

Culture of fear, age of anxiety: case of the Ebola outbreak in 2014

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Master's Thesis
Master's program of Development and
International Cooperation
Major in Sociology
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A Master's Thesis in Sociology and the Master's Programme in Development and International Cooperation

Department of Social Sciences

University of Jyväskylä

Spring 2017

83 Pages

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how 2014 Ebola outbreak was presented in Western media, and how it relates to the ways in which risks and dangers are constructed in Western societies. Sociological studies on culture of fear by Frank Furedi (2002), Barry Glassner (1999) and David Altheide (2006) provide a theoretical context for this thesis. Culture of fear refers to atmosphere of vulnerability in Western societies, which has increased over the past decades and fear has become an overarching perspective for viewing life. This study uses Ebola outbreak as a case study to analyse phenomenon of culture of fear. Empirical data consists of articles collected from two major British newspapers and their websites: The Guardian and Daily Mail. This thesis uses qualitative content analysis as a research method, accompanied with some aspects of both narrative and quantitative research. Data analysis reveals that the most prevalent themes in the newspapers were the possibility of the Ebola spreading to Europe and healthcare professionals' stories from the field. Results indicate that the Ebola outbreak was largely framed in terms of Western fear, although the two newspapers have significant differences between them. This thesis also brings postcolonial aspect into sociological discussion on culture of fear by analysing the ways in which media's representations of Ebola's 'victims' and 'heroes' reflect colonial relationships. The fear of

Ebola is connected to broader cultural anxieties in the West, such as fear of other and fear of illness and to general sense of unsafety. From the results can be concluded that fear shaped the international response to the outbreak, which indicates that fear in general may not only impact people's everyday life but also influence international politics and law.

Key words: Ebola, fear, risk, Daily Mail, The Guardian

Tiivistelmä suomeksi

Tämä gradu tutkii miten 2014 Ebola epidemiaa Länsi-Afrikassa kuvailtiin länsimaisessa mediassa, sekä sitä miten nämä kuvaukset liittyvät vallitsevaan pelon kulttuuriin. Pelon kulttuuri viittaa viime vuosikymmeninä länsimaissa kasvaneeseen ilmiöön, jossa pelosta on tullut vallitseva osa jokapäiväistä elämää jonka kautta maailmaa ymmärretään. Sosiologien Frank Furedi (2002), Barry Glassner (1999) and David Altheide (2006) tutkimukset pelon kulttuurista muodostavat teoreettisen viitekehyksen tälle tutkimukselle. Aineistoni koostuu englantilaisten The Guardian and Daily Mail lehtien Ebolaa käsittelevistä artikkeleista. Tutkimusmetodina on käytetty kvalitatiivista sisällönanalyysiä, sekä joitain aspekteja narratiivisista ja kvantitatiivisista tutkimusmetodeista. Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset ja sisällönanalyysi viittaa siihen, että Ebolaa käsiteltiin laajalti länsimaisen pelon näkökulmasta. Iso osa artikkeleista spekuloi Ebolan leviämisen mahdollisuutta Euroopassa, siitä huolimatta että epidemian todellinen uhka oli hyvin pieni. Lehtien välillä on tosin suuria eroja: Daily Mailin artikkelit usein lietsoivat pelkoa, mutta The Guardianin artikkelit painottivat että uhka Euroopassa on hyvin pieni. Artikkelien sisältö viittaa siihen, että Ebolan pelko liittyy laajempiin länsimaissa koettuihin pelkoihin, kuten sairauksien ja 'muukalaisten' pelkoon, sekä yleiseen turvattomuuden tunteeseen. Tämä tutkimus tuo myös postkoloniaalin näkökulman mukaan sosiologiseen keskusteluun pelon kulttuurista. Artikkelien toiseksi yleisin aihe oli

terveydenhuollon ammattilaisten kokemukset ja tarinat Länsi-Afrikan Ebola alueella.

Länsimaiset lääkärit ja hoitajat kuvattiin usein 'sankareina' jotka auttoivat 'uhreja', mikä heijastelee kolonialistisia epätasa-arvoisia suhteita. Kaiken kaikkiaan tämä tutkimus osoittaa, että pelolla oli vaikutusta siihen miten Ebola epidemiaan reagoitiin kansainvälisesti. Tämä viittaa siihen, että pelko ei ainoastaan vaikuta jokapäiväiseen elämään, mutta sillä saattaa olla myös kauaskantoisia vaikutuksia jopa kansainväliseen politiikkaan ja lakeihin.

Avainsanat: Ebola, pelko, riski, Daily Mail, The Guardian

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1. INTRODUCTION

On December 2013, a serious disease started spreading in a small Guinean village, causing deaths and devastation in the local community. In March 2014, this disease was identified as Ebola virus disease (EVD), which is an acute illness, often fatal in humans (WHO 2015). Incubation period of EVD is from 2 to 21 days, and initial symptoms include muscle pain, headache, fever and sore throat, which can be difficult to distinguish from symptoms of other infectious diseases, such as typhoid fever and malaria (WHO 2016). Initial symptoms are then in many cases followed by diarrhea, vomiting, impaired kidney and liver function and sometimes internal and external bleeding, and the average fatality rate of EVD is 50% (WHO 2016). Ebola virus is transmitted to humans from infected wild animals, such as fruit bats, monkeys, porcupines and forest antelope. It spreads through human population via direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids, as well as through contaminated materials, such as clothing or bedding (WHO 2016). Bodies of the deceased are also highly contagious, and therefore traditional burial practices where the mourners touch the body, have played a role in transmission. Also number of healthcare workers have been infected while treating the patients in situations where precautions have not been strictly practiced (WHO 2016). There is no cure for Ebola, but treatment of specific symptoms and rehydration with fluids improves chances of survival, and potential treatments, including vaccinations and drug therapies, are being evaluated (WHO 2016)

The outbreak that started in 2014 was the largest and the most complex Ebola outbreak since

the virus was first discovered in 1976 (WHO 2016). It claimed over 11 000 lives in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria in 2013-2016, which is more victims than in all the past outbreaks combined (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016). The outbreak devastated Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria, which already lack many resources, have inefficient healthcare systems and have recently suffered from long periods of instability and conflict (WHO 2015). On 8th of August in 2014, Ebola outbreak in West Africa was declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the WHO's Director General Margaret Chan (WHO 2016)

The outbreak received lot of international media attention, however, much of the media discussion was centered on the possibility of Ebola spreading to the Western world. This was the case particularly in tabloid media, which framed the outbreak in terms of potential threat to Europe, Australia and the US, despite very slim chances of the outbreak spreading outside West Africa. Kevin Glynn (2000) has studied the phenomena of 'tabloidization', which refers to move away from informative news on politics and foreign affairs towards entertainment, a trend which started in the late 1980s in the US. Although characteristics of tabloid media are fluid and difficult to define accurately, Glynn (2000, p. 7) points out that some common aspects of tabloid media include: use of populist tone, heightened emotionality, emphasis on melodramatic. Journalistic style falls somewhere between entertainment and news, and tabloid media "thrives on the grotesque, the scandalous, and the "abnormal"" (Glynn 2000, p. 7). Entertainment comes at cost of covering complex issues in depth, since informativeness often appears as less interesting (Furedi 2006). In the case of Ebola outbreak, significant information concerning social and economic conditions in West Africa, was largely ignored by tabloid media. The media attention the Ebola outbreak received speaks well with the ongoing debates about fear. Number of social scientist have found that such 'scares' are common, past examples include SARS and bird flu (Glassner 1999; Furedi 2006; Burgess 2008). In all these cases, (tabloid) media highly exaggerated the risks and made dramatic

predictions, despite lack of evidence to support the fears.

Social scientists who have studied the concept of fear argue that since the 1960s, the general atmosphere of vulnerability has increased in Western societies and everyday life is now perceived as more dangerous than before (Glassner 1999; Altheide 2002; Furedi 2006). Barry Glassner (1999) refers to this phenomenon as ‘culture of fear’, sociologist Frank Furedi (2006) calls it ‘age of anxiety’, and Adam Burgess (2008) discusses ‘climate of fear’. Furedi (2006, p. vii) argues that fear is no longer simply a response to threat, but has become “a cultural idiom through which we signal a sense of growing unease about our place in the world”. Different scholars believe that tabloid media is fueling fears, although simply blaming media would be a simplification of a complex phenomenon (Altheide 2002; Furedi 2006). In the past, scares such as Ebola, might have been dismissed as media’s ‘fear mongering’, but in the current climate, it is more likely that such fears might catch on.

1.1. Fear as an issue for development

In this thesis I wish to bring postcolonial aspect into the general sociological discussion on culture of fear. While studying international development, I have often come across the problematic relationship between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ world. Escobar (1995) heavily critiques Western development ideas, which he sees as a form of cultural imperialism that reinforce cultural and moral superiority of the West. In the 1950s, early post-war II period, theorist and politicians initiated development discourses and practices that were aimed at restructuring “underdeveloped” societies through processes of urbanisation, growth of production, modernisation, industrialisation, and through adoption of cultural values and modern education (Escobar 1995, pp.4-5). This highly ethnocentric approach has had

disastrous consequences, and such development practices produced a massive debt crisis, and increased poverty, violence, exploitation and oppression in many parts of the world (Escobar 1995, p. 5). Even though this failure has been recognised, all too often echoes of the colonial relationship can be heard and western interventions are still offered as a solution to fix problems in poor countries or communities, who are in need of ‘saving’. This is apparent in everyday language, TV, newspapers, and sometimes even in the development field itself, such as in advertisements by NGOs. In the case Ebola outbreak, Daily Mail tends to frame Ebola sufferers as helpless victims who need to be saved by altruistic, morally superior European heroes.

In the context of development, it is interesting that fear of Ebola is also associated with the fear of ‘other’. While researching about culture of fear and reading Ebola related articles, I noticed that ‘othering’ is present in articles discussing Ebola as a potential threat. When ‘Africans’ are not seen as victims, they are portrayed as potential transmitters, and the 'exotic' nature of the disease is emphasised. For example, Daily Mail speculates how Ebola might spread through cultural habits, such as eating bush meat and burial practices. According to Loomba (1998, p.104), racial and colonial discourses, and their related sciences, have been preoccupied with finding differences between races. Large groups of people have been constructed as backwards and inferior ‘others’, and such distinction between races also produces an ‘insider’, usually a white European male (Loomba 1998, p.104). Many postcolonial critiques aim to uncover how such binaries function in colonial representations (Loomba 1998, p.104). This study aims to shed light on different racial representations within the newspaper articles on Ebola. In the selected articles, racial ‘other’ is sometimes constructed as potential threat and in other cases as helpless victim, while the European ‘insider’ is presented as an altruistic hero. In both cases, such language reinforces racial stereotypes, echoing ethnocentrism and unequal colonial power relationship.

Another reason why 'culture of fear' as a phenomenon caught my attention, was the fact that throughout my studies in the field of development, it has become apparent how remarkably high quality of life most people in the West enjoy in terms of security, safety, healthcare, education and material wealth, in comparison to the most parts of the world. Since the political and economic practices have taken a turn towards neoliberalism in 1970s, wealth has concentrated on few hands and social inequalities have grown bigger than ever (Harvey 2005, pp.12, 25). Although world poverty has gone down since the 1980s for the first time in history and majority of people live in countries that are rapidly developing, one fifth of the world's population has not experienced income growth, and suffer from conflict and hunger (Collier 2007). Furthermore, in many fast developing countries, such as India and China, great inequalities exists and large groups of people still face poverty. In comparison, only one-sixth of the world's population live in the countries that are among the most developed, which includes the Western nations (Collier 2007, p.10). Even though poverty and inequalities exist in the West, most people are not threatened by conflict, nor lack food, shelter, basic healthcare and education. Therefore it seems highly contradictory that people who live relatively safe lives, fear of all kinds of potential dangers. For example, citizens of Western countries enjoy better health than ever, but many people are increasingly worried about their health and vulnerable to illness, Burgess (2008, p.20) refers to this as the 'worried well', I became interested in studying how fears are experienced and expressed in Western societies, and furthermore how they influence people's perception and everyday life. No matter how irrelevant fears may be, they can still have far reaching impacts. From the perspective of international development, it is important to understand that fear influences people's everyday lives, for both to those who fear and those who are being feared. Fear may even affect international politics and law, for example, fear has been strongly present in discussion around migrant and refugee crisis in Europe that started in 2015 and has in some cases even provoked violence.

