS, 201 words or groups of words to describe that disease and *The Australian* uses, apart from the acronym SARS, 26 words or groups of words. This could have some relation to the number of times SARS was reported in *The Straits Times* and the coverage the disease got in *The Australian*.

We now turn to the headlines and the paradigmatic and syntagmatic propositions that the headlines offer as far as an interpretation of the way SARS was reported by the two broadsheets under review. Within these lexical choices, sub-sections are analysed under the following themes: politics, culture, social, medical, business and fear. These social and cultural aspects of a crisis fit well within the orbit of what this thesis is about,

the use of news to affect an overarching picture of the way a disease is progressing. Hartley said that news is a social and cultural institution among many others. It occupies a special place in our culture's hierarchy of values (Hartley, 1989 p. 5). Within lexical choices and discourse, we can enumerate the following separate conceptual experiences that can be reported within the news about a crisis: politics, culture, social, medical, business, fear, and others.

As far as a crisis is concerned, in any country, certain areas of interest to the general population would be reported. Such areas of interest include: travel, business, political, and social and cultural aspects of a crisis. Also, as Hartley has noted, news itself is a social and cultural institution, it shares an important position in our culture's hierarchy of values and comes from an impersonal institution which is also an industry (Hartley, 1982, p. 5). The word also has values that have made it, as a discourse, one of the most important of the communication systems since it first appeared on the scene centuries ago. We have mentioned earlier that news values lead to research on what makes news news (Masterson, 1991, p. 21). However, the factors described below appear again and again in the headlines of SARS reporting in both *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* and are worthy of further investigation as aspects of news. The headlines in this case are all about a crisis situation and not, as Masterson said, 'when is information news?' (Masterson, 1991, p. 21). After all, the core elements of Interest, Timeliness and Clarity are without doubt necessary elements of the reporting of a crisis such as SARS. But the fact that business, economics, social, cultural, political, medical and fear factors

also appeared in the reporting of SARS means they need to be discussed and analysed to demonstrate the important part they play in the narrative.

Emphases given in the analysis of a case study

The following: actors, primary definers and themes have been discussed and developed as they are some of the more defining formations of the lexical choices aspects of the analysis of the reporting of the SARS crisis.

Actors

What the headlines say about medical staff	
Doctors show they are true to their oath	ST, 15 May 03
Doctors, scientists unite against SARS	ST, 28 Apr 03
Private doctors, nurses to stay put	ST, 21 Apr 03

Medical staffs at all levels were mentioned in many of the narratives about SARS. There is not any doubt that doctors and nurses would receive ample coverage of the way they behaved and treated people during the spread of the disease in Singapore. *The Straits Times* in particular made sure of that.

Primary definers

I include: fear factors, business and economic factors and themes (such as social factors, cultural factors and political factors) as primary definers.

What the headlines said about fear factors

Don't let fear take economy into a tailspin	ST, 20 Apr 03
Why take the risk? Find ways to live with the Bug	ST, 7 Apr 03
Disease's two pronged attack	AUS, 3 Apr 03

Fear has always been one of the composite happenings that occur during a crisis such as this. It appears that the newspapers have used the term in ways that make sure they can help the population gain some sort of mastery over the way groups of people could behave if fear took over and somehow got out of hand.

What the headline said about business and economic factors

Hard hit firms get backing on tough moves	ST, 16 Apr 03
Business picking up for travel agents	ST, 28 Jun 03
Tourism industry puts on brave face	ST, 20 May 03
QANTAS cuts costs	AUS, 31 Mar 03

The way businesses were affected played a prominent role in the coverage of the discourse. Certainly airlines, travel and hotels were mentioned at length in both

broadsheets. It is clear from what the headlines say that serious problems existed for the business groups mentioned here. The main focus is on the danger to businesses and their possible failure, loss of money and the inactivity of staff during the time of the crisis.

Themes

What the headlines said about social factors	
Let's Get the Pre-Schoolers back in class	ST, 30 Apr 03
Cremate all SARS Victims	ST, 18 Apr 03
Try a Little Kindness	ST, 13 Apr 03
Nightmares on our doorstep	AUS, 2 Apr 03

Perhaps social groups of people would have their lives affected by this disease. Groups of people in general would expect to be mentioned as taking care of each other and looking at the way they did things under normal circumstances and trying to change things around during the crisis so that the risks would not be so great.

