

EASA Media Anthropology Network
E-Seminars Series

<http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm>
25th E-Seminar Discussion

**“Discourses on media portrayals of immigrants
and the homeland”**

Dr. Ulrika Sjöberg and Dr. Ingegerd Rydin
Halmstad University

Discussant Dr. Kira Kosnick,
Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main

January 2 – January 22 2009

ABSTRACT:

While much media research has focused on how the media represent immigrants and ethnic minorities, this paper examines how media coverage of immigrants is perceived among migrant families in Sweden.

The analysis is based on results from the three-year project ‘Media practices in the new country’ (funded by the Swedish Research Council) and involves immigrant families (mainly with children in the ages 12-16) living in Sweden with origin from countries such as Greece, Kurdistan, Iran, Lebanon, Somalia, Syria, Turkey and Vietnam. The methodological approach is ethnographic with extended in-depths interviews and observations in the homes of the families (both adults and children) as well as to some extent visual methods, such as disposable cameras. The approach implies close readings of how media use (e.g. television, Internet, print media) is perceived and negotiated within the private sphere of the informants’ homes. It also gives a unique insight into family discourse about these matters, since parents and children are interviewed, sometimes together.

A key concept for the project is citizenship, which traditionally, e.g. within jurisprudence and political science, has been tied to the issue of national identity. However, within sociology and social psychology citizenship is seen in a broader sense, which includes other kinds of identities, such as cultural, social and religious identity as well as informal and formal participation. By ideally

providing an equal flow of information and promoting communication among people, media might be seen as a facilitator of a living democracy. However, in today's media saturated society with increased access to different media (e.g. minority, transnational, national and local media) claims are raised that democracy is under threat and that multicultural civil society tends to be fragmented, encouraging exclusion rather than inclusion between cultural groups. Do specific cultural readings encourage the formation of, for example, so called 'media ghettos' and/or 'multiple public sphericules'? If so, what are the implications for identity processes and how citizenship and participation in society is perceived? Thus, the paper takes as its task to illuminate the complex relationship between different readings of certain media texts in order to attain knowledge about the role of media in the perception of the Swedish (Western) society in terms of cultural codes, language, values, norms, and traditions. The study shows that there is close interconnections between specific media readings and the perception of, for example, dominating discourses in society related to immigration. Several key issues are discussed among the informants in order to confirm cultural affiliation such as the search for the 'truth' and media objectivity, seeking alternative portrayals of reality from transnational media (e.g. Al-Jazeera). Other topics raised are cultural imperialism, non-ethical Western journalism in terms of lifestyle, values and violence, but also the need of belonging to a national mediated public sphere. The paper shows that, despite predominant critical voices, it is not simply about minority and diasporic media displacing local and national media but rather that the informants prefer a mixed-up media usage.

Sigurjón B Hafsteinsson [sbh at hi.is](mailto:sbh@hi.is)

Mon Jan 5 23:45:55 PST 2009

Dear all,

The year 2009 starts with our 25th e-seminar! We will discuss Dr. Ulrika Sjöberg and Dr. Ingegerd Rydin (both at Halmstad University, Sweden) paper titled "Family talk about media portrayals of immigrants."

The seminar closes January 22.

The working paper is available at:

<http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm>

How it works: Discussant is Dr. Kira Kosnick (Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, Germany). She will post her comments to the list this evening (Tuesday) or tomorrow (Wednesday).

Ulrika Sjöberg and Ingegerd Rydin will then respond to Kosnick's comments.

After their response I will invite further postings from the floor. Please have in mind that these sessions can only work if we have wide and sustained participation, so all contributions are very welcome. To post, please write directly to medianthro at easaonline.org, i.e. not to me.

All the best, Sigurjon.

