

<p><b>Institution: Loughborough University</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: D36b Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</b></p>
<p><b>Title of case study: Media Representations of General Elections and Drug Policy in the UK</b></p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impact that the Communication Research Centre at Loughborough University (LCRC) is claiming is raised awareness and understanding of the media's representation of two socially significant topics: general elections in the UK, and government policy on drug usage. The former analyses have led to repeated commissions, and the latter proved central to the UK Drug Policy Commission's report to government, and its recommendations to combat negative stereotyping of users.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research that underpins the impact reported in this narrative was carried out under the auspices of the Loughborough Communication Research Centre (LCRC), active in the Department of Social Sciences since 1992.</p> <p><u>Background</u> The Loughborough team originally consisted of Professor Peter Golding (1990-2010), Professor Michael Billig (1985-present) and (now Professor) David Deacon (1990-present). Professor Deacon continues to play a leading role, and has been joined by Professor John Downey (2000-present), Dr James Stanyer (2005-present) and Dr Dominic Wring (1997-present). Together they have been externally commissioned to work on specific projects by several major organisations, which are reported below. During this time the team have published work which has become known for its methodological rigour and innovation [examples of which are given as <b>3.1</b>, <b>3.2</b> and <b>3.3</b>].</p> <p><u>General Election coverage research.</u> The original LCRC project for <i>The Guardian</i> provided the first ever contemporaneous, 'real time' content analysis of nationwide broadcast and print media coverage during a British General Election. The newspaper commissioned further studies during the three subsequent campaigns. The last of these, in 2005, was the most expansive ever because sponsorship (following competitive tender) by the UK Electoral Commission enabled inclusion of Scottish, Welsh and regional English campaign reporting for the first time. The General Election work promoted Loughborough University as a leading source of expertise for decision makers and opinion-formers seeking quality media information audits. This recognition led to the team being invited to tender - successfully - for contracts from the BBC and the Electoral Commission. The research carried out by the team produced a stream of publications including analysis of the most recent campaign (and LCRC's fifth such) study of the 2010 election [<b>3.4</b>]. A key aspect of this work was to identify and explore how particular issues were reported (or not) and as a consequence the team has engaged in work of relevance to more dedicated policy related areas such as the following example [<b>3.5</b>, see also <b>3.3</b>].</p> <p><u>Drug policy coverage research</u> In 2010 the LCRC conducted research for the UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC), a charity dedicated to informing both government policy decision-making as well as wider public debate on drug related matters. The UKDPC commissioned a project focused on newspaper reporting of the topic and over 6000 news items were analysed from four UK wide, two Scottish and two regional titles in the selected years of 1995, 2002 and 2009. The sample enabled comparisons to be made between media representations of the subject from a variety of potentially contrasting perspectives, specifically the urban/rural, local/national and Scottish/British dichotomies. Crucially the Loughborough University research provided UKDPC with original evidence as to the scale of press misrepresentation of drug users as well as the highly negative content of this coverage [<b>3.5</b>].</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b> (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p><b>3.1.</b> Deacon, D. (2007) 'Yesterday's Papers and Today's Technology: Digital Newspaper Archives and "Push Button" Content Analysis', <i>European Journal of Communication</i>, 22(1),</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

5-25. DOI: 10.1177/0267323107073743

[Note: the EJC is a prestigious academic journal with a wide international reach]

- 3.2.** Downey, J and Stanyer, J (2010) 'Comparative media analysis: Why some fuzzy thinking might help', Applying fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis to the personalization of mediated political communication' *European Journal of Communication*, 25(4), 331–347. DOI: 10.1177/0267323110384256

[Note: the EJC is a prestigious academic journal with a wide international reach]

- 3.3.** Stanyer, J., Deacon, D., Downey, J. & Wring, D. (2009) *Reporting Health Inequalities in the British Print Media*, for the National Social Marketing Centre and Department of Health, December, 75pp.  
[http://thensmc.com/sites/default/files/Health%2BInequalities%2BReport%2BFinal\\_0.pdf](http://thensmc.com/sites/default/files/Health%2BInequalities%2BReport%2BFinal_0.pdf)

[Note: The report was scrutinised by both agencies in a form of peer review before publication]

- 3.4.** Deacon, D. & Wring, D. (2011) 'Reporting the 2010 General Election: Old Media, New Media - Old Politics, New Politics', in Wring, D, Mortimore, R. & Atkinson, S. Eds., (2011.) *Political Communication in Britain: the Leader Debates, the Campaign and the Media in the 2010 General Election*, Palgrave, 2011. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 281-303. ISBN 978-0-230301-45-0

[Note: this edited book received praise within and outside academia where for example, it was reviewed as a "fascinating collection of essays" by a senior BBC journalist.

- 3.5.** Stanyer, J., Deacon, D., Downey, J. & Wring, D. (2010) *Representations of Drug Use and Drug Users in the British Press*. London: UK Drug Policy Commission, December, ISBN 978-1-906246-28-0, 72pp.  
([http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/resources/UKDPC\\_Media\\_analysis\\_report.pdf](http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/resources/UKDPC_Media_analysis_report.pdf)).

Funded by £11,932 from UKDPC for its 'Addressing Stigma and Discrimination Towards Recovering Drug Users: Media Analysis'

[Note: Unusually for an analytic report, this had nearly 2000 downloads up to July 2012.]