What the headlines said about cultural factors	
Church puts confessions on hold	ST, 9 Apr 03
Keep Maids Updated	ST, 25 Apr 03
No handshakes, MPs play it safe when meeting residents	ST, 10 Apr 03
Our lifestyles help germs to thrive	AUS, 3 Apr 03

Cultural aspects of life in Singapore include such situations as going to church, shaking hands and employing Philippino maids. For example, shaking hands is a very cultural habit for most people and as one would suppose a civilised way of carrying on. Cultural habits would obviously be affected by a health crisis of such magnitude, and these were also observed and reported by *The Australian*.

What the headlines said about political factors	
Passion for politics? Not in a straightjacket	ST, 9 Apr 03
\$1m Boost to Fund from Government	ST, 18 Apr 03
Government Trims this year's Growth Forecast to 0.5-2.5%	ST, 18 Apr 03
China sacks top officials over bug	AUS, 21 Apr 03

A necessary part of newspaper reporting, headlines mention political factors during the SARS epidemic that included items such as: economic growth, assistance to business and a boost by the government to funds available for assisting in the alleviation of the hard times that would happen if the crisis got any worse.

Subjects and topics in the headlines

In a final discussion of the results from the headlines of the two broadsheets, *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*, an analysis of the data taken from these headlines, expressed in a slightly different way from those in Chapter 3, is included in Table 11

below. They have been analysed as being subjects/topics that can be cited as what the newsmakers consider to be the most important facts about a particular event, in this case, of SARS.

Table 11 Subjects/topics cited as what the newsmakers consider to be the most important facts about a particular event, in this case, SARS.

Subject/Topic	The Straits Times		The Australian	
	Occs	%	Occs	%
India	1	0.13	2	1.60
Hong Kong	16	2.03	9	7.20
Malaysia	7	0.89	-	-
China	41	5.19	19	15.20
North America	14	1.77	1	0.80
Taiwan	7	0.89	-	-
Australia	3	0.38	6	4.80
Switzerland	2	0.25	-	-
Regional	6	0.76	3	2.40
Politics/politician/govt	37	4.68	-	-
Laws during outbreak	22	2.78	-	-
Religion	4	0.51	-	-
Nurses	6	0.76	-	-
Doctors	19	2.41	-	-
Hospitals	39	4.94	-	-
Business (general)	15	1.90	6	4.80
Hotels	6	0.76	-	-
Airlines/Travel/Airport	31	3.92	19	15.20
Taxis and cabbies	10	1.27	-	-
World Health Orgn.	19	2.41	3	2.40
Cost of SARS to S'pore	3			
Attitudes, affairs, Comments, re SARS & Outcomes	272	34.43	32	25.60
Management of SARS	20	2.53	-	-
SARS and comments	110	13.92	20	16.00
Historical	3	0.38	-	-
Restaurants	3	0.38	-	-
Publicity	1	0.13	-	-
Singaporean attitude	34	4.30	-	-

Education	9	1.13	2	1.60
Testing/thermal scan	27	3.42	-	-
Experiments/investigate	20.25		-	-
Terrorism	1	0.13	-	-
Singapore	-	-	1	0.80
Iraq war	-	-	1	0.80
Gambling	-	-	1	0.80
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>790</u>		<u>125</u>	

The subject's topics analyse the events themselves, the causes of the events, the comments and reactions to the disease, the actors involved in the crisis such as nurses, doctors, politicians, taxi drivers and business men, the reactions from the public to the disease and its effects and the inquiries, plans and policies written about during the events that may prevent future outbreaks of the disease. It is obvious from the figures quoted here and in the chapter on the design of the study that Singapore was more affected by the disease than was Australia. However, the subject/topics such as 'comments on SARS' and 'attitudes, affairs, comments and outcomes' had a certain similarity as far as the results were concerned, for example, the percentage occurrence of the two topics was fairly close numerically. However, effects on airline traffic interruptions and reduction in tourism were more frequently written about in Australia than they were in Singapore.