Kira Kosnick [k_kosnick at yahoo.de](mailto:k_kosnick@yahoo.de)

Tue Jan 6 08:39:27 PST 2009

Dear list,

first of all many thanks to Ulrika Sjöberg and Ingegerd Rydin for allowing me to engage with their ongoing research on immigrant audiences in Sweden and their critical media practices. Their paper „Discourses on media portrayals of immigrants and the homeland“ was first presented at the ECREA Barcelona conference in November of last year, which I did not attend, so apologies for not being able to pick up the discussion from where the authors and some of you might have left off.

“According to the informants, the media’s discursive power is strong in maintaining exclusion and symbolic segregation rather than being inclusive and promoting mutual understanding“ is the concluding summary offered in the paper. What the authors have shown in the preceding pages is that immigrant audiences practice what can be called, following Stuart Hall and David Morley, oppositional ‘readings’ of various kinds with regard to mainly Swedish mass media representations. The paper is framed by a concern with migrant integration, thought of in terms of their involvement in a (national) mass-mediated public sphere that might seem under threat if migrants withdraw into alternative spheres provided by satellite- or internet-based mass-media circuits with links to former homelands.

Two of their research findings are very pertinent to answering such concerns: the finding that migrant families in Sweden do not turn away from Swedish mass media but rather complement them with a range of transnational or ‘home country’ media sources, and respondents’ demands for more diversity in the Swedish media, both in terms of immigrant participation and of more nuanced ‘home’ country or regional representation. Both of these findings (though established on the basis of a relatively small and diverse group of respondents) echo and support research results obtained elsewhere in European countries, where different immigrant audiences have been shown to develop complex media uses and critical interpretative abilities in response to changing mediascapes (in the sense of Appadurai) and political circumstances (a long list of references would have to be mentioned here).

What strikes me as particularly interesting in the paper, however, is what I see as the strong influence of a 20th century Western European public-service broadcasting tradition that seems to implicitly set the tone for both the framing of the main research question – how media coverage of migrants and their home country is perceived among migrant families – and of its operationalization in the context of interviews and focus groups. This influence can be detected in the highlighting of media as facilitators of a national public sphere and the linked concern with integration, as well as in the allocation of responsibility for symbolic inclusion or exclusion. Raising these issues as concerns is certainly legitimate and possibly expected in a national context that has a strong public-service tradition, but I’d

like to problematize some of the assumptions that underlie this focus in the paper and invite the authors to engage with a few provocative comments.

'Media coverage' is in the paper very quickly linked to a notion of 'the Swedish media', emerging in the text as mainly television and newspaper coverage produced within Sweden, as opposed to transnational or country-of-origin media. I find it remarkable that the notion of media is so self-evidently taken to refer to mass media here, of a type that positions their users as (albeit critically) receptive audiences of a mass-targeted product - i.e. 'classically' 20th century forms of mass media with a pronounced divide between producers and audiences. While the internet does receive some mentioning in the text, there is little discussion of the fundamental transformations that have been a preferred topic of media-anthro list discussions so far.

What about the momentous shifts of the past three decades in terms of new media technologies, economies and practices that challenge, among other things, the production-reception divide? And can we, in this context, still hold on - empirically and normatively - to the idea of a single, national mass-mediated public sphere that is invoked with the notion of 'the Swedish media'? Is the invocation of that idea by migrant respondents, their wish to 'belong' to it (p.1), a tribute to the continued practical or ideological importance of public-service broadcasting traditions in Sweden, an indication of specific media practices and understandings among migrants, or potentially even influenced by a research methodology that might unwittingly introduce the notion of such a public sphere in interviews and focus groups as a given? Let me haste to say that I am not accusing the authors of methodological naivety, but it is difficult to discern from the text what status should be accorded to the notion of the public sphere in relation to 'Swedish media'.

I wonder, as a consequence, if the Habermasian undercurrent in the paper might be somewhat at odds with the recognition that we live in a period of transnational media development which calls into question many of the former tenets of early 20th century mass communication research in Western Europe and the United States.