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

#### General Election coverage research.

Research carried out on UK election coverage by the Loughborough University team had its impact through raising awareness (among working journalists, politicians, pollsters and commentators) of (a) the extent to which women politicians had been marginalised in news reports, and (b) the extent to which there was a systematic absence of coverage of substantial policy issues in health, economy and education.

#### *Awareness.*

The 2010 election research stimulated considerable, and immediate, interest among the stakeholders listed above. Members of the team made numerous media appearances and also supplied additional data to a range of external bodies including the major political parties; Sky News and BBC News; the Electoral Commission, and pollsters **[5.1]**.

#### Drug policy coverage research

Research carried out by the Loughborough University team formed a crucial part of the UK Drugs Policy Commission's 2010 publication *Getting Serious About Stigma* **[5.2]**. The report highlighted how negative public reactions experienced by recovering drug users and their families constituted a 'hidden' barrier to their effective reintegration into society **[5.3]**. The report, with the Loughborough University research at its core, had impact on awareness and understanding.

#### (a) *Awareness*

- The Loughborough University project findings informed a series of recommendations that collectively strengthened the official guidance drawn up by the Society of Editors' Code of

Practice Review Committee. This change was highlighted in the parent body's subsequent annual report: 'We continue to work in diverse areas such as sports rights, drugs and human rights. Work is progressing on the production of a factual reporting guide about people fighting and recovering from drug addiction' [5.4].

- The LCRC research has contributed to raising awareness albeit sometimes in unintended ways. Commenting on the launch of the original UKDPC report a columnist for a quality Sunday newspaper wrote dismissively of the Loughborough University team's evidence based findings: 'My daily fix, Prof, is to stigmatise these smackheads (as) drooling mindless imbeciles (and) 'glassy-eyed and threatening, desperate and aggressive' [5.5]. The research has, however, also helped improve the quality of debate. In her speech opening the June 2012 Scottish Parliamentary session devoted to her motion on 'Family Support for Drug Addicts' MSP Nanette Milne made reference to the work of the UKDPC and commented: 'The media's use of words such as "junkies" only adds to the stigma' [5.6]. The research was also cited in the 2011 annual report from UK Focal Points on Drugs, a body sponsored by the UK Department of Health, which collates data and information on behalf of the continental wide European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction [5.7].

(b) *Understanding*

- The Society of Editors' annual report 2010-11 acknowledged that the importance of the LCRC's empirical work in identifying changes were already underway: 'We welcomed the recognition by the UK Drug Policy Commission that the media has become an important positive influence on public understanding of the problems of stigma' [5.4].
- The Loughborough University evidence based 'Getting Serious About Stigma' report led to and directly informed the UKDPC-Society of Editors joint publication 'Dealing with the Stigma of Drugs: a guide for journalists' [5.8].
- The UKDPC's *Submission to the Leveson Inquiry: press reporting of illicit drug use* of January 2012 explicitly acknowledged the Loughborough University study in introducing a briefing that used the LCRC evidence to make the case for the strengthening of the code on reporting of this topic from whatever form of regulatory body emerges in the future [5.9].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The following sources of corroboration can be made available at request:

*1. Research impact*

Letters of endorsement from the following sources are held on file at Loughborough University. Each endorses the impact that our research had on their agency's understanding of media representation.

- 5.1. Assistant Chief Executive IPSOS-MORI
- 5.2. UKDPC Director of Policy and Research

*2. Drug Policy coverage impact*

The following provide evidence of how our research raised awareness and understanding of the media's portrayal of drug issues.

- 5.3. UKDPC (2010) Getting serious about the stigma: the problem with stigmatising drug users, UK Drug Policy Commission, pp.14  
<http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/publication/getting-serious-about-stigma-problem-stigmatising-drug-users/>
- 5.4. Society of Editors (2011) Annual Report of the Society of Editors 2010-11, 27pp  
<http://www.societyofeditors.co.uk/userfiles/files/SOEAnnualRep2011PDFwebsite.pdf>
- 5.5. Liddle, R. (2010) 'My daily fix is to stigmatise these junkies', Sunday Times, 19th December  
<http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/comment/columns/rodliddle/article484088.ece>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

- 5.6. Scottish Parliament (2012) Official Report, 21st June, Column 10326  
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=7327&mode=pdf>
- 5.7. UK Focal Point on Drugs (2011) United Kingdom Drug Situation, Annual Report to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 260pp  
<http://www.nwph.net/ukfocalpoint/writedir/00c6FOCAL%20POINT%20REPORT%202011%20FINAL%2010.04.12.pdf>
- 5.8. Seymour, D. (2012ed) Dealing with the stigma of drugs: a guide for journalists, Society of Editors/UK Drug Policy Commission, Autumn, 51pp  
<http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/dealing-with-the-stigma-of-drugs.pdf>
- 5.9. UKDPC (2012) Press reporting of issues relating to illicit drug use: submission to the Leveson Inquiry, UK Drug Policy Commission, January, 11pp  
<http://www.ukdpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Briefing%20-%20Submission%20to%20the%20Leveson%20Inquiry%20press%20reporting%20of%20illicit%20drug%20use.pdf>