The subjects/topics included in Table 11 cover both headlines and letters. There were no letters published in *The Australian*. However, the letters in *The Straits Times*, with a headline, numbered 141 and are included in the number of occurrences in Table 11. Thus, extrapolating and categorising the subjects and topics from both broadsheets we find that 57.34% of the *The Straits Times*' subjects/topics were SARS related and 44% of the Australian's topics were SARS related. Turning to the actors, *The Straits Times*

results show that on 21.02% of the occasions subjects/topics mention actors and in *The Australian* 20% of the occasions actors are mentioned. Countries were mentioned on 12.28% of the occasions in *The Straits Times* and on 20% of the occasions in *The Australian*. Finally cultural and general attitudes were mentioned on 9.36% of the occasions in *The Straits Times* and on 3.2% of the occasions in *The Australian*. Apart from the last category, cultural and general attitudes, the percentages occurrence of subjects/topics in the headlines of the two broadsheets bear a close relationship.

Van Dijk (1991) suggests that the coverage of affairs (he was interested in ethnic affairs, but it could just as well be a health crisis), requires complex theories and subtle methods of discourse analysis, which specifically focus on detailed textual structures of news and cognitive social, political, and cultural structures of their contexts (1991, p. 49). van Dijk also suggests that ‘headlines’ themselves define and play a prominent role in how readers understand and internalise news.

The results of the survey into the way SARS was reported in *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* point to the fact that that there were social and cultural elements linked with the headlines analysed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. It is quite possible that crisis journalism has its own ‘discourse’, as Hartley puts it, in the way language is employed (1982, p. 6). It was therefore necessary to take a close look at the social, political and historical conditions under which the news of SARS was produced. This is the reason for outlining in the tables in Chapter 3 the words used in the headlines and endeavoring to identify the discourse of news reporting.

The number of articles published per day on SARS in *The Straits Times* from March to July 2003 was 649, and there were 153 days in that period. Therefore we see that 4.24 articles per day were published during that period. *The Australian* published 125 articles from March to July of 2003 and this equates to 0.82 articles per day. Although the articles per day were less in *The Australian* than in *The Straits Times*, it would seem that there is some consistency between the two newspapers in the other tables discussed in Chapter 3. For example, Table 3 demonstrates that the length of the headline in each of the broadsheets is very similar 4.96 words in *The Straits Times* and 4.94 in *The Australian*. Table 6 contains the number of articles in the two newspapers and analyses them by type. In *The Straits Times*, 72.6 per cent of the articles were ‘features’ and for *The Australian*, 88 per cent were ‘features’. This was considered to be enough evidence to point to the importance of SARS in a social, cultural and political sense. Both broadsheets gave the SARS epidemic good coverage.

It is possible to conclude from the data in Table 7 about actors, sources and primary definers that the media in Singapore consider the population/general public, the government/public service and business interests deserve an equal share in the reporting of a crisis by the print media. In Table 8, both broadsheets give adequate space to the mentioning of SARS. *The Straits Times* mentions the term directly on 29 per cent of the occasions and *The Australian* defines the situation by mentioning SARS on 38 per cent of the occasions. In other words, *The Australian* is direct on 9 per cent more occasions. If one combines ‘mentioned directly’ and ‘mentioned indirectly’, then the results indicate that *The Australian* uses a direct or an indirect reference to SARS in 60 per cent of the

occasions measured, whereas *The Straits Times* uses a direct or indirect reference to the epidemic on only 31 percent of the occasions. These differences could be explained by accepting the fact that SARS in Singapore was more intense in its effects and more cases occurred in that state. This probably resulted in there being many more stories and a greater variety of narratives. This is borne out by the fact that ‘other’ lexical choices occurred on 59 per cent of occasions in *The Straits Times* and on only 30 percent of occasions in *The Australian*. Following on from these references to the concept of SARS, Table 9 quantifies the use of the acronym SARS and states that *The Australian* uses the word SARS or its derivatives twice as many times as does *The Straits Times*.

The SARS crisis – some news items

Before drawing some final conclusions, it is as well to point out that since the headlines are concerned with the SARS health crisis, it is not surprising that the most frequently occurring word(s) contained ‘SARS’ or its derivatives. Table 8 in Chapter 3 suggests that SARS was mentioned on 29% of the occasions in *The Straits Times* and in *The Australian* on 38% of the occasions. The headlines too define more dramatically the situation by using such words and phrases as:

Link up to Fight Viral Globalisation	ST, 4 Apr 03
Why take the Risk? Find ways to Live with the Bug	ST, 7 Apr 03
Australia fears three new cases	AUS, 30 Apr 03

The social unrest that the presence of the disease could have caused may have persuaded the editor of both newspapers to use such headlines as:

What if Singapore...Had no Government?	ST, 9 Apr 03
Tough Times Calls for Tough Measures	ST, 19 Apr 03
Killer flu epidemic 'like start of AIDS'	AUS, 27 Mar 03

How tough these measures were can perhaps be gauged from the headlines analysed in Chapter 3. However, anecdotal evidence gained in Singapore in 2006 does point to the fact that the public, whilst appreciating tough measures, were worried about the changes to social and cultural habits brought on by the effects of the disease on everyday events such as travelling to work. They could not talk and chat in the way they have been used to.