As many of you know, Jürgen Habermas famously described the rise of a national mass-mediated bourgeois public sphere as the necessary foundation for the practice of democracy in complex modern societies (Habermas 1991[1965]). It was the newspaper-based arena of male bourgeois debate that seemed to him to exemplify the principles of the ancient greek agora, a public sphere that democratically decided the common interest of the greek polis. Habermas was quickly criticized for his neglect of alternative public spheres that challenged the very idea of a public sphere in the (national) singular (Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt 1993[1972], Robbins 1993, Calhoun 1992). Nancy Fraser (1992) in particular made an interesting contribution thinking about what Habermas' model could mean to immigrants and their participation in processes of democratic deliberation, albeit not on the basis of empirical research.

The idea of a singular public sphere was thus debunked even before the historical demise of public-service broadcasting monopolies in Western Europe, the drive toward commercialization, and the radical

transformations in media technologies and practices. Technologies and practices that challenge both the producer-receiver divide, the national frame as the privileged arena for information/communication circuits, as well as the separation between different types of formerly distinct media.

Having done research on media and migration in a German context that has similarly been marked by a strong public-service broadcasting tradition (Kosnick 2007), I am quite surprised that these themes do not emerge as relevant for the contemporary Swedish situation. While there was a strong political impetus in the late 80s and early 1990s to make public-service broadcasting more responsive to the needs of immigrants and more reflective of ethnic diversity in Germany, the development of mediascapes not just for immigrants but more generally has taken the punch out of these arguments over the past decade. The prime manifestation of German public-service broadcasting with a diversity mission, the Berlin-based radio station Radio MultiKulti, was shut down just a few days ago (<http://www.multikulti.de/>).

And the perceptions among many immigrant groups seem to have changed as well. It might well be the case that migrant focus group discussions led by German researchers could still produce similar distinctions between 'German media' and 'home country media', and demands for different representations in the former, particularly when highly divisive issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or the so-called war on terror are concerned. Yet, I would tend to then interpret these as calculated discursive interventions intended to mark out a position in particular political contexts, rather than as statements indicating migrants' basic understanding of contemporary mediascapes.

The focus on immigrants demands for more images of themselves, more positive depictions and more truthful representations might also keep us from exploring the possibility that something might have changed in our (including immigrants') very relationship to media representation as a depiction of 'reality'. What, James Der Derian has asked, happens to the idea of reality/authenticity, no longer in the Benjaminian age of mechanical reproduction, but in the age of photoshop? It would be interesting here to consider whether the contemporary immediacy and modifiability of images through networked information technology produces new 'truth effects' that have consequences for the ways migrants think about impartiality, objectivity, reality. As James Der Derian has argued in an interesting essay on media representations of terror, "...not just cultural interpretation, moral judgement and ideological fervor, but also new technical means of reproduction, real-time transmission and global circulation via the internet produce profound and potentially uncontrollable truth-effects through the use of photographic and videographic imagery." (Der Derian 2005:33)

To sum up, my worry is that the paper might not give quite enough thought to the kinds of contemporary media practices and understandings that do not surface within the nationally framed public sphere orbit of 20th century mass media. Not that migrants' access to media from the former home country or new transnational media productions is ignored here, but that the changed conditions for the very existence of mediated public spheres and the production as well as interpretation of media representations seem to form no integral part of this picture.

Mark Deuze has persuasively argued that the expansion and growth of 'ethnic' media needs to be situated in the wider context of emerging participatory media practices (Deuze 2006), Karim H. Karim drew attention to the growth of ethnic- and diaspora-based commercial broadcasting infrastructures and their diverse effects already ten years ago (Karim 1999). All of these contributions render the public sphere discussion infinitely more interesting - and complicated. Could we, should we take them on board?

Thanks for reading!
Kira Kosnick

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Sigurjón B Hafsteinsson [sbh at hi.is](mailto:sbh@hi.is)

Wed Jan 7 01:38:45 PST 2009

Dear list,

Thanks to Kira for her comments! The floor is now open for comments and/or questions.

All the best, Sigurjon.