1.2 Fear as a sociological concept

Fear has often been explored and understood through psychology, as it is one of the human emotions (Tudor 2003, p. 1). However, Tudor (2003, p.1) points out that fearfulness seems to have become an integrated part of life in modern society. We are faced with constant influx of newspaper articles, TV and radio shows that warn us about dangers lurking everywhere. As a result, many people fear medical risks, food dangers, environmental risks, going out at night, home intruders, accidents and so on (Tudor 2003; Glassner 1999). Furthermore, fears today seem to an independent and fluid existence, and they no longer bound to specific clearly defined threats, such as hunger (Furedi 2006). Even the language we use today influences our sensitivity to fear. For example, expressions such as “being ‘at risk’ or feeling ‘stressed’ or ‘traumatised’ or ‘vulnerable’” have become part of our everyday conversations (Furedi 2006, p.1). Therefore fear cannot be fully understood and explained on an individual, psychological level. In order to get an adequate understanding of characteristics and consequences of fear, sociological study that takes cultural and historical dimension of fear into account is required. Tudor (2003, p.2) argues that fear is a central, but often silent, concept in many general themes that have been part of modern social and political theory. For example, many social scientists have analysed the concepts of risk and trust, which relate to fear, but fear in its own right has remained relatively untheorised (Tudor 2003, p.2). There is no doubt, for example, that Ebola virus presented a real danger especially for the inhabitants of the area of epidemic. In this study, however, I am analysing fear as a social construction, which is strongly shaped by cultural and historical context. This thesis uses the 2014 Ebola outbreak as a case study to understand the phenomenon of ‘culture of fear’, drawing on studies of Frank Furedi (2002), Barry Glassner (1999) and David Altheide (2002).

1.3 Research questions

In this thesis, I will explore the social construction of fear in media reporting related to the Ebola outbreak through following two research questions:

- What issues related to the Ebola outbreak were highlighted in media in March 2014 – July 2014?
- How does this media coverage relate to the ways in which risks and dangers are understood and constructed in Western societies?

Because media plays a significant role in creating and maintaining culture of fear, I wanted to approach this phenomena through media format that is widely spread and easily accessible to public. Therefore I chose to analyse online newspaper articles in two large British newspapers, Daily Mail and The Guardian. Together these two papers reach such a large number of readers every day, inside and outside the UK, that they can be considered as major influencers in the popular culture. Furthermore, the format of the newspaper itself influences the way in which news reports are written. The length of an article is usually limited and the article must be published fast, which easily leaves out any in-depth analysis on an issue. Newspapers compete with other entertainment formats and have to therefore attract readers with catchy and even shocking headlines and images. Despite these limitations, audience may still interpret newspaper articles as comprehensive, and many will not seek further information to understand complex phenomena. For these reasons, newspaper articles provide an interesting context for analysing the phenomenon of culture of fear.

1.4 Structure of the report

I begin the second chapter by discussing how understanding of fear has changed over time, drawing on sociological studies on ‘culture of fear’ by Furedi (2002), Glassner (1999) and Altheide (2002). This chapter also examines whether or not contemporary world is particularly dangerous, as well as discusses how ‘culture of fear’ influences different areas of life. Media’s impact on fear is also discussed in this chapter.

Third chapter explains how qualitative content study was used as a research method in this study. Research process, including data collection, coding process and data analysis is explained in detail. I will also discuss the differences between the two newspapers, The Guardian and Daily Mail, from which the empirical data is collected.

Fourth chapter presents my results regarding newspaper articles that discuss Ebola as an international threat. In this chapter I argue that Ebola outbreak was largely framed in terms of threat to the Western world. I will also analyse how fears of Ebola connect to broader cultural anxieties in the West, including fear of other, fear of illness and general sense of unsafety.

Fifth chapter presents my results regarding newspaper articles about doctors’ and nurses’ stories from the field. I begin this chapter by exploring how the newspapers use different narratives in order to create an attractive storyline. Rest of the chapter examines the articles through postcolonial lens, focusing on the ways in which Western volunteers are described as ‘heroes’ and people living in the area of Ebola outbreak as needy and helpless ‘victims’. I will also briefly discuss how fear relates to morality, drawing on Adan Burgess’ (2006) and Mary Douglas’ (1982) sociological studies on fear and morality.

In the final chapter I conclude that media's conversation around Ebola was largely framed in terms of Western fear, more so in Daily Mail, which took the attention away from structural issues related to the outbreak. This indicates that fear does not only influence people's everyday lives but it can also be considered as an obstacle in solving international crisis. Furthermore, media's representations of 'victims' and 'heroes' reflect colonial unequal relationship. Since fear can influence such many areas of lives, the concept requires further sociological analysis.

THEORY: FEAR AS A PERSPECTIVE FOR VIEWING EVERYDAY LIFE

In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical approaches to fear in contemporary sociological literature. This chapter first discusses fear as a social construction and reflects on how broad historical changes have embedded fear in Western societies. I will then discuss some of the implications ‘culture of fear’ has on everyday lives, politics and even identities, drawing on Furedi’s and Altheide’s studies. Finally I will discuss the role of media in the culture of fear in order to understand and reveal some common patterns of ‘fear mongering’ in the newspaper articles discussing the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

2.1 Fear as a social construction

Mary Douglas, an anthropologist who has widely studied the interpretations of risks in different cultures, wrote an influential book on the topic, *Risk and culture: an essay on the selection of technological and environmental dangers* in 1982. She argued the following: “What are Americans afraid of? Nothing much, except the food they eat, the water they drink, the air they breathe, the land they live on and the energy they use” (Douglas 1982, p.10). Now, three decades later, fears are still very much present in Western societies, if not increased. For example, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 provoked fears of terrorism around the Western world, leading to many negative consequences to Islamic communities globally. Fear of crime

has also increased, resulting in increased surveillance, which in turn contributes to general sense of vulnerability (Glassner 1999).

This shift towards more fearful society cannot be explained only by increases in actual risks, but rather indicates that the very understanding of risk has changed. ‘Risk’ and ‘fear’ are closely related concepts in the sociological literature, as well as in everyday language.

According to Furedi, there have been extensive studies on risks in the field of social sciences, but the role of fear has rarely been considered “as a sociological problem *in its own right*” (Furedi 2007, p.1). Fear is more often examined in relation to a specific risk, or sometimes used as a synonym for risk, and it has rarely been elaborated or explained (Furedi 2007, p.1).

This thesis focuses on *fear* of Ebola, rather than *risk* of Ebola, even though some discussion on risk is also included. I am discussing fear as a concept that is at least to some extent socially constructed, and therefore subjected to cultural and historical variations. The culture of fear is largely a Western phenomenon and therefore the well-justified fear experienced by the people in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, (countries that suffered from the outbreak), is hardly a part of it. Therefore my focus is on fear of Ebola in the Western societies. I am focusing on UK newspapers, because among the USA, UK could be considered as a significant influencer of Western culture. For example, British movies, music, TV shows, books, as well as newspaper articles, are widely read and viewed outside the UK.

2.2 Are we living dangerous times?

There is no uniform opinion on whether or not the contemporary world is particularly dangerous or risky. On one hand, new risks, such as large-scale ecological crises, have

emerged. On the other hand, people in Western societies are enjoying good health and living longer than ever before due to advancements in medical science and control of infectious diseases (Buckingham 2006, p.20). Sociologist Ulrich Beck coined the concept of 'risk society' in his influential book, *Risk society: towards a new modernity* in 1992. This book sparked lot of discussion in the field of social sciences. Beck argued that our modern societies face number of new risks that are caused by social, technological and scientific developments. According to Beck, societies have been going through a transformation from 'first modernity' to 'second modernity'. First modernity was characterised by welfare state, full employment, collective lifestyles and careless exploitation of nature (Beck 2000, p.18). The second modernisation is characterised by large-scale ecological crises, general insecurity, individualisation and decline in paid employment. Furthermore, risks are no longer bound to certain geographic location, but have far-reaching global effects and may affect future generations (Beck 1992). Where the first modernity gave guiding ideas and institutionalized answers to society's problems, they no longer are convincing or appear as self-evident. For example, the idea that more technology and scientific research will solve problems created by modernity, has now been challenged (Beck 2000, p.24).

Various scholars have further built upon Beck's theory on risk society, but many have also criticised its theoretical inconsistencies. Gabe Mythen (2004, p.181) argues that Beck fails to properly acknowledge the continuity and reproduction of inequalities related to class, gender, race, and age that are strongly linked to risk distribution. Mythen also points out that Beck's argument relies too heavily on a small number of concrete examples and overstates global tendencies of risks by focusing on worst-case scenarios and accidents. Disasters, such nuclear explosions are discussed, but Beck does not pay much attention to everyday risks with routinely impact on people's lives (Mythen, *ibid.*). Nevertheless, he states that the faults in the risk society thesis have been central in generating the dialogue through which the social and

academic knowledge on risks has been advanced. It is difficult to measure if our contemporary societies are particularly 'risky', as both risks and their definitions are constantly changing. Some sociologists have even suggested that people now tend to take risks for example by doing extreme sports, because contemporary life is so "boring" and predictable (Altheide 2002, p.6). Despite the more comfortable lifestyles, people feel increasingly worried about their health and vulnerable to illness. Buckingham (2006) refers to this phenomenon as a 'health paradox'.

Whether or not the actual risks have increased, many scholars agree that the very understanding of risks has gone through a shift over time, and fear has intensified over the past few decades. Furedi (2006, p.4) argues that until quite recently, fear was focused around socially stigmatised hazards, which reflected social conventions and were "embedded in informal taken-for-granted folk knowledge about threats facing the community". Fears, such as fear of polio, unemployment, or fear of godly punishment, were transmitted through a shared cultural script, which gave them a clear focus and concrete quality. Furthermore, fear has not always had only negative connotations and pointed to negative emotional responses. In the past "fear constituted a dimension of a reasonable response to new events", and it has been associated with an expression of admiration or respect. For example, the act of 'fearing God' could have had culturally valued connotations (Furedi 2006, p.7). In contrast, today "fear has an unpredictable and free-floating character", it can move from one problem to another, often without any logical connection (Furedi 2006, p.4). Burgess discusses the same phenomena, referring to it as 'risk mitigation', where the focus of fear and anxiety is subject to change and risk concerns have only a short-term impact (Burgess 2008, p.58). This was the case for example during outbreak of SARS disease in 2003, which was relatively quickly solved and forgotten. This indicates that the health scares are often illusory or minor, and often "panic can be a bigger problem than its ostensible source" (Burgess 2008, p.59).

Burgess (2008, p.67) sees material wealth as a precondition for climate of fear, as it is only when all basic necessities are readily available when people can occupy themselves with ideas, choices and worries. Therefore it is largely a Western phenomenon. Furedi also discusses fear as distinct cultural phenomena, using fear of crime as an example. He points out that prior to 1970s, crime was not perceived as a significant political issue, but as a distinct problem confined to few marginal communities. Now it has become highly politicised and normalised issue and numerous surveys indicate that fear of crime has spread wide (Furedi 2006, pp.1-2). What is distinguished about this is that in contemporary societies “fear is experienced as a problem in its own right” (Furedi 2006, p.3). This is not confined only to the problem of crime, but extends throughout the society. For example, anxiety about bad health is sometimes interpreted as a risk itself. Furedi points out that there has been a significant shift in the US legal system, where this trend has been internalised. In the past, ‘fright’ as a reaction to an actual event was compensated, but now also the fear that something bad could happen, is also taken as grounds for making a claim (Furedi 2006, p.3). Burgess (2008, p.57) similarly sees risk society as a very recent phenomenon, which began to develop in the 1980s. Before this era, risks were balanced against benefits, and they were generally considered more acceptable ‘price to be paid’. Furthermore, prior to 1960s-1970s, risks were generally understood in more positive terms of “taking risks, rather than the defensive sense of feeling at risk” (Burgess 2008, p.63).

Break-up of traditional forms of social solidarity and move towards individualisation has reduced the sense of security that comes strong from association to group (Buckingham 2008; Furedi 2006). Furedi (200, p.6) also believes that lack of shared informal norms contribute to the climate of fear. Shared informal rules and unspoken assumptions have provided “the foundation for relations of trust and help clarify the terms on which people relate to one another” throughout the history (Furedi 2006, p.6). Furthermore, they have been important in transmitting expectations of mutual support and solidarity. Currently, many communities in

Western countries lack such web of informal rules, and this lack of clarity can represent an existential crisis for many. For example, elderly people may be unsure if they can trust younger generations to treat them with respect, and younger generations can feel threatened by the unclear rules of behavior (Furedi 2006, p.6). Furthermore, numerous surveys have shown that people tend to not know or trust their neighbors, and many report that they do not feel safe in their neighborhoods (Furedi 2006). Misuse of technology, for example in war and in situations where use of modern technology has resulted in environmental damage, has created a backlash against science. Fear in contemporary Western societies stems from belief that we are both individually and collectively incapable of mastering nature and controlling our environment (Buckingham 2008; Furedi 2006).

2.3 Living in a culture of fear: 'Better safe than sorry'

Fear has always existed in some form in all societies, but as Altheide (2002, p.175) puts it: "It's the magnitude and nature of fear that is different today". Fear has become a lens for viewing everyday life, and it is attached to number of activities and issues. According to Altheide (2002, p.175) this is partially due to our increased mobility and the large amount of information that is now available to us. This thesis analyses news coverage on Ebola in the context of 'culture of fear' that now exists in contemporary Western societies. Different scholars have discussed the ways in which 'culture of fear' impacts our everyday lives. They point to the ways in which structures of society contribute to the culture of fear, and how culture of fear in turn influences institutions, political decision making, media and other structures of society. Different studies have suggested that violent content in the news can lead to audiences perceive everyday life as fearful and dangerous (Altheide 2002, p.24). Fear then provides solutions that often involve agents of social control, such as police and surveillance

(Altheide 2002, p.24). In the US and the UK, local and central institutions actively pursue “the project of reducing the fear of crime as opposed to the level of crime” (Furedi 2002, p.2). For example, numerous teenagers have been subject to suspicion, not because they have committed a crime, but because they have “contributed to creating a ‘climate of fear’ in their neighborhood” (Furedi 2002, p.2). Furthermore campaigns (e.g. Neighborhood Watch), visible policing and the use of CCTV cameras aim to reduce fear levels and to reassure people. My aim is to discuss if fears about the Ebola outbreak similarly provoked a call for action to protect citizens, despite the unlikeliness of the disease spreading to Europe.