Conclusion: Narratives, Representations and the Nation

In conclusion, narratives, representations, and headlines are re-visited in a final attempt to exemplify and explain the more disparate aspects of this study. In exploring the role of two national newspapers and the way they reported a health crisis, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) the thesis has found that crisis, the role of the

national newspaper and the national mind are clearly evident in the narratives and representations identified in the content analysis. This content analysis was used to identify and codify the headlines as they were placed before the public. Both *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* used similar methods to identify the risks of a health crisis and to narrate daily its effect on a nation. The results and the way they were interpreted and developed point to the fact that a new stage has been reached in the way news of a communicable disease is transmitted from the World Health Organisation (WHO) to the international media. The conclusions are analysed under the headings of: narratives and representations and analysing headlines – a case study. In effect, narratives point to the fact that the coverage of the disease was not just about SARS but said much about the extent to which public health has been given so much attention by the media.

Following on, SARS has also been used as a benchmark for the reporting by the media of serious infections such as AIDS: ‘to lower cases of AIDS, treat like SARS threat’ (Tan, Nov 29, 2006). Trevor Cullen’s research on the reporting of HIV in the Pacific reveals that there has not been much in-depth analysis of the disease and the educational content. There are commonalities here. Cullen makes the point that there is a need to widen the coverage into the medical, political, social, economic cultural and religious aspects (Cullen, 2006, p. 94).

It is possible to conclude, after clarifying the reporting of a health crisis Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), that the parameters used in the analysis show there is a relationship between living in a ‘risk society’ and a crisis. It is also possible to point

towards a more coherent understanding of a crisis, which has been shown can be identified closely with: the national newspaper, the national mind and my own research, including content analysis of newspaper headlines. The culture of the national newspaper has developed into a communications model that has played and continues to play an important role in the development of the world's media. It has always had an historical influence on a nation's psyche and is in effect the narrator for the nation and according to the *The Australian* that newspaper is 'The Heart of The Nation'.

A crisis called SARS happened and in a contemporary society we see the part the media plays in the twenty first century in the reporting of risks and crises. Danger, fear and insecurity are the terms used by Seale (2002) in his analysis of media health representations to emphasise the risks that are involved in life in the twenty first century. Gothic themes common to horror and science fiction stories are often used in media representations of serious health issues. In fact Seale quotes headlines such as "killer bug", "killer viruses" in his summary of headlines in British dailies (Seale, 2002, p. 81).

Bearing in mind all that has been discussed in this thesis, one can conclude that the people involved in fighting SARS and suffering from SARS also coped with the fears associated with Beck's 'risk society', all of them were looking at fear from two different stand points. One, the fear of a disease itself and secondly the fear of the second modernity that is with the public all the time and, as Beck would put it, risk is the modern approach to foresee and control future consequences of human action, the various unintended consequences of action (Beck, 1999, p. 3).

It is possible to conclude from the narratives editors and journalists use to describe how ordinary people live and what they value, that we share in the commonness of our understanding of what headlines, with their metaphors and metonyms, are saying to us, the community. Although the two newspapers this thesis uses arrive at their ‘commonness’ from different cultural perspectives, they have similar roots, roots in their own national psyche that has sustained the production of news for a community over hundreds of years – the maintenance of society in time (Carey, 1989, p. 18). The ways the newspapers represent the SARS virus in the headlines allow the public to translate what the headlines mean to them.

Another conclusion from this study is that a crisis, a national newspaper and a nation have much in common. They are related historically and in terms of the narratives that are built around the dangers of a health crisis one can relate them to the national mind. It is deeply meaningful that a newspaper should report SARS and dwell on the narrative of what SARS, or any crisis for that matter, means to the national psyche. A communication vehicle such as the national newspaper narrates the story of a crisis and the information about the social, cultural and political aspects of a crisis. Crisis journalism also has a set of terms, codes and conventions that have structures, meanings and values which we construct out of the raw materials of language as we use them in context (Hartley, 1982, p. 2). In many ways, it does not very much matter whether these raw materials are produced by *The Straits Times* or by *The Australian*.