Ingegerd Rydin [Ingegerd.Rydin at hh.se](mailto:Ingegerd.Rydin@hh.se)

Fri Jan 9 00:21:05 PST 2009

Dear list and Kira,

Kira, thank you very much for taking your time to read our paper carefully and for your insightful comments, making us look at the text differently. It was very helpful. Our comments and clarifications are the following:

The Western European public service broadcasting tradition may well be reflected in the paper but it has to be pointed out that it was the informants themselves who made an implicit distinction between public broadcasting, often referred to as "Swedish media" and other media (transnational and satellite media). It also has to be stressed that this paper was devoted to "old media" (television, radio, newspapers). We have discussed Internet in another paper (e.g. one chapter in *Mediated Crossroads from Nordicom, 2008* and chapter in an upcoming book edited by Peter Dahlgren).. Perhaps, we have to be more explicit about this demarcation in the introductory part of the paper.

As for the matter of 'media coverage' perhaps it should be more clearly stated in the paper what type of media is of concern and why. The themes discussed in the paper were brought to the fore by the informants themselves. They tended to focus on news media, especially television and newspapers when talking about the issue of focus, i.e. the representations of migrants in the media.

Similar discussions were not seen when talking about internet usage. We do not see media as automatically implying mass media, quite the contrary. But when discussing the power of media, the informants tended to have traditional old media such as television and newspapers in their minds.

During the last decades we have faced several changes in the media landscape; socially, economically, culturally and politically, which in turn have implications on media practices and the meanings associated to these. While the net may blur the division between production-reception (as noted by Kira) this was not a common phenomenon in the informants' comments and reflections. There were just a couple of examples of informants creating their own chat forums in order to discuss with like-minded people about politics or for more social events like singing. But as said above, these things are discussed in another paper (chapter).

Kira raises the question 'And can we, in this context, still hold on - empirically and normatively - to the idea of a single, national mass-mediated public sphere that is invoked with the notion of 'the Swedish media'?' Our answer is that there is no single public sphere. Our study rather confirms the notion of "sphericules" and to the existence of alternative public spheres. The concept of 'public sphere' is only mentioned in the abstract and it has not been our aim to stress the importance of one single, national mass-mediated public sphere. The paper, rather, puts to the fore the discourses the informants had when it came to media portrayal of immigrants and their homelands. A single national mass-mediated public sphere has never been our point of departure (theoretically or empirically). Is this paper really about a single public sphere (as the text is interpreted by Kira)? Looking at our project as a whole, the informants made use of a wide range of media; Swedish, international, media from the homeland, and one could say that alternative mediated public spheres (or sphericules) are combined. But it is also a matter of creating mediated private spheres

where the greatest concern is to keep contact with friends and family worldwide (here internet has a special role as the ordinary phone). But it seems clear from the informants' talk that they feel excluded from the Swedish television and newspapers because of skewed portrayals of immigrants. This was a key concern among some of the informants and the main focus of this paper. However, we think that the point about bringing in a Habermasian perspective is a good one. So a discussion of media's role in the public sphere can be fruitful in the final part of the paper in order to situate our study in a more general discourse about the power of media in contemporary (perhaps Swedish) society.

Kira's note on methodology is an important one. Stating 'It might well be the case that migrant focus group discussions led by German researchers could still produce similar distinctions between 'German media' and 'home country media', and demands for different representations in the former, particularly when highly divisive issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or the so-called war on terror are concerned. Yet, I would tend to then interpret these as calculated discursive interventions intended to mark out a position in particular political contexts, rather than as statements indicating migrants' basic understanding of contemporary mediascapes'. Kira makes a good point here, but yet she suggests that we should take the informants comments and reflections literally. Or? And is not various political contexts embedded in migrants' understanding of media? In the interviews several examples were given on how increased experienced racism in Sweden was also seen in television and newspapers. Thus, the talks are not merely the result of certain interpretations of media texts, but also of how the informants position themselves in relation to the interviewer/researcher with a Swedish background and the interview context. A crucial issue which we try to highlight in the paper.