Altheide sees ‘entertainment of fear’ as significant to social life also because it connects to ways in which people construct their identities. New routines and habits appear through communication technologies, uses and styles (Altheide 2002, p.7). Altheide argues that perspective that connects the present to the future, is a key element in the growing use of fear for viewing social life (Altheide 2002, p.10). He believes that by agreeing about ‘fear’ and sharing and behaving according to fear guidelines, people symbolically participate in the popular culture (Altheide 2002, p.10). This could involve for example purchasing a car alarm or a cell phone for the purpose of convenience and “safety” (Altheide 2002, p.10). Perhaps this has become even truer as the social media has grown popular, making it easier for people to express themselves through sharing images, posts and articles. Also Furedi believes that “to be at risk is no longer only about what you do, or the probability of some hazard impacting on your life- it is also about who you are” (Furedi 2006, p.5). Climate of fear is encouraging society to “approach human experience as a potential risk to our safety”, which leads to the idea that every action can be turned into a risk to be managed, and everyone is a potential victim (Furedi 2006, p.5). According to Furedi (2006, p.154), “the consciousness of risk carries with itself its own morality”, which is intrusive and prescriptive and has far-reaching impacts on everyday life. Personal habits, such as food consumption, child rearing and sexual behavior are constantly inspected from the perspective of safety, and those who put others at

risk are easily condemned. Decrease in social solidarity further reinforces the perception of powerlessness and sense of isolation (Furedi 2006, p.177). Furedi argues that society's attempts to artificially overcome this issue, for example through professional counselling and self-help groups, are inefficient. He sees it as ironic that the experience of individuality is often described in positive terms, for example some politicians present life today as "providing greater choice for people" (Furedi 2006, p.177).

According to Buckingham, the fundamental fact that everybody will eventually die of something, is often overlooked. For example, media and experts have reported 'mysterious' increases in age-related illnesses, ignoring the fact that "the paradoxical effect of medical advances in reducing the cause of one illness is that it necessarily increases the risk of dying from some other illnesses" (Buckingham 2008, p.28). Buckingham (2008, p.19) believes that this heightened atmosphere of vulnerability puts a burden on healthcare systems, as significant proportion of general practitioners' work involves treating people with symptoms that cannot be medically explained. According to Furedi "we live in a world that finds it hard to accept the fact that occasionally bad things can happen to us" (Furedi 2006, p.10). For example, public health officials and safety workers avoid the term 'accident', and often to claim that injuries are preventable. Harms and misfortunes are increasingly seen as caused by individuals' malevolent or irresponsible behavior. In other words, "our culture of fear discourages people from taking risks" (Furedi 2006, p.9). The act of 'daring' is linked to negative character traits, for example scientist who have dared to push the limits of science, have often been accused for "opening Pandora's box", "tampering with nature" or "playing God" (Furedi 2006, p.10)

Media driven culture of fear also contributes to political agenda in various ways (Altheide, p.24). For example, studies in America have demonstrated that "television news shape the relative importance Americans attach to various national problems" (Iyengar & Kinder quoted in Altheide, p.24). Media sets the terms by which political choices are made by priming some

aspects of social life while dismissing others. Viewers may then draw on these accessible bits of information to interpret event (Altheide p.24). Furthermore, public authorities and political actors are anxious to be seen as taking public health seriously, and suspicions about possible health scares have to be acknowledged somehow (Buckingham 2008).

Another consequence of culture of fear is that public panic and hysteria has not benefitted the potential victims, but rather caused large sums of money and public resources going to waste (Glassner 1999). Furthermore, serious ongoing problems that give rise to these very dangers, such as income inequality and poverty, remain largely ignored. It is not possible in the framework of my master's thesis to analyse how the media coverage on Ebola influenced the international response to the outbreak. However, my aim is to also draw attention also to issues that were *not* mentioned in the newspaper articles. If the discussion largely focuses on fear around the Ebola, it is likely done at expense of covering some other issues.

2.4 Media and 'fear mongering'

All scholars who have studied the culture of fear argue that media fuels fears among the public at least to some extent. Dramatic 'scares', such as crimes, accidents, or illnesses tend to get disproportionate media attention. The fact that the Ebola outbreak attracted so much media attention in the West, is in *itself* a manifestation of culture of fear. Glassner's study on culture of fear exposes common 'fear mongering' patterns used by media through number of examples. He sees media as a significant contributor to culture of fear and argues that media both manipulates our perception and benefits from our anxieties. According to Glassner (1999, p.xxiii), wide array of groups exploit the fears of public in order to gain financial benefit. Many businesses, religious groups, news organisations, promote scares for various reasons.

Newspapers use scares to attract readers, and “a company that sells alarm systems is not about to call attention to the fact that crime is down” (Glassner 1999, p.xxiii). In modern Western societies “the scope of our health fears seems limitless” and there are disproportional fears over things such as crime, drug use, ‘superbugs’, deadly diseases, ‘homicidal strangers’, traffic accidents, plane crashes and so on (Glassner 1999,p. xii). News benefit from these scares, since they have to compete for ratings with movies and during prime-time TV hours.

Many studies have discovered that dangers, such as crimes or illnesses tend to get disproportionate media coverage. This increases the atmosphere of vulnerability even though readers and viewers may not have any personal experience of the perceived danger (Glassner 1999, p.xxi). Altheide gives an example of The Center for Media and Public Affairs report, which found that in between 1990 and 1998 national murder rate in the USA had fallen by 20%, however, the number of murder stories in the news rose by 600% (Altheide 2002, p.21). Furthermore, Buckingham points out that health statistics and risk ratios are often presented in misleading way, and harmful impacts are exaggerated. For example, if connection between lung cancer and passive smoking is expressed in terms of relative risk rather than absolute risk, statistic give an impression of a much bigger risk. Another way of distorting data is by making predictions, for example about childhood obesity, based on ‘recent trends’. These predictions tend to produce scarier numbers than found in present data, and the historic data is sometimes based on only few years, which makes the predictions inaccurate. Furthermore, categories that are used to define obesity, such as BMI, are subject to change. According to Buckingham, this misleading use of risk ratios can have powerful impact on how people interpret researchers’ findings.

Furedi (2006, p.190) believes that increased climate of fear has led to a situation where warnings about potential risks are “far more likely to be believed than the reassurance of an expert authority”. He further relates this process to increased mistrust towards politicians,

scientists and other professionals. Where Glassner is more focused on describing the media driven culture of fear, Altheide goes further on to analyse fear as a wider perspective and as a significant part of public discourse. He examines the ways in which popular culture and mass media are shaping our social world, and argues that by promoting entertainment of fear, they have contributed to changing everyday life routines and social expectations (Altheide 2002, p.1). Fear has become a perspective for viewing social experience, and also a part of a public discourse. Altheide (2002, p.3) sees that “fear becomes a matter of discourse when it “expands” beyond a specific referent to use as a more general orientation”. Entertainment formats tend to focus ‘fear’ rather than ‘danger’, which is more easily integrated into everyday life. Firstly, entertainment formats emphasise “an absence of ordinary”, second “the openness of an adventure outside the boundaries of routine behavior”, and thirdly “suspension of disbelief by the audience member” (Altheide 2002, p.6). Furthermore, these emphases are packaged with dramatic formats; they are often brief, visual and action-oriented. As audiences are exposed to these formats, popular culture, the logic of advertisement and entertainment, they become normalised and taken for granted.

According to Furedi (2006, p.5) “the free-floating dynamic of fear is promoted by a culture that communicates hesitancy and anxiety towards uncertainty and continually anticipates the worst possible outcome”. This trend is illustrated for example by fear of terrorism, which has expanded since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. Fear has floated to new territories, because since 9/11 any ordinary dangers and hazards can be turned into great threats by associating them with terrorists’ actions. For example, now we do not worry only about the possibility of nuclear power station accident, but also fear that the power station could be turned into a terrorist target (Furedi 2006, pp.5-6). To Altheide (2002, p.6), “the mass media and popular culture are the most important contributors to fear”. Adam Burgess on the other hand views media as significant contributor in ‘culture of fear’, but points out that people do not simply believe everything they read or see, but respond to health scares in varying degrees

(Burgess 2008, p.58). Therefore he sees that media is only able to influence general terms in which people think about risk, and the influence is usually indirect.

Also Glassner points out that simply blaming media and journalists would be an oversimplification of complex phenomenon.

This thesis aims to reveal some patterns of ‘fear mongering’ on newspaper articles that were written about the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Glassner’s (1999) study on culture of fear includes number of examples of media driven ‘scares’, and therefore provides an important point of comparison for my study. However, my aim is to analyse the ways in which news coverage on the Ebola outbreak relates to the broader phenomena of culture of fear. Culture of fear is not limited to media, and therefore I wish to avoid overstating influence of the analysed newspapers. I am using Glassner’s study as a context for my discussion on *how* and *why* Ebola was framed in a certain way in the two UK newspapers. However, Altheide’s and Furedi’s studies analyse fear on a more in-depth level, seeing it as a discourse that influences different levels of social, public and private lives. Therefore I am drawing on these studies in my analysis on how fear of Ebola is connected the ways in which risks are understood and constructed in Western societies.

2.5 Conclusion

Broad historical changes have embedded fear in Western societies, and media has further contributed to emerge of ‘culture of fear’. Where some risks have increased over time, some have decreased. Therefore ‘dangerousness’ of the modern world cannot alone explain the grown atmosphere of vulnerability. Breakdown of social solidarity and lack of shared norms has reduced the sense of security that comes from a strong association to a group (Buckingham 2008; Furedi 2006). Culture of fear influences many areas of public and private

life, and has become a lens for viewing actions, experiences, relationships and even identities. Studies by Altheide, Glassner, Buckingham and Furedi, provide the theoretical framework for my analysis on Ebola in the context of culture of fear. This study does not analyse Ebola as an actual risk, but rather focuses on *fear* of Ebola in the context of contemporary understandings of risks, and as represented in the Western media.

3. METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

This study uses qualitative content analysis as a research method. Content analysis is a strategy that studies the presence of concepts in the data (Mathison 2005). By analysing the presence, meanings of phrases, words and concepts in the text, researcher makes inferences about the messages in the text regarding audience, writers and even the broader culture. I chose qualitative content analysis as a research method, because I was interested in detecting subtleties in the articles. Content analysis allowed me also to further analyse the meanings of used the language and its connections to broader issues. The empirical data is collected from two major newspapers and their websites in the UK, The Guardian and Daily Mail. I chose written media partially due to its accessibility, but also because these two newspapers reach such a large number of readers every day inside and outside UK that they can be considered as major influencers in the popular culture. In the beginning of my research I started with large number of articles, 121, and counted frequency of certain topics. However, this was merely done in order to supplement my understanding of the data and to direct focus of the research. Since my analysis is qualitative, the next step was to focus on a small number of selected articles. This analysis is data driven, as the focus of the analysis is determined by the most prevalent themes in the data. I have used David Altheide's book, *Qualitative Media Analysis* (1996), as a main guide in my research process which I will describe in detail in this chapter

3.1 Different kinds of newspapers as sources

Where Daily Mail is well known for its entertainment oriented format and alarmist headlines, The Guardian is generally considered as a more reliable news source. Fear mongering is often

apparent in tabloid newspapers, such as Daily Mail. Therefore its articles on Ebola provide an interesting case study for culture of fear. However, in order to get a more holistic picture of the news coverage on Ebola, I also included The Guardian as a primary source of data. Daily Mail and The Guardian newspapers are among the largest newspapers in the United Kingdom. Daily Mail and its website The Mail on Sunday have the largest number of readers in the UK, around 18 400 / month (The Statistics Portal 2015). The Guardian and its website The Observer is the third biggest newspaper in the UK, with 11 500 monthly readers (The Statistics Portal 2015).

Although this thesis does not deeply explore the political or economic agendas of these newspapers, it is important to shed some light to these companies in order to put their news into a context. The Daily Mail is owned by the Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT) (Media Info 2016). Overall, DMGT owns or has a stake in 33 other companies and in the 1990s invested in lot of business-to-business solutions (Economist 2013). Since DMGT's establishment in 1922, it has diversified to other areas of business, and in 2012, the media operations contributed only 22% of DMGT's profits. Companies currently owned by DMGT include for example: Risk Management Solutions (RMS), which is a company that models the risk of catastrophic events, such as terrorism or hurricanes, and according to their website, "helps financial institutions and public agencies understand, quantify, and manage risk." (RMS website 2016). Other companies include a consulting agency EDR, and Genscape, which provides of data and intelligence for commodity and energy markets (Genscape website 2016). DMGT is a business, and therefore it has an interest in maximising its profits by attracting as many readers as possible. Daily Mail has been often criticised for its tendency to simplify complex issues and it is well known for its alarmist headlines (Bowery 2007, Burgess 2008). Daily Mail's values are somewhat conservative, for example, climate change is treated with skepticism. Furthermore, Daily Mail often criticises groups such as immigrants, unemployed and left wing politicians. Even The Guardian newspaper is sometimes criticised

in Daily Mail, which refers to The Guardian as a left wing newspaper.