This case study began with an investigation into the headlines of two national newspapers, *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* who take on the role of informing the public about many events both cultural and social - such events as sport, business, arts, finance, politics, and international news as well as health crises. The public debate about the SARS crisis in *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* to a certain extent took place through the headlines. Therefore, if we summarise the complete list of headlines (sectioned in Chapter 3) one has a summary of what the public were told about a 'crisis', and this would have an effect on every part of a nation. Each headline describes a particular segment of a nation's being that has been considerably affected by that crisis. It should be stated, as was mentioned earlier, that although *The Australian* had reported many less cases of SARS, there were great similarities between two newspapers in the content analysis results, on a percentage basis that is. Also, at this stage I reiterate earlier comments that it is possible to see three different groups who contributed to how the news of the crisis was presented to the general public: the journalists/editors, the advertisers, and the government. Then of course there is the general public itself who, unheralded, through their presence, and by their opinions make a contribution to what is written about in the news.

The structure and style of the headlines express what the editors and the journalists see as the major topics in the news about SARS. This is expressed in both *The Straits Times* and *The Australian*. Examination of the topics in the headlines point to the fact that most of the themes and realities associated with the reporting of the disease are

closely allied to fear, trauma, sub-sets of crisis and risk and attitudes that express the feelings of when will the problem be solved.

Returning to the effect that crisis has on the news, the readers, the journalists/editors and particularly the government. The crisis sets the scene, names the characters, and produces the text irrespective of what the media says. The heroes, the villains and the freaks all must play their parts, even against the fourth estate that has only a small part to play according to many leading politicians in the developing world.

Many of the main concepts contained in the thesis came from the application of content analysis methodology to the two broadsheets in question, and the answers to the sections on content analysis has been used to define these concepts. Further investigation into the matter contained in the preceding chapters is needed and these investigations could quite well be in the areas of headlines and lexical choices. The next steps in any investigation into the concepts of risk society and crisis journalism should be to trace the relationships between the risks and the crises that arise from technical decisions and natural cultural methods that affect the public's lifestyles and measure if there are any relationships between the two. I have also concluded from the work done in Chapter 3 on newspaper headlines and the way the two broadsheets, *The Straits Times* and *The Australian* used these, that further work should be done on the way a developing nation and a developed nation report on a crisis as serious as SARS.

One cannot conclude this thesis without making a final comment on the matters raised and discussed earlier in this chapter. The discussions ranged over a wide range of topics from crisis compared to risk, narratives, representations, and post SARS events, to the evaluation of crisis reporting using a case study of a health crisis. The latter section also includes discussions on the headlines and their structure that contained: news items on the SARS crisis, some qualitative aspects of the headlines, business, social, and economic factors, political, cultural and political factors, medical and fear factors, all of which had a part to play in the analysis of the headlines developed in Chapter 3.

Just like any other news story, when the events being reported cease to have meaning, the story ends. It then becomes history, an historical fact that happened and has now been superseded by other stories that have more 'news value'. SARS thus in the later months of 2003, lost its meaning for the editors, the journalists, the advertisers and the readers, as they turn their thoughts and attention to the next crisis, whatever that may be

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Singapore Press Holdings in the Twenty-First Century

The group publishes and distributes 11 newspapers and eight magazines. The newspaper publications are: *The Straits Times*, *Business Times*, *The New Paper*, *Berita Harian*, *Lianhe Zaobao*, *Lianhe Wanbao*, *Shin Min Daily News*, and *Friday Weekly*. The sole Tamil newspaper in Singapore, *Tamil Marasu*, was added to SPH's stable of newspapers in late 1995. SPH magazines are *Her World*, *Young Parents*, *Home & Décor*, *Singapore Business*, *Go Magazine*, *Young Families NSman* and *Citta Bella*.

The Straits Times, *Lianhe Zaobao*, *Business Times*, *Singapore Business*, *Her World*, *Go* and *Home & Décor* circulate outside Singapore in China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, Thailand, Myanmar, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Cambodia, Japan, Korea and Australia. Singapore Press Holdings is building up its networks of foreign correspondents and is endeavoring to decrease reliance on news agencies.