The possibility of changing relationship to media representation as depiction of 'reality' is an interesting one and needs further exploration. It has been out of the project's scope to look more in-depth (would require text analyses of media content and how specific content is interpreted) to whether contemporary immediacy and modifiability of images through networked information technology produces new 'truth effects' that have consequences for the ways migrants think about impartiality, objectivity, reality. A few examples in the paper touch upon these matters in how for example Al-Jazeera provides the truth and being objective compared to Swedish television. It also interesting that the power of media was merely mentioned when discussing Swedish media.

Finally Kira urges us to give more thought to the changed conditions for the very existence of mediated public spheres and the production as well as interpretation of media representations. During recent years, we have seen an increased interest among media scholars in studying the portrayal of minorities and people with migrant backgrounds, especially how they are portrayed in newspapers and television news. These studies have revealed a picture of negative connotations such as problems, deviance and conflict. Findings that are also reflected in our families' interpretation of Swedish television and newspapers. As it is work in progress we welcome other members of the list to give their

comments - what direction should the paper take? The one suggested by Kira?

Sigurjón B Hafsteinsson [sbh at hi.is](mailto:sbh@hi.is)

Sat Jan 10 01:50:50 PST 2009

Dear list,

Currently we are running an e-seminar (our 25th) until January 22.

There are over 610 members on this list - all interested in media and in particular media anthropology. Majority of members are established and active professionals at research institutions and graduate students.

Please, step forth and participate in our seminars. These sessions can only work if we have wide and sustained participation. All contributions are very welcome (short/long comments, short/long questions).

To post, please write directly to [medianthro at easaonline.org](mailto:medianthro@easaonline.org).

The paper we are discussing now can be accessed at:
<http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm>

Discussion so far can be found in the archive.

All the best, Sigurjon.

Daniel Taghioff [danieltaghioff at yahoo.com](mailto:danieltaghioff@yahoo.com)

Sun Jan 11 09:40:39 PST 2009

Dear Ingegerd, Ulrika, Kira and Colleagues

This was a very interesting paper for me from a personal perspective. I have been an immigrant in Sweden, living in Stockholm for 3 years. Being a Brit with Central Asian descent, I experienced the frustrations of preconceptions of me as Muslim-looking. I must admit to indulging in the get-out clause of switching to educated sounding English, and watching the transformation of attitudes that this brought.

Picking up on the public sphere debate, Sweden is in many cases a limit case in this. It is a society with one of the largest state structures per capita of population on earth. This in itself produces a sort of public sphere in that a staggering proportion of the population are employed directly by the state (and yet more in partially state-owned industries). This is a hugely homogenising force, in a country that has very recently let in 1 million immigrants to add to its 8 million population, albeit rather a lot of those are Finns and Norwegians, so barely "other".

I experienced Swedes as having strongly shared attitudes and prejudices. So it is not at all surprising to me that the informants in the study identified with a "Swedish Public Sphere" though I question the notion that this is exclusively a media phenomenon, since the day to day practices and presence of state institutions is very important in Sweden.

What has struck me in Sweden of late is precisely that immigrants are finding a voice in culture, with plays and books and some media platforms (as mentioned in the paper).

Perhaps this suggests a dynamic approach to public spheres or sphericules, looking at them as situated conversations that unfold. Couldry puts forward this conception (Nick or others do you have the exact reference, see end of comment). This fits with Bakhtin and genre-oriented approaches, since the idea of genres is very much that they unfold over time rather than being reified categories.

I would love to see work, also, linking this notion of public spheres to insitutional contexts, Sweden being a good site for this, immigrants also seeing rather a lot of the Swedish state as part of their "integration" or "assimilation." I think a dynamic / historical approach fits with this (whilst hard work methdologically, I must admit. HOW to chart such unfolding conversations is a really interesting set of questions.)