The Guardian Media Group is solely owned by The Scott Trust Limited (Forgan 2016). The Scott Trust was created in 1936, and its purpose is to secure financial and editorial independence of the The Guardian and The Observer newspapers (Singer & Ashman 2009, p.4). The Scott Trust appoints the editor of The Guardian, but other than that, it does not interfere in the content of journalism. The Guardian does not have an owner in the traditional sense of the word. All the profits made by The Scott Trust are put back into development of the newspapers and quality journalism, and they do not benefit proprietors or shareholders (The Guardian 2015). According to The Guardian (2015), The Scott Trust does not “invest in activities which conflict with the values and principles of the Trust”. The Guardian Media Group has a liberal tradition, and it outlines “honesty, courage, integrity, fairness, and a sense of duty to reader and community” as its core values (Singer & Ashman 2009, p.4).

These two newspapers have significantly different structure of funding, which then influences the way in which journalism is conducted and news presented. Furthermore, the newspaper market in the UK is highly competitive in terms of seeking readers as well as advertising revenue (Shlesinger 2006, p. 301). This further influences the way in which they compete for stories, which then connects to the different aspects of the ‘culture of fear’.

3.2 Qualitative content analysis as a process

This research studies the presence of the concept of ‘culture of fear’ in Daily Mail and The Guardian’s articles. For studying culture of fear, I opted for the method of qualitative content analysis. I also considered using quantitative media analysis (Berger 2000) as a research method, because I began my research with a large number of articles from a specific time frame. Having chosen this research method, I would have systematically selected and counted

words, themes or phrases from these 121 articles, looking for patterns common themes. However, I was interested in examining articles in depth and detecting subtleties in the analysed text. Therefore I opted for qualitative research, which allowed me to analyse smaller number of articles in more detail. Nevertheless, I used aspects of quantitative research in order to supplement my understanding of the data. Rough process of categorisation and counting themes directed the focus of my research. I followed David Altheide's (1996) six stages of qualitative content analysis. According to Altheide, qualitative content analysis consists of the following steps:

Step 1. Pursuing a specific problem

Step 2. Familiarising oneself with the process and context of the information source

Step 3. Becoming familiar with several examples of relevant documents, noting particularly the format. Selecting a unit of analysis (e.g., each article), which may change.

Step 4. Listing several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection and draft a protocol

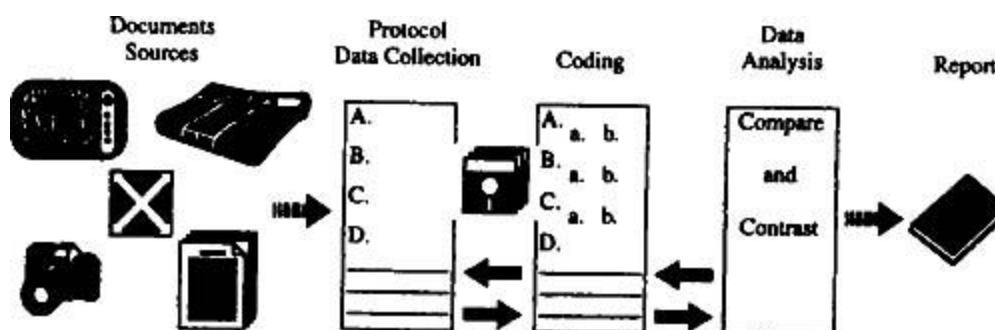
Step 5. Test the protocol by collecting data from several documents.

Step 6. Revise the protocol and select several additional cases to further refine the protocol.

All these steps were included in my research process, however, they were not done strictly in successive order. As the research progressed, I moved between the steps, often returning to the first step to redefine my research questions, and to break them down to questions that are more manageable.

Figure 1. Illustrates the steps as a process involving five stages: (a) documents, (b) protocol development and data collection, (c) data coding and organization, (d) data analysis, and (e) report.

Figure 1. Steps in research project. Source: Altheide (1996, p. 24).



Analysis was done through a process that involved few rounds of analysis. I first analysed the document sources roughly from the headings and proceeded towards deeper analysis of the contents of the articles.

3.3 Document sources and data collection

My research question, ‘What issues related to the Ebola outbreak were highlighted in media in March 2014 – July 2014’, was very practical and guided the first stage of my data collection. Initially, I collected all Ebola related articles that were published in The Guardian and Daily Mail online newspapers in June - August in 2014. Although the 2014 Ebola outbreak began in March I chose to focus on June-August time frame, because this is when the media attention really took on. I accessed all articles online by using keyword search, through either online database or newspaper’s website. All the articles from Daily Mail and its website The Mail on Sunday were collected from ProQuest Central online database. I used ‘Ebola’ as a keyword to search through the newspapers, not combined with any other words. Then I narrowed the time

frame down and collected only articles that were published within the June- August 2014 timeframe. Some articles had different editions, with only few editorial differences between them. In these cases I only selected the latest version for further analysis. In total I collected 80 articles, which I will discuss in more detail later. Articles from The Guardian and its online newspaper The Observer were collected through their official British webpage <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news>. Here I used the search function, again using ‘Ebola’ as a keyword, not combined with any other words. Then I narrowed the results down by selecting only articles published within June- August 2014 timeframe, which left me with total of 38 articles. Articles in The Guardian’s website are sorted by categories, for example ‘world news’, which then has subcategories, such as ‘Africa’, ‘cities’ and ‘development’. Search results included all Ebola related articles in different news categories. News about the Ebola outbreak mainly fell under the category of ‘world news’ and more specifically under ‘Africa’ or ‘Europe’. However, I also found one opinion piece, ‘*Concerned about Ebola? You’re worrying about the wrong disease*’ by James Ball (2014), which I included in this analysis. In total I collected 118 articles, of which 80 articles were from Daily Mail and 38 from The Guardian. Table 2. Below shows the number of articles found in each month.

Table 2. The number of articles found

Month published year 2014	Daily Mail	The Guardian
June	3	3
July	12	8
August	65	30
total:	80	41

According to Altheide (1996, p. 24), research problem guides the selection of a research unit, and which section of it will be analysed. The aim of my research was to explore how newspaper articles relate to the ways in which risks are constructed in Western societies. Many of the articles, especially in Daily Mail, were written in narrative story form that often included a clear beginning, some speculation about a problem and finally some kind of conclusion. I was interested in exploring not only *what* was said about the Ebola outbreak, but also *how* it was said. Therefore I chose to use whole articles as research units, as this allowed me to also take the format of each article into account when analysing their contents. After collecting all Ebola related articles, I roughly divided them into different themes according to their headlines. Whenever the theme was not obvious in the headline, I determined it according to keywords in the text. Table 3.3 below shows the themes in each newspaper.

Table 3. Themes identified in the articles as per the paper

	Daily Mail	The Guardian
Ebola as an international threat	34	9
Stories from the field	15	9
Response to the outbreak	4	7
Other	5	4
Vaccines and medicines	6	1
Ebola mentioned, but not a main topic	7	0
Descriptions of horrors of Ebola	7	0
Facts, figures, or history	1	5
Misconceptions about Ebola	1	3
Total	80	38

This process of categorisation gave me a rough idea about the most prevalent themes in the data, as well as highlighted the difference between contents in the two newspapers. There was some overlapping of the themes, for example, the same article may have included discussion on misconceptions about Ebola as well as stories from the field. In these cases I determined the category according to theme that seemed the most prevalent.

According to Altheide (1996, p.27), testing of the protocol can be done by ensuring that necessary information can be obtained from the data by using the protocol. After roughly categorising articles according to themes, I examined these categories in the light of my research question ‘How does media coverage on Ebola relate to the ways in which risks are understood and constructed in Western societies? In a way, all articles about Ebola related to some extent to the ways in which risks are constructed in Western societies, as Ebola was generally framed as risk. Therefore I continued by assessing which categories were the least relevant to my research. I first excluded all articles that did not discuss Ebola as a main topic, these were mainly articles on business or sport in West Africa that only mentioned Ebola. I also decided to leave out the ‘Facts, figures, or history’ category out of my final analysis, since this mainly consisted of informative articles, but did not include fear-based speculation. Articles under ‘descriptions of horrors of Ebola’ were clearly related to fear, but were only found in Daily Mail. Furthermore, Daily Mail’s articles on all categories included similar discussion on ‘horrors of Ebola’. Articles under the category ‘Response to the outbreak’ were somewhat common, and included discussion on what has been done, or what should be done in order to overcome the outbreak. Articles that fell under ‘vaccines and medicine’ category mainly discussed what kind of cures were being developed to treat Ebola. These two categories included interesting discussion on the outbreak on an international context. Where The Guardian’s articles called for international cooperation and help to overcome the outbreak in West Africa, Daily Mail’s articles tended to call for action to protect Europeans. However,

it was easy to see that overwhelmingly large number of articles discussed the possibility of Ebola spreading to Western world. (Four Daily Mail's articles discussed a European patient who contracted Ebola, these articles were also included in 'Ebola as an international threat' - category). The idea that Ebola might spread to the Western world, is a typical case of 'health scare', where media exaggerates the risk through alarmist headlines and use of colorful language. There has been number of similar cases in the past, in relation to epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, bird flu and SARS. Therefore, the most common theme, 'Ebola as an international threat', provides a clear case study for my analysis on Ebola outbreak in the context of culture of fear. 'Stories from the field' mostly consists of articles discussing experiences of doctors, nurses and volunteer workers in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. This was the second most common theme in both newspapers, with total of 24 articles written on a topic. Glance through the headlines revealed that the workers were often portrayed as 'heroes', more notably on Daily Mail. It seems that these two categories are related: first there has to be something 'scary', so that brave volunteers can come to rescue. Furthermore, Glassner (1999) points out in his study on culture of fear, that media uses number of tools to attract audience, including by creating exciting storylines. For these reasons, I selected these two categories as the focus of my more detailed analysis:

1. Ebola as an international threat
2. Stories from the field

My research is data driven, as the focus of my analysis is determined by the most prevalent themes in the newspaper articles rather than any analytical framework build on any theoretical framework. These two key themes will be discussed in detail in two separate result chapters.

3.4 Coding process

After excluding newspaper articles in less relevant categories, I was still left with 67 articles. My aim was to select a representative sample out of these articles, in such way that issues that were discussed in large number of articles would be covered in my analysis. Therefore, I examined all the articles, highlighting words and phrases that appeared frequently. Some common words and phrases that appeared in both categories included:

-deadly/ highly contagious/hideously unpleasant/ scary / dangerous

However, strong adjectives, such as ‘heroic’ or ‘hideously unpleasant’ were far more common in Daily Mail’s article, where the Guardian tended to use more neutral tone. The following words appeared commonly in articles that discussed Ebola as an international threat:

-airport/airline/air travel/ flight/plane/air passenger/ airline flight / international flight/ passenger

-bush meat/ monkey meat/ chimpanzee flesh/ smuggled meat/ infected meat/ illegal meat

This coding process revealed that there were two main reasons that were seen as possible causes for Ebola spreading internationally: air travel and illegal trade of bush meat. Articles under the category of ‘Stories from the field’ repeated the following words:

-brave, selfless/selflessly, hero/heroic/heroism

-medical staff, doctor, medic, health worker, aid worker, nurse, physician

Unlike in the ‘Ebola as an international threat’ category, coding words in ‘Stories from the field’ category did not reveal information that was not evident already in the headlines.

Therefore I read all the articles again, taking notes about the most common topics. The most striking difference was that Daily Mail's articles discussed *only* Western health care professionals' experiences on the field, where The Guardian's articles focused on local workers' experiences, with fewer articles on foreign workers.

3.5 Articles for the final analysis

Coding process described above helped me to ensure that the most common themes are covered in my final sample of articles. Furthermore, it highlighted differences between the two newspapers as well as guided the focus of my research. For the theme 'Ebola as an international threat', I included articles that discussed air travel as well as discussing illegal trade of meat. I also selected different types of articles: one opinion piece, one article that has been mostly written in a story form, one that is in question-answer format, and the rest are written in typical news report format.

Within articles in 'Stories from field' category, lot of attention was given to British nurse, William Pooley, who contracted Ebola while working in Sierra Leone. The Guardian has three articles about Pooley, and Daily Mail has five. Therefore I have included one article about Pooley from each newspaper for my final analysis. Next I will list and describe the articles selected under the themes, and the process of content analysis conducted on the selected articles.

Articles selected for the theme 'Ebola as an international threat':

1. *"Concerned about Ebola? You're worrying about the wrong disease"*

(The Guardian, 5 Aug 2014)

This article is an opinion piece, which addresses the whole media discussion on the Ebola outbreak, criticising tabloid media's fear mongering. I chose this for further analysis because it directly discusses *fear* itself. Although tone of this article is more provocative than in the news reports, there is discussion on same issues as in the Guardian's news, such as stressing the unlikelihood of Ebola spreading to Europe.