SPH, prints regional editions of international newspapers such as the Asahi Shimbun, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, The Asian Wall Street Journal, International Herald Tribune and International Express, and a summary of its activities is below:

Language	Number	Titles
English	5	Straits Times, The Business Times The New Paper Streets, Today
Chinese	3	Lianhe Zaobao Lianhe Wanbao Sin Min Daily News
Malay	1	Berita Harian
Tamil	1	Tamil Murasu

Circulation

2000: Total	1,197,301
2000 English	551,463
2000 Chinese	570,775
2000 Malay	65,103
2000 Tamil	9,960

In addition to its core business as a newspaper publisher, SPH provides Internet portal services with online news and e-commerce facilities while its broadcasting arm, SPH MediaWorks Ltd, runs two free-to-air TV channels. SPH has also expanded into property investment. It acquired Paragon and The Promenade – two prime retail commercial buildings in the heart of Orchard Road. SPH holds stakes in MobileOne (M1), a mobile phone and paging service provider. The group also has stakes in StarHub, an info-communications company offering cable TV, Internet as well as fixed-line and mobile telephone services.

In its Business Profile, SPH says that it reaches more than 90% of Singapore through their products in the media: Print Broadcast and the Internet. Last year, 2002, the group showed a net profit of \$S 307.4 million and an operating revenue of \$S 903.5 million.

APPENDIX B

Politics in Singapore.

Singapore has a uni-cameral Parliament and together with the President this is known as the Legislature. The Singapore parliament is modelled after the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy where Members of Parliament are voted in at regular General Elections. The leader of the political party that secures the majority of seats in Parliament will be asked by the President to become the Prime Minister (PM). The PM will then select his Ministers from elected MPs to form the Cabinet. When the new Parliament meets for the first time, the Speaker will be elected followed by the oath taking of members.

I believe, however, that there is the problematic that perhaps the media on the edges, whoever they are, will at some time take over the space presently held by the mainstream.

The Peoples Action Party (PAP) has formed the government ever since Singapore became an independent state within the Commonwealth in 1965. Although there are two other parties: the Singapore Democratic Party and the Workers' Party. The Cabinet is responsible for all government policies and the day-to-day administration of the affairs of state. It is responsible collectively to Parliament, and comprises the Prime Minister and the Ministers in charge of the ministries of Community Development and Sports, Defence, Education, the Environment, Finance, foreign Affairs, Health, Home Affairs, Information, Communications and the Arts, Law, Manpower, National Development, Trade and Industry, and Transport. The

cabinet is lead by the Prime Minster and is appointed by the President, who, on the advice of the Prime Minster, also appoints other members of the cabinet.

There are 23 constituencies and 84 elected members of parliament, 9 Nominated MPs and 1 Non-Constituency MP. The life of each Parliament is 5 years from the date of its first sitting after a General Election, which must be held within three months of the dissolution of Parliament.

The Senior Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, who has been active in the political life of the country since its birth manages all crises well. He has an almost democratic way of handling them, bearing in mind that democracies seem to handle crises better than most authoritarian regimes. All that can be said is that Lee must have created:

- A very different authoritarian system, one that is easy to live in for most of the population
- A society where there is a gradually evolving democracy – a democracy that the population can feel is evolving but no one outside the country is aware of

Most countries that hold parliamentary elections have a well-organised and well-politicised civil society. However, taking Singapore to be an authoritarian regime, they:

Seek to involve the population, or at least segments of it, in public life through their participation in official regime organizations and rituals.

A range of bodies may be generated to organize and structure public activity, including youth groups, trade unions, women's groups, sporting associations and the like. The aim of such organizations is to keep the populace busy, to involve it in activity which, by its conduct through official structures, is essentially regime supporting (Gill, 2000, 13).

Journalists and editors employed by *The Straits Times* may be members of a trade union, however, the trade union, as well as The Straits Times has very close links with the government. The aim of this it appears is to de-politicise the production and the management of one of the state's most important media outlets. It happens to work too.

APPENDIX C

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SCHEDULE – PRESS COVERAGE OF SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)

(This is an adaptation of a model taken from: Hansen, A., Cottle S., Negrine R., and Newbold C. (1998) *Mass Communication Research Methods*: Basingstoke: MacMillan.

LEGEND – contains summaries of what is reported in the newspapers under investigation.