I must say that I like this paper, that this is an area that really needs exploring in Sweden, and that Sweden is an unusual but very interesting case for international debates. Its huge mainstreaming and assimilation of newcomers stands out. By contrast, the UK has an opposite problem of perhaps not pulling immigrants into the mainstream enough "English for Immigrants" being a relatively new idea, which, as with many things in England, has run its course somewhat, in the ever shifting world of UK government funding. There are stories of people living in the UK for 20 years without learning English, something that only lazy English speakers can get away with in Sweden. These differences are very significant to any idea of public or publics.

So I would end by saying keep up the good work, if only so it is a bit easier for a dark man like me to one day return to the land of order and organisation (and generally decent social politics may I add).

Daniel

Here is one of Couldry's Papers that relates to this:

<http://209.85.175.132/search?q=cache:GcvgUeCwZEsJ:www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media%40lse/pdf/MediatedCitizenship.pdf+couldry+public+spheres&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=12&gl=uk>

I think he discusses the idea of situated unfolding conversations with institutional bases in detail in another paper I cannot track down right now. Nick, or any one else, does this ring a bell?

Ulrika Sjöberg [Ulrika.Sjoberg at hh.se](mailto:Ulrika.Sjoberg@hh.se)

Sun Jan 11 11:58:20 PST 2009

Daniel,

Thanks for reading our paper and sharing your thoughts. It is evident that the informants' talks need to be placed in a Swedish context when it comes to for example media structure. We have to add something about this. While we have not written about the informants' wish to be part of the "Swedish Public Sphere" (besides media) in the paper their wish to belong to the Swedish society and have more contacts with Swedes were much discussed. We are for the moment writing a book that look at the various issues raised in the project, where a whole chapter is devoted to this matter. Your suggestion to look at public spheres through a genre oriented approach is interesting and we will definitely look at the reference you suggested.

All the best,
Ulrika Sjöberg

Peterson, Mark Allen Dr. [petersm2 at muohio.edu](mailto:petersm2@muohio.edu)

Sun Jan 11 17:25:33 PST 2009

"This is a hugely homogenising force, in a country that has very recently let in 1 million immigrants to add to its 8 million population, albeit rather a lot of those are Finns and Norwegians, so barely "other"."

Are they "barely other"? I've wondered about that.

My grandparents and great grandparents were immigrants from Scandinavia and my father remembers as a young man growing up in eastern North Dakota-southern Minnesota-northern Iowa (in the early 1950s) that there were Swedish bars and Norwegian bars, and a "Swede" (who might well be first or even second generation American) who went into a Norwegian bar or vice-versa was looking for a fight. And discriminatory language against Finns was quite common among both groups.

Just curious.

Mark

Daniel Taghioff [danieltaghioff at yahoo.com](mailto:danieltaghioff@yahoo.com)

Mon Jan 12 23:33:54 PST 2009

That is a good question.

Now as I understand it "otherness" has shifted over time. Indeed the new migrants may well have made these older categories less "other" though I don't have evidence for this.

Which makes for an interesting avenue of study, how have these various "others" been articulated in media (and institutional) conversations over time, and have they been articulated with one another?

This is an interesting way into spheres vs sphericules, if you take Couldry's conversation approach to publics.

Daniel

Postill, John [J.Postill at shu.ac.uk](mailto:John.Postill@shu.ac.uk)

Tue Jan 13 11:31:23 PST 2009

Dear Ulrika, Ingegerd and all

I've enjoyed reading the paper, the discussant's comments and the few other comments so far (I think it's a busy time of the year for most of us). I have two comments and questions:

1. Although this paper aims at contextualising media discourse as part of a project entitled 'Media practices in the new country' there is no mention of these families' actual domestic (media) practices and their relationship with their discourse on Swedish and other media. Why this absence? Is this an area being covered elsewhere?