2. *"WHO declares Ebola outbreak an international public health emergency"*

(The Guardian, 8 Aug 2014)

This article is based on WHO's statement about the Ebola outbreak and it discusses some of the challenges that affected countries in West Africa are experiencing and calls for coordinated international response to overcome the outbreak. There is also discussion on border control as well as some recommendations for traveller. This is one of the three articles in the Guardian, which discusses the possibility of Ebola spreading through air travel.

3. *"Fear and false alarms as Ebola puts Europe on alert"*

(The Guardian, 22 Aug 2014)

This article discusses number of false Ebola alarms that took place in Europe in August 2014, after a Spanish missionary died of Ebola in Spain after having contracted the virus in Liberia. This article is useful in analysing 'health scares', which are a typical aspect of the culture of fear.

4. *"Truth about incurable virus that's just one plane ride from Britain: Q&A"*

(Daily Mail, 31 July 2014)

This article is in question-answer format and mainly discusses symptoms of Ebola, and the ways in which it might spread. Article includes expert testimonies and speculation about Ebola spreading to the UK. This is an example of an article, which discusses air travel, which is seen as one of the two main reasons Ebola might spread.

5. *"The secret trade in monkey meat that could unleash Ebola in Britain"*

(Daily Mail, 02 Aug 2014)

This article is an example of an article, which discusses the other main reason Ebola is believed to spread in the UK: illegal trade of bush meat. It is written in narrative story form and is also an example of an article using colorful language and criticising cultural practices.

6. *"HSE confirms no Ebola virus case in Ireland: But false alarm should be wake-up call"*

(Daily Mail, 16 Aug 2014)

This article discusses suspected Ebola case in Ireland, which turned out to be a false alarm. It is an example of an article, which criticises authorities and calls for more action to prevent the outbreak from spreading.

Articles selected for the theme 'Stories from the field':

1. *"Will Pooley: 'At the start there was the horror of Ebola, now it's a bit routine'"*

(The Guardian, 26 August 2014)

This article is one of The Guardian's three articles, focusing on William Pooley. This article describes the working conditions of Pooley and other nurses in Sierra Leone, as well as some of Pooley's personal experiences.

2. *"Ebola: life and death on the frontline"*

(The Guardian, 27 August 2014)

This article is lengthier than average, around 2700 words, and it covers all themes that are prevalent in most other articles on this topic. This includes discussion on risk and stigma faced by the workers as well as general confusion surrounding the Ebola virus. This article includes a narrative from five different people: doctor, mourner, nurse, sanitation specialist and survivor. Two of these people are from the West and the rest three are locals.

3. *"Ebola is the worst we have been on alert. But world's deadliest plague, so virulent that Irish citizens warned not to travel to Liberia, while Europe is now could the courage of one granny be our salvation" **

(Daily Mail 14 July, 2014)

This article is about experiences of Cokie van der Velde, a 54 year old British sanitary expert, who worked in Guinea and Liberia. The article elaborates the horrors of the Ebola outbreak and has many direct quotes from Cokie. Common feature in Daily Mail's articles is to emphasise the voluntarily made choice of Western workers. This article for example highlights that Cokie has chosen to and help Ebola victims, despite missing her grandchildren at home.

*there are mistakes in this heading, however, this was the exact form that this heading was written in ProQuest database, as well as Questia database. Therefore I have not attempted to correct it.

4.”*A selfless hero to lift our hearts: As brave British nurse fights Ebola*”

(Daily Mail, 27 August, 2014)

This is one of Daily Mail’s five articles, which discusses William Pooley. This article includes some discussion on the concept of altruism in form of volunteering work, using Pooley as a model example. As in all other articles, Pooley is described as heroic, selfless and brave.

3.6 The analysis of the selected articles

In the following chapters I will present my analysis and interpretation of these ten articles in dialogue of the literature discussed in previous chapters. My focus is on analysing the ways in which ‘culture of fear’ is manifested in these selected articles. According to Mathison (2005), qualitative content analysis involves analysing “presence, meanings, and relationships of words and concepts and make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writers, the audience, the program, the organization, and even the larger culture”. My aim is to analyse not only what was said about the outbreak, but also *how* it was said, by detecting subtle tones in the text.

In my analysis, I read thoroughly the selected articles, exploring their meanings and the ways in which they reflect understandings of risks in the Western societies. According to Altheide

(1996), data analysis involves comparing and contrasting parts of the data. In the case of my research, I will compare how same issues were framed and discussed in the two newspapers. I will also use a slightly different method of reading in each of the themes. Under the theme “Ebola as an international treat” I will concentrate on connections to broad cultural anxieties, whereas under the theme “stories of the field” I look more closely on how the narratives are constructed, and what kinds of roles are attributed to different actors.

Generally, Ebola outbreak is pictured as a threat in both magazines; it is seen as a problem that needs to be addressed. However, The Guardian and Daily Mail have framed this problem quite differently. Daily Mail tends to have alarmist headlines about the Ebola outbreak, which is often described with words and phrases such as ‘deadly’, ‘scary’, ‘highly contagious’, ‘out of control’ and so on. Articles focus on scandalous aspects and make predictions about the spread of the outbreak. The Guardian’s articles on the other hand discuss the outbreak in the wider context, shedding light to public health, and social and economic conditions in the West African countries suffering from the outbreak. This difference between the two newspapers highlights the emphasis that Daily Mail put on Western fear. Culture of fear is manifested in different way in the selected articles, where Daily Mail contributes to Ebola ‘scare’, The Guardian’s articles address the fact that the fears about Ebola in the West are exaggerated. Furthermore, Daily Mail’s articles reflect colonial relationship, often describing ‘African’ customs and beliefs with a patronising tone.

All in all, my analysis proceeded through different stages described in this chapter. In the following two chapters, I will present my findings under the two main themes identified.

4. EBOLA AS AN INTERNATIONAL THREAT

In this chapter I will present the results of my analysis under the theme “Ebola as an international threat”, and discuss my findings on how they relate to the culture of fear. In the first section I argue that Ebola outbreak was largely framed in terms of Western fear. The rest of the chapter aims to analyse how fears of Ebola spreading across borders relate to broader cultural anxieties in the West. I will discuss how fears of Ebola reflect general feelings of unsafety that have become prevalent in the Western world. Then I will examine how the news coverage on Ebola relates to fear of ‘other’. The final section discusses how fear of the Ebola outbreak relates to anxieties about health risks and illnesses.

4.1 Framing the problem: Western fear in the center of the discussion

Culture of fear is manifested in many ways in articles that discuss Ebola as an international threat. Much of the media discussion on Ebola is centered around speculation on whether or not the outbreak is going to spread to Europe. This is the case particularly in Daily Mail, which presents two potential causes for Ebola’s spread across borders: air travel and illegal trade of bush meat. However, it was highly unlikely that the Ebola was going to spread to Europe. Indeed, now three years after the outbreak, Ebola has been forgotten and media’s attention has again shifted towards new potential dangers. Nevertheless, even Daily Mail’s headlines portrayed Ebola as being “just one plane ride from Britain” (Daily Mail 31 July 2014). In contrast to prolonged discussion on Ebola threatening West, Daily Mail’s articles

hardly included discussion on situation in affected countries in West Africa. Whenever the outbreak is mentioned in the context of Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia, it tends to be highly simplified. For example:

“The Ebola outbreak that is causing crisis in West Africa has thankfully yet to be detected on our shores.” (Daily Mail, 16th Aug 2014)

Emphasising the possibility of Ebola spreading internationally despite the unlikeliness of such event could be seen as an attempt to involve readers in the UK. By implying that no-one is safe from Ebola, Daily Mail invites readers to see the outbreak as a threat to their everyday life. In a way, this could be seen as simply a strategy to increase profits by attracting more readers. Nevertheless, this strategy would not be successful without the framework of culture of fear, in which the audience is more likely to buy such ‘scares’. Scholars who have studied ‘culture of fear’ (Glassner 1999), or ‘climate of fear’ (Furedi 2006), argue that fear has become a pervasive frame through which surrounding world is interpreted in the Western world. Altheide (2002, p.1) argues that by promoting entertainment of fear, medias have contributed to changing everyday life routines and social expectations. Therefore, if an audience member perceives everyday life as somewhat dangerous, he or she is more likely to also view Ebola as a threat.

The Guardian on the other hand aims to give more holistic picture of the phenomena. Articles are written in more neutral tone, and discuss for example the social and economic situation in affected countries, as well as the role of international community in managing the outbreak. Where The Guardian is not contributing to culture of fear in a sense that Daily Mail is, it nevertheless acknowledges the discourse of fear. The opinion piece by James Ball, “Concerned about Ebola? You’re worrying about the wrong disease”, particularly criticises media’s fear mongering. Also other articles discuss the false alarms that took place in Europe

as well as highlight the unlikelihood of Ebola breaking out in Europe. It could be seen that this is a response to the hysteria created by tabloid media, a reaction to the unnecessary fear. This indicates that media coverage on Ebola is largely centered on fear itself: it contributes to the broader phenomena of culture of fear, or reacts to it. This following question-answer set from Daily Mail's article, "Truth about incurable virus that's just one plane ride from Britain: Q&A", illustrates how the fear itself is emphasised:

"WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT SUDDENLY WORRIED? Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond chaired an emergency Cobra meeting on the issue yesterday because there are growing fears that the virus could enter Britain from Africa."
(Daily Mail, 31st July 2014)

This article states that action needs to be taken simply because public fears have grown in the UK, not because the actual risk of Ebola has grown.

Abeysehne (2016) recently conducted a study, which analysed the ways in which Ebola outbreak was discussed in various tabloid newspapers in the UK, Australia and the USA. Her analysis also included articles written before the 2014 outbreak, which was the first one that was seen as a threat to the Western world. Abeysehne similarly found that the discourse around Ebola was largely centered upon the West, and sees it as highly troubling that "concern and substantial mobilisation around the event failed to materialise until the disease entered the West" (Abeysehne 2016, p.456). Furthermore, she found that serious issues in the most affected areas in West Africa were absent or under-emphasised and there was only general discussion of 'Africa', or 'Africans'. This was in stark contrast with prolonged examination of the few rare cases in the West (Abeysehne 2016, p.457). A very similar pattern can be detected in Daily Mail's articles, which give much more importance to fears of European (or British) people, than to experiences of people suffering from the outbreak in Sierra Leone,

Liberia and Nigeria. By doing this, Daily Mail transforms the outbreak from a serious health crisis in West Africa into a potential threat in Europe. The Guardian on the other hand makes an important contribution to Ebola discussion by acknowledging public fears and aiming to put them back into proportion.

4.2 Fear of Ebola connected to general sense of unsafety

Many studies have discovered that unfortunate events, such as crimes or illnesses, tend to get disproportionate media coverage (Glassner 1999). Such media coverage contributes to general sense of unsafety, which has grown over the past few decades in the Western world. Therefore the fact that Ebola outbreak received so much attention in the Western media, is in *itself* a manifestation of culture of fear. Furedi (2006, p.x) believes that the idea that the whole humanity is confronted by great destructive forces, is central aspect of the climate of fear. Like many other ‘scares’, Ebola is presented as something that audience can only passively fear, with very limited opportunities to protect themselves. For example, one of the articles in the sample is titled: “Truth about incurable virus that's just one plane ride from Britain: Q&A” (Daily Mail, 31st July 2014). Saying that Ebola is ‘just one plane ride from Britain’, seems to be aimed at provoking fear among British readers. Another Daily Mail’s article claims that illegal trade of bush meat could “unleash Ebola in Britain” (Daily Mail 02 Aug 2014). These articles describe in colorful and emotional language the horrors of Ebola. It is described as being out of control, and the articles claim that authorities are not taking enough actions to protect citizens in the UK.

However, The Guardian emphasises the unlikeliness of Ebola spreading to Europe and even Daily Mail in some cases acknowledges that chances of the outbreak reaching Europe are

small. Nevertheless, such acknowledgments tend to be followed by speculation on potential transmission. For example, the article “Truth about incurable virus that's just one plane ride from Britain: Q&A” has the following question-answer section:

“HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CASES IN BRITAIN? No. But Dr Ben Neuman, a virologist from the University of Reading who studies viruses such as Ebola, warns that it is statistically likely the virus will eventually come to the UK.”

(Daily Mail, 31st July 2014)

By saying that it is “statistically likely” that Ebola will reach UK, is an example of speculation that is common aspect of media’s ‘fear mongering’. Even though there was not a single case of Ebola virus in the UK, number of articles paint a picture of a nightmare like situation familiar from disaster movies. These ‘worst case scenarios’, are connected to the sense of powerlessness, which many scholars see as part of culture of fear. Ebola is framed as something that people cannot protect themselves from, since anyone could be a potential transmitter. According to Furedi (2006, p.23), perception of risk often has little to do with actual risk. In many instances, sections of public have interpreted a theoretical risk, or speculation about risk, as a real danger. Daily Mail often blurs the line between speculated risk and actual risk. Articles include statements such as:

“There are fears that smuggled bush meat might be a route for the virus into Britain”

(Daily Mail 31 July 2014)

“The most immediate danger is that the virus will enter Britain on an airline flight”

(Daily Mail 31 July 2014)

“And the underground trade in bush meat may be the channel by which the UK is most vulnerable to an Ebola outbreak”

(Daily Mail 31 July 2014)

Although Daily Mail technically does not say that Ebola is definitely on its way to Europe, articles imply that there is a very big chance of an outbreak in Britain. Therefore it is no wonder that some members of audience may have interpreted Ebola as a real threat to them. Glassner (1999, p.xxi) points out that unlike in the past, media can provoke fears even though readers and viewers may not have any personal experience of the perceived danger. Fears now stem from alarmist media reports, rather than personal experience, and they are “about dangers that we cannot directly confront, but simply fear passively” (Furedi 2006, p.x).