Date:

HEADLINE (copy verbatim)

REPORTER/AUTHOR copy name and designation
(e.g. health correspondent if given)

HEADLINE LENGTH (number of words)

HEADLINE EXTRAPOLATION (number of keywords, copy verbatim)

NUMBER OF WORDS IN EXTRAPOLATION.

TYPE OF ARTICLE

1: Front Page story	5: Letter
2: Other News Story	6: Advertisement
3: Feature article	7: Other
4: Editorial	

ACTORS/SOURCES/PRIMARY DEFINERS

(a performer = one who takes part, a participant, one who acts for another)

Primary Definers: Hall, et al (1978) suggested that the media tend to faithfully and impartially, to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order. One of the results of this structured preference given in the media to the opinion of the powerful is that these 'spokesmen' become what we call the 'primary definers' of the topics. However, Hansen, et al (1998) disagree somewhat with this representation of primary definition. They say it does not normally distinguish between the different messages that come from the same group of primary definers, nor does it indicate varying degrees of 'legitimacy' corded different sources or voices by the media. To try to assess the effect of all voices/actors and primary definers the following have been isolated from the headlines in *The Australian* and *The Straits Times* in an effort to assess the news making scenarios through which primary definers and sources become newsworthy and establish a claim to be articulators of the topic under study in this thesis i.e., Actors/ Sources /Primary/Definers

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1: Victims | 8: Govt/public service |
| 2: Visitors/tourists | 9: Politicians |
| 3: General Population | 10: Scientists |
| 4: Sports people | 11: Doctors |
| 5: Theatre people | 12: Nurses |
| 6: Music people | 13: Business interests |
| 7: Nil | |

HEADLINE TYPE (defined by vocabulary and lexical choice)

Subjects/themes/issues: Health issues was the single event, the coverage of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), however, there are other issues such as the following that must be extracted from the “Headlines”.

Vocabulary and Lexical Choice

Global definition and evaluation – words manifest the underlying semantic concepts used in the definition of the situation.

Choice of words, how is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome referred to?

- 1: Quoted directly
- 2: Quoted indirectly
- 3: Referred to but not quoted either directly or indirectly
- 4: Other

What do the headlines define about the situation?

- 1: Social opinions are expressed
- 2: Political opinions are expressed
- 3: Cultural opinions are expressed
- 4: Medical statements reported
- 5: Scientific opinions reported
- 6: Alert sounded-emphasis placed on crisis situation that has evolved
- 7: Health authorities take stock.
- 8: Business actions are reported
- 9: Relief that the disease is almost over
- 10: Fear of infection.

How far quantification is taken in content analysis and to what degree the quantitative indicators that this technique offers are read and interpreted in relation to questions about the intensity of meaning in texts, the social impact of texts, or the relationship between media texts and the realities they reflect (Hansen, et al., 1998, p. 95).

APPENDIX D

News Corporation in the Twenty-First Century www.newscorp.com (accessed 10 November 2007)

Newspapers:

News Corporation is the globe's leading publisher of English-language newspapers, with operations in the UK, Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the U.S. The Newspaper segment includes News International, which publishes four national newspapers in the U.K.; News Limited, which publishes more than 110 national, capital city and suburban newspapers in Australia; and the *New York Post* in the U.S.

News Limited owns the following newspapers in Australia:

New South Wales: *Sydney: Daily Telegraph, and Sunday Telegraph, Herald Sun, Sunday Herald Sun, Cumberland Group.*

Victoria: *The Weekly Times, Leader Group of Community Newspapers.*

Tasmania: *The Mercury, The Sunday Tasmanian.*

Western Australia: *Sunday Times*

Queensland: *Brisbane Courier Mail, Gold Coast Bulletin, Sunday Mail, Quest Community Newspapers.*

South Australia: *Adelaide Advertiser, Sunday Mail, Messenger Group of Community Newspapers.*

Northern Territory: *Sunday Territorian, Northern Territory News.*

National: *The Australian and Weekend Australian.*

National News and Photo Information available on the web:

Worldwide Interests of News Limited

Filmed Entertainment:

Newsphotos, Newspix, Newstext, News Interactive (an online news web site).