2. On page 18 you conclude that it is 'intrinsic to media logic to dichotomize and draw lines in black and white', and previously (p. 8) you refer to a family who felt that Western media brand all Muslims as terrorists after September 11. This is not my experience of Western left-liberal news media (BBC, Guardian, International Herald Tribune, El Pais, etc) in which the editorial strategy seems to be to present stories from different 'angles' and one favourite theme is precisely anti-Muslim discourse, xenophobia, etc. There is also plenty of space in this sector of the news media devoted to grey areas, eg a lot has been written in the UK since the July 2005 bombings in London about 'homegrown terrorists' who are portrayed as being born and bred Brits yet somehow not quite British. This is a discourse reminiscent of Great War fears about 'the enemy within' (Brits of German descent living in Britain during the First World War who it was feared may act as German spies). Is public broadcasting in Sweden really that dichotomous and anti-Muslim? How do mainstream Swedish media handle the fear of an enemy within, if at all?

John

Ingegerd Rydin [Ingegerd.Rydin at hh.se](mailto:Ingegerd.Rydin@hh.se)

Wed Jan 14 01:45:51 PST 2009

Dear John,

Thanks for your comments and that you took your time reading our paper.

Here, some reflections on your questions:

1) We have much more information about the informants' media practices (television, Internet, newspapers, books e t c), but the focus of this paper is on the informants' more general images of media's coverage of

issues related to migration and migrants. As this is a qualitative project, it is difficult to relate media uses with the informants' opinions on media representations/portrayals in general. One could of course, go back and see if there are connections here, but it will be difficult to make conclusions, because our data corpus is quite small.

2) This question is very interesting to me, as it reveals differences between the situation in Sweden as compared to Britain. Most of our informants (mostly low educated workers) were referring to "media in general" when discussing these issues. They made no explicit difference between print media versus eg. television. And they did not seem to be particularly conscious about political nuances in various newspapers. They talked more generally on the image of "Swedish media" vs eg. "Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia". Sometimes they talked about "homeland media", but mostly in terms of it being "more violent than Swedish media".

Anyway, the informants' overall image of "Swedish media" is a sense of contents promoting prejudices, providing skewed images of migrants and so forth. I think that few Swedes, now I talk generally, are able to differentiate between eg. different newspapers in terms of their policies regarding immigrants (as you suggested from a British point of view). Sweden is such a small country in terms of population (9 million) and there are basically just two daily newspapers: Dagens nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet. Then there are many local/regional daily newspapers, some very small. The study was undertaken in the countryside (small cities). In these cities, most people, just read the local newspapers. It might be the case, that these local papers present portrayals of migrants that promote xenophobia. That is a hypothesis that would be interesting to explore in more detail. Also, there are a few Swedish studies on media portrayals of migrants, i.e. content analysis studies, that I will look further into to see if we can find a clue to our results there.

Thanks again,
Ingegerd

Sigurjón B Hafsteinsson [sbh at hi.is](mailto:sbh@hi.is)

Thu Jan 15 01:46:41 PST 2009

Dear list,

Our ongoing e-seminar closes January 22 - a week from now. You can access the working paper "Discourses on media portrayals of immigrants and the homeland." at: <http://www.media-anthropology.net/workingpapers.htm>

All the best, Sigurjon.

Shari Li [15875121 at student.uws.edu.au](mailto:15875121@student.uws.edu.au)

Tue Jan 20 23:53:39 PST 2009

Dear Ulrika and Ingegerd and the list,
Thank you for the paper. I enjoyed reading it. However, I have a question and I wish you could kindly provide some explanations. As has been revealed in the paper, immigrants are under-represented and marginalised in Swedish television. However, I would be thankful if you could explain more about the concept of 'wise TV channels'. i.e. what kind of representations they would expect to be portrayed or reported in these 'channels'. The paper argues that participants do feel not satisfied with the negative representations of immigrants' lives on Swedish TV. If this reflects some aspects of social reality, I wonder how a 'wise TV channel' should include such issues. Will the media coverage further invite the dilemma between wishing to be 'informed citizen' and hoping not to be in a social minority situation in reality? Thank you very much for your time and response!