Furedi (2006, p.10-11) relates these kinds of representations to the idea that contemporary Western culture refuses to accept death and misfortune as a part of life and human condition. When an unfortunate event takes place, there is a need to ‘do something’ to prevent it happening again. For example, if someone dies tragically, it is common to search for lessons that will shed light to the experience. Isolated events or accidents easily provoke a call for more preventative measures and regulations, and family members may issue messages hoping that “something ‘good’ will come out of their relative’s tragic faith” (Furedi 2006, p.11). This seems to have been the case with media coverage on Ebola, where fear itself was seen as a reason enough to take preventive measures. This reflects the central aspect of the culture of fear: fear has become an accepted, even expected, normal way to respond to perceived threats, no matter trivial or small they may be (Glassner 1999; Furedi 2006).

4.3 Fear of Ebola connected to fear of other

Tabloid newspapers are known for producing and reproducing images of racial stereotypes. For example, small number of crimes done by African American men has attracted disproportionate news coverage in America for many years now, often portraying the whole group as criminals (Glassner 1999, p.109). More recently, the focus has moved towards ‘islamophobia’, and fear of terrorism, which has caused serious problems and prejudice towards Islamic communities around the world. Such fear of ‘other’ is manifested in the Daily Mail’s articles, which tend to emphasise cultural aspects of the Ebola outbreak when discussing the way in which is spreading (or assumed to spread). As mentioned earlier, Daily Mail presents two reasons for the spread of Ebola: air travel and illegal trade of bush meat. Both are connected to cultural practices, such as burial practices and ‘exotic’ cuisines. This following text sample is from Daily Mail’s article “The secret trade in monkey meat that could unleash Ebola in Britain” (02 Aug 2014), which is mostly written in narrative story form:

.. “WITH the sun beating down on the strange and exotic-looking meats on sale -- some dripping blood, some heavily smoked and impossible to identify -- the sights and sounds at this London market are straight out of Africa. Skinned goat carcasses dangle overhead, blackened cow heads and lamb brains are lined up in trays, while baskets tucked in darker corners brim with yellowing strips of cured flesh ” (Daily Mail, 02 Aug 2014)

The article goes on elaborating ‘exotic African dishes’ and dangers of illegal bush meat assumedly proposes to the UK. Abeysinghe’s (2016) study focused on media narratives and representations around border control in relation to Ebola in the UK, the USA and Australia. She similarly found that number of articles emphasise the ‘African nature’ of the disease, and present “depictions of the ‘uncivilised’ practices of affected populations” (Abeysinghe 2016, p.463). This is a common response to epidemics, Abeysinghe believes that “collective understandings of infectious disease tend to produce narratives of intervention which reflect

notions of threat, morality and blame” (Abeysinghe 2016, p.452). In the past, outbreaks of other diseases have led to stigmatising and ‘othering’ of communities. For example, SARS outbreak was linked to Asian communities in the West, and the rise of HIV/AIDS led to stigmatisation of communities (Abeysinghe 2016, p.461).

It seems that Daily Mail is able to tap into existing fears about ‘others’ in the UK. Furthermore, some judgmental tones can be detected in the text. This example is again from Daily Mail’s bush meat article, where the reporter describes his day at the Ridley Road market:

“This Nigerian butcher agreed to meet me in a cafe away from the market, and made a spirited, if dangerously ignorant, defense of his business. ‘A lot of people believe bush meat is magical,’ he told me.” (Daily Mail, 02 Aug 2014)

Such narratives put blame on African communities living in the UK, despite the fact that there were no cases of Ebola spreading through trade of bush meat. Furthermore, cultural practices are very much simplified and the articles selectively discuss only ‘exotic’ examples, which reinforce racial stereotyping. Some Daily Mail’s articles also discussed burial practices in West Africa, and similarly deemed them as ignorant or irrational.

The fact that negative stereotyping is clearly present in tabloid magazines’ Ebola conversation, is acknowledged by The Guardian. This sample is from James Ball’s opinion piece:

“Ebola might have our attention, but it’s not even close to being the biggest problem in Africa right now. (...)The most real effect for millions of people reading about Ebola will be fear and stigma. During the Sars outbreak of 2003, Asian-Americans became the targets of just that, with public health hotlines inundated with calls from Americans worried about “buying Asian

merchandise”, “living near Asians”, “going to school with Asians”, and more.” (The Guardian 5 August 2014).

One of the Guardian’s articles in the sample discusses situation of pregnant mothers, families and children in affected areas, who struggled to access medical services even before the outbreak. The article, “WHO declares Ebola outbreak an international public health emergency” (The Guardian 8 August 2014), discusses WHO’s director general’s statement, who calls for coordinated international response and urges the international community to provide support:

"Countries affected to date simply do not have the capacity to manage an outbreak of this size and complexity on their own," said Margaret Chan, the WHO's director general. "I urge the international community to provide this support on the most urgent basis possible." (The Guardian 8 August 2014)

Such articles remind the public that people in the West are not actually likely to suffer from Ebola, but are rather in a position to support the countries devastated by the outbreak.

Altheide (2002, p.177) argues that “mass media content and forms are part of our everyday lives and contribute to social definitions of self, others, and social issues”. Therefore, number of significant actors, such as politicians, businesses, journalists and even social scientists, have a stake and an interest in fear (Altheide 2002, p.177). This perspective sheds light to The Guardian’s discussion on fear surrounding Ebola: perhaps fear cannot be ignored, since it is such a significant part of the public discussion.

Glassner (1999) points out that as a part of culture of fear, serious ongoing problems that give rise to these very dangers, such as income inequality and poverty, remain largely ignored.

Daily Mail's way of reporting could contribute to this kind of development, since it is not concerned about the actual issues in the affected countries, such as insufficient public health care, but rather demands action to protect citizens of the UK from an unlikely danger. Therefore The Guardian makes an important contribution to the Ebola conversation by aiming to put the focus back on the actually affected area and to the shared responsibility. Unfortunately, increased climate of fear has led to a situation where warnings about potential risks are "far more likely to be believed than the reassurance of an expert authority" (Furedi 2006, p.190)

4.4 Fear of Ebola connected to fear of illnesses

Fear of Ebola is related to ways in which health and health risks are generally understood in Western societies. Over the past decades, health-related alarms and scares have become a part of routine in Western societies (Burgess 2008, p.57). Paradoxically, while people feel increasingly worried about their health and vulnerable to illness, they are enjoying good health and living longer than ever (Buckingham 2008, p.19). The idea that Ebola epidemic is on its way to Europe, can be seen as an exaggerated 'health scare', strongly fueled by tabloid media. As discussed earlier, Daily Mail framed Ebola largely as an uncontrollable outbreak, and made a number of predictions about it spreading to the UK. Furthermore, colourful words and catchy phrases were used to describe the virus, such as: 'highly contagious', 'deadly', and 'hideously unpleasant'. This type of reporting has been typical also with other outbreaks in the past. Burgess (2008, p.60) discusses the case of bird flu in 2005, when dramatic predictions of casualties were made in media, despite the barriers for it to actually become a significant human health problem. Where in the past such claims may have been dismissed as fear

mongering, Burgess believes that this health scare was successful because in a society that is so risk-averse “such messages can strike a chord with personal insecurity and the strongly held conviction that it is ‘better to be safe than sorry’“(Burgess 2008, p.60). Ebola outbreak exists in this same continuum, where number of ‘health scares’ have gotten disproportionate media attention and then relatively soon forgotten. Examples of ‘better to be safe than sorry’ - principle can be found in Daily Mail’s articles. This following sample is from an article titled ‘HSE confirms no Ebola virus case in Ireland: But false alarm should be wake-up call’:

“I welcome confirmation that in this case Ebola is not the source of the illness, but I would also call on the Minister to take this opportunity to reassure the public about what processes he has in place in the event that we do have a positive identification of the virus. 'For example, in this instance, while Ebola was being considered as a possibility, was the Department of Health aware of the identity of other passengers who travelled with the patient into Ireland? 'Were reports that a containment unit had to be prepared at the Mater correct, and if so, why are such facilities not already in place given the seriousness of this virus threat? 'This false alarm should serve as a wake-up call to Minister Varadkar. Many people will have been alarmed by this morning's reports and I am calling on the Minister to act quickly to give those people reassurance.'” (Daily Mail, 16 Aug 2014)

Number of scholars have pointed out that it is typical aspect of culture of fear to demand politicians and other officials to take an action to protect citizens. Therefore culture of fear also influences political agenda by setting the terms by which political choices are made by priming some aspects of social life while dismissing others (Altheide 2002, p.24). Viewers or readers may then draw on these accessible bits of information to interpret event (Altheide

2002, p.24). Public authorities and political actors are anxious to be seen as taking public health seriously, and suspicions about possible health scares have to be acknowledged somehow (Buckingham 2008). Here Daily Mail specifically addresses minister Varadkar, making it difficult to ignore public fears, no matter how irrelevant they may be.

Culture of fear is also manifested through Daily Mail in the sense that their articles may have contributed to people actually fearing of being exposed to Ebola, perhaps even experiencing symptoms. Both of these following text samples are from Daily Mail's article: "Truth about incurable virus that's just one plane ride from Britain: Q&A".

"WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS? Dr Tom Fletcher of the Royal Army Medical Corps, who has treated victims in Guinea and Sierra Leone, says: 'The initial symptoms are quite non-specific and similar to a flu-like illness. They include fever, headache and lethargy. This progresses to severe diarrhoea and vomiting.' The incubation period for the virus varies from two days to three weeks." (Daily Mail 31 July 2014)

"WHAT IF I THINK I HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH AN INFECTED PERSON? Contact your GP immediately, although the health authorities are keen to avoid everyone who has flown from Africa rushing to their family doctor because it will overwhelm surgeries." (Daily Mail 31 July 2014)

The heightened sense of fear has led to a situation where we are often urged to self-monitor signs of illnesses and to be 'aware' of risks (Buckingham 2008. p.19). Interestingly, fear *itself* has also become understood as a health risk. Furedi (2006, p.4) believes that the "tendency to treat fear as its very own pathology is one of the distinctive features of contemporary society". Health risks are now also associated in with number of everyday activities, such as food, water, technologies, energy use and so on (Burgess 2008; Buckingham 2008). Therefore it is

perhaps no wonder that some readers may have related relate their ‘non-specific’ symptoms they are experiencing to Ebola, rather than, for example, to a normal flu.

The Guardian reminds again that fears about catching Ebola are disproportionate. James Ball argues in his opinion piece that “Ebola has become the stuff of hypochondriacs’ nightmares across the world”, and recalls the numbers of people dying each year to malaria and tuberculosis, which are significantly higher. Another Guardian’s article, “Fear and false alarms as Ebola puts Europe on alert”, discusses the number of false alarms that took place in Europe in August 2014. According James Ball in the Guardian (22 August 2014) “There has been only one confirmed Ebola case in Europe since the epidemic broke out in Africa, but a string of false alarms has provoked jitters and charges of overreaction”. This article lists number of cases, including at least dozen of West Africans around Europe, who had mild flu symptoms and were isolated until it was confirmed that had not contracted Ebola virus. Also number of people who had travelled to West Africa were suspected to have Ebola, but all turned out to suffer from some other illness. In one case, around 600 people were quarantined for two hours in a Berlin jobcentre after a false alarm. In his opinion piece, James Ball also critiques the way in which many responded to the outbreak by demanding protection of borders:

“Even intellectual powerhouses such as Donald Trump have fallen into panic, with the mogul calling for the US to shut off all travel to West Africa and revoke citizens’ right to return to the country – who cares about fundamental rights during an outbreak?” (The Guardian, 2 August 2014)

Buckingham (2008, p.19) believes that heightened atmosphere of vulnerability puts a burden on healthcare systems, as significant proportion of general practitioners’ work involves treating people with symptoms that cannot be medically explained. In a way, “health scares contribute to the culture of fear, but they are also a product of it“ (Buckingham 2008, p.32).

4.5 Conclusion

Media discussion in the analysed newspapers on the Ebola was largely centered on Western fears. Daily Mail contributed to the culture of fear by using number of tactics common for tabloid media, such as exaggerating the issue and predicting worst case scenarios. The Guardian on the other hand aimed to put the focus back on the actually affected countries, and pointed out in number of articles that fears in the West were disproportionate. Furedi (2006, p.4) argues that because fear in contemporary society has a free-floating dynamic, it is easily attached to wide range of phenomena. Perhaps it was therefore easy for mass media to connect the Ebola outbreak into number of fears that already exist in Western societies, including fear of other and fear of illnesses. Furthermore, in the contemporary society, fear has become a prevalent framework for viewing the world, which has increased the general feelings of unsafety. Perhaps this explains at least partially why people might have been more likely to 'buy' Daily Mail's messages about the worst case scenario. Now in 2016, there have been hardly any mentions about the Ebola outbreak. Tabloid media outlets seem to have moved their focus on terrorist attacks in Europe and the recent refugee crisis, which includes provoking fears about criminal 'others'. Burgess refers to this kind of process as 'risk mitigation', where the focus of fear and anxiety is subject to change and risk concerns have only a short term impact (Burgess 2008, p.58). This indicates that the health scares are often illusory or minor, and often "panic can be a bigger problem than its ostensible source" (Burgess 2008, p.59). This seem to have been the case with the 2014 Ebola outbreak, which was feared to reach Europe, North America and Australia. However, small number of Ebola infections has still occurred in Liberia, but they have been contained quickly (WHO 2016). More importantly, Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone continue to suffer from serious issues,

such as poverty and insufficient health care. Nevertheless, these ongoing problems rarely get mentioned in the Western media.