Newspapers owned in United Kingdom

News International

News of the World

The Sun

The Times

The Sunday Times

Times Literary Supplement

Newspapers owned in United States

New York Post

Other Assets include:

Television:

News Corporations television assets continue to grow and include:

BskyB
Fox Broadcasting Company
Fox Australia
Fox Television Stations
Foxtel
SkyPerfect TV!
STAR
Stream

Cable:

A crucially important element of News Corporations television strategy is its cable and satellite network programming, which includes:

Fox Movie Channel
Fox News Channel
Fox Sports Digital
Fox Sports Enterprises
Fox Sports Espanol
Fox Sports Net
Fox sports World
Fuel
FX
Los Angels Dodgers
National Geographic Channel –USA and Worldwide
Speed Channel

Direct Broadcast and Satellite Television.

Spanning the five continents and harnessing interactive, satellite and innovative, digital technologies, News Corporation's television operations continue to grow. The Company's television stations group has enjoyed ten years of record profits and FOX Broadcasting Company is America's most watched network among young adults.

Sky Italia
Bsky B
FOXTEL
Phoenix Television

Magazines and Inserts

News Corporation is the largest shareholder in Gemstar-TV Guide international, the world's largest provider of interactive programming guides, and the supremely popular *TV Guide Magazine*. News Corporation also owns News America Marketing,

a portfolio of consumer promotion media that reaches millions of shoppers every week.

Inside Out

Donna Hay

News America Marketing

SmartSource

The Weekly Standard

Gemstar – TV Guide International, Inc.

Books

News Corporation's book publishing division, HarperCollins Publishers, sets the industry standard for literary and fiscal success. The recent acquisition of such renowned imprints as: William Morrow and Company, Avon Books, Amistad Press, and Fourth Estate have made HarperCollins one of the largest and most dynamic trade publishers in the world.

HarperCollins Publishers:

Australia

Canada

Children's Books

United states

United Kingdom

Regan Books

Zondervan

Broadsystem

Festival Records

Fox Interactive

Mushroom Records

National Rugby League

NDS

News Interactive

News Outdoor

Nursery World

APPENDIX E

A summary of how *The Australian* and *The Straits Times* break down their daily news presentations.

The Australian

Monday

The Nation
Worldwide
Arts
Features
Opinion
Business
Sport
Thoroughbreds

Tuesday

The Nation
Opinion
Features
Australian IT
Business
Worldwide
Sport

The Straits Times

Monday

Prime
Asia
China
East Asia
India/South Asia
Southeast Asia
Malaysia
World
Review
FYI (for your information)
Home (all about Singapore)
New Markets
You think
Forum
Sports
Obituaries
Classifieds
Special Focus
Life/People

Tuesday

Prime
Asia
China
East Asia
India/South Asia
Southeast Asia
Malaysia
Asia
World
Review
FYI
Home
Forum
Sports
Obituaries
Money
Travel

Digital Life Magazine
Classifieds

Wednesday

The Nation
Worldwide
Fashion
Opinion
Arts
Sport
Higher Education
Business
Wealth Magazine
Australian Literature Review

Wednesday

Prime
China
East Asia
India/South Asia
Southeast Asia
Malaysia
World
Review
FYI
Home
Forum
Sports
Obituaries
Money
Life (Arts, TV, Films)
Classifieds
Mind Your Body Magazine

Thursday

The Nation
The World
Opinion
Arts
Features
Sport
Business
Special Advertising Report
Media

Thursday

Up Front
Asia
China
East Asia
India/South Asia
Southeast Asia
Malaysia
Asia
World
Review
FYI
Home
Forum
Sports
Obituaries
Money
Life
Classifieds
Urban Magazine

Friday

The Nation
 The World
 Features
 Opinion
 Arts
 Sport
 Business

Friday

Prime
 Asia
 China
 India/South Asia
 Southeast Asia
 Malaysia
 Asia
 World
 Review
 Insight
 FYI
 Home
 Forum
 Sports
 Obituaries
 Money
 Life Special
 Special Focus
 Classifieds

Weekend:

The Nation
 The World
 Opinion
 Inquirer
 Editor
 Business
 Motoring
 Weather
 Sport
 Weekend Leisure
 Weekend Travel
 Career One
 Careers in Nursing
 Review
 Magazine

Weekend:

Prime
 Asia
 China
 East Asia
 India/South Asia
 Southeast Asia
 Malaysia
 Asia Focus
 World
 World Focus
 FYI
 Saturday
 Insight
 Science
 Review

Sports
 Obituaries
 Money
 Home (about Singapore)
 Forum
 Life (Arts, Motors, Design)
 Recruitment
 Classifieds
 Properties