Regards,

Shari

Postill, John J. [Postill at shu.ac.uk](mailto:John.Postill@shu.ac.uk)

Wed Jan 21 03:45:23 PST 2009

Ingegerd wrote:

"1) We have much more information about the informants' media practices (television, Internet, newspapers, books e t c), but the focus of this paper is on the informants' more general images of media's coverage of issues related to migration and migrants. As this is a qualitative project, it is difficult to relate media uses with the informants' opinions on media representations/portrayals in general. [...]"

Many thanks for this response.

My follow-up question is - why would the qualitative nature of the project make this difficult? I would've thought that that's precisely what qualitative research can bring out. For instance, those of your informants who use YouTube regularly and read the comments left by users are likely to be familiar with the kind of blatant sexism, racism, Islamophobia (e.g. "muslims = terrorists") found in some of the comments. I haven't encountered these kinds of remarks in public broadcasting or the so-called left-liberal press where generally more subtle or indirect forms of 'othering' are practised. I would expect those of your interviewees who use the Web regularly to be familiar with these marked discursive differences across media platforms.

John

Ulrika Sjöberg [Ulrika.Sjoberg at hh.se](mailto:Ulrika.Sjoberg@hh.se)

Wed Jan 21 23:59:50 PST 2009

Dear Shari,

Thanks for reading our paper. We appreciate all comments we have received so far. The expression 'wise TV channels' was uttered by one of our informants and summarized many of the thoughts concerning the wish that Swedish television would contain more topics and deal with questions that engage people with immigrant backgrounds and that shed light on their situation. They also requested that more immigrants would take part in various programs. The informants did not describe in detail how these representations could be like but as you can read in the paper the informants discussed different Swedish television programs that they thought were appealing to them. It is also important to note that we have not done a textual analysis dealing with the representations of immigrants. It is the informants' thoughts about this matter that are discussed.

All the best,
Ulrika Sjöberg

Sigurjón B Hafsteinsson [sbh at hi.is](mailto:sbh@hi.is)

Thu Jan 22 00:34:19 PST 2009

Dear list,

The e-seminar is now closed!

I want to thank Ulrika Sjöberg and Ingegerd Rydin for their participation in the e-seminar by sharing their interesting work to us and taking the time to respond to comments and questions about their paper. I also want to thank Kira Kosnick for taking on the role as a commentator and post her thoughtful comments. Many thanks go also to members that took the time to read and send in their comments and questions to the list.

I must confess that I'm really disappointed in the turnout of responses in the seminar and that I am hesitant to continue with the two e-seminars that are scheduled before summer.

It would be interesting to hear from people on the list if we should continue as scheduled or rest this form of exchange for a while.

All the best, Sigurjon

Ingegerd Rydin [Ingegerd.Rydin at hh.se](mailto:Ingegerd.Rydin@hh.se)

Thu Jan 22 01:32:11 PST 2009

Dear John,

I saw that the e-seminar just closed, but I take the chance to make some comments on your questions anyway, because they are important.

You are right about the advantages of doing a qualitative project like ours. And it had been possible to study media practices, eg. how Internet is used and valued in-depth with the type of study we did. But in the conversation-type of interviews we did, the informants seemed to stress the social use of Internet, such as chat forums to find relatives and likeminded, or e-mails. When it came to politics and news media, they tended to stress the use of Swedish mainstream media as well as satellite broadcasting and sometimes local homeland newspapers (paper or digital on the net). Youtube was never mentioned of natural reasons. We collected the data in 2005 (Youtube was released in US in 2005, I think). YOutube in the Swedish language was released in 2008. Some informants in our study did not understand English.

Perhaps a study devoted specifically towards Internet with explicit questions on how people use and evaluate certain sites and information could have been fruitful for answering the very important questions you are raising.

Thank you, once again. And thanks also to all other comments on the paper. We, have at least learnt a lot on this exchange of ideas.

Ingegerd