5. STORIES FROM THE FIELD

This chapter analyses the ways in which culture of fear is manifested in Daily Mail's and The Guardian's articles that fell into the category of 'stories from the field'. This refers to articles that discuss experiences of health care workers, as well as others affected by the Ebola outbreak, such as family members or survivors. This was the second most common theme in both newspapers. Some issues are covered in both Daily Mail and The Guardian, such as challenging work conditions, and articles tend to be written in narrative story form in both newspapers. However, there are some striking differences between the two papers. Where The Guardian discusses experiences from the perspective of locals and foreign workers, Daily Mail exclusively focuses on Western workers. Furthermore, The Guardian's articles mainly discuss health care professionals' actual work, where Daily Mail is more focused on their personal life and characteristics. Relationships between Western health care workers and locals are also described very differently in each newspaper. Daily Mail tends to portray the Western nurses and doctors as brave saviors, and The Guardian emphasises aspects of cooperation and friendship between local and foreign workers. Again, The Guardian also discusses the ways in which Ebola outbreak connects to broader issues in the society, such as income inequality. In this chapter I will look more closely in the narrative structure and the roles attributed to different actors.

5.1 Creating an attractive storyline: Brave heroes fight the evil

Headlines on Daily Mail's articles often resemble something one could expect to find from a disaster movie trailer, for example: "Blood-spattered floors at hospital where brave UK nurse got Ebola" (25 August 2014, Daily Mail) or "Ebola health worker gets experimental 'cure' in hospital" (27 August 2014, Daily Mail). According to Glassner (1999, p.xxii), tabloid media newspapers and TV-programs have moved towards more entertainment like format themselves in order to compete with actual entertainment, such as drama programs or movies. Therefore the boundaries between news and entertainment have become blurred for many people. For example, Daily Mail describes Ebola with following words:

"Ebola starts with symptoms of a common cold. It ends with excruciating death -- massive organ failure and bleeding from every orifice -- and kills up to nine out of ten of its victims. And crucially, it incubates for up to three weeks: enough for a carrier to unwittingly travel far from its cradle in central Africa to infect new populations." (Daily Mail 14 July 2014)

Glassner (1999) sees this as an important aspect of culture of fear: tabloid newspapers and TV programs exploit people's fears for the purpose of financial benefit. In order to do so, newspapers attempt to create interesting and appealing stories, often through use of colorful language and story lines that can resemble fictional shows. Professional narrators have an important role in "transforming something implausible into something believable" (Glassner 1999, p.207). According to Seale (2002, p.32), news media often present health risks in a 'standard story form', where strongly opposing forces are confronting each other. For example, "victims are pitched against villains and fools, and community safety is disrupted by a variety of threats, often then opposed and resolved by community rescuers" Seale (2002,

p.32). In this case, Ebola is the threat or a 'villain' and Western volunteers are the rescuers.

Blurred line between entertainment and news has led to situation where audience might even sometimes confuse fiction with actual news, which in turn contributes to general feelings of unsafety (Glassner 1999). Such thrilling storylines can be easily detected in Daily Mail's articles discussing stories from the field. By describing scary experiences of noble volunteers fighting Ebola, Daily Mail creates familiar, yet an attractive, storyline. This is an example of such storytelling from Daily Mail's article "A selfless hero to lift our hearts: As brave British nurse fights Ebola":

"Though warned against such an act of selfless heroism, William put his own life in jeopardy to work horrendous hours and try to save others. He didn't heed any 'health'n'safety' considerations or consult his insurance policy, he just acted because he had dedicated his life to others." (Daily Mail 27 Aug 2014)

This article continues to praise Pooley for his altruism, sacrifice and selflessness in a face of a deadly disease. Even Pooleys' parents are said to have 'generous spirits', and Pooley's co-worker is quoted to have said that Pooley is 'a pretty extraordinary guy'. Glassner (2006, p.208) points out that using emotional content in place of actual evidence, is a typical part of news 'scares'. Picturing Western volunteers as heroes is connected to exaggerated possibility of Ebola spreading to Europe: heroes are necessary only if there is something that the audience fears. The language Daily Mail uses is equally colorful when describing virtues of volunteers and the horrors of Ebola. Two Daily Mail's articles in this sample describe British volunteers with following adjectives or phrases: 'calm young Englishman', 'brave', 'like an angel', 'extraordinary', 'tired, but upbeat and smiling', 'selfless', 'driven by altruism'. Phrases used in reference to Ebola include: 'epicenter of an apocalyptic death zone', 'deadliest disease the world has ever known', 'excruciating death', and so on. By creating such as stark contrast,

Ebola outbreak is transformed into an easily digestible and entertaining story. It is common aspect of news ‘scares’ that emotional content and touching interviews are used in place of scientific evidence (Glassner 2006, p.208). Within the culture of fear, ‘scares’ are commonly backed up with testimonials from people audience can sympathise with, in this case, heroic Western volunteers, or their close ones. Such way of reporting again dismisses the complexity of the Ebola outbreak and its connection to other issues in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

The Guardian’s (27 August 2014) article “Ebola: life and death on the frontline” on the other hand includes discussion on broader level, it for example talks about how Liberia’s deep class divisions enable some people to flee the outbreak, while others are forced to “remain dormant and weather the storm” (The Guardian, 27 August 2014). Like Daily Mail, The Guardian also includes narrative descriptions from the field. This sample is from The Guardian’s article where a foreign doctor, local mourner, local nurse, a foreign sanitation specialist and a local survivor discuss their experiences:

Cokie van der Velde, a British sanitation specialist:

“It’s my job to make sure infection is kept under control: train people in how to wear the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and teach the protocol for getting in and out of high-risk areas in the treatment centers. I also deal with the dead bodies, training the burial teams in how to dispose of them. It’s physically demanding work. The PPE is completely waterproof, so there’s no chance of evaporation and therefore no chance of cooling down.” (The Guardian, 27 August 2014)

One of the differences to Daily Mail’s articles is that here the stories are told directly by the people who are at the field, instead of speculating journalists. The language The Guardian uses is less emotional, but these stories do include some discussion on a more personal level.

Mourner who lost family members for example states:

“The problems I am encountering now are too big for me. I’ve not really slept since my father, brother and sister were admitted to the West Point treatment centre in Monrovia a week ago.” (The Guardian, 27 August 2014)

Nevertheless, the main focus is not on these health care workers’ personal feelings or (assumed) characteristics, but on the actual work that they are doing. The connection to culture of fear is perhaps less obvious in The Guardian’s articles. Since culture of fear is largely Western phenomenon, the well justified fear experienced by the local people in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, cannot be seen as part of the same phenomena. However, this difference between the newspapers highlights the difference between the culture of fear in the West and the fear experienced by local people actually at a risk of contracting Ebola virus.

5.2 News coverage on Ebola through postcolonial lens: Needy victims and selfless heroes

In the previous chapter I argued that Daily Mail transformed Ebola from a problem in West Africa into a problem of contagion in the Western world. Articles speculating the possibility of the outbreak spreading to Europe emphasised the cultural aspects of Ebola and reinforced fear of ‘other’ through racial stereotyping. In Daily Mail’s stories from the field, Western health care workers are portrayed as selfless heroes. Previous chapter discussed how fears of Ebola reflect broader fears prevalent in Western societies, such as fear of other. Stories from the field in turn reflect the way in which Western (British) society likes to perceive itself. Of

course these perceptions change and vary greatly, but here the focus is on the flattering image of a model citizen, which Daily Mail presents.

Interestingly, the “others”, the ‘Africans’, who were portrayed as potential transmitters with irrational beliefs in previous articles, are now viewed as helpless victims in need of saving. This double position of the other reflects well the postcolonial contradictions related to the “othering” of the Africans (Loomba 2003). Inhabitants of Africa and America were constructed as savages in early colonial discourses (Loomba 2003, p.108). They were attributed with often contradictory characteristics such as primitivism, laziness, sexual promiscuity, irrationality and innocence (Loomba 2003, p.107). The traditional colonial imaginary also portrays the others as “noble savages” (Loomba 2003, pp.117-118). This has been used need as a justification for intervention, to provide paternalistic care, civilization, and rescue. The language used in Daily Mail indicates that such ideas and attitudes have not fully disappeared, as here the ‘Africans’ are still pictured as innocent victims with not much of agency or own capabilities.

This following text is from Daily Mail’s article “A selfless hero to lift our hearts: As brave British nurse fights Ebola”:

“TRY to imagine yourself as a patient at the neglected Kenema hospital in Sierra Leone, desperately afraid, alone and in pain. In panic you shout out for help, and then the calm young Englishman arrives at your side, offering water and murmuring soothing words you don't understand -- but which make you feel cared for.

That's surely how it must have been when brave William Pooley did his rounds. The British nurse, now struck down by the Ebola virus, must have seemed like an angel to the terrified patients after most of those who should have been

nursing them had fled.” (Daily Mail 27 Aug 2014)

This article goes on speculating ‘what it must have been like’ in the field, praising Pooley for his bravery and altruism. However, Pooley is not interviewed in this article, but it is based on assumptions and other news coverage that the author of the article has viewed. Furthermore, none of Daily Mail’s articles allow local people of West Africa to speak for themselves. According to Loomba (2003, p.231), questions of representation are central in colonial study as well as in other fields of study that are concerned about perspectives of marginalised groups. It can be problematic to frame colonised people as victims, “incapable of answering back”, which is what has been done in these articles (Loomba 2003, p.231).

The Guardian’s article, “Will Pooley: 'At the start there was the horror of Ebola, now it's a bit routine’”, is written by a journalist who met Pooley number of times in Sierra Leone. The tone of this article is quite different, and lot of credit is also given for Pooley’s local colleagues as well as resilient Ebola victims:

“He [William Pooley] talked about everyday life at the heart of the Ebola outbreak. There were people up, walking and recovering, children playing, sometimes singing and even rare moments of laughter. He described women in recovery, saying: "They were sitting around singing songs, you wouldn't see that on a ward in England, you wouldn't see people singing like that."

(The Guardian, 26 August 2014)

This article on Pooley recognises his efforts and the fact that his work under horrific conditions saved dozens of lives. However, it emphasises cooperation between Pooley and the local nurses. Furthermore, Pooley is described as a friend of the locals, rather than their

saviour. Also, the patients and their families are treated with more respect: they are seen as resilient fighters who also help others when they can, rather than helpless victims.

As discussed earlier, Ebola outbreak was used to criticise African communities and their customs. Daily Mail's stories from field, which exclusively focus on Western volunteers, in turn enable audience members to feel good about themselves. This following sample is from Daily Mail's article that discusses other British volunteer, Cokie van der Velde.

“Beneath the suit, divorcee Cokie -- it's a childhood nickname coined by her sister, a shortening of her Christian names Agnes Caroline -- holds on to the home comforts which help her endure life in this most extreme and terrifying environment. She has with her Marks and Spencer knickers, an electric toothbrush which she can charge from her computer and Jo Malone mandarin, lime and basil moisturiser. Cokie, who is from Britain, keeps up her spirits by listening to BBC radio programmes, and by keeping in touch with her grandchildren Isaac, eight, Joseph, five, and one-year old Suzannah.” (Daily Mail 14 July 2014)

These mentions of Cokie's personal life, could be again seen as an attempt to engage with readers by enabling them to regard distant Ebola outbreak as something they can relate to. Article on Pooley describes him similarly as “somebody who has similar hopes, fears and loves, as you and me” (Daily Mail 27 Aug 2014). According to Altheide (2002, p.49), it is common that media attempts to establish a relationship between the audience member and the story-form. This way “mass-mediated problems are oriented to be everyone's problems” (Altheide 2002, p.49). In this case, the emotional descriptions of heroic volunteers invite the readers to participate as sympathetic audience members. Interestingly, it seems that the sympathy is not directed to the Ebola victims as much as it is given to British volunteers and their families. However, such stark contrast between the victims and heroes may reflect some

underlying attitudes about ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. According to Loomba (2003, p.104), racial opposition do not only produce outsider, but essentially also the insider, “usually white European male ‘self’”. Daily Mail’s references to Cokie’s personal life, such as family and hobbies, seem to be aimed at showing how she is ‘one of us’, or an ‘insider’. In this case, ‘insider’ is constructed as an ordinary, Christian, hard-working British woman with a kind heart.

The way in which Daily Mail portrays Ebola’s victims as helpless and needy, reinforces unequal colonial power relationships. In the field of development, the concept of ‘help’ is often seen as problematic since it always refers to unsymmetrical hierarchical relationship (Koponen & Seppänen 2007, p.336). Such patronising tone fully ignores the agenda of Liberian, Nigerian and Sierra Leonean people and fails to treat them with respect, while glorifying acts of Western volunteer workers. This is not to say that the volunteers themselves felt this way, but rather this is how their acts were framed in tabloid media. One Daily Mail’s article for example assumes that volunteers “are driven by altruism” (Daily Mail 27 Aug 2014), without giving volunteers any opportunity to discuss their motives in their own words. Indeed, interviews in The Guardian indicate that Western workers highly valued the skills and resilience of their West African colleagues.

5.3 Fear of Ebola in relation to morality

Some scholars who have studied the culture of fear, argue that the ways in which we understand risks, is connected to society’s understanding of morality (Douglas 1982; Burgess 2006). Mary Douglas, an anthropologists who has widely studied how people interpret risk,

suggest in her book *Risk and Culture* (1982), that people are only drawn to selected dangers. She points out that there are countless potential risks in all societies, but not all of them get our attention. Risks get selected because they for example offend the moral principles of the society, or open up an opportunity to criticise disliked groups. The Ebola outbreak in Western Africa got considerable attention in the Western (tabloid) media, far more than many other diseases or ongoing issues. Malaria, for example, kills more people than Ebola every year, yet it is rarely mentioned in the Western media. Perhaps the success of this ‘scare’ was partially due to a fact that it reinforced a worldview where the West is morally superior in comparison to ‘uncivilized’ and dangerous developing world. For example, hints about moral superiority can be detected in Bel Mooney’s article on volunteer workers abroad:

“How, in a world which can seem so wicked and rotten -- where murderous jihadists and other pitiless fanatics regard human life as cheap -- one selfless young man calmly risked his life in the most difficult situation imaginable, to help others” (Daily Mail 27 Aug 2014)

This is not to say all readers of Daily Mail feel this way, but to some extent such beliefs are common. The Guardian on the other hand brings up the questionable morality in highlighting Western suffering, for example:

“.. it was only after the infection of two American NGO staff, Dr Kent Brantly and Nancy Writebol, who were working in an isolation centre in Monrovia run by Samaritan’s Purse, “that the world sat up and paid attention”, according to Ken Isaacs, one of the organisation’s vice presidents.” (The Guardian 27 August 2014)

Burgess (2006) also suggests that the way in which societies fear, reveals something about

their moral values. He believes that boundaries between desirable and undesirable shed light to what societies are, or what they aspire to be. Minimising risks has become a way of living for many people in the West and risk awareness is manifested through daily actions, for example by consciously avoiding potential unsafe foods. Interestingly, where risk avoidance is generally seen as a sign of responsibility, here risk taking is glorified. In the context of culture of fear, this is slightly contradictory: people are urged to beware of dangers and to take measures to protect themselves even from unlikely dangers, while those who have decided to put themselves at risk in order to help other, are admired as heroes. Burgess (2008, p.62) argues that “‘awareness’ of risks to our health and security has become a new form of showing oneself to be a responsible citizen; taking active measures to limit the impact of these evils an even greater sign of modern virtue.” Perhaps here the volunteers who attempt to protect others despite putting themselves at risk, are celebrated as having such virtues. Indeed, Daily Mail’s articles emphasise the fact that the British workers are there *voluntarily*. References to their personal lives highlight the fact that they could be safe at home with their families.

As mentioned earlier, all Daily Mail’s articles dismiss the Ebola outbreak’s connection to broader issues, such as poverty, inequality and poor health care. Rather than discussing any larger scale actions that could be taken in order to overcome the outbreak, the focus is on acts of individuals. Individualisation theory, which emphasises choice of individual and downplays structure, has grown popular in the West since the 1990s (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005 p. 422). Daily Mail’s writing reflect the ideas of individualisation, As the social and economic context is underestimated in Ebola discussion. The Guardian on the other hand reminds readers of the large scale actions that should be taken in an international level. In Daily Mail, helping people who are suffering from the outbreak is not considered as a responsibility of global community, but rather a noble pursuit of a few heroes. Furedi discusses this phenomena in relation to politics. He believes that politics of fear has cultivated vulnerability of people in such way that

where in the past policies engaged with responsible citizens, people are now treated as vulnerable subjects “who tend not to know what is in their best interest” Furedi (2005, p.142). This has led to a situation, where political elite does not strive for large scale change in the public sphere, but is more concerned about managing micro issues in the private sphere. For example, politicians in the UK are far more likely to have strong views on issues such as classroom size or people’s diet, than about EU’s agricultural policy (Furedi 2005, p.142). In a same way, Daily Mail regards altruism and selflessness as an answer to a problem, rather than tackling it in its political, economic and social context.

5.4 Conclusion

Stories from the field exist in the same context of culture of fear as the articles discussing Ebola as an international threat. These two key themes relate to each other: Articles about Ebola as a threat to Europe provoke fears among readers, but stories from the field present some answers to this threat. Portraying Western nurses, doctors and other volunteers as brave heroes fighting a horrific diseases creates an attractive and adventurous storyline, which is same time familiar. In a way this is a strategy to attract readers, but it also connects to values and moralities on a deeper level. Daily Mail describes Western volunteers as noble saviors, while fully ignoring the contribution of local workers in West Africa and describing patients as helpless victims. This reinforces a colonial hierarchical relationship where help from superior West is seen as a key for solving problems of the developing world. The Guardian on the other hand emphasises the co-operation between the local and foreign workers, and highlight the resilience of the patients.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Revisiting the research questions

One of the purposes of this research was to discover what were the key issues highlighted in Western media's discussion on the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Originally this question was merely a practical one and aimed at finding key themes I could then further analyse in a next stage of my research. It did guide me towards the main themes, but this question alone revealed something significant about the data. The overwhelmingly most common theme was the possibility of Ebola spreading to the West, with roughly one third of all articles focusing on this topic. This is a striking number when considering the fact that the outbreak did not spread to Europe (or elsewhere in the West), and it was always highly unlikely that it would. In a way, such large number of articles is in itself a manifestation of culture of fear. Furthermore, it indicates that Ebola was transformed from a humanitarian crisis in West Africa into a problem of contagion in the West, which could be seen as highly Eurocentric approach to a serious issue. The Guardian, however, often pointed out that there is no need for such hysteria. Nevertheless, The Guardian did not aim at provoking fear among the readers in a same way as Daily Mail, but it nevertheless participated in the fear discussion. It could be seen that The Guardian responded to tabloid news' reaction, urging audience to put fear back into proportion and to pay attention to real structural issues.

The second most common articles were narrative stories from the field. Most articles discussed experiences of healthcare professionals, but some had also interviews from survivors and family members of those who had contracted Ebola virus. Closer look through the articles revealed that The Guardian emphasised experiences of the local people, and

included more interviews from local fieldworkers. When foreign workers' experiences were discussed, the aspects of co-operation and friendship were highlighted. Daily Mail on the other hand exclusively focused on European healthcare professionals volunteering in the field. Language used in these articles reinforced colonial unequal relationships, as Western workers were pictured as altruistic saviors, helping needy victims in West Africa.

Another aim of this research was to reveal how media coverage on Ebola relates to the ways in which risks and dangers are constructed and understood in Western societies. Therefore fear has been regarded at least to some extent as a social construction throughout this study. The way in which Ebola was framed as an international threat, connects to number of broader cultural anxieties in the West. One of the aspects of contemporary culture of fear is that the general sense of unsafety has increased. Daily Mail highly exaggerated the possibility of Ebola outbreak in Europe, and presented it as something people cannot protect themselves from, but can only passively fear. News coverage on Ebola also connects to fear other, as Ebola linked to 'African' communities, whose customs pose a threat to the rest of the society. Ebola 'scare' can also be seen as a 'health scare', which is a common aspect of culture of fear. As people already feel vulnerable to health risks and are urged to monitor themselves for all kinds of potential illnesses, it is more likely that such scare will catch on.

6.2. Culture of fear and the Ebola outbreak

Overall, this research provides a case study on 'culture of fear', and reveals that when an issue is framed in terms of fear, it can become an obstacle for truly understanding the problem and looking for efficient solutions to it. It does not matter whether or not the danger is real, fear

can have far reaching impacts either way. After all, number of scientists argued that it was always unlikely that Ebola would spread to Europe, but resources were still used to prevent it. Similarly to previous researches, results of this study indicate that fear can be intertwined with prejudice towards groups of people (Douglas 1982; Burgess 2006). Furthermore, fear can be utilised to criticise disliked groups of people, or to reinforce the image of a model, European, civilised citizen.

The empirical data of this study was collected from two widely read British newspaper. Where The Guardian is generally considered as a reliable news source, using somewhat neutral tone, Daily Mail is well known for its shocking headlines and emotional content. Therefore articles from Daily Mail should be considered as the most extreme form of ‘fear mongering’, and not taken as representation of all media coverage on the topic. Had I chosen only less commercial and more neutral newspapers, or other medias, the results would have likely been different. Nevertheless, such tabloid papers, as well as TV shows with similar content, are highly popular and reach a large audience. Therefore it was important to include such content in my analysis on culture of fear, which is largely a media driven phenomena. However, it is important to note that although fear was highly present in the collected articles, it does not necessarily reflect the actual fear of Ebola experienced by readers. After all, many people do not believe everything they see or read on the news, especially on tabloid news. In order to more carefully analyse to what extent media fuels fears, it would likely require another research method, such as interviewing or surveying audience members.

Findings of this study had some similar aspects to other studies on diseases or outbreaks. In the case of Ebola outbreak, African communities in the Britain were framed as potential transmitters, where during the SARS epidemic in 2005, blame was put on Asian communities (Abeyasinghe 2016, p.461). Also, in the 1980s the rise of HIV/AIDS was linked to gay

communities, leading to many negative consequences to already marginalised groups of people (Abeysinghe 2016, p.461). This indicates that it is common for (tabloid) media to emphasise cultural aspects of a disease, and frame assumed habits of minorities as potential threats to ‘average’ Western people, who are generally assumed to be white, heterosexual, and hard-working families. This thesis also explored the ways in which groups of people were presented in Ebola related news. This added a postcolonial perspective into sociological discussion on culture of fear. Result indicate that tabloid media contributes to ‘othering’ of certain groups of people, while constructing a flattering image of an ‘insider.

6.3. Suggestions for further research

Culture of fear is connected to number of contemporary problems, and therefore it is important to further study the ways in which fear has become a lens for viewing all kinds of activities and issues in the Western world. For example, negative stories about immigrants outnumber the positive ones, which is likely to influence public opinion. Fear can have an impact on international politics and law, but it can also influence the way in which people connect with each other in their everyday lives. In 2015, conflicts and violence in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq caused an influx of refugees into Europe, with a record number of over million people arriving to Europe in 2015 (UNHCR, 2015). This has sparked a heated conversation around Europe, which is still ongoing. Where some groups of people demand more humanitarian treatment of refugees, others view refugees as a threat. Such view tends to be fueled again by fear, for example, fear of increased crime, or fear that supporting refugees reduces funds available to other groups in need. It could be relevant to conduct a study on attitudes towards refugees within the framework of culture of fear. If a large number of population reacts to

refugees with fear, it can be a significant obstacle for arrivals to settle into their new home country.

Chapter two provided a brief overview of the ways in which fear has changed since the 1960s. This revealed that nature of fear is not set in stone, but rather subject to historical and cultural circumstances. Although the trend has been towards more fearful Western society, it does not necessarily mean that this will always last. For example, fear of crime may have increased surveillance, but this has also been met with criticism as people wish to protect their privacy. Having positive interactions with refugees can help people to overcome their fear and prejudice. Fear could still spark an action towards positive outcome, for example, if people fear enough that a certain natural habitat is being destroyed, they might do something to protect it. Younger generations might be more critical towards media, as they grow up navigating through ever growing online content. Perhaps the move from paper format into online format influences the way in which media is able to affect the audience. Unlike in the past, news now have an interactive component to them as many newspapers include a comment section on their website. Recently a department of Police of Finland warned people on Facebook site about dangerous ‘suicide game’ that is spreading among the youth (Helsingin Sanomat, 23 May 2017). The post was quickly shared all around Finland and raised many concerns, but at the same time the post was widely critiqued as not being based on facts and seen as unnecessary ‘fear mongering’. Although this incident was about a Facebook post, not a newspaper article, it indicates that doubts about a ‘fake news’ could potentially spread through social media networks just like fears. Therefore media’s influence on culture of fear may not be that straight forward and requires analysis that takes the interactive component of the news into account. Nevertheless, fear is ingrained in contemporary Western societies in a way that it was not before, with new potential risks emerging in the news every week. Fear does not exist in isolation but connects to other social issues, such as breakdown of social solidarity, loneliness, unclear shared rules of behavior and uncertainty about the future.

Perhaps these issues fuel one another, as fear may for example reduce interactions between strangers. Not all people fear the same things in a same way, but fear is still likely to impact everyone's life to some extent as it influences laws, rules at workplaces, norms about family life and even international relations. However, the most negative consequences about fear may be not be experienced by those who fear, but rather those who target of fear, such as ethnic minority groups. In order to overcome these issues, there is a need to further study fear in its own right, and to better understand the mechanisms through which fear is socially constructed.

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